Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs History Project

WAYNE LEININGER

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Q: Let's start at the beginning. Tell us where you were born, where you went to school, how you spent your childhood?

LEININGER: I was born in the little town of Kingston, New York, which had about 28,000 inhabitants at the time. It is about 90 miles north of New York City, on the Hudson River. It was the first capital of New York State, and I guess for that reason was burned to the ground by the British in 1777. It never really recovered. It was a sleepy town through most of the 1950s. It had a slight economic boost in the 1920s when a brick manufacturing industry was the primary economic mainstay. Then came the depression, which left its mark until IBM moved in the mid-1950s.

Anyway, I was born in 1949, the eldest of three kids, so I experienced the IBM boom in my early years. IBM and its employees had pumped a lot of tax money into the city, and that in turn supported a pretty good public school system. I was very fortunate in that respect.

The folks on my mother's side of the family were Irish, who came to the U.S. between 1870 and 1890. I found that out by looking up some old census records. Both her parents were Irish, so with a smattering of Irish from my Dad's side of the family, I am more than half Irish. My father's family was primarily of German origin, as my last name suggests. His mother was Danish-English, with that bit of Irish I mentioned thrown in.

My mother had a high school education, and became a telephone operator, a job she held after high school until after she was married and we kids came along. Those were the days when live, human operators were central to the working of the telephone system. My father joined the Navy right after high school, and served on the light cruiser "Providence" as a ship's clerk. That sort of set him up after he was discharged to begin a career in bankinstarting at the bottom, as a teller.

My parents were married in 1948. We lived for the first couple of years with his parents, though I barely remember those years. My folks bought their own little starter house soon after my little brother was born. My Dad did well in banking, moving up the ladder to chief teller and then cashier. I was the first in my family to go to college. I kind of always took it for granted that I would, though I don't really know why I was so sure that that would be the case. I attended public schools all through high school, and, for that matter, a public university, too. Interestingly enough, the elementary school administrators kept redistricting the system, so although I never changed addresses, I attended seven schools by the age of twelve. That was not nearly as traumatic as the experiences of some military or Foreign Service kids, who actually have to move from school to school without their friends. In my case, when I was transferred, so were my friends, in most cases.

Q: In your case, although your parents never went to college, I gather they expected you to do so.

LEININGER: I was such a bookish nerd that I guess they didn't really know what else to do with me. All during elementary school, I would bring home four or five books each day from the school library. I liked school, liked learning, liked even taking tests. I was a klutz at most sports, though I played organized Little League, Babe Ruth League, and Connie Mack baseball from age eight to eighteen. Brought new meaning to the phrase "good field, no hit," especially there at the end. Anyway, my parents encouraged me to look forward to going to college. My brother and sister never made it.

Q: Did you have a teacher in your school days who might have stimulated your interest in books?

LEININGER: Not that I can recall. I read because I was insatiably curious. I read biographies, sports books (Clare Bee and John R. Tunis), lots of books about the Civil War. I always had an unexplained and very affecting affinity for that period of our history. I eventually got into science fiction, which was kind of a cheap way to "travel" to exotic places without leaving the sofa!

Q: In retrospect, were your academic programs particularly rigorous?

LEININGER: Because the presence of IBM, which brought in many upper-middle class, well educated people, there was a substantial group of parents who insisted on a good education for their children. Since IBM paid a lot of taxes to the township, these parents had considerable influence. The school authorities began a "track" system - i.e. "advanced," "intermediate" and "regular" classes. So by the time I reached third grade, a number of my schoolmates and I were selected for the "advanced" classes. That meant that the schoolwork we did was at least one grade - and sometimes morahead of what the kids in other "tracks" were getting. We started studying foreign languages, for instance, in sixth grade, and algebra in the seventh.

When I was thirteen, in 1962, we moved to Rockledge, Florida. That's in Brevard County - the Kennedy Space Center (Cape Canaveral) area. There was a major influx into the area of space engineers and other well-educated families. NASA was pumping major dollars into the local economy, and there was also some federal ai"impact" funds, they were called. That brought up the level of education in the county, similar to what had happened in Kingston when IBM had moved in. The high school I attended was actually located in Rockledge, where we lived, though in those days it was called Cocoa High. Eventually, Cocoa built its own high school, and the school I attended is now called Rockledge High.

Q: How was it that you moved to Florida?

LEININGER: My father was offered a job there. He had been interested in a job in Fort Lauderdale the year before, but that didn't work out. Kingston was drying up; IBM had announced it was phasing out its operation there in order to move it to Poughkeepsie. That essentially brought the town to a standstill. If you go back to Kingston today, its population is about 24,00less than it was when I left there. It is not growing, and people are leaving it when they can. When I go back to visit older relatives, I can't find any of the names of my old schoolmates in the phone book.

In any case, I must say that I had a very good public education both in Kingston and Brevard county.

Q: You finished high school in the mid-1960s. Did Vietnam begin to loom on your horizon?

LEININGER: I was aware of it, but it was not really a central concern until I got to college. In high school, and initially in college, I tended to concentrate on mathematics. In fact, I began as a math major at Florida State University. I had applied to a number of universities and colleges, but even though both of my parents were working at the time; we did not have the means for me to attend a school outside the state system. My parents earned too much for me to get full scholarships, but not enough to allow me to attend one of the more elite, Ivy League-type schools. I was awarded a National Merit scholarship, which would have helped with my tuition at Michigan State, but it was in the grand sum of $100 per year. I visited the school, but the scholarship simply was not large enough to allow me to consider going to MSU.

So I went to FSU in Tallahassee, which we could afford. My parents contributed some money; I contributed from savings from my summer jobs; I had a Florida State teachers' loan. If I had become a teacher, it would have been forgiven - over a period of five years, or something like that. Finally, I relied on the Federal student guaranteed loan program; by the time I graduated I owed about $4,000.

I started at FSU in the fall of 1967. At the beginning, I was a math major, as I said; that lasted about a year and a half. That is how long it took me to get into campus politics - during an interesting time, because we became in a movement that led to the university president being removed over an attempted censorship of the school newspaper, on a local scale, as well as getting caught up in larger national and international concerns.

At that point in time, FSU had about 16-17,000 students. Now it has grown to 37,000. I became involved in the student government. In my junior year, I was a member of the cabinet, in the first non-Greek (non-fraternity or sorority) student government in the history of the school. I had the grand title of Secretary of Communications, whatever that was!

I think events of that period had considerable impact on my choice of majors, and, obviously, my future. It was during this period that some of our great national leaders were assassinated - Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy. These events came to dominate our thinking; it was almost like, "I can't be bothered with schoolwork right now; I'm too busy getting an education?" There were groups on campus that took up causes in kind of a juvenile way - painting walls of the ROTC building and other vandalism. There was also a chapter of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) on campus who were a liability sometimes to those of us who viewed these national events with deep concern, but still felt we could work within a basically good democratic system. We were interested in seeing changes in our country, but didn't feel that obstructionism was the right approach. So we regarded the "lefties" as radicals, and they regarded us as "sell-outs."

My experience in student government was valuable. I learned how to deal with people in authority, with whom I disagreed. I learned how to negotiate with leaders with different views than mine. I learned how people in power are themselves, often, operating under pressure from above and have to do things they aren't particularly happy about. I learned to use tact, but also to appreciate the value of a subtle hint that mass action might be just around the corner.

There was considerable anti-Vietnam war sentiment on campus, sparked by such events as the Cambodian incursion and the shootings at Kent State. We held candlelight marches attended by 5,000 people, which, in the traditionalist southern city of Tallahassee, was unheard of. Of course, any semblance of disorder on campus was viewed by the administration as a challenge to its authority. But our most rigorous criticism came from the town fathers; our campus activities became a "town and gown" issue. Whenever we mounted a demonstration, we did try to reduce the possibility of confrontation; we preferred sit-ins or lectures or other non-violent demonstrations.

Q: Did you yourself come to oppose the war?

LEININGER: I did a lot of reading on the issue. I learned all about the history of the Vietnam conflict, back to the French colonial period. I came to the conclusion that the premises we used to justify our engagement with the Vietcong were flawed - e.g., that they represented an invasion force from outside South Vietnam; and that the fall of South Vietnam to communism would result in that dangerous ideology spreading to other parts of Southeast Asia (the "domino" theory); and, indeed, that, save for the French, there was really any such thing as a "North" or "South" it really was just "Vietnam." It was somewhat ironic that when I took the Foreign Service oral entrance exam, I was asked whether I could defend U.S. policy in Vietnam. My answer was that I could explain it, but I was not sure I could identify with it. Were we "evil" in our approach? I didn't think so; we were just working on false assumptions. Did we seek empire? What on earth for? Did we have an interest in oil in Vietnam? Of course not. We were just mistaken in what we could or should do.

So I became interested in these major national and international issues. I was doing well enough in math subjects, but they were starting to seem irrelevant to the real world, which unfortunately was filled with deaths in Vietnam and riots in Tallahassee and other places in the U.S. The center of the black community in Tallahassee (called "French Town") was burned down when Martin Luther King was killed. So it seemed to me that sitting in an ivory tower worrying about matrix algebra and mathematical formulas was not an adequate response to what was going on.

Q: What did you major in?

LEININGER: I changed to international relations. This was a brand new School for FSU. Previously, the subject was part of an interdisciplinary major, which consisted of a variety of courses chosen by the student. By the time I decided to major in international relations, the department had been in being for just two years. As it turned out, I was the first graduate of FSU's School of International Relations to join the Foreign Service. There had been other FSU graduates who joined the Foreign Service, but I was the first from the School of international relations to do so.

I took enough courses to be credited with minors in economics and history. That was one reason I loved my major; you could take courses in a wide variety of subjects, which allowed you to study in some depth a number of broad issues - sociology, psychology, history, economics, religion, humanities, etc. It was perfect for a career in the Foreign Service, which requires some knowledge in many different disciplines.

Q: You graduated in 1971. Was the draft a possibility?

LEININGER: Originally, I would have been eligible, but my circumstances changed. First of all, I had been admitted to graduate school; secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I was born on June 24, which made me Lottery Number 356, which was well beyond the number being drafted at the time. When that ping-pong ball came out of the bin I went home and kissed my mother!

I was admitted to the School for International Studies (SAIS) of John Hopkins University as well as the FSU graduate school. The grants in those days ranged from $3,700 to $5,200. Now, I had become engaged at the end of my junior year at FSU. In fact, I had met my wife-to-be in high school; we really didn't see each other much during our first two years at FSU, but during our junior year, we decided that we belonged together. So we have by now known each other for forty years.

I decided to take the Foreign Service entrance examination just for the practice. I didn't initially have a career in the Foreign Service in mind. I wasn't going to teach international relations, but I was looking for something that would allow me to do good for one person at a time - which is one of the reasons I eventually gravitated to consular work. I took the written test in the fall of 1970. Much to my wonderment and surprise, I was told the following January that I had passed. I was asked if I could come to Washington for the oral exam - the Department having a budgetary squeeze at the time, which prevented examiners from traveling outside the city. My dad floated me a loan to pay for the trip, and so in late February or early March, I went to Washington. Surprise, surprise: I passed the oral as well. I was only twenty-one at the time.

Having passed both the written and oral exams, I decided to join the Foreign Service, which was offering me a job at the princely sum of $8,900. That was considerably larger than the grant I might have received from graduate school. That was not hard to figure out. I was a banker's son, after all! So I graduated from FSU in June 1971, married in August, and entered the Foreign Service on September 11. I was in Toronto on my first assignment by December of that year. A fairly busy, fun-filled six months!

Q: Had you passed a language qualification test?

LEININGER: For Toronto? I had not. I had taken Russian in college, which had been taught by a first-wave immigrant. He had left Russia in 1913 when he was about seventeen. So he hardly spoke any language fluently by the time he was teaching at FSU; his English was his best language. So I think I scored 1+ in Russian, which was not nearly enough to even get off language probation in the Department. In any case, in 1971, the Department didn't seem to care that much about foreign language competence and sent me to my first post without requiring any evidence of my being able to use a second language. I think the Department took pity on me when it sent me to Toronto. I had never been outside the U.S. ever before - not even to the Bahamas or Mexico. Some Career Development Officer somewhere knew what he or she was doing!

Toronto was a very good "learning" post. We don't issue any non-immigrant visas (NIVs) to Canadians. In those days, we had a lot of third country applicants for U.S. visitor visas who would tell you that they had decided "only yesterday" to visit the U.S. - that is, after having crossed an ocean or two to get to Canada, they suddenly realized it bordered on the U.S. Yes, right! In those days, we still processed immigrant visas (IVs) in Toronto - this was before all the immigrant visa processing for Eastern Canada was consolidated in Montreal. Most of those applicants were third-country nationals, also, from all parts of the world. Adjustment of status to permanent resident by a foreigner who had violated the terms of his visa while he or she was in the U.S. was not possible under the law; someone who wanted to do that had to leave the U.S. and apply in Canada or another foreign country. No one at all born in the Western hemisphere could adjust their statuby laand so they also had to come to Canada to be processed for an immigrant visa. We pre-processed everybodexamined all aspects of the case even before seeing the applicant - because the Canadians were unwilling to let people enter their country unless there was some evidence that they would be re-admitted to the U.S. So we had to check all of these people's documentimmigrant visa petitions, police certificates, medical papers, etc. in advance. If they needed and qualified for waivers of any ineligibilities, we pre-processed those as well. So in some cases, we would deny a visa, apply the waiver, and issue the visa, all at the same interview!

Q: Who was our Consul-General in Toronto?

LEININGER: Joe Henderson, a former director of the Visa Office. He was a good man to have in the front office for those of us who were issuing visas, since he understood visa law. My immediate boss, who turned out to be my best consular boss ever, was Warren Swope. He was an s.o.b., and proud of it. I bet the people in the Visa Office still have a Swope file. They showed it to me before I left for Toronto; it was three and a half inches thick. The file was filled with documentation of battles that Washington had with Swope. He had risen through the ranks from a staff person, to head of the consular section in Toronto. He may have started as a communicator or courier or something like that, and then moved into consular work. He and every other consular or administrative officer at a post were staff officers. I was the only "exam" consular officer at post.

Later, when I became an instructor in consular work at FSI 1976, I had a contact in the Bureau of Personnel (PER) run off copies of personal audit reports of everybody in the consular cone. I found out that, as of that time, still 55% of all consular officers were still non-exam officers. Two thirds of all female consular officers were non-exam officers, and more than half of them had no more than a high school diploma. They had become officers without ever having to pass the Foreign Service entrance exam.

Q: It is important to talk about this issue a little because I think the general perception has been that staff officers were narrow-gauged," green eyeshade" types, very literal-minded who had no appreciation for the larger picture, often without college degrees. They were people who had begun their career as staff officers in many different areas, such as communications or secretarial work, and had eventually been assigned to consular or administrative work. There were exceptions, but in general that was the view and, in fact, the case.

LEININGER: True. And that was the charge against the consular officers for many, many years. This view had an impact on the new young exam Foreign Service officers who were assigned to consular work during their first or second tours. In fact, we "newbies" wondered, after being at post for three or four weeks, why the people doing consular or administrative work did not measure up to the quality people we had met in Washington. We wondered whether the Foreign Service had damaged these people in some way or whether these people were just left over from a by-gone era, and that in the future the caliber of people in consular or administrative work would improve considerably. We hoped it was the latter!

Q: What was your view of U.S.-Canada relations while serving in Toronto? My recollection from serving in Canada many years later than you did was that English-speaking Canadians often had a very harsh view of Americans.

LEININGER: I found the same. That view was exacerbated by the Vietnam War. The Canadians had always seen us as too barbaric, too prone to flex our muscles, and given to action without enough thought. When I read the op-ed page of English Canadian newspapers, I noticed that almost every day they were filled with anti-American sentiment; what ever we did, it was wrong. This view was reinforced by the ever-increasing number of draft dodgers and deserters who were filtering into Canada. The Canadians viewed these expatriates as perfectly moral people who were doing the right thing. Some of these Americans became quasi-celebrities and small-scale heroes. I met some of these people, but only occasionally. Most of them stayed clear of us; they wanted nothing to do with the U.S. Government. Remember the song "American Woman" by the rock band "Guess Who?" The "Woman" in the song was the whole U.S. It included a line about "stay away from me." That was intended to mean, "Keep your cotton-pickin' hands off Canada and our way of life!" That was the attitude of many Canadians at the time.

Q: Apart from what might be considered the "intellectual" class in Toronto, what was the view of the "man on the street" about the U.S.?

LEININGER: I think only our downstairs neighbors knew that I worked at the consulate. Everybody was quite hospitable. Canadians are very decent folks. Toronto was the most relaxed and fear-free city we ever lived in. It has grown since our days, but whenever we visit, we find the attitude has not changed. They are very accepting of strangers.

Q: Did you serve for two years in the consular section?

LEININGER: I worked on consular matters exclusively. Initially, I did nothing but oversee the pre-processing of immigrant visa applications that came to us from the U.S. For the first 12-13 months, that is all I did. All of these applicants needed later to be interviewed; so we had two or three officers who did nothing but interview and stamp the applications that I had already decided should be approved. I did not see many of the applicants myself, except those I interviewed as part of my learning process.

Then came a succession of minor disasters in the non-immigrant visa unit, with which I became familiar because I drafted much of the replies to congressional complaints they caused. The chief of the unit when I first got there was a veteran who was not ruffled by anything and took everything in stride; he was transferred in the summer of 1972. The Department, in its usual wisdom, sent as a replacement a lady of advanced years, with multiple health problems. The Department clearly thought it was doing her a favor by assigning her to a civilized English speaking post with good health care, near the U.S. Unfortunately, we had only two NIV officers, who in the summer had to do about 200 interviews each - every day. These were all third country applicants, so the interviews were difficult and often contentious. So, in the summer, these two officers were laboring under a Herculean workload, of a kind that required them to turn down most of the applicants. The new lady just could not say "No" in a happy way. She was just too ill, and had served in too many hardship posts, that seemed to have warped her judgment forever. She got into a number of screaming matches with applicants. All that did was increase the number of congressional inquiries. So within a few months, and a few sessions with Warren, she decided that it would be best to retire.

That brought another newcomer. This was a second tour officer who had previously served in Bogotï¿½. He was Hispanic. I say that only because in analyzing his work, Sthat's what DS, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, was called in those days - found that he issued visas to two out of every three applicants when they were of Hispanic origin, most of whom should have been refused, in the judgment of the chief of the consular section and of the OIG (Office of Inspector General), which opened an investigation into this officer's actions. Eventually, he was allowed to resign quietly, without fuss, on the grounds that the visas were issued because of mistaken judgment and not corruption. He didn't take any money. He just got tired of saying "No."

Q: Did anyone try to get you involved in non-consular work during your tour in Toronto?

LEININGER: I did serve as escort officer to Senator Javits, who represented the U.S. at a NATO parliamentarians meeting at Niagara-on-the-Lake. But in fact, consular work was the consulate's meat and potatoes. Not much else was going on. We didn't have many official visitors. There was some commercial work to be done, but that was handled by representatives of the Department of Commerce. Ray Eveland was in charge of that activity; in some respect, he and his wife Ruth became mentors for my wife and me. They were grandfatherly and grandmotherly types who taught me how to mix a gin and tonic - a brand new experience for me, but that was what they drank and so I learned.

Q: After your tour in Toronto, did you come to the conclusion that you wanted to specialize in consular work?

LEININGER: Yes. I found the opportunity for interacting with the individual applicants a great attraction. That is, of course, the key to good consular work. I remember distinctly one of my early experiences on the IV desk. We did not have a counter - no bulletproof shielin those days. I sat on one side of a desk, and the applicant sat opposite me. In this case, the applicant was a Greek ship jumper. He had been interviewed by INS when he left his ship while it was docked in Baltimore. He then had married an American lady about 13 years older than himself, and that of course raised some suspicions. His whole case had been thoroughly investigated by INS before it approved his petition. In fact, his case had been worked on for three years before he appeared before me. We shook hands when he came to the desk, and then I told him that his paper work all seemed to be in order - I had reviewed it before he ever came to the office. In fact, I had earlier triggered one of the investigations. So I told the seaman that I congratulated him and that he was free to enter the U.S. and stay there as long as he wanted, and I wished him well. At that, the Greek man got down on his knees and grabbed my hand, and kissed the back of it. He was crying, and he couldn't thank me enough. I knew right then that I was getting into the right kind of work! (Laughs)

Q: As your tour was coming to an end, did you think about a next assignment?

LEININGER: I didn't really have a chance. The Department said that I was going to Rotterdam. That sounded good to us. First though, I had to attend Dutch language training, although as we know the Dutch speak several languages - French, English, Spanish, German, and Dutch. But in any case, I had to acquire a passable knowledge of some foreign language and Dutch served that purpose well. So I spent five months learning Dutch and got off language probation status.

So by the summer of 1974, we were in Rotterdam. That was a wonderful small post. There were only five Americans officers there. I was nominally the "American citizen services" officer. I was also the full time administrative officer. Towards the end of my tour, I also served as the commercial officer for 6-8 months; I also did some political reporting in my spare time. So I had opportunities to be involved in a wide variety of Foreign Service tasks. That was a wonderful developmental assignment - an opportunity that would have been hard to replicate in most other posts.

I should mention that I was also the "by the way" officer. My office was right down the hall from the consul general's. He was an economic officer on his first assignment as a principal officer. He had been in Rotterdam earlier in his career as a junior officer, and had married a Dutch woman. So he was very excited by being the principal officer in a post he knew; but this was his first assignment as a consul general. He had never run anything larger that a three-man economic section. He had a very hard time making decisions. He had to be pushed, led, nagged, begged, and threatened, before we could get any decision out of him. The subject matter was not an issue; he just could not reach a decision on any issue presented to him.

Unfortunately, I was the first American within his line of sight whenever he entered or left his office. So I was "by the way, could you look into this matter for me?" Or "could you follow up for me on this?" That got me involved in a lot of projects that had nothing to do with my nominal job description. He had of course a deputy who also served as the chief of the consular section - John Coffey. John liked to go to visit the American ships that were coming in. He had been a consular officer in almost every major seaport in the world - back when "shipping and seamen" issues were major issues for American consular offices. By the mid-1970s, though, the industry was deeply into container ships. The ship's captains no longer had to come to the consulate to present and deposit ship's papers, because the vessels were in port for less than six hours - the derricks just put the containers off and on the ship, and it was on its way to the next port. The unions also had become a major factor, which meant that we did have to worry so much about seamen's welfare and repatriation and other personnel issues as had been the case in earlier days. The unions took care of those matters. In any case, John liked to visit the ships; he used to spend weekends on board talking to the captains. So he had no time for issues dealing with post management. Since the CG could not reach any decisions and the deputy was busy elsewhere, often the chore was left to me. That included such matters as having the CG's driver disciplined for drinking Heineken on the job, for instance!

Q: It is interesting that the principal officer had no management training or experience. That has been a theme that has run throughout the history of the Foreign Service.

LEININGER: Rotterdam was a commercial-interest post. It was the largest seaport in the world at the time. It was the banking center of the Netherlands. So an economic/ commercial officer was assigned as the Consul General. It was a very busy post.

We enjoyed living in Rotterdam, except for the weather. There was a period between February and May, 1975, when we saw the sun on only two days.

Q: Aid you notice any anti-American feeling because of Vietnam?

LEININGER: By the time we arrived that issue had pretty much faded from the public's mind. The Dutch were very judgmental about what they considered to be the deplorable state of race relations in the U.S. Within five years, they themselves had to face the problems of integrating different races and cultures; they had a major influx of Surinamers who had gained their independence from the Netherlands. They came by the hundreds and thousands, until the Dutch decided to shut down the immigration. I think it was four or five years after our departure that the Dutch had to face race riots in their own cities - both by the whites protesting the influx of the black Surinamers, and by the blacks protesting their treatment by the Dutch. That, I think, brought pretty to an end the Dutch tendency preach about the status of African-Americans.

Q: Did you have a heavy consular workload?

LEININGER: Visas for the Dutch was pretty much a pro-forma operation. But we had a lot of third-country applicants - Iranians and Middle Eastern people. They were on the move and landed in the Netherlands as "guest workers" - legal or otherwise.

Q: In either Toronto or Rotterdam, did you notice much congressional interest in consular matters?

LEININGER: There was a lot of interest in certain visa cases, particularly in Toronto. There, fortunately, I had one of the best local employees in the world - a woman by the name of Betty Garnett. She took me under her wing when I first arrived. She drafted the overwhelming majority of our congressional correspondence; I think we received about 2,000 letters per year from the Hill.

Q: Were there cases that were more than just pro-forma inquiries? Did you get phone calls from staff or Congressmen?

LEININGER: Indeed we did - more often than not, as a matter of fact, there were phone calls - Toronto being almost a "local call." I ended up on a first name basis with a lot of congressional staffers. I would categorize them as insistent, but certainly not unpleasant. I don't think, during my whole career, I ever have run into a staffer or congressman who went beyond reasonable limits - with perhaps one exception that we can discuss later. I found that my contacts with the Hill were always professional. As long as our case was supported by facts, rather than prejudices or knee-jerk reactions, I never had a problem. The staffers understand that what they receive from the constituent is a one-sided story; they are perfectly willing to hear a balanced and fair presentation of the whole case.

I must say that attorneys are a different matter. The immigrants - both legal and otherwisliving and working in the U.S. were to some extent or another desperate people. Many did not have the required documentation; some had shady pasts. They were ripe for picking by attorneys, some of whom we referred to appropriate authorities for investigation, resulting in some disbarments. These were people who were manufacturing job letters for labor certification cases. They were manufacturing marriages. There was considerable fraud involved in many cases prepared by unscrupulous attorneys. Their clients could not afford legitimate or competent representation.

Q: What was the background of the program that required people living in the U.S. to go to a near-by foreign country in order to be issued a visa?

LEININGER: The only people who could qualify as for a immigrant visa from a near-by consular office were immediate relatives of American citizens or green-card holders. Without that connection, we would not have processed the application; they were required to go back home. People in other visa categories, such as the then-third preference work visa applicants, had to go back to their country of origin for processing. So the services we provided in Toronto were primarily for the convenience of a family of an American citizen or green-card holder.

Q: You were in Rotterdam from 1974 to 1976. It was, I gather, a good assignment.

LEININGER: That is was. It was also a wonderful place for traveling because it had good transportation facilities. It was the rail junction for northern Europe. The European trains were fast and clean, so that we could get to anywhere in Europe from Rotterdam. My sister, after her high school graduation, visited us and we took her around the continent - on the "Tran-European Express."

Q: As your tour was ending, what possibilities were you considering?

LEININGER: I had read in the Department's newsletter that FSI was contemplating major changes in its consular training program. Someone had the idea that a mock consulate should be established in FSI - ConGen Rosslyn, since FSI was located in Rosslyn at the time. The mock consulate would allow all trainees to have an almost "real life" experience in consular operations.

Q: I should have asked this earlier, but did you find that the training you had received was at all useful in your subsequent assignments?

LEININGER: No. It was stultifying, dull and had little relationship to the "real world" that I was to find in Toronto and Rotterdam. It focused on reading the Foreign Affairs Manual - six hours at a time - by the instructor. Then we were to take the manual home for additional reading. That might have been a cure for insomnia, but it did little to prepare us for our assignments. We didn't even understand what the technical words used in the text meant. So when we got to post, someone had to show us what an immigrant visa application form looked like and how it was to be filled out. None of that had we learned at FSI.

In any case, when I heard about this new training approach, I wanted to be part of it. The Department was looking for people who had had a couple of tours in consular sections to be part of the teaching faculty. I was brash enough to believe that I could make a useful contribution to the training of new officers. So I raised my hand in November, 1975 and was chosen very quickly, which allowed me in my last six months in Rotterdam to collect files on actual cases that had been adjudicated which might prove to be useful case studies for consular trainees. I tried to find examples of different kind of issues - death, destitution, loss of nationality, arrests, etc.

I took these cases back with me to Washington in the summer of 1976, and, together with Joyce Smith, Bob Tsukayama, and John Coffman - the founding patriarch of ConGen Rosslyn - spent the first six months putting the case material into usable form; we also developed a series of self-instructional guides. When we finished in February 1977, ConGen Rosslyn was open for business.

Q: Where did the impetus for this new approach to instruction come from?

LEININGER: It was John Coffman's baby. He had to sell his idea not only within FSI, but also to the Bureau of Consular Affairs. It was definitely more expensive to use this new training technique. We started the training for groups of four - every other day. So we did not train as many as had been trained previously in the same period of time; we also needed more a lot more space - not only large conference rooms, but individual cubby-holes (i.e. "offices") for the trainees to conduct "interviews" and exercises. We took over an entire floor of the old FSI building. At the beginning, we did not have a miniature NIV hall; eventually we managed to cobble one together. But we did have a jail and other mock facilities, which were very useful for training purposes.

John Coffman bore the brunt of selling this approach to our superiors. He had a Ph.D., and he was familiar with teaching techniques. He had learned through his own efforts what made "good" training programs, as used in the Army and in private business. He had gotten some ideas on how you train people quickly, but thoroughly enough to that they can his their new jobs running, doing them as well as they could and as efficiently as they could. John fought an uphill battle because he needed more resources than were at the time devoted to consular training. But he battled for every nickel and dime. The Dean of the School of Professional studies was a Civil Servant, John Sprott. Directors of FSI came and went; they were usually ex-ambassadors or senior political officers who were at FSI while awaiting another assignment. Sprott had been there for a while and would be there for much longer, and he became an invaluable ally. Coffman had to fight many bureaucratic fights, but eventually won the war. He got the space and funding to conduct the course. It may have been perhaps because he had to have so many fights that he never got to the senior Foreign Service. He was the only director of the ConGen who never made it, but his successors, who built on his program foundation, all did. Unfortunately, of all of the Coffman team that developed ConGen Rosslyn, I was the only one who made it to the senior ranks - one transferred to the civil service and the other had to retire for medical reasons.

Q: That is quite interesting because I remember that the occupants of that director's job in later years were almost always promoted. It was viewed as a prestigious job. But the original director, Coffman, who started it all, was not rewarded.

LEININGER: He had to break a lot of china to the concept into being. He was a very strong willed person who did achieve his goal, but in doing so did not always endear himself to his colleagues and bosses.

Q: Tell us a little bit about the ConGen Rosslyn theory and how it worked.

LEININGER: We had a continual stream of students coming to take the course. We did not, therefore, have to wait for a class to form. They would come in small groups, some a every other day, so that we could keep a steady flow of people going through the training. It had a sense of a conveyor belt. So a student would start at the beginning and then when he or she got to a certain point, would fall back and become a role player for the group that followed. So a student would have an opportunity to act both as a consular officer and as an applicant. It was the latter role, as a supplicant for repatriation application or for a visa, that was the greatest fun. The students also played the role of a foreigner when he or she could test all the possible ways to fool the American consular officer.

On the other hand, they also learned what it was like to be denied an application by an officious functionary - as compared being told "NO" in a professional and humane way. People could learn from playing various roles. The director of the ConGen, as well as members of the "faculty," were always around to critique the operation as it unfolded. The emphasis was on hands-on training in an environment that resembled a consulate in a foreign post to the maximum extent possible.

We even installed phones in the offices of the officers-in-training. I would periodically call and play the role of some VIP demanding some service or another - immediately. I would remind the officer-in training that I had just met with the ambassador at some social function - in order to impress my importance upon them. I would be very demanding, and of course would give the trainee a hard time even when I was asking for something against regulation - i.e., not appearing in person to execute a notarial action, for instance.

Sometimes, we would have a gap in students flowing through and that left it to the staff to play some of the roles. So we all became role players as well as teachers.

Q: The course went on for how long when it was started?

LEININGER: It went on for twenty-three workdays. That included a couple of "programming days" - i.e., standard classroom workdays. That was done largely on a self-study basis; it was done so that people could become familiar with the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and other written instructions. The students would go through the material at their own pace, learning to use the Manual as a reference guide - not memorizing it, but become acquainted with it, so they'd know where to find things when necessary. That is really what happens in real life; you shouldn't depend on your memory, but on your knowledge of where to find the appropriate references.

There were a couple of days of these readings and exercises, and some presentations on videotape, using speakers from the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA), who had in the past stood at a lectern and repeated the same lecture over and over again. We found that some of these guest speakers could not speak in front of a camera to save their lives, so Coffman or I would often give the introductions to the study units on the videotapes.

Then the students would move on to case studies, during which they would handle actual cases - which we had written up from post and Department files, changing only the names to protect the individuals involved. That would force the students to consider the facts, and come up with their own solutions. We instructors would then question and prod them, critiquing the proposed solutions. During these sessions, the role players would interrupt, making the case studies even more realistic.

After a while, the leadership of both FSI and CA came to recognize us as a very innovative teaching institution. Our graduates were also well received in their onward assignments, because they arrived ready almost immediately to go to work. They didn't need the extended training that posts so often had to offer to newly arrived consular officers. I think within the first year, we must have had three dozen delegations from foreign embassies in Washington come visit, to study our methodology. Even eastern-bloc countries came to see ConGen Rosslyn. I think it was a learning experience, and eye-opener for these foreign diplomats. We were careful of how much we divulged, particularly to communist countries.

Many years later, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation began to try to modernize its Foreign Service. They came to study our personnel systerecruitment, training, assignments, promotion, everything. We shared everything, thethe better, perhaps, to cripple their diplomacy for decades!

I need to add one story to this chapter. We started at ConGen Rosslyn to teach what was then the state-of-art name-checkinlooking up someone's name to see if there was any reason not to issue a visa. When I entered the Service, we used a big yellow fat "Lookout Book." Then the book was converted to blindness-inducing microfiche, so as not to kill so many trees. Within a couple of years, the Department progressed to a teletype system. It used paper tapes; the consular officer would type in the name of the applicant; that made some holes in the tape, which was then fed into a machine, which researched a database maintained in Washington. It was extremely primitive; there was no such thing as an algorithmic cross-checking based on a variety of spellings or pronunciations. But it was an "automated" system. So we wanted to teach this system to our students at FSI. But we couldn't find a machine. These machines were known as ASR-28s; the number was given to the equipment for a reason. They were last manufactured in 1928! So, by the time we came along, there was not a spare one to be had. What extras had been available had been cannibalized for spare parts for those that were still operational.

We were now in December, 1976, and due to open in two months. We still had no machine. I happened to be attending a Christmas party with the information management staff in the Main State building. There I met a visiting salesman from AT&T. He had been making the rounds that afternoon, going from party to party. By the time he got to the information management staff affair, he was not feeling any pain. I asked him where I might find one to these old teletype machines. By sheer coincidence, he used to sell ASR-28s, and he knew that AT&T had some old ones in a warehouse in Maryland. Within a week, we had a free machine!

Q: That is a funny story which illustrates one important point: even in the mid-1970s the Department's information system and equipment was way out of date. The introduction of an automated name check system was probably the first modern technological data management system.

LEININGER: That is right. Crude as it was, it was still far ahead of where consular operations had been - looking up names in a big book.

Q: I recall the days of the microfiche which looked like a plastic square on which were imbedded 3 or 4 thousands bits of information. You put this disk into a reader and then went looking for the information you wanted.

LEININGER: We had two versions of that: one world-wide fiche, and one a post-specific one. We used the ASR-28 both in Toronto and in Rotterdam; we used the Book, and later the microfiche, when the teletype system was down - which was more often than not.

Q: I just raised this issue because I think it illustrates a continuing theme in consular operations: outdated management systems. The ASR-28 was an improvement over previous practices, but hardly modern. As I recall, that change came about because of some visa scandals that occurred in the 1970s. It was after that the Department felt it had to show Congress and other critics that it was trying to modernize.

LEININGER: The worst scandal at all through the 20th Century came from the first World Trade Center bombing, which led to a machine-readable visa program. That event allowed the Department to seek permission to collect machine-readable visa application fees, and that allowed us to make today's state-of-the-art changes. Before that event, the Department did not have adequate financial resources.

Q: As your tour at FSI was coming to a close, where did you want to be assigned?

LEININGER: Having seen who was going through training, I decided that I had to get further up-stream in the process to see what I could do to contribute to an improvement in our officer selection procedures. So I became interested in joining the Board of Examiners. Fortunately, at the time, BEX was in the process of changing its assessment process. The Board of Examiners was the Department's entity responsible for bringing new recruits in the Service; it was part of the then Bureau of Personnel (PER, now called the Bureau of Human Resources, HR). It administered both the written and the oral exams. The passing results of the written are variable from test to test; there is no absolute number of correct answers that separates the winners and losers. A certain number of applicants will pass the written depending on the Department's recruitment needs at that particular time. In the 1970s, the number of people who "passed" the written might vary from 1,000 to 2,000 per annum. Those who passed would then constitute a pool of eligibles for the oral exam, from which were chosen a certain number of candidates to be placed on lists, called "registers," for entry into the service in the respective disciplines (administrative, consular, economic, political, and, upon our absorption of the former U.S. Information Agency, public diplomacy), called "cones." We'd generally put two to three times the expected hiring levehistorically, about 150 to 250 people a yeaon the registers, since many people, even when eventually called, had gone on to other endeavors.

The written test was something like a graduate record exam. You would have multiple-choice questions. You might read a passage and answer questions about it. The test included questions on American history, and culture, and economics. I spent most of my time working on the revisions to the format of the oral exam. It was, at the time, patterned after the exam that a Ph.D. candidate has to go through defending his thesis before a panel of academics. It consisted of three examiners talking to the candidate about current events or historical events in a very sterile and intellectual way. As long as the candidate was eloquent and knew how to ingratiate himself or herself with the examiners, he or she would be successful. It was very clubby in the sense that if the candidate exhibited the characteristics that examiners felt importanusually the ones that they thought had brought them this far in the Servicthe candidate was "in." So criticism was that the Service tended to replicate itself because the examiners would usually only passed those candidates whom they thought were very much like themselves.

Q: But when you saw these people who had successfully passed the exams, you saw in ConGen Rosslyn that something was missing.

LEININGER: Right. They lacked a sense of collegiality, an ability to work with others. Some lacked a sense of humanity. Some seemed to have no common sense; they were just unable to handle real world problems, as contrasted to the academic challenges that they had overcome in college. They could describe how many "angels could dance on the head of a pin," and how they arrived at their conclusion, but who cared? Could they make a decision about whom to contact in case of death of an American citizen? No! That was far too practical.

This was just one of the reasons why the Department's assessment process had to be changed, following the example of AT&T. In that company, the assessment center concept was employed to determine the suitability of mid-level management personnel for promotion to the senior levels. Assessment centers usually did not focus on entry-level selection; most companies used it to select middle level managers for senior level positions.

Q: Who was the driving force to change the nature of the oral exams?

LEININGER: There were a couple of driving factors. One was just to try to get a better quality of candidates. But perhaps even more importantly, the Department needed a defensible exam process because the current one was not producing enough minority or female candidates. So the oral exam had to become more and more "job related" - the selection mechanism had to reflect the skill needs of the Service in order to comply with the law.

Q: Were these changes the result of Congressional pressure reflecting the views of American society?

LEININGER: Well, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was the net result of general societal pressures for equality in the workplace, but it wasn't specifically directed at the Department. Nor do I recall any specific member of Congress who was pressuring the Department. But there were lawsuits - or threats thereof - from individuals and groups who felt disadvantaged by the Department's past employment practices.

Q: Was there any particular event or person who happened to make the changes at this time?

LEININGER: Bill Owen was BEX's psychologist/consultant, whom we used to insure that our testing mechanism were consistent with the requirements of the new law, but the policy decision was made by PER's front office. The mid-1970s was a period of major change in this country on minority rights issues. So the Department had to keep up with the changing nature of society's demands. If that meant we ended up with an exam that actually produced candidates better suited to the needs of the Servicwell, what a bonus!

Q: Where was the locus of action in the Department?

LEININGER: It was all in BEX. We revised the entire oral examination process. We knew we wanted to use the assessment center concept, but it was necessary to develop the exercises and elements for igroup interactions, paperwork problemthat could be pointed to as absolutely reflective of the work we actually do on a daily basis. As I mentioned, the old process was essentially an hour or two of conversation between three examiners and the candidate. The new process went on for most of a day. It included interactions with other candidates; it had elements of "real life" activities - sometime working with an "in-box," sometimes presenting a demarche followed by the drafting of a report. There is still a Q and A session for each candidate with the assessors. Each assessor takes turns at evaluating candidates from a group of usually six. An assessor does not just evaluate just one candidate; he or she will observe a number of them during the course of the day, each in a different setting. That is done to eliminate the potential of an assessor becoming a cheerleader for just one candidate. They are looking for a candidate to display "KSAPs" knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and personal qualitiethat have been identified as crucial for success in the Foreign Service. To get an idea of what those KSAPs are, all you have to do is look at our Employee Evaluation Reports (EERs) they are the same qualities that supervisors are called upon to evaluate in their subordinates. In any even, at the end of the day, the assessors reconcile their evaluations of the candidates they have observed. Again, the new process puts a much greater emphasis on "real life" situations and the candidates' reactions in varying scenarios. That makes the selection much more applicable to the challenges that a new officer would face.

Q: You said that BEX used AT&T as a model?

LEININGER: We did, because most of the literature on a modern assessment process was based on that company's experience. It was a cutting edge concept, and so we used it, although as I noted earlier, we had to devise elements for it that were appropriate to a Foreign Service career. And though AT&T did not use its process for entry-level competition, we reasoned that a new Foreign Service officer does not really come at the bottom of the organization; he or she is already a "junior mid-level," with the many thousands of FSNs under them.

Q: You went to BEX in the summer of 1978 just in time to help develop this new entrance examination process.

LEININGER: For the first five or six months, we continued the old process, as we worked on the new exercises in-house. The Assessment Center did not really open for business until the spring of 1979. The written exam was given as usual in October; the new orals based on our new assessment process started in the spring.

Q: If the old process was tended to bring into the Service young officers who were very much like the examiners, what was the new process looking for?

LEININGER: In each part of the new oral exam, there were certain parameters on which the each candidate was scored - e.g., effectiveness of oral communication, advocacy, and organizational skills. For example, in making a case for "sending a certain person to the U.S. on an international visitors grant because..." a Foreign Service officer candidate would have to explain what criteria he or she would use, what are the personal characteristics of the grant applicant that are relevant, and why that candidate is a better choice than one or more of the others in the running. That presentation would be judged by an assessor, whose views would be fully documented in terms of observed behaviors, so that they could be defended in a court of law, if it came to that. It was not so important that the candidate's argument be winning one; sometimes your better part of discretion is to retire gracefully, recognizing that another candidate has a better proposal than the one that you are putting forward. You might have been more aggressive than others; that was not as important as having people who could actually recognize "right, truth and justice" when they saw them. "My candidate, right or wrong" does not score many points. All of the exercises are scored in a quantitative manner, using the KSAPs as parameters.

Q: Over the course of years, has this new system proved to be able to stand external scrutiny?

LEININGER: I think it has. In fact, I think it has proven to turn out a lot more successful candidates among minorities and women, compared to the old exam. My view, based on the successful candidates that I observed as an assessor, as a supervisor in the field, and now in my present position training JOs, is that we are getting better people than we ever have.

Q: I gather that the oral exam that you and others designed is still in use. What about the written exam?

LEININGER: The Department has fiddled with that again and again - particularly to make legally defensible. It had to show, once again, that the broad range of knowledge required to pass the exam was necessary to be a successful Foreign Service officer. At one point, the Department conducted a survey to validate the content of the written exam. It asked successful FSOthose who had been promoted faster than the average time-in-clasto go back and assess what elements of American history and economics, for instance, were important for an FSO to know, and how important it was that they did. That was one way of validating the exataking successful FSOs and using their practical experience to ensure that the questions asked on the exam were relevant and important for one's career.

Q: I think I remember that there was an argument at one time that the written test was not compatible with certain cultural experiences - e.g., where you grew up, what your educational experience had been, etc. I think it was also alleged that it was biased against women.

LEININGER: That is right, and that's why it was crucial that the exam we ended up with be defensible as job-related. The Department added a separate "functional field tests" at a certain point, which were supposed to determine which field - political, economic, consular, administrative, public affairs, etc - the candidate was best suited for. I think eventually that was integrated with the rest of the written test and was made part of the ranking process. I am not sure of that, but I think that is what happened.

Q: Who else worked with you on the new oral exam?

LEININGER: I mentioned Owen, the consultant. Wever Gim was, as I recall, the Director of BEX at the time. The various examination panelwe had several operating all at once, both here in Washington and traveling the countrhad representatives of all the generalist Foreign Service functions; every "cone" was represented on the panels to ensure that all the candidates' skills were evaluated broadly. Alta Fowler, a senior officer, represented the consular function, and was my boss. I worked for her initially. She moved on and Bernard Gross came to replace her - although it was not really possible to fill her shoes. She was a ball of fire, who was also president of the Consular Officers Association.

Q: Did the Department's management pay a lot of attention to the work you were involved in?

LEININGER: Indeed it did. There were many legal challenges to the system, and management was concerned about that.

Q: You were in BEX for one year until September of 1979.

LEININGER: That's right. I spent one year in BEX, during which we completed the bulk of the work on the new oral exam, and I participated as a member of the examining panels in the spring of 1979. My onward assignment was to academia - USC - in the public administration master's degree program.

Q: Why did you decide to return to academia?

LEININGER: First of all, because my CDO asked me whether I would be interested. I always thought I should go to graduate school, which I had passed up in favor of entering the Foreign Service. I had been in the Service for eight years by this time. I had reached the grade level, FS-3, which made me eligible for further academic studies. Of course, having been a trainer at the ConGen, I knew every one in FSI who was involved in the selection process and they knew me - favorably, I believe. Consular Affairs supported my nomination, in part because as a general policy it was trying to get consular officers into management training.

Q: Why USC over other universities?

LEININGER: I wanted to get away from Washington as far as I could. I had been involved in a lot of bureaucratic battles by this time, both when dealing with ConGen and the oral exam. I was fed up with bureaucracy! I wanted to get out into "real life with real people." I looked at other possibilities. I looked at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, but having grown up in northern New York, I wasn't ready to face the snow again. Furthermore, I think there is a certain bias in the Department in favor of eastern schools - Harvard, Syracuse, SAIS, etc. I had visited a lot of these places as part of my work at BEX. So I was familiar with a lot of the places that are favored by the foreign policy establishment. So I chose USC instead and its Los Angeles campus.

Q: What did the USC management program consist of?

LEININGER: It had all kinds of eclectic programs. It had a course on government operations taught by a former OMB deputy director. Great program, which illuminated the annual budget cycle. There were courses on performance evaluation processes, analyzing the latest state-of-the-art techniques. There were seminars on selection processes, where I was able to outline what the new Department program was doing, and compare it to what was showing up in the academic journals. I was pleasantly surprised that most of what we had done at BEX was cutting-edge, state of the art stuff.

Q: Wasn't this one of the Department's early efforts to send people to academia for management training?

LEININGER: It didn't do much of it before the 1970s, and did not do much in the 1980s because funding dried up. Right now, at the mid-career level, we send two or three officers for such training. That hardly meets the needs. Someone may be sent to Princeton, and perhaps Stanford; that is about it. Recently, former Speaker Newt Gingrich said that the Department should send more people back to academia for advanced studies. That was in the same piece in which he criticized the Foreign Services for many alleged "sins." On the issue of advanced studies, anyway, he was right.

Q: In the 1970s, the Department was sending a dozen officers for advanced training, in management, economics, and area studies. That, over a period of a decade, would give you a pretty good base. Now you say the Department sends two or three. That is not good.

LEININGER: Right.

Q: You spent a year at USC?

LEININGER: Right. We lived in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles, near Griffith Park. The Department did not give us any housing allowance; it just paid for tuition and salary. Housing was pretty expensive; the other expenses were manageable since it was just the three of us - my wife, our son and myself. I joined a running cluthe Griffith Park Athletic Cluthat turned out to help me meet my goal of rubbing shoulders with "real people." On any given day I'd be running with a bunch of guys who might include a piano tuner, a running shoe store clerk, an attorney, or a Buddhist monk! By the end of the year I'd not only made straight A's, but also was able to run my first two marathons. Very productive!

Q: Did you earn a degree?

LEININGER: I was just one course short. USC did not have a one-year MA course. Ordinarily, it took two years. I took extra courses and almost satisfied all of the academic requirements. Of course, obtaining a degree, per se, was not the goal of the training. I found what I did learn at USC to be extremely useful in my subsequent assignments.

Q: In those days, were political or economic officers assigned to this advanced management training?

LEININGER: No. They went to area studies or advanced economic training. That has not changed as far as I know, which is unfortunate, because many of those "substantive" officers end up in management positions. I should note, however, that now, as a routine part of career development, every officer at each stage of his or her career has got to get some management training at FSI.

Q: After your academic stint, what was your next assignment?

LEININGER: My only request to my career development officer, with whom I dealt at very long distance, was that my next assignment be to a post that had an English-language school. That was so that my son could start first grade in such a school. I was told that there were a number of posts that fit my requirements, including Palermo, Italy. The job of deputy principal officer was coming open. I applied for it and was chosen. I was supposed to go to Italian language training first. After I had been approved for the job, my career development officer sent me the post report. Lo and behold, nothing was said about an English school. So I want back to him and pointed out that my only requirement had not been met. So Personnel put that assignment on hold. By sheer happenstance, it was about at this time that an officer - the chief of the Consular Section in Moscow - resigned - in a great deal of self-generated publicity. He denounced the Department for making the Embassy in Moscow utterly marginal, and irrelevant to U.S.-Soviet relations. So that job opened up. It was a job for an FS-1 - or one grade above my level at the time. Also it required a working knowledga 3/of Russian.

When I was approved for the job, I had to go to language training first. That meant that the Moscow position had to be left vacant for a yeaor, rather, it was filled on a temporary basis by Kent Brown and Wayne Merry - two political officers! I returned from the west coast to Washington and attended language training for a year. You'll recall that I had studied Russian in the past, so that it was more a matter of refreshment and enhancement - or rather, erasing some very ungrammatical Russian that I had learned. My vocabulary was old-fashioned.

Q: So you went to Moscow in the summer of 1981. This was your first important overseas assignment. What was it like when you arrived?

LEININGER: I was in Moscow from 1981 to 1984 - the "deepest and darkest" days of the "Evil Empire." In 1980, we had boycotted the Moscow Olympics and the Soviets were planning to retaliate by boycotting our LA Olympics scheduled for 1984. The Soviets were taking a very hard line in Poland against the "Solidarity" movement; they were continuing their occupation of Afghanistan; they would soon shoot down the Korean airline that had strayed off-course into Soviet air space; they were increasing impediments to emigration not only for Soviet Jews, but for ethnic Germans, Armenians, Ukrainians as well. That policy also blocked the humanitarian emigration - divided spouses or families, many of which were Americans. Very, very few people were allowed to leave the USSR.

Q: Why did the Soviets impose such restrictions?

LEININGER: To some extent, the people were regarded as the property of the State. "We educated you; we housed you; we provided health care, we gave you jobs. You owe us." More importantly it was another means of control. The refusals of exit permission were in many cases completely arbitrary. The Soviets just wanted to scare any one from even trying to leave. They felt that emigration would signal that all as not well in the USSR. They didn't want it. They had been more liberal in earlier periods, particularly during the Nixon presidency. But by the early 1980s, Brezhnev was in power, even though he showed many signs of senility. He and his entourage became increasingly concerned that they were losing control of the country. It was a symptom of the ossification of the entire regime. They were clenching and were tightening the screws of control tighter and tighter, including making the emigration process more and more arbitrary. One could not predict if exit permission would be granted or if there was a defect in one's resume. There were just no known ground-rules. The authorities would just say that it was not "desirable." Neither the applicant nor we would ever know why such a decision had been reached.

Sometimes, we might make an educated guess. We had one applicant who was a spouse of an American. He was a trained computer technician or programmer. In those days, Soviet computers were still in a primitive stage compared to those in the West, but they were still the latest in the USSR. So he was denied permission to emigrate. He then made a living as a photographer, and by repairing home computers of journalists in Moscow.

We had a list of about 150 people who fell into the "divided families" categories. We had taken formal diplomatic notes to the Foreign Ministry periodically to ask for a review of these applications, hoping to get permission for some of these people to emigrate to the U.S. Many of these cases had Congressional interest behind them, reflecting the interest of the relatives in the U.S., who wanted these applicants to join them. A lot of these people were distant relatives - uncles, aunts, grandparents. While I was in Moscow, we began to focus more on "divided spouses" - people who were being denied the primary relationship of a family because of Soviet arbitrariness. That constituted about 35 applicants. Some of them had been divided as much as thirteen years; some were in the three or five year category.

All of these applicants were viewed as part of the political contest, a tug-of-war. We also had the case of the Pentecostal families, who had taken refuge in the Embassy, since June, 1978. By the time I got to Moscow, they had been "guests" for three years. You will recall that in 1978, eight Pentecostals (two families) tried to enter the Embassy by rushing past the Soviet guards. They wanted to discuss the possibilities of emigrating to the West. They had been for a period of 15-20 years persecuted - thrown into prison camps, denied jobs, etc. They were ethnic Russians from Siberia, but they were evangelical Pentecostals. Now, the Soviet authorities tolerated the Orthodox Church because they had it under control; it had been under the government's thumb since czarist times and was hardly a threat. That Church had a nice organizational structure, with identifiable bishops and known meeting places. The authorities could easily keep track of the Church's doings and who was responsible. The Soviets could live with it.

But what the state could not tolerate were religions like the Pentecostals, who had no organizational structure, no ordained ministry, no set places of worship, except homes, where they could not be easily monitored. Very difficult to control. So the Soviets cracked down on all evangelical groups. Our "guests" hoped that they could emigrate to the West, but the Soviet guards in front of the chancery turned them away. However, the Pentecostals took evasive actions and finally ran past the guards. That is, most of them made it. One was caught by the scruff of the neck and beaten badly on the sidewalk in view of the seven others. He was dragged off to the militiamen's box around the corner, not to be seen again.

The Pentecostals who had breached the Soviet "security" perimeter entered the consular area and huddled in the waiting room. The ambassador was not in the chancery and I don't think the DCM was either. Jack Matlock was the political consular - and acting DCM. He made the decision on the spot not to force the Pentecostals out; he judged that they would undoubtedly have faced retribution from the Soviets, having seen one of their number beaten bloody on the sidewalk in front of the Embassy. He decided that under the circumstances, it was perfectly appropriate for the Embassy to offer temporary refuge to these people. [end tape]

Q: Wayne has just arrived in Moscow, and he is giving the background of the Pentecostals who made their way into the Embassy in the early summer of 1978. So they decided on that day that they wouldn't turn them back. What flowed from that?

LEININGER: Wthe Embassy and the U.S. Governmenbecame responsible for their well being.

Q: Of Seven people.

LEININGER: Seven people. There were two families, the Vaschenkos and the Chmykhalovs. There were five Vaschenkos: Pyotr, Augustina, and daughters Lyuba, Lilya, and Lidia; and Maria Chmykhalov and her son 13-14 year-old son Timothy. The Vaschenko girls were probably at that time 17 to 21. What everyone thought was going to be a relatively short process of resolving these people's immigration concerns ended up being a five-year odyssey. On the very first business dastill on that afternoon or the very next morning, I don't know, but on the very first opportunita consular officer called the Foreign Ministry and said, "You know we have these people here from Chernogorsk, Siberia. They are the Vaschenkos and the Chmykhalovs, and they wish to emigrate to the west. How should they go about this?"

Q: Could they have gotten visas as refugees or something?

LEININGER: I will describe the general process and then we will go on to the rest. The response of the Foreign Ministry was, "they have to go back to Chernogorsk and apply for exit permission just like anybody else." That formulation, almost word for word, was exactly what we were told by the Soviet authorities every time we asked for the next five years, exactly.

Now, ordinarily to emigrate from the Soviet Union you needed a relative or other kind of sponsor in the West who could file an invitation called a "priglasheniye" that became the basis for your application for exit permission. Absent such a close relative, or absent, when they were allowing it, membership in an ethnic group that might be permitted en masse to leave, such as the Soviet Jews, there was no hope for individuals to emigrate. None, closed case. You just couldn't pick up and go just because you wanted to; you saw a better life, no, not permitted, "nelzya" never. You were property of the state. So this advice from the Foreign Ministry, "you should go back to Chernogorsk and apply like everyone else," was disingenuous, because if they applied like everybody else, the application would get round-filed immediately. There was no basis for emigration if the Soviet citizen didn't have a required relationship. The Pentecostals, being nobody's fools, had not survived 15 or 20 years of persecution, prison camps and everything else just to be shined on by some bureaucrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with some b.s. advice that they knew wouldn't avail them anything. They offered back, "You know, we don't believe that." Well after about three or four days of getting nowhere, someone finally said to the, them, "Well you can't stay in the waiting room any longer. Embassy officials had put them up in the waiting room; there were no other facilities available to them at that point. They said, "Yes, but we can't go now." "Why can't you go now? We can watch you and make sure you are not beaten." "We can't go now because we have already left Soviet Union. We left without permission. We are here in America on American soil. " "No, you are not on American soil." But our finely-honed legal position on non-assertion of the principle of extra-territoriality to our Embassies was irrelevant to them. In their minds, and arguably in the minds of the Soviet authorities, they had in fact left the Soviet Union without permission. This itself was a criminal offense, and they would be sent back to prison. So that provided, by the second day, a longer lasting reason for them not to leave. Having once committed that sin, they could not leave the Embassy. So an attempt was in fact made to talk them into going home. They declined to go. They declined to go for the next five years.

Q: This case, did it get publicity in the United States?

LEININGER: Within a matter of a couple of weeks. Very shortly thereafter a tactical mistake was made by the Embassy leadership that was to reverberate to our discredit for the next 2-and-a-half to three years. That was, to cut off access to the families to anybody except a designated few within the Embassy hierarchy. No other Embassy staffers or well-wishers, no co-religionists, no visiting journalists, nobody visiting from the West, was allowed to have access to the families. They were in effect kept in a quasi- isolation status.

Q: Did you put them in an apartment or on the grounds, where did they live?

LEININGER: They were in two, side-by-side courier apartments, one to a family. The apartments on the street level of the Embassy, with windows that looked out on the sidewalk, but the apartments themselves were semi-sunk.

Q: By couriers you mean diplomatic?

LEININGER: Diplomatic couriers, who need housing while transiting.

Q: American couriers.

LEININGER: These were turned over to the families. The Vaschenkos, the five of them, stayed in one and the Chmykhalovs stayed in the other. There was a common bathroom down the hall, which was shared. The apartments themselves had small hot plate stoves and refrigerators.

Q: The Embassy supplied them with food I take it?

LEININGER: Initially, there were donations from Embassy staffers. In the course of time it was the Secretary's emergency fund.

Q: The Secretary of State has an emergency fund, discretionary.

LEININGER: The consular emergency fund to handle consular emergencies. Out of that came their food, their clothing, and educational expenses, for books that were purchased for them. But still, in essence, they were denied access to the outside world, and the outside world was denied access to them.

Q: Why was that?

LEININGER: It was apparently intended as a form of psychological pressure, not to make them too comfortable, to get them to make the decision to go back home. Well, instead, in a very short period of time, we became the enemy. The United States government became the enemy of these people.

Q: In their minds.

LEININGER: Not only their minds, but in the minds of supporters in the West. You ended up having large human rights and religious rights organizations in the United States and around the world in support of these poor beleaguered people, who were being harassed and persecuted not only by the Soviet Union, which was expected to be horrible, but by the Americans, who should be acting on their behalf, but instead were acting as their jailers!

Q: Were they getting comments out to the world these people.

LEININGER: It was impossible to keep everybody within the Embassy community away from their wing of the compound. So there were leaks, and there were Embassy staffers who were sympathizers, who disagreed with the Embassy 's policy, who were sharing information with the outside. So that was the situation. Three years down the road, Curt Struble, who was to be my deputy, preceded me to Moscow by a few months. Curt got there in April and I got there in June or July. We walked into this thing, and we discovered that we were the bad guys! The consular assistants, who attended to the day-to-day needs of the families, were regarded as their guards. We eventually had to spend a year and a half, easily, attempting to overcome that long history of mistrust, suspicion, and downright hostility. We found that the families would not take at face value any good advice that we might give them about what course of action to take, where do we go from here. So we rethought our policy. In six months, Curt and I had many discussions on this, Curt often taking the lead. He was the best deputy I ever had. He is now ambassador to Peru; he just got sworn in a couple of weeks ago. Anyway, he said, "Look, let's stand this on its head. Let's just open the door. Anybody wants to come in and talk to these folks, please, be our guests, go ahead, have at it." And then there was a whole spate of interviews, the Christian Science Monitor, and even Parade Magazine, and all the visiting firemen of all the organizations sponsoring them. Danny Smith from England, Jane Drake, from Alabama, Freda Lindsay, of Christ for the Nations, in Dallathey all came, and within six months the story was old news, and we were back to, "Now what? Now what do we do?" There was no more finger-pointing about us being the bad guys. We are now looking at working with the groups and families that were supporting the Pentecostals, attempting to find a solution to this problem. In fact, every time we had a visit from the Secretary of State or a major administration official, human rights in general and or the Pentecostals in particular were always up there as number one or two on their agendas, every single time.

Other visitors came. The Reverend Billy Graham came. We briefed him in advance; we tried to warn him that if he went in and to have a prayer session with these folks regarding them as meek and mild, hold your hands, bow your heads Christians, they were going to eat his lunch. They were going to put him and his whole organization on the spot. "What are you going to do for us?" "Whom are you going to talk to while you are here?" "What are you going to do when you leave?" "Who are you going to talk to in the outside world?" "How are you going to help us?" He shrugged that off and said, "Don't worry about that. I have talked to people under stress before." He got in there, and within 5 minutes his face was pale. He was sweating. He couldn't speak in a complete sentence. I have never seen anybody so otherwise self-possessed become so thoroughly discombobulated before. But then, he had never met anybody like these people before.

Q: Why did the Embassy decide to handle them that way in the beginning? The ambassador, the DCM, who pushed that decision, did the consular people?

LEININGER: That was well before my time, but my impression is that it was a tactic agreed upon between the Embassy and the geographic desk in the DepartmenEUR/SOV. I think the decision was made after awhile that, "we can't have this precedent set of allowing people to stay indefinitely; all of Eastern Europe would have tried to follow suit." They probably thought, "We have got to do something, but something short of actually forcing them out, which would be politically and morally impossible." So it was an attempt psychologically to freeze the Pentecostals out, in hopes they would make the decision themselves to leave. Little did anyone know?

Q: So you arrived there in the summer of '81, and they are there. These Pentecostals. And then there was the overriding situation, with the Russians being totally annoying as usual, more annoying than usual.

LEININGER: Well, you know, just the usual things, having your phones tapped, the tables at the restaurants where you dine out miked up, or people having their off-compound apartments broken into, routinely searched. They'd sometimes do cutesy little things like, we had our albums, old vinyl onethat is how long ago this waalphabetically stored. They would just reach in and grab a handful and turn them upside down and backwards here and there, putting them all out of order. Just a little calling card. "We were here, and we fiddled with your stuff, and we can do it any time we want." That was the pleasant kind of demonstration. The unpleasant kind was sometimes they would come in and take a dump right in the middle of the bedspread on the bed. It'd still be sitting there, steaming.

Q: Because people did not all live within the compound, American housing was not all within?

LEININGER: I counted, as I recall, about 30 apartments in the old Embassy building. The new Embassy was under construction then. Three and a half years in progress, and it was going to take another seven years to finish because of all the buggings. So we were not even close to occupying any of those facilities. Most of us lived off compound in high rises that were segregated for foreigners, usually foreign diplomats, news people, and businesspeople. No ordinary Soviets lived anywhere near us in these compounds. The apartments were monitored, bugged constantly. Militia people were stationed at the parking lots, watching entryways and taking photographs of everybody who came and left. You were on public display 24 hours, all the time. You could never count yourself to be alone. It was a very stressful time. You couldn't argue with your spouse, lest potential marital discord give the KGB the idea that there was a possible intelligence vulnerability there. You were told when you arrived at post, "if you two have something you need to discuss, come in to the Embassy and yell at each other in a secure environment." And you could only argue there. Now who argues that way? So, if you were pissed off at something, you just bit your tongue because you couldn't blurt out, "yes, and your whole damn family is alcoholic." You couldn't do any of that stuff. So the moment passed and you internalized it. People just closed down. You very rarely could have a normal, healthy exchange of opinions about anything. You couldn't talk about family illnesses at home, least of all financial problems of your brother or somebody back in the States. "God he is out of work again." All this stuff constituted potential vulnerabilities that could be exploited, so you just didn't talk about anything of a really sensitive, family- oriented nature.

Q: How big was the consular section?

LEININGER: We had five, counting the consular assistant. Let's see, Curt, me, Bill Hill, Adrian Stefan, yes, only four officers, and then the consular assistant, whose primary job was caring for the Pentecostal families.

Q: Then did you have FSNs, Russians?

LEININGER: We had Russian staff, but of course, they didn't work for us. They worked for the diplomatic service bureau, the UPDK.

Q: Right, which meant that the Russian government actually employed them all.

LEININGER: Right, and their job was to spy on us, how we interacted, what we did and what we said, and that sort of stuff.

Q: Exactly.

LEININGER: So they stayed on one side of a Dutch door and we stayed on the other side of the Dutch door. We didn't raise our voices in proximity of the Dutch door. Any time we had sensitive issues to discuss we went to the other end of our half of the consular wing, and that is where we had our staff meetings and where we did everything else. Even there we had to assume that the windowwhich could be seen from adjoining Soviet buildingwere being lased, so you didn't talk about anything classified even in your own office. The FSNs did routine processing of notarials, and actual preparation of something like 700 or 800 NIV's a year, 80% of those in the official visa categories, and maybe 200 B-2 tourist visas issued to people who'd won the Stakhanovite of the year awarworkers who had "over fulfilled the plan" during the current year, turning out steel or something. They could only travel, though, with KGB escortyou know, like in the movie, "Moscow on the Hudson."

Q: So in other words as late as the early ' 80s you were issuing 800 nonimmigrant visas a year in a country of 200 million people.

LEININGER: 210, 220 million, something like that. But remember, only about 200 of those NIV's were issued to "real" tourists?

Q: Amazing.

LEININGER: ?Now we had also a Consulate General in Leningrad, and they issued, by God, they had another 200 or 300!

Q: So the NIV work was not?

LEININGER: Virtually non-existent. One thing you never had to worry about was 214-B, the section of law that presumes that visitor visa applicants are intending immigrants and puts the burden of proving otherwise on them, because these people would never have gotten exit permission in the first place if the KGB believed there was the slightest chance they wouldn't come back.

Q: They had their families?

LEININGER: They had their families hostage. Our own regulations tell us never to take family members hostage by denying them visas, as a mechanism to ensure the return of the principal visa applicant. We in Moscow were even tempted to do that. That is what the KGB did for us. They only issued exit permission to one or two family members, and kept everybody else at home. So that was the extent of our nonimmigrant workload. On the immigrant side, we had a handful of real immigrants, probably a couple of hundred a year, who in fact did get exit permission and were able to be reunited with family members. In my first year or so, the initial time while I was there, we had quite a few Armenians coming forward through the refugee program. My first year there was something on the order of 3600 as I recall, but it dropped down to about 900 by the time I left.

Q: How did they get to get out? I mean the Russians were willing to let them go?

LEININGER: They were willing to let them go. Armenians were a pain, I guess they were perceived to be a pain. For our purposes, and the way the refugee laws were written, anybody fleeing a communist dominated country was a refugee with a credible fear of persecution, even though I can say without fear of contradiction that fewer of two percent of any of our Armenians were ever personally persecuted in any way whatsoever.

Q: They were really economic refugees but not?

LEININGER: They were by no means suffering "a credible fear of persecution on account of race, religion, ethnic origin," or any of that stuff. But we could get them out; it was good to get them out, so we did get them out. In Moscow, we did all the preprocessing, as if they were going straight to the U.S. In fact they stopped off in Rome, and INS issued the final refugee admittance documents. But we did the medical exams. We looked for criminal ineligibilities, and lined up sponsorships with the voluntary agencies, and all of that stuff. There was at that time no INS presence within the old Soviet Union to process refugees for. There is now, somewhat amazingly.

Q: How did you find the issue of American citizen services? Did many Americans go there in those days at tourists or journalists, and did they get into trouble.

LEININGER: Few people went for tourism purposes, or exchange purposes because those were the scientific or cultural exchanges that were being closed down right and left because of the soured relationship. People who came in for organized tours through Intourist were actually very easy for us to take care of. We didn't have to do much of anything, because the Intourist took very good care of them. The Soviets did not want any of these people to get lost! Anybody who got sick was taken care of by the best hospitals then available in the Soviet Union, and then gotten promptly out of the country. There are benefits to doing consular work in a totalitarian state. People don't get lost, and if they do somehow get lost, they can be found very quickly.

Q: Most tourists came in with Intourist.

LEININGER: Yes, there was virtually no private tourism at all except if you got an invitation, it had to be an invitation, invited to go into the old Soviet Union, on the basis of an official tour through Intourist, to see a close relative.

Q: Were you able to travel around in the country?

LEININGER: To a limited extent. There was, as I recall, something on the order of 60% of the country permanently closed to foreigners. Permanently. That means that even if a plane crashed, you couldn't go there. The other 40% was nominally open, but every time you wanted to go someplace, you had to file a diplomatic note at least a week in advance, giving your itinerary. They would never tell you "yes." If you just didn't hear from them, then you could go. You carried with you a copy of the note you had sent, informing the MFA that you were going. But fully half to two thirds of the time they would tell you "no" for "reasons of a temporary nature," never specifying what these reasons might be, and sometimes telling you only an hour before you were to board the train. Now, in some cases we would know what the reasons might be. They had just suffered a devastating flood, and half the wheat crop was wiped out, and they didn't want our Agricultural attachï¿½ to go out there and see the devastation first hand, because they wanted to conceal what dire straits they were in, before concluding the next grain deal with us. We might have suspected, but didn't know, that there had been, say, a bacteriological contamination of a facility somewhere in the area. Or some kind of nuclear accident, or chemical spill. There was always lots of speculation as to why an area that previously had been open was now closed. Even within those travel parameters you had to have a reason, at least as consular people we had to have a reason, to visit. Many times divided families were used as that rationale, to get to the Baltic republics, for instance. Then, on behalf of our colleagues in the political section, we'd tack on visits with religious or political dissidents. Of course, when you got out there, you were followed.

Q: Did you drive or take the train?

LEININGER: Usually trains, or if distances were huge and you felt like living dangerously, we'd use Aeroflot, the Soviet state airline. You could never travel in the old Soviet Union alone, under our own travel rules. You always had to have a compartment mate for protection. A couple of times in a tour you would get to make a non-pro courier run through Leningrad, onward to Helsinki, to pick up classified correspondence. That was one of the forms of R&R, a non-professional courier run that you signed up for. I think we did a total of four runs to Helsinki in the space of three years. Roughly once every nine months. It was a free trip out. A couple of times I heard stories of people being gassed in their train compartment on the way back to Moscow, carrying stuff back into the old Soviet Union. Colorless, odorless gas would be introduced underneath the door of the compartment. The compartment would be opened up. You had the pouch right there in the compartment with you. You put it between the two bunks, where, hopefully, it would be safe. It never happened to me fortunately.

So we did get to travel a bit. We visited the Baltics. We also went to Soviet central Asia. We went up to Tashkent, Samarkand and a little town called Andizhan. But, again, people always followed you when you took these trips inside the country. Almost always, anyway, but especially when we were going to areas of political sensitivity, like the Baltics. Nobody followed you to Samarkand or Tashkent, but we did have people "spontaneously" invite us over to their restaurant tables to share some vodka or something, "Thanks, but no thanks." Peoplusually women, if you were guys traveling togethewould ring up your phone in your hotel in the middle of the night and invite you to party. Again, "thanks, but no thanks."

But anyway, we got to Andizhan. Now Andizhan, we didn't know why we were going there except that the travel officer, a guy named John Beyrle, now a senior officer but at the time a second tour junior officer, had been made the travel officer. It was his job to try and organize our annual travel plans so we got as many people out to as many areas of the old Soviet Union as possible, without duplicating trips and wasting our limited travel money. He also ensured that every traveler who went out into the country filed a trip report describing the localities visitehow much meat was in the shops, how many fresh vegetables were in the farmers market, and so forth. Now, we wanted to go to Samarkand and Tashkent; those places we had heard of as desirable destinations. Samarkand more than Tashkent. Tashkent in modern times is a dump. After the earthquake in the late '70s it was rebuilt in the Soviet Stalinist modern style, a lot of square apartments and office buildings. But Samarkand is gorgeous. If you ever get a chance you should go to Samarkand. But as sort of penalty or premium on that destination, with dogged Mr. Beyrle as travel officer, you had to go to Andizhan. You said, "Why? Where is Andizhan?" "Oh, it is in the Fergana valley." "What do they do there?" "Oh they grow rice." "Why are we going to go?" "Well, there is a report here from the late '60s, when somebody went" "What did they see?" "Nothing much." "Well, why do we have to go again?" "Well, maybe something is going on now!" So we went to Andizhan. Andizhan turned out to be indeed an agricultural community, of about 50,000 people. It was very large. Even small villages in the old Soviet Union were very large collectivized farms, conglomerates, lots of people. But the atmosphere was so much different than it had been in the Baltics and in Leningrad and in Moscow, where you had this ever-present perception that people were watching. And it was truthey were watching, so that people walked the streets hunched over looking down at the sidewalk, never making any eye contact. There was never any spontaneity among themselves, or, least of all, with you as a foreigner. In Andizhan people walked around with their heads up, looked at each other in the eye, even smiled at you, even knowing that you were a Westerner.

Q: Was it a Russian area?

LEININGER: Yes, well, actually it is in Uzbekistan.

Q: So it is part of Uzbekistan now.

LEININGER: Yes. And all kinds of ethnicities intermingled there for thousands of years. One interesting story: at the time of the Korean War the Soviets forcibly relocated a lot of ethnic Koreans, Korean/Russians, from the northeast part of country, and brought them to the Andizhan area. They came, and the locals looked at them curiously and said, "You guys look funny, what can you do?" The immigrants said, "Well, we can grow rice." Since the primary staple of life there is pilaf or "ploff," as they called it, a rice pilaf casserole type of thing, the people in the Andizhan valley were overjoyed. The ethnic Koreans brought with them a special variety of hard kernel, yellow-gold rice, and it is perfect for "ploff." Andizhan is now about the only place in the Soviet Union where that particular rice is grown, because the immigrants brought it from Korean border regions.

Q: That is interesting. So you were able to go there and that had a much more?

LEININGER: Wide open atmosphere. We went to the market there. We were walking along the market stalls, and everyone was just as open as could be, and greeting us and talking to us. "Where are you from?" "Well, we are American. I don't think you really want to talk to us." "Well, why?" "Well, we work for the Embassy, and you probably don't want to talk to us." "Why?" they would ask, genuinely puzzled. I mean, in Moscow, you often openly identified yourself that way, because you didn't want innocent people to get in trouble. You were being followed in Moscow, if the followers saw you speaking to anybody along the street, they would grab them, they would visit them at their homes later that day. "Why were you talking to Amerikanski Diplomat?" You didn't want to get people in trouble you know, so we all became circumspect.

It wasn't like that at all in Andizhan. We met a guy out there around the market. He was sort of like the character Norm, on "Cheers" everybody knew his name! Everybody was calling out to him. "Andrei, how are you doing Andrei?" Andrei was dressed in Levis, real Levis with the orange tag on them, and hand tooled western boots. By western I don't mean western hemisphere, I mean Texas western. He had on a leather jacket that would have made anybody in the KGB green with envy, and a silk shirt. Where did this guy get the money? Well, it turned out Andrei earned the money, and was so popular among the citizenry, because he was the chief Zhiguli mechanic in town. The Zhiguli was the Soviet version of the Fiat. You know how reliable Fiats were, even when made by the Italians. Just imagine the same Fiats, that wonderful engineering design, being manufactured by drunken Soviets. The rule in the Soviet Union was never to buy a car that was manufactured on Monday or Friday, because the workers were either getting an early start on a drinking weekend, or working off the resulting hangover. Because those lovely cars were so apt to break down, Andrei was the most important man in town. He had the Zhiguli spare parts, and he scheduled the repair appointments. As a result, he earned more money, he told us, than his schoolmates who had gone through engineering and medical schools.

Q: Well, they couldn't make the cars work.

LEININGER: They couldn't make the cars work. Everybody paid Andrei off in order to get the parts and in order to get the servicing. He had been to Turkey, Greece, to Italy, and to Egypt, foreign travel opportunities that were virtually unknown for ordinary Soviets. Of course, he had to leave his wife and kids behind, but that didn't bother him. He was a Soviet Central Asian male, and he'd have done that on his own, anyway!

Q: Let me ask you in that connection. In light of what happened to the Soviet Union by 1990 and what has happened to it since.

LEININGER: Okay, we are going to get there.

Q: Yes. What did you think when you were there?

LEININGER: Our experiences in Andizhan gave risand we shared these impressions when we got back to Moscothat those who held them were maybe attempting to tighten the reins of control, but the reins didn't seem to be attached to anything out there in the hinterland. Our guy, Andrei, took his afternoon off from work, and he called up all his buds on the phone, his engineering buddies and university professors, "Hey I got some Americans here in town. Let's go up to this little retreat up on the mountainside and have a real blowout feast." So we retired up there for the rest of the afternoon, drinking and eating, and eating and drinking all afternoon. I was blown away. I'd never seen hospitality like that, so open, in the old Soviet Union. Now, I'd had it extended by certain desperate people, religious dissidents or refuseniks, who were at wits end, and they would share meager things with us, but they had no where else to turn, and nothing left to lose by being seen associating with us. But this was the first really open and completely hospitable social occasion we'd experienced, and, still leery, I said, "Look. Something like this just could never happen in Moscow. You guys would be taken in for questioning. You would be hauled away." Our host just looked at me, and he said, "We are a long way from Moscow. It is not like that here." The fact that he not only had that perception, but also that he shared it so readily with me, an American diplomat, is what led to my doubts about the ability of the central government to control the ethnic populations in the outer lying republics, by simply demanding that they just fall in line. The people, the populace, already felt themselves to be out of Moscow's control. They had local party bosses, sure. But they are ours; they were not "the center." "The center" was something else. "The center" wasn't holding, even at that point. We took that trip in the spring of '84.

Q: But also if they couldn't build a decent car in the Soviet Union, what does one make of these reports that the U.S. intelligence people were constantly about how strong the Soviet army was and all the nukes and bombs.

LEININGER: It was a totally two track economy. I mean they had separate factories to build nuts and bolts for missiles than those that built nuts and bolts for the Zhiguli factory. They had different standards of quality control, different hiring and firing practices. I mean most of these people pretended to work, and the state pretended to pay them. That was the old joke. But for state sponsored enterprises, the military, scientific and arms industry, they did have a second track economy. But the problem is that they ran out of money. The rest of the economy couldn't support it. This couldn't go on. So even those favored industries or sectors couldn't sustain themselves over time.

Q: But I mean do you attribute, did the Soviet Union collapse, I mean people say Reagan did it, I mean but you always see it as a certain element of saying the rooster crowed and then the sun came up. I mean Reagan did certain things and the Soviet union collapsed, but is there a link between his or is it much more kind of a seventy year sclerotic thing that finally did them in and was going to do them in anyway?

LEININGER: I came away with that view. The place was rotten to the core. And it probably helped push them over the edge that Mr. Reagan had made it clear that he was prepared to keep U.S. military spending at a high level, one that those in the know in the old USSlike Andropov! knew the Soviet infrastructure could not sustain.

Q: Yes, but why wasn't, was the intelligence people reflecting that? Was that coming through?

LEININGER: Our intelligence people were trained to look only at certain elements in command and control structures, or in throw weights of missiles or in the number of people in military divisions. How many tanks they had. They were not looking at the infrastructure underneath it.

Q: Did you feel that way at the time, you say gee this place is something.

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: I mean is this the great enemy? I mean how are they I am not just speaking of weapons and stuff but the whole.

LEININGER: Everybody there regarded it as simply a third world country that happened to possess nuclear weapons. In every other respect it was not a world power. We all knew that.

Q: But you couldn't find that reported much in the United States in the public media in those days?

LEININGER: No, I don't think you could. But there were some people that had those feelings. I recall a USIS project, as I recall it was a USIS project that tried to garner those impressions from the "non-professionals." They took us all into our individual secure compartments and said, "Just talk about your experiences. What do you think of the place?" Some of us came out with some of this stuff. Now, I am a consular officer. What the hell do I know about the future of the Soviet Union. So my comments probably went to some nice convenient filing cabinet somewhere, and nobody really took it seriously.

Q: So who was the ambassador when you were there? Was it Hartman?

LEININGER: Hartman. Actually when I started Matlock was DCM and charge. He had come back for a second or third tour of duty, and was charge. He left and Hartman came in from Paris with the dearly departed Warren Zimmerman, one of my best DCM's. A wonderful man.

Q: So how did your interaction go with those people?

LEININGER: Fabulous. Really it was absolutely fabulous.

Q: Very supportive?

LEININGER: Extremely.

Q: And they agreed with your idea to open it up to the Pentecostals and so forth.

LEININGER: Yep. They were for all of our human rights activities across the board, not just those having to do with divided families, but also those on political and religious dissident issues in general. I mean, Hartman opened up his house. We had parties and receptions there, to which those on the "outs" were made guests. Hartman cooked up a program with Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of American, to share first-run American movies with us. They started it with official showings, for Soviet audiences. I mean functionaries at the various ministries. Those guys were under orders in most cases not to meet with Americans under any pretext whatsoever, but it was a "social occasion," so that movies were an exception. They could come to Hartman's house and watch things like "Sophie's Choice." Which the Soviets loved. It is the quintessential Russian movie, with suffering, and all this conflict, and madness, and trauma. Best of all, who are the bad guys? The Germans! So they loved that movie. They never got "ET." They couldn't understand why "ET" was even made, full of frivolity, a fluff of a movie. Anyway, they would come and turn out and we would have these social occasions, drinking Hartman's booze and eating his cook's mini-pizzas. Well, Hartman started bringing in a couple of dissidents on the margins, but then the Soviet official attendees dropped out, on orders, and we lost that opportunity to get them liquored up and get them talking about things. So Hartman then established dissident night, once a week dissident night, and everybody came for various kinds of presentations, Jessye Norman singing, or a Hollywood movie, luncheons, all kinds of neat things.

Q: Now did they include you in that and the consular friends?

LEININGER: Oh yes, absolutely. We had ours, the political section had theirs. The folks in the press section had their contacts. All people on the outs, and we got together and had a jolly old time. Of course, a lot of them didn't trust one another; there was always an undercurrent of paranoia, of suspicion that so-and-so was an informer for the KGB!

Q: Did you interact much with the station people there, the CIA people?

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: So you were able to get your views to them, and they trusted your travels and experiences and so forth.

LEININGER: They were very circumspect in what they told us, but they were interested in what we had to say about what our contacts in the dissident community were willing to say aloud. Remember, in those days, everybody was trying to weave a grand tapestry with little bits of lint about what was going on in the leadership, and who is on top, and who is on the bottom, and who is in line for this, and that kind of thing. The constant speculation all over the place about who was on the rise and who was coming in and who was going out; it was a grand guessing game. The best at that actually were our own internal political guys. They were better than the station chiefs. Lynn Pascoe and Mark Parris were fantastic. You know Wayne Merry was still there, and Kent Brown was still there for most of the time, and Steve Coffey, whom we called "The Wizard," because he seemed sometimes to be able to predict the future on the basis of no information whatsoever.

Q: What happened finally to the Pentecostals? You opened it up and let the air out of the balloon.

LEININGER: ?and freshness started to come into things. And outside events contributed to the breaking of the logjam. First of all, there was an ill-advised but quasi- successful series of hunger strikes undertaken by a number of the divided families. It began, I think, with some German divided families. Hunger strikes, serious hunger strikes were then going on, usually in Moscow, for a variety of reasons. And foreign journalists were able to visit, usually to report that nothing was happening. The Soviets then made a tactical mistake. Instead of taking the short-term, albeit severe, public relations hit of a hunger striker or two dying, they let a couple of them out. As soon as that happened, our divided family community started to take it to heart, and we had a few hunger strikes started among our group. One of those people got out. Now, she got out only because she was the daughter of a general in the Red Army. He made his superiors understand that unless his daughter was let go, he was going to defect. He had leverage. They let her go. Well that in turn inspired our tenantthe Pentecostalto try a hunger strike. Now the least of thel say this in terms of physiognomwas Lydia, who must have been about 5 foot 1 and 98 pounds soaking wet, at the outset of the hunger strike. Her hunger strike wasn't as rigorous as the one by one of the divided family guys, named Yuri Balovlenkov, who started out at 165 pounds and went down to 113, and had turned yellow. He was jaundiced from the tip of his toes to his eyeballs. But because she was so slight in the first place, we soon had concerns for her health. She was joinemore or lesby her mother, Augustina. Augustina was a large woman, to begin with, and we had reason to believe that she was cheating on her strike, so we were much less worried about her.

Q: What year was this going on?

LEININGER: This was '83 and '84. I remember that was the most depressing thing I ever had to dgo around and visit these hunger strikers and report back at the end of business every day, sending a cable to Washington, so that their spouses in the U.S. could have it the next morning, so they could find out how Tatyana was doing, how Yuri was doing, how Sergei was doing. Were they responsive, were they active? Curt and I took turns making those visits. Yuri ended up suffering brain damage. His short-term memory function was gone. You have probably read about people like this. There is a movie out now, Fifty First Dates, that somewhat makes light of the phenomenon. Well, this happened to Yuri as a result of his hunger strike. He consumed nothing but mineral water, period, nothing else. Well Lydia took fruit juices, and Lydia supplemented that with crackers every once and awhile, but nevertheless, over the course of about 2 months, she lost something over 17 pounds. She was down to 81. We had an Embassy physician on the compound. Dr. John Baker. A saint of a man, who cared very deeply about his responsibilities to the families, but past a certain point he couldn't monitor Lydia's physiological wellbeing any longer. He didn't have the blood testing equipment. There is a certain toxin build up in the blood that occurs in prolonged hunger strikes that will cause you to sustain permanent damage. For example, Yuri's wife came to Moscow to care for him. She was a registered nurse. She flew Yuri's blood samples to Helsinki to have them analyzed. One of the labs came back and said, "This man is dead. Why are you having us analyze the blood of a corpse?" Yuri had reached that point where the level of toxins in the blood usually kills people. He was "merely" brain damaged. Well, John Baker, our doctor, couldn't past a certain point certify that Lydia could be saved or that she wouldn't go on to some kind of shock or coma as a result of her strike. He had limited facilities there on the compound in the clinic. He and Warren and Curt and I sat down and talked it through, then went to Hartman and said, "Look, past a certain point, we are going to have to remove Lydia from the compound and put her in a Soviet hospital if she persists in this." So we told the family that if she kept on, this would be what we were going to have to do. We were not going to see her die or become permanently disabled while in our care. We could not. President Reagan even wrote a letter to Augustina and Lydia, pleading with them to stop. Augustina agreed. Lydia said, "We are going to continue. We know it works." Well, it worked here and there as rare exceptions, when the Soviets made stupid mistakes, or in the one case where the General had them by the short hairs. We knew it wasn't going to work with the Pentecostals, but they persisted. At a certain point we said, "Okay. Lydia has got to go to the hospital." We made arrangements for her to be transported by ambulance and admitted to Botkin Hospital in Moscow, which was usually reserved for high-ranking party members and foreigners.

The family was convinced that what the Soviets were going to do was to take her there, force feed her, and take her away to prison. Well, when she was admitted, Lydia was welcomed by name by the nurses, given the best possible care, and initially given saline solution, glucose and saline solution. That is the way you bring them back. You can't give them solid foods initially. As you might be able to tell, I came to know more about hunger strikes than I ever wanted to know. When I was in India, years later, some Tibetan monks undertook a hunger strike on behalf of the Tibetan refugees there. I wrote 2 and a half pages for our human rights officer. "This is what you want to look for. These are the psychological effects; these are the physiological effects. This is what goes first; then this, then past a certain point, it's too late." Oh my God. I don't want to go there.

Q: It was not knowledge that you want to recall.

LEININGER: It is not. Right. Anyway?so she went to the hospital. Was given the best possible care. We had someone visit every day. After two days, she willingly took food by mouth. Got herself back to, I don't know, 92 or 93 pounds, and was certified as able to travel by the doctors. The authorities said, "Now you are going to go back to Chernogorsk, to your family there." She said, "You are not going to send me to prison?" "No you are going to go back to your family in Chernogorsk."

That was the critical first step, because now Lydia was back in Chernogorsk, in a position to make application to the Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR) for her exit permissiojust as we had been advised five years earlier. Now, by this time, there had been significant high-level interest in the case expressed by the Reagan administration to the Soviets. Schultz and, I think, Eagleburger, talk about this in their memoirs. Reagan more or less made it clear to the Soviets, "Look. This is a continuing bleeding sore between us. Let these people out and I'll guarantee, we will not crow about it; we will not repeat our previous denunciations of your previous treatment of these people, we will not hold you up to international condemnation for their five years worth of struggle. Just let them go and we will have done with it." Now what exactly else, if anything, the Soviets had got in return for this I have no way of knowing. But in any event, in our continuing interchanges with the Foreign Ministry were told how Lydia go to the OVIR in Chernogorsk and apply to emigrate. Presuming to know their laws better than they did, we said, "But?but?there is no basis. She doesn't have an invitation." More sternly, "Have her go to the OVIR and make application." Now, we were in touch with her by phone. She was phoning in once a week to the family. We said, "Lydia, we have it on fairly reliable authority that you can go to the OVIR and apply." The OVIR was a local branch of the Ministry of the Interior, one that oversees, again, the issuance of exit visas. Well, Lydia did so. Filed her application, and was granted exit permission within a period of about two or three weeks, which was world record time. Now, ostensibly, she was to go to Israel, because this is where religious dissidents were allowed to go. It didn't matter that she was Pentecostal and not Jewish. So we had to work this little charade. She was documented with a Swiss transit visa in Moscow before she left. She would "go to Israel." We worked it out with the Israeli Embassy in Moscow. They gave her an Israeli immigrant visa, even though she is not Jewish. Our other-Embassy colleagues played along with us. I mean, this is the benefit of a cohesive consular corps in places where it is you against the host government. I have been in other places where the consular corps is absolutely nothing but elbow-bending social tea parties, a bunch of self-promoters and hangers on, especially at the honorary consuls. But man, in Moscow, we were all together in the same boat, getting over, around and through Soviet bureaucracy. So when we needed to call on these people, "Please give us a piece of paper to cover this," boom, boom, boom, it all worked.

So we got Lydia to Israel, where she was not actually met by a Jewish organization but by some of her supporters from the West, who put her up in a hotel. Once she was there, she promptly turned around a filed "priglasheniye," or invitation, for the remainder of her family, and for all the Chmykhalovs, the other family, even thought they were not blood relatives. But again, the Soviets, by this time, didn't care. They willingly turned a blind eye to a requirement of their own rules. Lydia sponsored everybody else for immigration.

The final hurdle we had to overcome was that the families in the Embassy had to take that final leap of faith, and return to Chernogorsk. They had to believe. Now, they had watched Lydia's treatment in the hospital. They had watched how Lydia got her exit permission. They had watched how the Soviets let her go to the West. So they were willing to buy into the proposition that the Sovs wouldn't have gone that far, only to turn around and screw them at the eleventh hour. That would have undermined whatever good will the Soviets would have been attempting to cultivate previously by letting Lydia sail through the process. It would have made them out to be absolute conniving beasts. In many respects they were, but not in this instance! Curt and I partially drove vans with the families to the airport domestic terminal, because the families mistrusted our FSN drivers. And we waited in the waiting areas until we saw them on the plane going out to Chernogorsk. As soon as the families got there, they phoned. They got there fine. They settled down. Within, I guess, two months, all the exit permissions came through, and they all emigrated. Not just the ones who had been resident in the Embassy, but all their extended families, too. It was something like 12 more Vaschenkos and 17 more Chmykhalovs. I mean huge families...

Q: ?talking with Wayne Leininger, and we are just at the point where all the Pentecostals are making their way out of the Soviet Union. So the extended families?

LEININGER: Extended families all got out. They ended up transiting Europe. They didn't all go on to Israel. As I said that was something of a sham in the first place. Even the Soviets knew it was a sham, but so what? The address on the invitation was the right address. What they did after they left the Soviet Union was out of anybody's control. The Chmykhalovs all settled around Dallas, Texas, are, and the Vaschenkos all went on to the Pacific northwest. If you were to ask me how they're doing, I know that the most vocal and articulate member of the Vaschenko family, Lyuba, went to law school, which was absolutely appropriate for her. Timothy Chmykhalov wrote a book, which was widely promoted in evangelistic Christian circles. On the web you can probably still find the book somewhere. I have done recent Google searches on them, but I can't find anybody. Maybe the girls got married, and aren't going by the name Vaschenko anymore. I know Pyotr, the father, died of cancer. Oddly enough it had been Augustina, his wife, all the time in the Embassy who was complaining, "Oh, I'm dying of cancer." She had colitis. Just was overweight, didn't exercise, didn't eat right, and just had a lot of gastric problems. The last I knew she was still alive and doing fine. Anyway there was a lot of good will in the human rights community all around the world, and I am glad the people got out and are apparently leading happy existences here.

While they had been with us, their presence was, in a way, useful, helpful, because conditions in the old Soviet Union were hard, and conditions were getting desperate, and people were getting desperate. In addition to the Pentecostals in the Embassy, we had others who wanted to be helped to emigrate, and were taking desperate measures to do so, by crashing through the Embassy gates, literally crashing through with automobiles, climbing over the walls, or in one instance, taking refuge on the construction site of the new Embassy, which didn't have that much security around it at the time. In all these instances our imperative was get them out before close of business. "Do not allow them to stay overnight and have the same pretext of fear of retribution enter into the situation." Now, "get them out" didn't mean we physically twisted arms and threw them out. We were never going to do that. We had to make them see the futility of attempting to gain exit to the west by camping out in the Embassy. While the Pentecostals were with us, we always had those couple of occupied apartments over across the compound to point to. "See those people over there? They have been here for 4 years, and they have not gone anywhere. We are full up; we don't have any more room, and moreover, you don't want to put yourself in that position. You would be cut off from everybody." "Yes, okay, I understand." That usually worked, with the sane and rational people.

Q: If they left, the Soviets simply let them walk down the street.

LEININGER: Yes, and they turned the corner, and the KGB probably then took them away. We usually walked out with them, to forestall any incipient violence, and sometimes went so far as the nearest subway entrance. I would say, usually, in half of these instances, the fact that there were Russians in the American Embassy, who had been there for several hours closeted with consular officers, became known outside. Most of the journalists had lunch at the Embassy snack bar, so there was almost always somebody hanging around from the Post, Newsweek, or the New York Times. We had great relations with the press by the way. Again, the press and we were in the same boat, trying to gather these bits of lint to weave those tapestries. John Burns from the New York Times, Ned Temko from Christian Science Monitor, Andy Nagorski, from Newsweek. We used to play touch football on the weekends. It was Andy who dubbed that the "Liars versus the Spiers" bowl, and mentioned it in the magazine. We used to play poker. We had weekly poker games. This mad German, Peter somebody from Sturm or Der Spiegel, used to have everybody over; tons of beer and tons of snacks and we would play poker until 3:00 in the morning. That is neither here nor there, but anyway it illustrates that this was not an adversarial relationship with the press. We cultivated them and they cultivated us.

Q: So anyway, people would leave.

LEININGER: They would leave, and we would escort them to a subway station. We would tell them this: "We will get you to the nearest subway station. We can't guarantee your safety beyond that. We will go with you as far as the subway station, and after that you will probably have to explain yourself to the authorities. If you want to say you were discussing a potentially complex immigration case, that would not be far from the truth, and it is legal for you to do that." We heard they were in fact taking them into custody for questioning. As far as I know, though, nobody was actually taken away and put in prison or sent away to a camp. Except for one guy we know was a wanted felon, for having committed assault on his foreman in this factory with a monkey wrench. He came to us not because he was a political dissident or a religious dissident. He was simply pissed off at the way workers were being treated. He had asked for some time off for something, to go to, I don't know, a relative's funeral, something fairly reasonable. His foreman wouldn't let him go. They got into a verbal back and forth, and then he beat the hell out of this guy. He told Bill Hill and me this in a very boastful way, cackling about how much blood he'd made flow. Bill and I just kept looking at each other out of the corner of our eyes, edging toward the door, in case he went off. This guy who we are talking about came in with a handgun into the Embassy. He was disarmed by the Marines before he was let in. He actually showed his weapon to them. "Please sir, give me the gun. You don't need the gun in here. We will give it to you when you go back out." They didn't give it back to him, obviously. He was also physically imposing, hulk of a man, easily 6'3" 260 pounds with fingers as big around as my wrist. I mean, you could picture this guy going amok on an assembly line beating people with a wrench.

Q: They took him away.

LEININGER: They took him away. We had no basis to intervene or to provide refuge. Bill and I talked him for about two or three hours; we were scared, the guy was a time bomb. He could have lifted up the table and beat us with it. He left.

Q: Did you ever have somebody who would not leave?

LEININGER: We never had anybody who would not leave at the end of the day. We had one young couple who came back twice, first by running in and then by ramming their way in with their car..

Q: Broke in?

LEININGER: Broke in, smashed through the gates with their little Soviet Fiat. We had to tell the, "Things haven't changed. We can't help you any more now than we could the last time." I think the second time they got arrested for malicious destruction of property and causing personal injury to a militiamal think he broke a lebut again we were in no position to protest. That said, there were also, regularly, provocateurs who came in and pulled the same kind of stunt. Claiming to ask for political asylum or some sort of refuge, and their stories would be so obviously cooked up. You know you start an NIV interview, and somebody is claiming to be a white-collar worker in a bank, and he has got grease under his fingernails? We did the same kind of assessment of these "asylum seekers." These people were telling stories of woe, and yet they had nice manicures, and haircuts, and decent shoes by Soviet standards. They spoke very good, educated Russian. They were obviously not the oppressed factory worker I was just talking about. They weren't out of work, they weren't hungry and homeless, they weren't truly desperate. They were KGB. They were coming in to test our policies and procedures for handling walk-ins. So those were just, "Sorry, can't help you," and we blew them off. They would actually leave much sooner and much more easily than the genuine kind. The genuine people were really desperate. Then finally there was the Azerbaijani duo of "freedom fighters," they called themselves, who climbed over the construction site fence at 3:00 in the morning in February one year. By this time Curt had already left. He had stayed for only stay two years; he hadn't extended. Marsha Barnes had come in behind him. Her Russian wasn't up to doing these kinds of things. So I was the only one who could speak to these people. I crawled out of bed at 3:00 in the morning and talked to these guys for an hour and a half. I couldn't stand it any longer. I was freezing to death. I said, "Look this isn't even diplomatic property." We hadn't asserted full diplomatic privileges over the site. "So we can't protect you if they want to come and get you. There is nothing I can do or the Embassy can do about the political situation in Azerbaijan. Now you got this guy down there, Aliev. I understand he is a fairly strong character. He might come to some prominence." Of course he is the guy who years later took over and became a despot in his own right. Now his son has taken has inherited the job. "Aliev, he is a fool. He won't do anything." He was not a fool. He eventually did take over. In any event, I convinced them that the Embassy was not in a position to be able to assist them in asserting Azerbaijani rights to independence from the Soviet Union, and if they wanted to do anything, they should go back to Azerbaijan and work from within. "Oh, yes, that is good idea." "Then you had better get out before the sun comes up, because then the guards will see you and want to know what you are doing here. You will have to show your papers and bad things could happen." So they agreed to leave, and they climbed back over the fence where they had come in, and they avoided the Soviet militia guards, and left.

Q: All right. So that is the flavor of life. One thing I wanted to get in is how did your family handle, you had a wife and one child, and how did they function in this environment?

LEININGER: Oddly enough, for the kids, it was almost perfect. They lived in the Embassy housing compound or in those huge apartment complexes assigned to Westerners. They played together. The stairwells were filled with American families and their kids. The same kids that got on the school bus together and went to the American school, which was a fantastic school.

Q: It was, yes.

LEININGER: For every teacher we recruited, we had to fight off a hundred applicants each year. That was one of the few ways you could get into the country legally and stay for any length of time, was to be a teacher in the American school. People were incredibly well motivated and well qualified. Once they got that job they taught like their whole future depended on it, because they didn't want to lose it. Class sizes were small, and the kids in effect lived in a little cocoon. They suffered next to none of the hardships of daily life in the USSR. Our son, because of my job, was something of an exception in that regard. Through our relationships with the divided Soviet spouses and their American husbands and wives, he saw a lot of the negative side of Soviet life. He saw a lot of tears.

Q: How did your wife feel?

LEININGER: Spouses in general had a hard time because the officers were as a rule all workaholics. I mean, there was nothing much else to do. Go in to the Embassy on weekends? Sure! The most interesting thing to do was come in and browse the cable traffic. Remember, this was well before the day of satellite TV; there was no CNN and definitely no ESPN.

Q: They didn't have the spousal employment program.

LEININGER: Very minimal spousal employment. Outside employment opportunities were obviously very limited; nothing was available on the regular economy, and jobs within the mission were few and far between. Nan did, however, became a CLO after a time. She time-shared the job with two other Embassy wives, one after the other.

Q: CLO being the community liaison officer.

LEININGER: Right. But there generally is just one of those I per mission, at least in those daythe CLO was a recent innovation then, and hadn't proved it's wortand so that one job was it, as far as mission employment for spouses was concerned. Well, we had about 135 direct hire Americans as I recall, in those days, and that meant you had 133 unemployed spouses. There was not much to do in old Moscow. You couldn't freely wander around very easily. Even if you could wander around, there wasn't much to do. Gorky Park. You go to Gorky Park once, and you have been there. You can't do much else. Soviet television was the only television you got. There were no cable stations. There was no Internet. Embassy employees, whether they were specialists or officers, on weekends often went to the Embassy to do more work, because it was the most interesting place in town. You could hang around the snack bar and schmooze with the journalists. It is where the action was. It was all on a volunteer basis. It was stay home and get bored or go to the Embassy. This whole situation stretched and strained marriages a lot. Now, we did have help at home, and Nan did want to try to get out of that apartment. For awhile, she worked for a journalist there, Ed Stevens, an ex-pat American, who had been living in the USSR since the '30s, and who had been co-opted by the Sovs a long time ago. He was what used to be called a "comsymp" a Communist sympathizer. For Nan to get the job she had to be vetted by the Regional Security Officer. "If you take this job, you tell us anything funny that goes on, and who visits him and that sort of stuff." Stevens wrote a lot of stories speculating about the Party leadership struggles, so it was interesting for Nan to have an inside look on that.

Anyway, we'd known in advance that she would want to do something, so we brought along a nanny. Now, originally, this was my late-in-life-acquired step sister, the daughter of my mother's third husband, who had just turned 22 or something, had just gotten out of junior college, was at loose ends, and didn't have a life plan. So going to Moscow with us seemed to be a wonderful thing to do, see the world and all that. Well, she got off on the wrong foot when she transited Paris on the way in. She stayed at the hotel we had stayed at some years previouslwhen my sister had "done Europe" after graduating high schoobut the place had since taken a downturn. The night manager came up and started fondling her feet one night! So she split that place in a blind panic at 2:00 a.m. after vainly trying to get the police to understand what had happened. She went off to the airport Sofitel, where she spent the rest of the night before she got to Moscow. During the time she was in Moscow, though, about the only thing she could do was hang out at the Marine house, because she had no Russian. Remember the Marines, Moscow, early '80s?

Q: I was going to come to that. Wasn't there a scandal?

LEININGER: There was a scandal; the main events all are reputed to have happened after we left. Different people, but the assignment policies?

Q: Except that Hartman was still there.

LEININGER: Hartman was still there.

Q: He took a fall because of it.

LEININGER: And it wasn't his fault. The Marines in Moscow were in the main screw-ups. They were there, as screw-ups, as a result of a policy followed by the battalion commander in Frankfurt. A Marine got assigned to Embassy duty in Moscow because he had gotten into trouble elsewhere in western Europe.

Q: Why would they do that?

LEININGER: Because it was punishment.

Q: But I mean didn't they see the implications. Isn't that strange.

LEININGER: They were idiots. Now there were the rare exceptions. Some of those guys volunteered to go to Moscow, in the best tradition of that organization, because it was hard duty. Those are the guys who later went on to college, and several went on to take the Foreign Service exam.

Q: And who decided who became a Marine Security Guard (MSG) in Moscow?

LEININGER: The battalion commander out of Frankfurt.

Q: It wasn't the State Department?

LEININGER: State, and Hartman, didn't have any say-so about who we got.

Q: So they were sent there as punishment.

LEININGER: Right. Even while I was there, I had to go to the Finnish consul and try and defend a Marine for raping one of the Finnish nannies. The admin counselor had to go to the Foreign Ministry and argue that they ought not hold two of our guys who, on May Day, had been ripping down the red flags from the street poles around Moscow, after they had gotten drunk. I had to go again for Marines who had gotten in a bar fight at one of the western restaurants in town. This one had a bowling alley attached to it. I mean, one incident after another. I know for a fact that Hartman protested the assignments formally to the marine commandant and got nowhere.

Q: Really, wow.

LEININGER: So, the next generation of screw-ups came along, and they reputedly sold out, supposedly to allow tours by KGB pawns, of some of the Embassy's secure areas. That has never been proved conclusively, to my knowledge. We do know that there was an excess, shall we say, of fraternization, and that the gunnery sergeanthe gunny! did get involved with a Soviet agent in a romantic liaison. The whole thing just stank. It was just awful. The people should never have been assigned there in the first place under those conditions of stress, where you have got to be really punctilious in your conduct, and attentive to security details.

Q: Did that change after the scandal?

LEININGER: Oh, yes. They upped the standard of training for people to even get into the MSG program back at Quantico. The whole policy has changed.

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Q: Today is March 1, 2004. We are still talking about his experiences in Russia. Is there anything, any other issues or particular themes that you would like to talk about from that period.

LEININGER: I would like to go back and revisit, go into more depth about the divided spouse issue. I think I mentioned Curt Struble and I, when we got there, had something like 135 or 140 people on what we called the Rep list, representation list, which important American dignitaries carried with them to the Foreign Ministry every time we had a high-level visit, and said please let these people go. Well, partly in response to the squeaky wheel syndromnamely, the spouses of these people in the United StateCurt and I said, "Wait a minute. Husbands and wives are different, and we ought to have a sub-set of the Rep List, just a separate small list of the really important cases, those of the husbands and wives, because this is the fundamental relationship in someone's lifetime. Having these folks not allowed to live together is an order of magnitude greater than simply not allowing someone's grandparents to emigrate." So we got the front office aboard, and we got the Department to buy into it. That whittled down our "important" caseload to something like 35, of whom in a given year we might get five to seven out.

Q: How did you get it whittled down? If you started with 140, did you get?

LEININGER: All the rest were uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, grandparents, brothers or sisters.

Q: They were people of interest, but not spouses.

LEININGER: The spouses became really the focus of our push. We had great little capital to use in those days. We had used up the sticks, and cut off the carrots, so there was very little we could do in the way of bargaining for these people. But at least we spent an awful lot of time in? caring for them, is the only phrase to use. They had almost without exception lost their jobs. They had been thrown out of school. A couple of them, because they had neither job nor school in Moscow, a couple of them had been thrown out of the city. You needed a residence permit to stay in Moscow. A woman named Yelena Kaplan was exiled to an industrial town called Kalinin, a town of about 120,000 people, none of whom seemed to have gotten past high school. She was put to work in a cloth factory, grading fabric. This was a young lady whose father was a research physicist in one of the closed cities in Moscow, who herself had gone to Moscow State University, where she met her future American husband. She was on her way for her doctorate in mathematics. So they kicked her out of Moscow and sent her to work in a yarn factory in Kalinin. As part of her punishment for trying to leave, she got to count how many cross-threads there were in each square centimeter of fabric. This is a lady who thinks, and, for her, this stultifying existence was the lowest level of hell. But almost everybody had a story like that. I think I mentioned Sergei Petrov, a guy who had engineering and computer training, who was reduced to taking photos and tinkering with home PCs of the journalists in town to earn money. Another touching case was hat of Matvey Finkel, who, despite his name, was not a Jewish emigrant. He was married to a girl named Susan Graham. She was a nanny at the time, for a journalist. Now, Matvey was perhaps not the sharpest tool in the shed, but he had the biggest warmest heart you ever saw. He would come over and play with out son, with little tinker toys and matchbox cars on the floor all around him. All he could get was daily work. No one would even give him a job. For the longest time he couldn't figure out why, and neither could we, why was this guy who was a blue-collar type, refused exit permission? I mean, Sergei had computer training. Elena's father was an important research physicist in a closed town. We said," Matvey what have you done in your life?" Matvey said, "Well I went to school. I studied in high school." "Yes, what did you study, everything? Nothing special?" "No. Then I sent to the army." "Well everybody goes to the army, Matvey. I mean, as you know, conscription is the law. What exactly did you do in the army?" "I dug holes." "Matvey, everybody digs holes in the army. You dig one hole, and you fill it up, and you dig another hole." "I dug big holes." "Where did you dig big holes?" "All around Moscow." It turns out he had been one of the laborers digging the silos for missile emplacements, the one that was allowed under the old Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty! That had been 10 years before, but because they ostensibly figured he would reveal all to us as to where these missiles were (as if we didn't have other means of discovering them) he was refused. He had been refused exit permission, by the time we got there, for four years already, and it was going to be another five years before he actually got out. Well after we left Moscow, he eventually got out. But that wasn't that unusual. I think I mentioned before that in some cases they would refuse permission for no discernable reason whatsoever, just as a means of showing people it is a crapshoot, unpredictable. You cannot count on any known, public policy in making your own life plans. "We own you, and we will do as we want, not as you want." There were storiel'm not sure we ever had any such cases ourselvetold by some of the other Western consuls in town, about charwomen in the ministry of defense being refused because they cleaned the toilets where the general shat. I suppose if they discovered bloody stools or something they could reveal the state secret that somebody was suffering from intestinal cancer or something. But the Sovs were in fact refusing permission to menials, who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It wasn't just to intellectuals or political or religious dissidents.

Q: So despite the small number of these cases, they took a lot of time.

LEININGER: An immense amount of time.

Q: ?holding them, correspondence with the States I suppose.

LEININGER: We worked with the spouses trying, on the one hand, to get the Soviet spouse out, but also, failing that, lobbying for visas to get the American spouse permission to visit. In some cases the Soviets would refuse that, too, just to be nasty. When the American spouses came to Moscow, they often stayed with us in our apartment. We often had people over for important holidays, and had Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners with them. The Soviet spouses became some of our best friends. Matvey, Yelena, Sergei, Anya, Yuri.

Q: But several of them.

LEININGER: Curt Struble and I would take turns on the weekends showing movies. This was well before the advent of VHS cassettes for that purpose. We were indebted to the AAFES folks, the Army Air Force Exchange System, for circulating 16 MM films all through the defense attachï¿½ offices in the east bloc. The DATT office would get these in oh I guess in tranches of six, every two weeks. There would be sign up sheets. People would pounce on them to sign up for these movies. There would be a 16mm projector in almost every stairwell of all the properties we owned or leased, and section chiefs had dedicated machines of their own. The community projector was schlepped up and down the stairs and traded off to people who were able to sign out the movies. You would show the movies on the big blank white walls. All the apartments had big blank white walls; we weren't allowed to paint them. I became an expert in switching out reels on a 16 mm projector in about two minutes and five seconds. Rewind, get it down, get the next rethreaded, ready to go! If it was a particular popular movie, you would "hot reel" it. It'd be showing in one apartment, and as soon as reel one was done, you would run it down two flights of stairs and give it to the downstairs neighbor. When you had really good movies, decent movies, ones that had been released to theaters in the United States, you were encouraged to use them, section chiefs especially, to use them for representation purposes. But we mostly got grade triple Z movies. Ones that, these days, would go straight to video. They were never released for distribution in the U.S. "The Monster From Outer Space That Ate Cleveland," that kind of thing. Movies you just couldn't believe, but that was all there was to do. Again, this was well before satellite television of any kind. It was well before commercial videotapes were widely available. Certainly, we didn't have a tape lending library in Moscow. So those movies were our entertainment. We had a TV in the house, but it only got Soviet programs, and most of those were just complete rot. You watched it when you wanted to get your blood pressure up, if you could understand it. So we would show these movies and have folks over for dinners. You couldn't help but get emotionally involved with the situation the divided families were in. My son grew up there; I guess ages seven to ten. He would just sit and listen to the conversations about people who were being screwed over by their own government, and he couldn't believe it. He still to this day has a firm loathing of authoritarian government because of what he saw happening there.

Q: So this brings you up to abut what, 1984?

LEININGER: 1984. We are now about getting ready to leave. Before I leave this topic, I want to relate a few more anecdotes about the KGB, because some of these are part of the lore of the times.

Q: Absolutely.

LEININGER: I mentioned the other day about how the KGB would come into your apartment sometimes, very annoyingly, and mess with your personal papers, leave "calling cards," scramble alphabetized record albums so the alphabet was screwed up. Sometimes, as well, these people would get a little light fingered. If your wife had left jewelry out of any kind, it would just go missing. That, of course, would be given to the searcher's girlfriend. Well, there were several ways of addressing this. You could go to the Foreign Ministry and lodge a formal complaint. You'd get, "We don't know anything about that. We can't possibly help." But the easiest thing to do, that developed over time, was simply to complain loudly to the chandelier, or just talk about it on the phone, complaining aloud about your loss, because the "listeners" in the KGB were from a different branch than the smash and grab people. The listeners didn't like the fact that the smash and grab people had this extra benefit on the side. So within two or three days of your talking loudly to the chandelier or talking over the phone about your loss, the missing brooch or ring would reappear magically in open plain view.

On the other hand, these guys were not to be trifled with. As I was just arriving in Moscow, another Embassy employee was packing up and going on after three years or so in-country. Early on in a tour, this petty harassment tends to just strike you as quirky, a little amusing. "This is unique; this is strange," you think, but after awhile it just gets to be annoying and really oppressive. So it was with this guy who was coming to the end of his tour of duty, so he had his brother, who was a locksmith in the United States, send him over the latest state-of-the-art, pickproof lock. Now of course all the standard locks on the off-compound apartments, the KGB didn't have to pick. They had their own keys to every Soviet apartment complex. So there was no need to jimmy the locks. But this guy, on a Saturday afternoon, took off that standard issue lock, and installed his brother's recommended pickproof lock. He and his wife went out to dinner, and the Bolshoi that evening. He was smiling to himself the entire evening, secure in his possessions for the very first timhe thought. They came home from the Bolshoi and got in the little lift, the caged elevator, when they got to his floor, there in the hallway, off its hinges, was the door to his apartment. The message was clear, "Don't F*** with us. You can't get away with anything." So you know, ultimately, there was generalized guidance for all of us: just behave, and conduct yourself, as if your life was an open book. Don't trust that anything you do will remain confidential. Believe that everything you say is going to be overheard, and don't keep anything important in writing laying around. You can rip it up, or flush it down the toilet, or burn it, or whatever you need to do. Don't say anything out loud you don't want anybody else to hear. I mention this because it is going to come back to another story I will tell in a little bit.

Okay, we are coming to the end of our tour of duty in the summer of 1984, and it is time to say our goodbyes. Now you have to understand that every time you left the old Soviet Union and crossed that border, whether you were on a plane, train or automobile, there was a tremendous uplifting feeling that filled your soul. It was like the weight of the world had just dropped away, and you were like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, being able to fly across the open skies, totally at liberty. It was a tremendous sense of relief and ease. If you were going to go back in again and face up the dreads again, it was okay to indulge in that fleeting feeling. But I had heard from other folks, and it became true with us too, that as you near the end of your tour, you develop increasingly severe survivor's guilt. And when you are leaving for the last time, you realize that you are leaving behind, in our case, some dear people that we had seen very close to death, or otherwise damaged by hunger strikes, or otherwise spiritually and psychologically depressed, and they were going to have to stay. We got very few of the divided spouses out of the Soviet Union during our time. There were just two of the members of the really core divided family group, the one that was really organized, and the one on whose behalf we made the most representations, who made it out. One of them was this general's daughter, Tatyana Lozanskaya, and the other was Boris Molchanov. He was the one the Soviets made the mistake about when they let out a "normal" person on hunger strike. From their standpoint, they should never have done that, but they did. That gave rise to the subsequent rounds of hunger strikes.

Well anyway, we are getting ready to leave, and Sergei Petrov visited our apartment, I guess the week or so before I am going to go. He said, "We have to talk.' "We can't talk here, Sergei, let's go for a walk." Well, you couldn't even talk within a quarter-mile radius of your apartment building, because they had parabolic microphones out all around, and you would be overheard. So we took about a mile and a half walk long the Naberezhnaya Road, going to Moscow State University. In the middle of a six-lane road, we walked in the center, tree-lined strip. He said, "I have been refused permission again, and it will be six months before I am permitted to apply again. Meanwhile I have been getting draft notices." "Yes, we know you have been getting draft notices. It is one of those reasons you probably fear for your life." He said, "Well I am not going to go. If I go into the Army they will never let me out of Soviet Union." "Well, Sergei, what are you going to do?" "If I have to, I am going to go across the border." "How are you going to go across the border?" "I am going to climb over the mountains into Turkey." "Sergei, you got off your hunger strike about months ago. You are still down about 40 pounds from your fighting weight. I don't think it would be very wise of you to climb mountains and try to get out of here." "I have no choice. I am going to go over mountains if I get another draft notice."

Now, I am already suffering anticipatory survivor's guilt. I am getting emotional. "Sergei I can't counsel you to do that. You will kill yourself. It is your life. I just feel bad that I have been able to do so little about getting you and Matvey and Lena and all these other people out." He stopped me, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Wayne don't worry about it. You kept us alive." So I felt a little better at that.

I told you that story in order to tell you this one. Okay, we are flying out of the Soviet Union, this feeling of uplift has set in but then survivor's guilt follows on its heels. We decided there was no way we were going to be able to go straight to home leave in Florida and start the usual rounds with friends and neighbors and relatives, going on about, "Oh, how was it in the Soviet Union?" All of us in the Service have had these discussions with the folks back home, usually about places of a rather nicer nature than the Soviet Union. When you start to try to tell people what it is like, in a minute and a half, two minutes, their eyes glaze over and they are looking in the far distance. "Dear, what are we having for dinner tonight?" We were still feeling the USSR too deeply to engage in that kind of inanity that quickly, so we decided that when we got back to the States, we would drive across country in an RV to decompress.

So we rented one just outside of JFK Airport, and we drove all across the northern tier of the country. We took a little side trip up to Toronto to visit old friends there, and came back, came back through Michigan. I ran a marathon in Duluth, Minnesota, Grandma's MarathoGrandma's is a saloon! And we drove all across North Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Washington. We headed south; we were going to end up in San Francisco. En route we stopped at a national forest in Oregon. We are at this point 23 days into a 27-day cross-country trip. We had stayed at nothing but Kampground of America RV parks and farmers' pastures in the most quiet and idyllic and American settings you could possibly imagine. We are now in the middle of this primeval state or national forest, and there is just one other camper, about a quarter of a mile away, in sight. It struck me suddenly that I never told Nan about my last conversation with Sergei, that if worst came to worst, he was going to climb over the mountains to Turkey and might die. I said, "Nan, have a seat. You remember when I went out for a walk with Sergei, the week before I left.?" "Yes." "He told me that he is really getting desperate now, he is really getting concerned. If he gets another draft notice, it is really going to be then end for him. If that happens he is going to?" and here I grabbed a napkin and wrote, "Going over the mountains into Turkey." And I handed it to her, and she read it, and with out another word she turned on the burner on the gas stove and burned it. It took us about fifteen seconds before we looked at one another, realizing what we had just done. The habits were hard to break.

Q: That is quite a little story.

LEININGER: Anyway I wanted to tell that story because it pulls a lot of things together. People who served in Moscow in those days of the cold war developed that kind of mentality.

Q: So you are coming to the end of your assignment. What are you looking to do next then. This is 1984.

LEININGER: 1984, in the summer. Of course there was bidding on onward assignments the previous fall. Oh, that is one thing I should have mentioned. To the tranche of language students who went off to Moscow a year or two before we did, everyone in the Department painted life there in a very rosy way. "Oh, it is not as bad as you have heard. You are going to love it. It is a very close-knit community," and so forth. Within about six months those people were in the pits of depression, because it was a helluva lot worse than they had been told it was going to be. So there were a lot of curtailments and a lot of people would not even consider the possibility of extending for a third year. Well, with our group took quite the opposite tack. They painted it in very dark terms. "It is very grim, but you are doing your country's business. If you really buckle down you might survive. You know, depend on each other, that sort of thing." They got us all expecting the worst, and as a result, out of our group, probably about 40 to 50% of us decided to extend. Now, you have to take into consideration the fact that you had to make that extension decision within about eight weeks of your arrival. Because of the language training requirement, they had to know whether to put the job on the bid list in the October-November time frame, for a vacancy that would ordinarily occur two summers later. If you were to extend, the job would not be advertised. But they had to know. So we just get there at the end of July, and by the end of August or early September we had to decide whether to extend. We hadn't gone through a winter, we hadn't experienced any of the ugliness of the place. We said yes, and we stuck it out for the third year, but that third year was tough. I said earlier that over time a lot of those little KGB games ceased to be amusing; when people leave your dinner parties and get arrested and dragged around the corner and get debriefed on every single thing that went on in the apartment that night, it ceased to be funny.

But all that said, I had seen a lot of people come and go from Moscow, including the previous political counselor, Sherrod McCall, who was a darling man. Uncle Sherrod, Curt and I called him. He was Acting DCM during much of the period in which we had gate crashers and hunger strikes, and so would sign out our most sensitive reports. He would correct our cables in the most sensitive and gentle way, with deep sighs of clear regret, and act as if we had somehow, inexplicably, disappointed him. We, his favorite children, hadn't gotten it quite right. We were talking about some pretty sensitive stuff in those cables, who is dying and who is not, and who was to blame for what action that had or had not taken place, and we had to get our nuances right. But he was very good. We loved him; he taught us, especially, to consider our audience and its needs and imperatives.

But he chose unwisely for his onward assignment. He went to Stockholm. Now you'd think, "What is wrong with Stockholm? It is a very civilized place. It is western. It is modern. Things work!" The problem was, he was bored to tears. Once you have been in a place like Moscol said this before, the most interesting things going on were within the mission; people would go there on the weekends for fuyou don't want to go to a place where you wonder why you get out of bed to go to the office in the morning, where you are not making any difference because there's no difference to be make. So with that lesson in mind, we looked around at what consular vacancies were coming up. We knew we wanted a better quality of life. We knew we wanted the place to be friendly and warm. But we also knew we wanted some substance, a little professional challenge. There was Tel Aviv! It was perfect. So we bid on Tel Aviv; that was within our sights.

Q: This must have been chief of consular section.

LEININGER: Consul general.

Q: Did it call for any language training?

LEININGER: No it was an English-speaking job. We had I think, two JO positions that were Hebrew designated, but for anybody I dealt with, any Israeli official of any importance, you could count on him speaking better English than you would ever learn to speak Hebrew.

Q: Now what was the size of the consular section?

LEININGER: We had eight officers, including me. Just a one person, one officer American Citizen Services unit, one officer doing immigrant visas, five in the NIV unit and me. What you do as a boss in addition to making sure things are running right, you float around and pitch in. As it happened I ended up taking hands-on responsibility for two issues, primarily, the Black Hebrew Community (BHC), and the harassment of Palestinian Americans.

Q: Now before you went to Israeyou went in the summer of 198before you went there did you get briefings from the State Department and if so, what kind of sense did you get from those as to what to expect or, did you know what the general tenor was, the circumstances? Did anybody say much to you?

LEININGER: The first Intifada still hadn't cranked up. They were still operating under a Labor government that had been in place forever, so the political situation seemed rather stable?

Q: Who was the prime minister then?

LEININGER: Shimon Peres. Small steps toward peace were being taken. Small steps toward peace had been being taken since 1948, and are still being taken today, and we are virtually in the same spot we were. We are not going to go there, on that issue?

Q: Did they tell you no contact with the PLO?

LEININGER: No, they didn't have to. That was a given. Nobody who didn't have professional responsibilities, didn't have any official reason to be in contact with the PLO, was authorized to have even casual contact. But even when we had formal negotiating sessions, people had to be specifically authorized to have those conversations because the PLO was not recognized as a governmental authority. It was a simple terrorist organization. But you know, we in Tel Aviv, we dealt with Israel proper. The Consulate General in Jerusalem is totally free standing, and they had jurisdiction over the West Bank and so carried out most of our day-to-day contact with the Palestinians. They did not report directly to the Embassy. The CG there is a Chief of Mission in his own right, by statute.

Q: Without an ambassador on top. But CG Jerusalem reports directly back to Washington don't they?

LEININGER: Correct. They do not come under the authority of our Ambassador to Israel at all. So Jerusalem had complete responsibility for dealing with the West Bank and the Palestinians. Conversely, they were not authorized to have any direct contact with the Government of Israel. Any time they needed to have some kind of representation made to the central government, on any issue, we in Tel Aviv had to drive up the hill. Though they had a lot of central government offices in Tel Aviv, the Israelis maintained that Jerusalem was their capitaa claim that the U.S.'s executive branch, at least, has not been willing to acknowledge, pending the outcome of "final status" talks with the Palestinians. Most of their most important MinistrieForeign Affairs, Interior, Justicwere all located in Jerusalem, so we had to go there for our government-to-government business.

Q: In your consular thing, you did not have any supervisory role over Jerusalem as Consul General in Tel Aviv.

LEININGER: They would call on me as a colleague, for technical advice, but they weren't obliged to take orders. The consular section chiefs there were more junior in rank than the CGs in Tel Aviv, so they'd usually be grateful for the input, but they stood on their own. The volume of work there was work was much lower, but the political complicationthey dealt with both Israelis and Palestinians within their jurisdiction, and sometimes those respective clienteles resented the attention paid to the othemade life interesting.

Q: So you went off to Tel Aviv and what was your sense, I guess, first, of the consular challenges there?

LEININGER: This was actually, as a boss, my first section with any volume business. I mean in comparison to Moscow, the volume of business was amazing. In Tel Aviv we were processing about 80 to 90,000 NIVs a year.

Q: Where you had to manage a lot of numbers.

LEININGER: Numbers of cases, and simply getting people in and out of the building with security concerns such as long lines standing out on the sidewalk, providing inviting targets for who knows who coming by with a hand grenade. We needed to get folks into the building quick. We had in those days 40,000 or more resident Americans in Israel, the bulk of them being dual nationals. Because of the Israeli Law of Return, anybody who emigrates to Israel of the Jewish faith automatically acquires Israeli nationality. This was never was grounds for loss of American citizenship, because the naturalization part was automatic. The naturalization is not upon one's own application. That dual national population was large, active, vocal. They stood up for what they believed; they were also entitled to full consular protection. We had an awful lot of income tax responsibilities. We had a lot ol was going to say extradition work, but it really wasn't extradition work because the Israelis would generally reserve the right to try Israeli citizens. They would use our evidence, in an attempt to try the suspects there. We were also laboring under an older version extradition treaty, one that enumerated every single crime that is covered. Modern extradition treaties usually say "any crime punishable by a year or more in jail is grounds for extradition," and that is that. That helps you avoid having to deal with revolutions in technology and newly invented crimes, like Internet crime, that no one envisioned when they drew up the treaty. "Crimes with more than a year jail time," covers all that. But, no, we had an old treaty, in which things were spelled out. Not only do you run the risk of new crimes not being covered, you also have the problem of differing interpretations of the elements of the crimes themselves. One of the god-awfullest case we got tripped up on there had to do with a Jewish-American religious teacher, who was accused on very good evidence of molesting three students in a yeshivreligious schooin Brooklyn. He had fled to Israel, but as a tourist, so he was not an Israeli citizen. So we got the evidence from the U.S. District Attorney in New York, all bundled up pursuant to the extradition agreement article 77 and so forth. The guy was accused of raping these three students. We sent it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who sent it over to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice says, "Hmmm. We don't think so." We were dumbfounded. "Say what?" "It is not covered here. This offense is not covered in the treaty." "Well, it says rape. See here, Article 13. Rape!" Well, it turns out under Israeli law rape is specifically defined as a crime committed by a man against a woman, and this religious teacher had molested little boys. In the Israeli interpretation of rape, his crime was not covered by the terms of the treaty. Now, they offered to try him in Israel on the basis of the evidence, but there was no way the U.S. Attorney was going to get these three kids on a plane and ship them to Israel to testify in an Israeli court. So the guy skated. That was just absolutely maddening. But it led us to eventually getting around to renegotiating the treaty.

Q: Which you did.

LEININGER: We did. We started the process when I was there. It wasn't completed on my watch. Negotiating extradition treaties usually is about a five to seven year process in my experience. Both countries are dealing with at least two different executive branch departments, justice and foreign affairs, and then they each have to get the treaty ratified by the legislative branch, and all kinds of procedural, jurisdictional, and, eventually, political problems have to be surmounted along the way.

Q: I suppose.

LEININGER: We ended up concluding one at the end of my tour in New Delhi. It had taken seven years to okay. Anyway, my primary task, as I said, was dealing with a subset of American citizen problems having to do with Black Hebrews; actually, the Hebrew Israelite Community of Israel. That is a redundancy, but that is what they called themselves, and, secondarily, we had to do something to control the GOI's harassment of Palestinian Americans. Now the Black Hebrews were led by a charismatic guy named Ben Ami Carter who, I don't know, I guess by his own inspiration, got it in his head that he and his followers, and any other like-minded people in the United States who cared to join up, self-identified, were in fact the lost tribe of Israel.

Q: So these were blacks in the United States of no otherwise discernable Jewish connection.

LEININGER: No lineal descent whatsoever. They came out of Newark and Atlanta, and Chicago, St. Louis. No prior connection. Once this community was founded, it became a magnet for people, some sincere, others who wanted to some extent masquerade under its umbrella and hide from check kiting, forgery, drug dealing, and other kinds of criminal charges. I have no reason to believe that Ben Ami was not sincere. I really believe he was. The conditions within their little community were pristine. Regular study of the Torah. Law and order without any discernable means of coercive exercise of force in any way. People behaved themselves. They were clean. The kids went to school, were polite, alert, well-nourished, well-dressed, industrious.

Q: The point is these people began to arrive in Israel.

LEININGER: Again, the Black Hebrews in Israel were originally Americans who decided they must be the lost tribe of Israel, and began to arrive in Israel in the late '70s. The original pilgrims made a stopover in Liberia for two years, as I recall, but didn't find any welcome there. You would have thought they would have. For whatever reason, they decided to come to Israel. As Americans, they didn't need Israeli tourist visas. The first group came in and comprised on the order of 35 or 40 people, but that number kept being added to. Hundreds more came over the next ten years. By 1984 when I got there, they numbered about 900 people. By the time I left it was nearly 1300 or 1400.

Q: Why didn't the Israelis just deport them?

LEININGER: Well it wasn't that simple. First of all they didn't want to appear to be arbitrary, capricious, or racist with respect to these folks. They did try and go through the routine means of?

Q: I mean were they prepared to recognize them as Jews?

LEININGER: Well, no. This is the point. The civil authorities at least in the early days were taking a rather measured approach, and trying to work something out. But the community itself wanted to be recognized as Jewish. Now the Israeli political authorities are not the ones in Israel who decides who is a Jew, or, as a consequence, who qualifies for citizenship under the Law of Return. You read the newspapers even today, and every once in awhile this issue still comes up. The Orthodox rabbinical authorities reserve unto themselves the decision as to who is Jewish and who is not. In this case, they decided unequivocally that these black folks were not the lost tribe. "We have already identified the lost tribe." Those were the Falashas from Ethiopia, who were equally black, so the GOI was covered, you see, politically, from charges of racism, after they rescued the Falashas from the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia by airlifting them all to Israel. In Falashas' case, there were clear genetic markers linking them to ancient Jews.

Q: So you can't just claim to be a Jewish convert and somehow that will happen. The civil authorities so to speak do not make these decisions...

LEININGER: They do not make decisions on who is a Jew. The rabbinical authorities do. Anyone who claims he is Jewish has to demonstrate that to the religious authorities. There are in fact means by which one can convert to Judaism, but that, too, is to the requirements of the rabbinate. The Black Hebrews refused any kind of conversion, maintaining that it was not necessary, redundant. The rabbinical authorities begged to differ, and it was their decision that counted.

Q: I see. So these people are there, and you say the community gets up to about 1300.

LEININGER: And the BHC leaders said, "Okay, we're here. Then they realized, being politically savvy, that the political winds were blowing against them. The rabbinical authorities had made a definitive ruling. That ruling hamstrung the civil authorities. They cannot be declared to be citizens of Israel. By this time, as well, the law enforcement aspect of the issue started to kick in because, as I said, more and more people came to hide within the community who were actual crooks. Well, anticipating that this might have been the outcome, the BHC leadership, not being stupid people, and realizing that being thrown out of the country was a real possibility, embarked on a campaign of formal renunciation of American citizenship. They wanted to make themselves stateless, so they could not be deported to the United States. They came to us in groups of about four to six a week, over the space of about five or six years. It got started before I got there, and continued for the four years I was there. They renounced citizenship. By the time I was getting near the end of my tour of duty, of the1300 or so people in the community, there were about 800 adults, and of those 800, 700 of them had renounced citizenship.

Q: The Israelis must have known they were doing this from the beginning. Why didn't they pick them up and get rid of them?

LEININGER: They did, on an individual basis, but initially they didn't want to have to cope with the scandal, the outrage, that would attend any attempt at mass deportation. Can you imagine the scene of Israeli policemen or immigration authorities marching into this commune and driving out the black Americans, with kids kicking and screaming, all on CNN?.

Q: Were they living on basically Israeli public assistance?

LEININGER: No. They were not given formal work permits, but they were, as almost any developed country has, an under-population of folks who were willing and able to do the work that no one else wants to do. They swept the streets. They cleaned people's houses. They hauled garbage. They did those kinds of things. They were living in the town of Dimona, which was another burr under the Israeli saddle. Dimona is the site of the Israeli nuclear research program, so having these people camp out in an old kibbutthat's what it was, it was an old abandoned kibbutjust really got to them.

Q: So the Israelis were not willing to take the political heat for fear of going after them. Did these people have political support from the United States?

LEININGER: The Black Caucus would weigh in from time to time. That actually diminished as folks renounced American citizenship, but at least initially they had very strong support from the Black Caucus. Visiting delegations would make a point when they went to the Ministry of the Interior who had jurisdiction over the BHC, to ask the Government not to harm these people. Well, long story short. The Israelis had a change in administration. The Labor Government got voted out of office, and was followed by the more conservative Likud party; worse, the Likud formed its ruling coalition only by including what otherwise were the marginally small religious parties. Worst of all, the Ministry the religious parties insisted on having as their part of the coalition pie was the Ministry of Interioexactly the Ministry that dealt with the BHC "problem." The new Minister of the Interior was a member of a religious party, as was his right-hand man, Arieh Deri. They, unequivocally, were going to do something about "these people." This is how they talked about the BHC, "these people." Lacking a direct way of deporting them, because most of the adults by this time had renounced citizenshiwe weren't going to take them back as aliens with respect to the United Statethey sought other solutions.

Q: They couldn't be deported because they had no legitimate means of entry to the U.S.

LEININGER: Correct. The Israelis began to take indirect coercive action, shall we say, to induce these people to leave on their own. They cut off the water and the electricity, do you remember that? You were in charge of the Overseas Citizens Services office in CA at the time. Now, in the past, the Israelis might go after individual adults on the street. Occasionally they would arrest somebody on criminal grounds. These guys were not American citizens anymore; so we had nothing to do with that. They were crooks, so we had no problem with that, either. We didn't even visit them in jail because they weren't Americans any more. We didn't have a dog in that fight. But once they started to do things against the Community that impacted on the well being of those 500 kids, we had real reasons to be concerned.

Q: The children remained American.

LEININGER: They were Americans, and they were suffering. They were in Dimona, in the Negev Desert, with no fans, not just no air conditioning, but no fans, even in the desert in the summertime. No water. So we went marching up the hill and said, "You cannot do that to these people. That is inhumane." Well then they would relent for two or three weeks, and then there would be outages again. They would be sporadic, pure harassment. Well, eventually the people in the community themselves got fed up with having to put up with things like this, and they started to send out feelers to the Government, "Isn't there some grounds for compromise here. Okay, you say we can't be citizens, okay. Can we at least have residence permits and work permits and can you just let us be?"

Q: In Israel.

LEININGER: In Israel. The Israelis for their part said, "On one condition and one condition only. You become Americans again, so that we can selectively deport those of you who are criminals." Michael, you know the drill when someone renounces citizenship. They come before you and you have to counsel them, and you give them a statement of understanding of what is going to happen to them. "You are going to be regarded as an alien with respect to the United States. You and any future children you might have won't have any rights of return to the U.S. You have to qualify for a visa. We won't have any ability to intervene on your behalf or welfare," and so forth. We tell them to think about it. And you ask them explicitly, "Are you undertaking this action under no force or threat of coercion?" Every single person who came before us would duly read all these things, sign all these things, proclaim themselves to be acting on their own volition, without any compulsion, force or anything applied against them. Well, once the general terms of this deal were outlined to the Department, the issue got thrust back to the attorneys in CA/OCS/PRPolicy, Regulations, and Interagency Liaison. Is that right?

Q: Yes, definitely.

LEININGER: They did some very creative lawyering and came up with what turned out to be a very helpful interpretation. They said, "Well, though there were individuals who came forward one at a time, or in groups of two or three or six, all of whom individually stated at the time that they were proceeding with renunciation voluntarily and were not acting under any duress or coercion, we believe the case can be made that the overriding political and social environment created a climate in which a reasonable person could not make a reasoned decision" and they voided all the certificates of loss of nationality that were issued as a result of those renunciations! So all those people had the right again to U.S. passports.

Q: Right, so did the Israelis let the people?

LEININGER: The Israelis relented. The Israelis issued residence permits and work permits. The community now lives there in relative tranquility, as far as I know. I keep in touch with my former secretary, who is now the senior-most FSN in the Tel Aviv consular section, Ingrid Barzel. Ben Ami Carter is still the leader.

Q: Did the Israelis take the position?did they stop new ones from coming in at port of entry?

LEININGER: Yes, well, our reaction to their tightening entry policies is what got the Israeli government's attention. The measures they were taking at the airports to limit the growth of the community got to be unreasonable, to the point of being abusive to black Americans in general. They were strip-searching, and detaining overnight without consular access, groups like the Baptist Church Choir of Montgomery, Alabama. We just couldn't have that. It just went on and on. I'd go to the Foreign Ministry, and I would get received graciously, and, "Oh, yes," the people in the Consular Administration would say, "we understand completely. This is awful. It is a blot on Israel's reputation. We will do everything we can." Well, yes, but how much pull does any Foreign Ministry have against the power of an Interior Ministry in any society, let alone in one that since its inception has felt itself to be under attack? The security officials trump everything; always will. So I would get heard out very nicely at the Foreign Ministry, and the abuses would continue. Within another week or ten days there would be another group of people getting strip searched; the whole nine yards. Tom Pickering by this time was Ambassador there. I started out with Sam Lewis, who was completing his seventh year when I first arrived. Then Pickering came. I had pretty good ambassadors. Hartman, Lewis, and Pickering in a row. Tom had been in Jordan most previously; I think it was Jordan. He knew the issues; he knew the personae. His focus, as it was for all political types, was, "We have to make peace. Let's work with the Israeli government, and we can't antagonize Israeli government if we are going to keep it on track for peace." But I eventually said, "Tom, look. We have a whole identifiable group of Americans who are as American as you or I, who are being subjected to conditions and treatment at that airport that are unconscionable, and we can not allow it to go on. And that is my job, to put out a warning." Now; you have to put this in context. We had not sent out a travel advisory or warning to the American populace to avoid going to Israel even during the 1967 war. Such was the Israeli lobby, the mood in Congress, and the reluctance of people in the Department on the geographic desk to antagonize the Government of Israel. We didn't even question it at that time. But the point about this, again for context, is that the State Department in the '70s and '80s had begun through the Bureau of Consular Affairs being more aggressive in issuing travel advisories when there were problems in other geographical areas. Once an advisory was issued, it could have a dramatic effect on tourism, in addition to having general public relations consequences?

Q: Exactly.

LEININGER: ?and, in turn, on tourist income coming in to various countries. So the advisories became very politically sensitive issues. This particular advisory, given the nature of the subjects of the advisory, and the reluctance of the Israeli government to be seen as persecuting, or discriminating against black Americans, I knew would get their attention, if we could get it ginned up, it. So that is when I talked Tom into backing it, and we got the Department to approve it. We told the Israelis, "We will be issuing this statement next Monday."

Q: What year was this approximately, do you remember?

LEININGER: This would have been 1987ish.

Q: So it had been going on for some time.

LEININGER: Yes, and only at this point did we get their attention. Tom notified the Deputy Prime Minister, as I recall.

Q: Did this particular advisory refer only to the question of how they were dealing with black Americans?

LEININGER: Right. It was limited only to black Americans at ports of entry. So Pickering tells the Government that this is en route, and that it is going to be issued "next Monday." They fell all over themselves. "Oh, you can't do that. Give us 48 hours and we will fix the problem." Within 48 hours they replaced the airport immigration authority leadership with new people. They gave us the home phone number of an Israeli senior Foreign Service officer, a former Ambassador. "24/7, any problem with the airport, call and this guy will show up there and resolve it." We said, "Okay, we will give you a month. We will test this system"-and it worked. Within a month the number of incidents went down to virtually nothing. And any time there was an incident, I called up this guy at his house, even if t was 2:00 in the morning. Some of those planes got in at ungodly hours. He was out there like a shot, and got people cleared.

Q: Did they still get, though, people trying to filter in to the Black Hebrew Community?

LEININGER: Yes, but any country has the right to exclude an individual tourist, and we weren't going to be second-guessing every single admission decision they made. Our concern was with their arbitrary, and seemingly discriminatory, abuse of sovereign authority.

Q: Were they still deporting individuals from that community?

LEININGER: Yes, once the people got themselves eligible again for U.S. documents. Of course, the real crooks often were not willing to apply for a passport, but once we deemed them Americans, then we would give them a travel letter and they would be extradited, or deported, back to the United States.

Q: Some of them were removed then.

LEININGER: Some of them were removed. As a matter of fact some of them had U.S. federal warrants against them. They were wanted by the FBI. So the U.S. had a reason to want to get these people back to face justice.

Q: So that system has now worked for all of these years. Isn't that interesting. And then the other issue of the black Americans entering seemed to go away.

LEININGER: Almost completely away.

Q: Tell me about the Palestinian American issue. Well with the Palestinian American issue I suppose one could say almost in effect the Arab-American issue, or would you really say it was a Palestinian issue?

LEININGER: It was in those days more a Palestinian-American issue. We didn't have that many problems with Arab Americans in general to my recollection. Unlike the situation with Black Americans, the Israeli didn't take blanket action against an identifiable class of people. They would hold individuals for what they regarded to be very good reasons. Our difficulties ran along the lines of consular access, and of mistreatment. The Shin Bet would pick up somebody on suspicion of being a PLO sympathizer or operative of some kind, acting on the basis of whatever kind of information security forces operate on. From their standpoint caution was the better point of valor, so they were always going after people before they built a rock solid case. Then they would just question, and question, and question some more.

Q: And you had strip searches and all that stuff at the points of entry.

LEININGER: Ports of entry, but again these were individuals, and it always was men so you didn't have this business about matronly contraltos being disrobed in front of witnesses. And it was done very quietly. When people were taken away for these kinds of things, they were held in secret for a long time. The only reason we learned that people were being detained was because they didn't show up when they were supposed to, and because friends and relatives, a week later, would say, "We were expecting a visit from our cousin, and he left Detroit on time but he didn't show up here." And we would backtrack, find out what flight he came in on, and we would eventually find the guy. Now, only once to my personal knowledge did I actually see evidence of a Palestinian-American having been tortured. There were cigarette burns, and visible signs of large welts and bruises having been healing for about a week to ten days, after we saw him when he was eventually released from custody.

Q: Was there anything to be done about that?

LEININGER: The ambassador and DCM took my report; I had a Polaroid camera and documented it. They took it up to the Prime Minister's office. I didn't hear any more. It was handled on that level.

Q: Interesting, and the ambassador and DCM didn't tell you anything after that. Did the Israelis ever?

LEININGER: The individual himself didn't want a public incident made about it for fear of retribution to his family.

Q: Did the Israelis ever produce a case out of these detentions or strip searches, did they every actually get anybody that was ever tried or held in prison on a formal charge?

LEININGER: Never on my watch.

Q: So what did you do? I mean did you try to produce the idea of a travel advisory for this group of people? I am curious if you did, because it came up later when I worked on this problem in the department.

LEININGER: We toyed with it at times, but again it was not a discernable pattern. It was individuals here, and individuals there, and we weren't sure of our facts. We could never be certain that any particular guy wasn't a terrorist in some way. Only over a period might such evidence have appeared. Keep in mind, the Intifada as an Intifada didn't crop up until the early to middle part of '87, which was the last year or year and a half of my tour. So we didn't have a stack of cases, a pattern, or a consistent body of evidence we could point to and say, "You have, with some degree of predictability, arbitrarily singled out these people for special attention, invidious attention, at ports of entry, and we want it to stop, or at least see better justification," because none of them had been charged. So at the time we didn't have that kind of documented behavior built up yet in order to make a strong case for a travel advisory to be issued.

Q: So you just had to deal with it on a case-by-case basis when people were reported missing and so forth. How did you fare with the Israelis in those cases?

LEININGER: As long as we were dealing with local officials, local police, or local immigration authorities, we had no difficulty. If we got to the Ministry of the Interior it was a stone wall. Again, the Ministry was in the hands of rather conservative faction of the religious parties, along with the professionally paranoid security types, and neither was inclined to play ball with us at all. They were taking steps that they believed necessary for the safety of their people and the security of Israel in general. "We understand your concern; we will take it into account, but we are not going to change anything we do." That is basically the approach they took. It is still the approach they take today, in my view.

Q: Yes, so that issue went on all the time you were there I take it.

LEININGER: Well, it was building. It was growing because the Intifada...

Q: So what else did you have to confront when you were there. You had a large visa demand; what was the nature of the visa work you were doing? Was it, let me put it another way. Did a lot of people slip out on visas and not come back to Israel or was it fairly honest tourism?

LEININGER: I would say like 80-90% of it was fairly honest tourist business, straightforward stuff. People who immigrate to Israel do so because they are highly motivated to stay in, and be in, Israel and build it up as a nation. We always took that as a foundation. The exception to that rule was usually recently-arrived Soviet Jews. Because many only went there because it was the only place the Soviet authorities would allow them to go.

Q: If they hadn't gone there initially just out of saying we want to go there?

LEININGER: Right. They had the option en route of "dropping out," as it was called in the transit cities of Vienna and Genevthe choice not to go on to Israel, but to accept resettlement in the United States or elsewhere in the West. But the private volunteer organizations and the major Jewish immigration organizations tried to convince them to follow through, and to go to Israel, lest the Soviets use a high drop-out rate as a pretext further to cut back on exit permissions. They'd say, "Give it a try, you will like it." Well, a lot of them did drop out and ended up in Brighton Beach. But those who 'd come to Israel and had a hard time adjusting, within six months, were at our doors, applying for visitor visas.

Q: Did you deny a lot of those?

LEININGER: We had a refusal rate among that group of about 80 or 90%.

Q: Did you have a lot of pressure about that?

LEININGER: Very little, surprisingly. Because people understood. In my experience, again, most of the congressional staffers who had any experience doing consular cases were reasonable people. It'd be only in their first six months or so that they'd be thinking that we, the consular officers, don't know what the hell we are talking about, or are arbitrary, rude, cruel and indifferent. The staffers pretty well learned on the job that there are two sides to every story, and our side, our explanation, is at least as compelling as the side they are getting from constituents in the United States. Any time we had such a case come up, we just simply wrote it up as "?recently arrived from the Soviet Union. He has got no full time job, he is living still on a government dole, and he is not learning any Hebrew." Duh! He's got no ties to Israel! We had no trouble defending those refusals.

Q: So you had high volume, but you felt that it was?

LEININGER: And it is interesting there because one particular subgroup of people who, ordinarily, all around the world would be automatic refusals, to whom we would routinely issue. We didn't start out that way. I mean we sort of grew into it, by growing out of our preconceived visa profiles. My predecessor clued me into it, and I found it to be the case, and it continues as far as I know. This was the profile: "unmarried, early 20 years old, young man or woman without a job."

Q: Probably just out of the army.

LEININGER: There you have put your finger on it. Those folks being discharged from the army, at loose ends, almost everywhere else in the world would be automatic refusals. But the tradition in Israel is that when the kids, and this is both young men and women because conscription is universal, get out of the army, mom and dad pay for a three to six month sabbatical trip around the world, or however much of the world the kid wants to go see. That is pressure relief. I mean, they had served their two to three years active duty, and they are going to be on reserve status until they are 50. All of them, without exception.

Q: I know. They have to do two weeks a year I suppose.

LEININGER: Two weeks a year active duty. And everybody returns. They didn't go in the army in the first place with the intent to abandon Israel down the line. Again, the families went to Israel voluntarily, and these young people are defending the country, They haven't committed their futures and pledged their allegiance without some degree of real commitment. So when people got out of the Army, and they were at loose ends at that stage of their lives, it was the only time they could ever take this little world excursion. It made sense. When they got back to Israel, they are going to get back into the serious business of making a life and a future. So we would actually go ahead and grant visas. Our return rate among those applicantwe did the surveywas like 98%.

Q: Interesting. Yes, I saw a few of those people in Montreal. I remember being very suspicious of them, but some of them managed to convince me they were legitimate, and didn't think of getting the visa in Israel. I would say, you are right; the profile was exactly people that you wouldn't normally issue to. That is intriguing.

LEININGER: When I am over teaching at the ConGen at FSI, and we are talk about "profiling your application pool" at your post. But we always caution, "This is good up to a point, but don't get carried away with profiles, and least of all don't let a profile formed at one post get carried over to another post where a certain little detail in the socio-economic situation can make all the difference."

Q: That is still a valid point. I remember from my experience in Rome, and I would think you would get this, that a lot of Americans appear in Rome and I would think in the holy land, and have kind of went religiously crazy.

LEININGER: Yes, that is up next, with regard to Israel, too. The nature of the place attracts people of that bent in the first instance.

Q: Right, I mean it is a small number of the overall, but you have got some really strange people out of their minds.

LEININGER: And this is across the board, almost all religious sects. I mean we had crazy Bahais, crazy Christians, and crazy Jews. The historical aura of the place, what happened there 2000 years ago or 6000 years ago just tends to draw people who have got strong faith- based convictions about things. Fill in the blank: right or wrong, war and peace, Armageddon. When it happens, they want to be in Israel. So people are just attracted to the place in the first instance who are a little bit "off." Secondly, at least among the Jewish American community, sending little Johnny, with behavioral difficulties, to Israel to work on a kibbutz for a year was perceived as a way to "straighten him out." "This will get his head screwed on straight." And of course it didn't. Life in a kibbutz is not easy. It is a lot of hard work, and it means getting along with others and obeying authority, and people who couldn't do any of the above in the U.S. did not adapt well to living in a foreign country, with, definitely, foreign customs and traditions. Don't make any mistake about it. Conditions of life were hard on the kibbutzim, and very strange for a kid from Brooklyn. Then finally, once you get to Israel, there is something about the place that sets some people off. It iat least in the bigger cities like Tel Aviit is hectic, loud, it is abusive, or at least it gives such an appearance. You take New York City and blow it up into a country, and that is the state of Israel. Everybody is in your face all the time, car horns are blaring, drivers are yelling and cursing at each other, and the gestures in the air, and the fingers. You have to learn, "don't take it personally," but a lot of people with genteel sensibilities when they arrived ended up getting really angry over time, and acting out. You would have bar fights and street confrontations. When people who went there were back home in Smallville, USA, they would be perfectly quiet green grocers or florists or something. But I think to an extent, obviously, there are pressures generated by living in a country surrounded by hostile neighbors, compounded by the history of the Jewish people, the history of the founding of the State of Israel, and, increasingly while we were there, the pressures of the Intifada, with even in those days, the beginnings of some random street bombings. Two people were caught in a rubber dinghy off the coast of Herzliya, which is an official American residential area, with RPG rounds in the boat. They caught two other guys with a stash of grenades in a hotel not a block and a half from the Embassy. So even we were feeling that to an extent, but for the people in the country, living in the country day in and day out, those pressures just build up and never go away.

Q: So you had a fair amount of these American services cases that were really the kind of people that went off the wall.

LEININGER: People went off the wall. We had Jesus Christ in the waiting room at least twice a week, and as the old Dire Straits song has it, "one of them must have been wrong."

Q: Did the fact of people having been American citizens, having been in the Israeli army, have any impact on their citizenship?

LEININGER: No. First of all, they didn't volunteer. It was compulsory military service. It was compulsory, not voluntary, and they sent you off to the Territories. And most of them didn't serve as officers, and for us to be concerned about their U.S. citizenship they had to be either serving as officers or fighting in an army engaged in hostilities against the United States. None of those conditions applied to most people. And we've not even gotten to the question of their "intent" with regard to their American citizenship, which, almost universally, they had no intention of abandoning.

Q: Were there any cases of serious senior Israeli government officials that were also Americans? You don't have to identify them, but that question ever came up you find the deputy prime minister of somewhere is also an American?

LEININGER: None to my knowledge. We will come to that similar circumstance when we come to Hong Kong down the road. But no, not in Israel, in my time. The Golda Meirs of the first wave of immigrants had long since exited the stage. I can't recall a single highly placed government official who was originally born in, say, Shaker Heights. Of course even if they had, loss of U.S. citizenship would have still come down to it a question of intent and they'd be absolved on that, anyway.

Q: Did the Israeli government try to bring much pressure in visa cases did you find?

LEININGER: No. Not major government administrations. Local government officials would. The mayor of Herzliya happened to be my next-door neighbor. Yes, he would send his driver over for a visa, and I'd have to tell him to come to the office like anybody else. It didn't give me any joy in those cases. The Druze leader had a little country estate north of Haifa, and apparently had been cultivating consuls general for years, inviting them up for long weekends and things. I very quickly scoped that out, with the help of my trusty senior FSN and said, "Thanks, but no thanks. I am not going there." He was a visa pusher extraordinaire, so I dodged him for four years.

Q: Did you have any scandals in the NIV section when you were there? There were some later I recall.

LEININGER: Some years later, different group of people, different NIV chief and different FSNs, two new junior officers, none of them present on my watch. We had some characters as NIV chiefs, however. One of them was a womanizer of the first water, a wonderful, um, reputation. Another guy suffered a heart attack, I think, about every six months, because he had the worst temper of anybody I have ever worked with. He just couldn't put things in perspective, couldn't mellow out. He had a difficult home situation, a wife who found fault a lot with what he was doing or not doing for the family, including housing. Among the other penances I had to pay when I was there, I was the chairman of the housing board. Being chairman of the housing board in a place like Tel Aviv, where the range of housing was so great, from small apartments with no closet space to large villas, three stories with nearly a quarter of an acre of yard, just sets you up for complaints. That was the most contentious business I've ever been involved with. I mean, who gets the small places? Singles, staff personnel, folks with no representation responsibilitieand you end up with a sort of caste system, it seems to the outside observer, as to who gets what kind of residence. You say, okay, well, the section chief has got to have a place with representational space, for section get-togethers, official dinners, and so forth. Well, those are defensible, but then there is this vast, fluctuating real estate pool in the middle that happens to ebb and flow only under market conditions. Who is at post and without housing when this particular house becomes available determines who is going to be assigned to it. Well, this NIV chief happened to get to a post at a time when there were no such nice large places available. Although he got a freestanding villa, it was rather small. The bedrooms were about 8x10, and there wasn't a lot of storage space, and it was vertical, and people don't like climbing the stairs, and on and on. We moved him three times to find like a place that would satisfy his wife. He was very understanding, himself, "Give me a place. I don't care." But he would get home and he would catch it, and poor guy.

Q: Interesting. These are the kinds of back office issues that you have to deal with in an overseas environment. They are not always transparent, and they can be extremely intense.

LEININGER: Extremely. It affects morale. People take it out at the office, against their co-workers serving on the committee, or, against supervisors, in this case. It is really awful when it is one of your own people and you can't come through for him. They expect that when you are housing board chairman, you are going to make it right for them. In reality, you have to bend over backward to avoid the impression of favoritism, which if it existed would create even more problems among everyone else in the housing pool.

Q: Did the Embassy own all the property there?

LEININGER: We owned at that point about 60% and we rented 40%, as I recall, but we had to rent more and more as the Embassy grew.

Q: So the U.S. Government was able to buy property in Israel.

LEININGER: Yes, but purchase prices were getting out of reach. Most of what we owned had been bought fifteen or twenty years before. Even if you could make a case that we'd recoup an investment in newly purchased housing over, say, the next fifteen years, FBthe old Foreign Buildings Office, that oversees our purchase of properties abroaisn't budgeted that way. They can't spend a lot now to save even more later.

Now on the opposite side of the house, I want to mention a guy named Julian Barkley.

Q: Oh, yes, killed in the bombing of the Embassy in Nairobi in 2000 or 1998. Julian was in my class. I knew him.

LEININGER: Julian was in my class, Michael. I've got the class photo to prove it.

Q: Julian Barkley was?

LEININGER: Julian Barkley was in my entering class.

Q: What number?

LEININGER: 99th. That's under the old numbering system; they started all over again in about 1980, I think.

Q: Then I encountered him very shortly thereafter. Isn't that interesting. I was his career counselor.

LEININGER: Yes, you were that. And you know he wasn't doing particularly well at the early stages of his career. He was still an FS-3 when he got there. When I got to Israel, it was 1984. We had been in the service 13 years. I was already an OC. He was an FS-3. Julian, frankly, had a reputation of talking a good game but not delivering. In this way he off-put some of the senior FSNs, the ones he needed to depend on to do his job properly. I brought him in and said, "Julian, you are better than this. At least you aspire to be better than this. Here is what you have to do in order to rehab your reputation. You have got to actually do something, and we're going to work on developing work habits in you that will help." I have never seen anybody dig in like he did, Mike. It was great. We did a baseline EER the first year that was very frank. "Julian has got to meet time deadlines. He has got to organize his work better. He has got to make greater attention to detail. He has got to pay greater attention to supervising his FSNs, and make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing," boom, boom, boom. We laid it out, year after year, noting areas in which he had demonstrated real improvement. He got promoted before he left post, to two, and then eventually to one, and he made senior service before he died. We turned him around. I have never been prouder of any individual supervisory experience than the one I had with Julian. It was probably harder and than what the textbooks would tell you, because we were friends trying to deal with the boss-subordinate relationship. But it was also easier, because we were friends, because he knew me, and trusted that I had his best interests at heart.

Q: That is very interesting. By the time that I dealt with him in personnel, he had become much more impressive than when I had met him ten or fifteen years before. Anyway, one thing I was thinking about is what kind of relationship did you have with Israeli Arabs as far as business was concerned. Were many of them trying to get visas? Did you deal with them on other issues? Were they trying to emigrate out?

LEININGER: No, they weren't an issue. There was no particular issue in those days. Most of the Israeli population didn't regard Israeli Arabs as traitors. It hadn't come up as a point of concern at this stage.

Q: And they were not politicized against the Israeli state, at least in your impression.

LEININGER: No. Not at that state of affairs.

Q: Did they get the same benefits? I mean did they get as much money for their schools and that kind of stuff as the Jewish population?

LEININGER: My impression is their general economic status and station in life was generally on a par with the rest of the population. The low people on the totem pole were the recently arrived Soviet Jews. They were the least of the least. And then of course the Falashas came in, and they took the place underneath the Soviet Jews.

Q: From Ethiopia. But you didn't get the sense that the Israeli government was trying to in effect push the Israeli Arabs out and grab their land, causing them to be running to the Embassy to try and emigrate to America or someplace else.

LEININGER: No. Israeli Arabs were full citizens, unlike the Palestinians. Israeli Arabs served in the military like everybody else.

Q: Isn't that interesting. So did any of them come in for visas just to visit the U.S. Did you see many of them?

LEININGER: Just in proportion to the population. They mostly lived in north, the outskirts of Haifa, and toward the Golan Heights area. It was our consular district. When they got visas, they came back.

Q: Isn't that interesting? How did you get along? You talked a little bit about Pickering. Who was the DCM when you were there?

LEININGER: We started with Bob Flaten, and he became ambassador to some African country [Rwanda] along the way, and then Art Hughes, who became Ambassador to Yemen, I think, and eventually headed up the MFO (Multinational Force of Observers).

Q: How did your relationship with them go?

LEININGER: It was extremely good. Bob and I were golf buddies. Art never played golf, but he was relatively younger, and we talked music and things like that. Both had very pleasant wives who entertained and were very welcoming. There was no feeling of condescension in our relationship when I was there as consular section chief. In fact, I was often "Acting" I was senior enough in rank that most of the time when the DCM was gone, I was his alter ego. So they were forced to trust me because they would be handing over certain portfolios to me for four weeks of home leave or whatever it was they were doing! Fortunately, again, mostly it was Pickering who was there when most of this happened, while he was ambassador. I was in good standing with him, so much so that when my four years were up, and we wanted to come back here and get my son into high school, and sit him down in one place in an American school before he went off to college, Tom asked me to stay on a fifth year as his political counselor. I said, "Tom, thanks, I am really flattered, but we owe it to our son."

Q: So you stayed there four years. You must have extended I take it.

LEININGER: Actually we signed up for "two and two" two years, home leave, two yearright at the outset. We knew we wanted to stay at least that long, before we ever got there.

Q: So you liked living in Israel?

LEININGER: We loved it. I mean it was paradise, and I mean that sincerely, after Moscow. The weather was wonderful, the people were welcoming. Fresh fruits and vegetables. The air was clean and fresh off the Mediterranean Sea. Our house was about five blocks from the Med. I used to run on the beach all of the time.

Q: You didn't have to go with bodyguards or anything like that?

LEININGER: Not in Israel proper. After the Intifada cropped up we couldn't go to Gaza or West Bank without an armed guard and an armored vehicle.

Q: Did you cover Gaza as a?

LEININGER: We covered Gaza as part of our district. But we had very little business there.

Q: Did many people come in from there trying to get visas or trying to get out of the country in your impression?

LEININGER: Nope. I think they didn't want to leave, for fear of not ever being allowed back.

Q: Yes because I guess they had very odd travel documents, the Palestinians. They didn't have passports from any?

LEININGER: Right, but sometimes carried the UN laissez-passer. So it was a really dicey situation. I mean, most wouldn't have qualified for NIV's in the first place. I think we had about a 80% refusal rate for folks in Gaza.

Q: So after the beginning of the Intifada, and even then though you didn't feel at risk in Israel proper.

LEININGER: As I said, it ratcheted up to the point where we did have a couple of EAC (Emergency Action Committee) meetings about the fact the guys had been discovered in the rubber boat with the RPG rounds, and others with the grenades. It was funny, in a way, because our security officer, Chuck Boles had lost, was it Diego Asenciwas he kidnapped n Paraguay?

Q: In Colombia.

LEININGER: In Colombia, okay. Chuck had been his RSO, and he had been Spike Dubbs' RSO in Afghanistan when he'd been killed. So Chuck was just concerned to the point of paranoia that something awful was going to happen again on his watch. So when these incidents, involving real threats to the Embassy, came to light, and we were informed only after the fact, he went crazy talking to the Mossad and Shin Bet, Israel's external and internal security agencies. They'd humor him. "Don't worry, American, we have it all under control. You had nothing to worry about at any time. Don't worry in the future." That was their attitude. "As long as we have it under control, there is nothing to worry about, and we are not going to reveal information sources and methods to you when you have nothing to worry about. We have it under control." I don't think they are so cocksure these days.

Q: How interesting. Did you travel all around the country?

LEININGER: I got up and down a fair amount, yes.

Q: But I mean as a tourist did you go to different places?

LEININGER: Yes, we went all around especially south to Eilat and around the Sea of Galilee, because they had an annual marathon up there. I ran there three years out of the four. I ran a half marathon at the Dead Sea. Oh, listen, I have got to recite this. I lay awake the other night thinking about this. Because, you know, I do a lot of running, and because my Foreign Service travels have gotten me to a lot of places, for fun I started to catalog the "Bodies of Water Along Which I Have Run." So I was on the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, and the Sea of Galilee. I have done the North Sea. I have done the Moscow River. I have done the Black Sea and the Neva River in the old Soviet Union. I have done the Rhine, the Danube, the Seine?

Q: A real watery trip.

LEININGER: ?the Tiber. I have done the Pearl River on mainland China, the South China Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean and my hometown Indian River of course go with out saying. I have done Lake Superior. I have done the Mississippi. Virtually any place there is a body of water, I have run along it.

Q: Very good my boy. You should add that to the recruiting poster for the Foreign Service. " We run beside every body of water there is."

LEININGER: Absolutely. It is the best way to get to see the world. I did an article for State Magazine after my first six months or so in Moscow about running in Moscow.

Q: Did the KGB follow you in a car?

LEININGER: Well that was the main thrust of the article. I was disappointed that they didn't; I was mainly ignored. There was one time, I am convinced, that they were testing me to make sure that I was really a runner, and I wasn't just using this as a means of scooting out of the apartment building for a meeting with someone I "shouldn't" be meeting.

Q: Or taking stuff to a dead drop.

LEININGER: I was running near Lenin Stadium, which was their Olympic venue in Moscow, and they have all their sports complexes there. Three guys fell in running behind me. Now they were in-shape guys, but they were not runners. You know, not greyhound types. These guys looked like light-heavyweight boxers. One had his nose slightly askew. There were three of them running at once, jog, jog, jog. You know how the legend is that American Indians used to run down their enemies by sending one runner at a time to tire a guy out, and then another would take over? That is the way they did me.

Q: There is a famous scene in drums along the Mohawk about that.

LEININGER: Well that is what they did. Lenin Stadium is on a peninsula extending into the Moscow River. So one of them came at me from behind. Those days I was usually running about a seven minute per mile pace, just ordinary training. This guy ran, he must have been coming at me at about a 6:40 or 6:35. So I said, "Okay," and sped it up a little bit. After about half a mile he fell back and then the second came at me. He ran even faster. We got down now about the 6:15, 6:10 range. Then he fell back. Now by this time I had run to the point of the peninsula, and the third guy cut across and intercepted me as I came up the opposite side. Now we are down around we are under six minutes a mile. After another mile he dropped back. That was the only time that I ever believed that, when I was on the run, I was under observation, or that they were testing me in any way. Now had they actually been paying attention, they would have known that I was a runner. On my weekends I would run around the Sadovoye Koltso, the Garden Ring Road around downtown Moscow, 13-14 miles in a loop, using public "rest stations," shall we say, when necessary. Those are god-awful places. You never want to use a public restroom, in the old USSR. You just don't do that. Then I rathis is now the summer of '8I ran a marathon in San Francisco, a punishing marathon up and down those hills. I ran a Ppersonal recorfirst half, in 1:22. Then we hit China town. Whew! Straight up! I crashed and burned the second half, a 1:33. I mean, I was hurting. But anyway, six weeks later, I'm "back in the USSR," and they were going to be running the Moscow City Marathon along the same course as had been run at the Moscow Olympics in '80. Remember, no Americans had participated. Now, in the summer of '82, Fred Lebow was the president of the New York City Roadrunners Club, the people who founded the New York City Marathon, and he brought a small delegation of Americans to Moscow to run in that race. Ambassador Hartman had everyone to the residence, on the veranda, before the race. I said, "What the Hell. I am not in shape; I have barely recovered from San Francisco, but I will run the race for the experience of it." Well, usuallthis is August 1usually by that time Moscow's daily temperatures are between 50 and 55, which is absolutely perfect marathon weather. It just doesn't get better than that. But that day it was 82 degrees, which is bad anywhere, but it was especially bad in Moscow, because they had little experience staging large events and even less experience dealing with warm temperatures. They simply weren't prepared, in terms of liquid refreshment, to handle the number of runners they had. On the course they served warm tea, with or without lemon, or salty, fizzy mineral water. So you had your choice at these rest stops of how you wanted to get sick. You couldn't get plain water anywhere. You had to either take the lemony tea, which soured your stomach, or you took the salty fizzy mineral water, which bubbled up in your stomach. I got quite nauseous. I ran that marathon 40 minutes slower than I had run in San Francisco. I did a 2:55 in San Francisco and 3:35 in Moscow. It was awful. But one of the young American women from New York City won the ladies division.

Q: That is a good story about the tea and the fizzy water.

LEININGER: They didn't know how to run a large public event. I mean, my wife did better, organizing impromptu 10K races on the weekends, occasionally, along the Moscow riverbank. Up to where we lived in the Lenin Hills was almost a perfect 10K. So we just moved the starting line back a little, and the finish line a little bit, and we had a 10k race. Some of our divided-spouse friends would participate under assumed names, and get written up in the Embassy newsletter. "Boris Smiley finished in 44:48." Nick Daniloff, I don't know if you remember him, he was a writer for US News and World Report. He was later on arrested by the Sovs, and held for two weeks or something without access. They suspected he was a spy. He wasn't a spy. Anyway, Nick was approaching 40, and he broke 40 minutes in one of those 10K races. Nick was a good runner. I'd try to beat all the Marines, who were about half my age. Only one of them ever beat me. Still remember his namSgt. Sancheand he went on to finish third among all MSGs in Europe in a triathlon, so I didn't feel so bad.

Q: Well, let me ask you again: do you have any observations or comments that you want to make about the Middle East political situation from your perspective of the time you were in Israel? I mean you must have. You went to country team meetings. You had a lot of neat talk. It had to be a frequent topic of discussion.

LEININGER: Then, as now, the Israelis took the approach that it is "us against the world, and no one stands up for us but us, and we have got to take a very hard and conservative line in making any type of concessions whatsoever, because we know what happens when you put yourself in a position of weakness. " They tend to take the approach, "we won't talk to those people because they are our enemies." They have always had to be brought around to the position, "You have to talk to your enemies to make peace. Those are the people with whom you have to make peacyour enemies. You have to talk to them. We had an administratiothe second Reagan administratiothat was willing to start to push the Israelis a little harder to get them to the negotiating table, to start to talk. But every time there was any progress the fear mongers would step up and scream that the sky was falling. It worked; the Labor government was booted out; Likud people came in. One step forward, two steps back. It has happened ever since, but worse. Rabin was so close they killed him. Sharon, this is the same Sharon you are dealing with today who made Sam Lewis and Tom Pickering crazy 20 years ago.

Q: Not to mention Habib when Habib was working on the Lebanese problem.

LEININGER: Lots of people on the American side. But Sharon has always been a hard case. Sharon was banned form Fourth of July parties at the residence in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila refuge camp massacres, where he reputedly decided to let the Lebanese militia in to have its way. With Lewis, the feeling was actually personal; he didn't want to have anything more to do with Sharon. When Pickering came in, the freeze-out was just maintained as a matter of principle. He didn't have any personal animus against Sharon. But from Sharon's perspective it has always been personal. I don't know that he has ever been friendly to any American diplomat ever since.

There's an article of faith I picked up during my four years there in the region, and in speaking to people who have worked in the NEA bureau both before and since it seems little has changed: anybody who goes to Israel with a pro Israeli bias ends up leaving understanding the Arab point of view more. Anybody who goes to an Arab country with an Arab bias ends up leaving with a pro-Israel bent. You immerse yourselves in these individual societies, and you get to see how they are so totally consumed with their own point of view, and cannot appreciate the fact that there are other human beings with wishes and desires and legitimate aspirations, too, who have got to be accommodated in some way. They are all going to have to live together, but neither will concede that that is the case. It has got to be maddening for people like Dan Kurtzer, who was an 0-3 political officer in Tel Aviv when I was there, and has since been ambassador in both Egypt and in Israel. He is still fighting the same issue today, pushing the same stone up the same hill as he was 20 years ago. Same issue, and the same personages. Arafat, Sharon. Maybe they are all going to have to die, wait another five years, clear off a whole new generation of political leadership.

I tell this to new junior officers at the ConGen, and I confess, "Boy I'm glad I'm a consular officer. My attention span isn't that long." I like getting into concrete, resolvable problems. I got involved with the Black Hebrew's problems; I got involved with the divided spouses' problems. I was prepared to work on those for as long as it takes. They took several years to resolve, but they were finite. They were resolvable. Most consular issues are; you fix them, or not, and move on to the next. But there aren't things that just hang over your head, amorphous, undefined, so that the parties involved don't even agree on what the problem ilike the "peace process."

Q: So you felt the siege mentality is really a dominant feature, particularly if you were in Israel, and probably if you were in the Arab country, it would be from their point of view too.

LEININGER: Possibly, but I have difficulty sympathizing with some of the Arab governments who criticize the Israelis for the treatment of the Palestinians, and blame the United States for disregard of the Palestinians, given the fact that those surrounding Arab countries have dissed the Palestinian people consistently as well. Not many Palestinians have legal status in these countries, let alone political and civil rights. I mean those governments have not provided material support or meaningful political support; they limit themselves only to gratuitous and inflammatory rhetoric. In many ways the Palestinians are stepchildren within the Arab world. Individual Palestinians I met while I was there were delightful. They are smart; they are family-oriented people. They are individually sweet, cultured, and peaceful. You see them and the Israelis as opposite sides of the same coin. They just happen to worship God by a different name. And it drives you nuts when you see what goes on, when you'd like to see total peaceful arrangement arrived at so that these people could live together. It could be an incredibly dynamic team. There is a richness of culture and of intellect there that is just waiting to be mined in a productive way. But it's now 50-60 years now of going at each other. It is a tragic waste. And that reminds mwell, later on when I got to New Delhi, it seemed to be the same thing with the Indians and the Pakistanis. Exactly the same thing. Exactly, in so many ways.

Q: Well, what else would you like to say about your experience in Israel?

LEININGER: Just that we were very glad to have had it. It was a great place to work, but it was also a great place to live in, in general. There's a good school, an excellent school, the American International School there is one of the best we ever have been associated with. The total student enrollment was something like 350 from K to 12. So class size was 15 or 20 kids in every grade, every class. You walk through the country and it is like living history. There is a Roman coin, arches are over there, and there, marble columns. The golf course has fallen marble columns left around from the ancient city of Caesarea. Marble columns left around from temples that are in play. They are regarded as part of the natural terrain.

Q: Don't hit it off the temple.

LEININGER: You don't get a free drop! My wife used to find old coins like other people find pop top lids from beer cans or something; she finds these little coins. She read heavily into archeology, did volunteer work on about six digs, including the Jesus boat in the Sea of Galilee, you know that 18-to-20 foot long vessel that is just the kind of fishing vessel used then, and it dates from the age. Jesus' apostles are said to have been on it when he did his walking-on-water.

Q: So you did four years, and you were motivated in part to come back because your son was going to go to high school.

LEININGER: Yes. He had been in Moscow for three years and in Israel for four, making seven of his most formative years, from the time he was seven until he was 13 or 14. So we came back here so he could spend some "normal" time in middle school and senior high at Lake Braddock, which had 3500 students, ten times the number of people he had been used to.

Q: Was that a difficult adjustment?

LEININGER: It was huge. As much as he had difficulty in moving from Moscow to Tel Aviv, and resented being uprooted again from Tel Aviv back to the United States, leaving behind friends he had made and so forth, fitting in at this new school was the hardest. This is like a kid moving to New York City from the middle of the sticks, plunking him down in the middle of Manhattan and saying, "Here, navigate the subway system."

Q: Right. That is always something that people on the outside just don't I am afraid grasp much about the Foreign Service lifestyle, how challenging this is to a family. We all face it, but it is very demanding.

LEININGER: You know we read all the "transitioning" literature, and we tried then to get him involved in that organization of F.S. teens put together to help integrate kids into American pop culture. Oh, this is one of my most gratifying vignettes. My wife took Hank, our son, shopping to get himself all outfitted for the beginning of school. She sent through the drill, "We want you to try to make friends and fit in and be comfortable and at ease with your new school and new classmates. Maybe," my wife said, "maybe we should wait like ten days or so and you can see what all the other kids are wearing so you can buy the style of jeans and shirts and whatever that they are wearing." He turned and said, "Mom, do you really think I really care about what other people think of the clothes I am wearing? Do you think I would make friends with somebody who would only make friends with me because I am wearing a certain style of clothes?"

Q: He is more grown up than a lot of kids.

LEININGER: We were blown away. So he just bought what he wanted to buy, and that was that.

Q: So he was able to make an adjustment.

LEININGER: He was. It is interesting. Within about six months or so of living in the United States, and interacting with so-called normal kids, he said, "You know, I feel pretty awkward." Okay, what is coming now? "Because I am about the only one who watches the news on television or reads the newspaper."

Q: Yes, he had the perspective.

LEININGER: Yup. "Big wide world out there, and what happens in it has an effect on us and everything we are doing." Most of these kids were just into the latest fads.

Q: So what were you looking to do in the Department? I mean did you bid on several things?

LEININGER: I should take a half a step back. I mentioned earlier on I had been involved in ConGen training. I had been on the Board of Examiners. Well, also during most of those years, I was involved on the board of the Consular Officer's Association. I was a member of the board, and I was vice president for a year, and then I was president. Now for historical purposes, since the Consular Officers Association doesn't exist as a functioning body any more?

Q: It doesn't?

LEININGER: No. You recall it was a combination quasi-lobbying group within or alongside AFSA, for consular officer rights. And it was also a consular officers' consciousness-raising society, to raise our own conception of ourselves, to an extent, because everybody had gotten beaten down by those years of being regarded as small- picture people, only concerned with green eyeshade rules and regulations and procedures, and not displaying any foreign policy sense, and blah, blah, blah! Well we were fighting all those issues, not the least of which was career advancement.

Q: Exactly.

LEININGER: You know, how do we get our fair share of DCMships and principal officer positions? How many years do we spend in class before we get promoted from one grade to the next?

Q: Because this comes back to you know an old theme in the Foreign Service, certainly since the Rogers Act of 1924, which is that the admin and consular side perceive themselves and are often perceived by the other side, the political and later the economic specials both as not quite full-fledged officers, not quite? whatever.

LEININGER: "Substantive."

Q: Right exactly. I mean this is a perception issue in many ways as much as it was a reality, but that was a fact of life.

LEININGER: Yes, because anybody who dealt with immigration from the Soviet Union wasn't dealing with a substantive issue? Anybody who dealt with protection of Black Americans, Palestinian Americans in Israel, those were not substantive issues? The whole thing was just a farce on its face for so many years, but we lacked the voice to communicate that.

Q: So you have a consular officers group to try to push these issues.

LEININGER: There were 500 members at its peak. We had a lot of people involved. We had a monthly publication.

Q: Oh, yes, I remember it well.

LEININGER: We did various kinds of exposï¿½s of various personnel issues, such as the zone merit promotion system. And the McBer report, which established the list of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and personal qualities needed for success in the Foreign Servicthe ones still used today at BEX, and also as benchmarks in our Employee Evaluation Reports. I wrote almost all those articles. So I had this sort of activist bent. This goes back again to when I was in university: you have a grievance; you work the system to get it resolved. Okay, the best way to get involved I thought, was on the inside, to get a job as a career development officer. A CDO. Learn how the system works on the inside, explain it to other people. How do you get promoted? How do you get the assignments you want? I seemed to do pretty well for myself, though to some extent I fell into it, as with my Moscow assignment. But by the same token I was doing some good things in places and times that were important. And I was going to country teams, and I was speaking up, and I was doing so from a rather principled position in most cases. I wasn't just spouting blather. So there are ways and ways of being both a self-promoter, and a promoter of the consular function. Being a Career Development Officer, I thought was the way to go. I also had a slight inkling, a remembrance in my head about that time when my career development officer had failed me, remember, when I was seeking a place with an English speaking school. That was the only thing I wanted when I was at the University of Southern California, and they sent me, or were going to send me, to Palermo. I said to myself, "No, we can do better than that."

Q: It is important to say that each grade or series of grades of consular officers was supposed to have an advocate within the personnel system, a career development officer was supposed to be your advisor, work on your assignments and explain to you in a sense how the system worked and how you were to benefit, and get ahead and make a contribution. A lot of those people were frankly, unfortunately in those jobs incompetent. I mean we have to say, not all, but many.

LEININGER: They didn't not care; they simply didn't know how the system worked. They did all they could, but they really couldn't explain it.

Q: Right.

LEININGER: So I put my name in the hat, and got quickly snapped up. There were only two of us in the consular branch at the time. Myself, and my initial deputy, Vince Battle, who went on to be ambassador to Lebanon. And then June Kunsman came in as Vincent's replacement. We had a clientele base of about 600 consular officers, from tenured '03's up through 1's. All the mid-grade consular officers. Our star pupil, client I guess we should say, at that time was a newly promoted FS-2 named Maura Harty. She made 2 in seven years. Just unbelievable.

Q: A really good example of the new type of people that, shall we say, a reformed consular business was able to attract. I mean you could see the difference between the '70s and the '80s.

LEININGER: You know what was interesting about that? Maura actually chose to become a consular officer. She entered, I think, as political officer but chose to re-cone as consular. Of course she had the right assignments afterwards. She wasn't "just" a consular officer. But a lot of our star female consular officers were ones who at one point, they alleged, as the women's class action suit had it, were told they should become consular officers because that is where women belong. But by the time I had them as clients, they were hotter commodities in terms of ease of placement for the best jobs than most of the men in the consular corps. They were, simply, better officers. Most of the senior leadership we have in the consular cone, still, to this day dates from that era, when they were implicitly or explicitly told, "You really shouldn't try to be anything else; competition for the political cone is really very severe. You should think about consular work." Well we got the best. We really did. Maura is emblematic.

Q: Maura Harty has since been ambassador to Paraguay and is now the assistant secretary for consular affairs.

LEININGER: But I tell this next story on her all the time. It amuses her no end; you will see why.

Q: Was she the first person specialized in consular work to become assistant secretary?

LEININGER: To my knowledge.

Q: That gives you an idea because the general pecking order tended to be that although you had the consular business, the head of that was always somebody that had a non- consular specialist, and often came in knowing very little of consular work, and often was a political appointee.

LEININGER: Often was. Maura, at that time had made here O-2 coming out of Bogotï¿½ which then, as now, is a hellacious place to be a consular officer.

Q: Very demanding.

LEININGER: But she did very well, as could be expected. She just had her pick of all the assignments she wanted. She said, "Wayne, I have worked very hard here. I mean, its pressures have been grueling. I would like to go to Madrid." Well you know, Madrid, for a Latin American consular specialist is like Valhalla. You die first in Latin America and then you go to Valhalla in Madrid. I said, "Laura I am sure I can get you that job pretty easily. You are going to be a very easy placement, but think about it." I was harking back to my experience and those of colleagues leaving Moscow going to cushy places. I said, "You are going to really find yourself feeling like you're wasting your time there within five or six months." Aha, she said, "Well let me try it anyway." So we got her the job. Within five to six months she had volunteered to go and open up the Baltic posts and then came back to CA as staff assistant.

Q: I dealt with her at length. I knew here very well. Did you get the sense that well there are two parts of the puzzle. One is that you had to have capable people, and the other is you had to have jobs you could get them into. Did you get the sense, this is at the end of the '80s, that you were able to do both of these things? That is, that you had better people and that you could get them into DCM and principal officer positions?

LEININGER: This is where we had to undertake major educational efforts. The Consular Officer's Association was still in existence. One of the last pieces I wrote for them was at the request of John Hotchner, the editor of the newsletter, who was a civil service fellow as you might know. He had been sort of a mainstay at COA for, God, almost its entire existence. He said, "Give me some tips for consular officers for getting ahead and getting these DCM jobs." What we found was that the out-of-cone jobs were necessary to make you well-rounded, and in turn to be competitive for leadership positions. Yes, keep your hand in the consular field, but get out of cone experience, because very, very few "pure" consular officers got those better jobs. The system wanted people with both policy and management experience to get these jobmultifunctional people, though that term had not been coined yet. Well by the time my counselees got to ml was doing the twos and oneand tried to do this, it was too late. You can't float those O-2's and O-1's into "substantive" jobs if it hadn't been dealing with, say, Palestinian issues on the Israel desk, at more junior grades. That FS-2, deputy office director position is not going to be open to them. So the strategizing has to start back a half a step. Start going out of cone at O-3. Think, after you are tenured, "Maybe I don't want three overseas tours in a row. Maybe I should come back to the Department then, and maybe serve two tours there, one in CA and one in any other bureau. Start to develop this longer-term career development philosophy."

I put it all out in my article for COA's newsletter, and I billed it not only as a matter of prudence, but of necessity. This is so because of the skewed nature of the consular position base versus the number of people in the consular cone at each grade. We have this massive number of jobs at the O-4 and O-3 levels, the service providers, so many that we have to "import" junior officers from the other cones to fill them. There are increasingly fewer O-2 and O-1 and senior consular jobs, the management positions, to go around to be filled by the career consular officers as they move up the promotion totem pole. They literally are not going to have consular jobs to bid on as they go up to the O-1 and senior levels. They are going to have to go someplace else, and it behooves them to equip themselves with some other kinds of skills so they can land somewhere they want to be, as opposed to being placed in some backwater job in some bureau we won't mention here. Because those second-tier bureaus can't attract good, quality substantive officers, they will take almost anybody. But that doesn't do anyone any good, not the system any good, nor the officer any good, to just be plunked into a holding pattern for a couple of years. So that is where we are today, with CA having to tolerate some of its most talented O-3 officers coming back from overseas and not filling CA jobs. CA has to be willing to let them go, so that at the O-2, O-1 levels and up, so that in the first instance they have very well-rounded consular section managers, who can appreciate that big picture we were talking about, but also, secondly, so CA can say with authority, "This is a consular cone officer we would like to see be made principal officer in Ciudad Juarez, or the principal officer in Montreal" and have it become so.

Q: Or Guangzhou, or someplace else. How did you find your relationship with the consular bureau where you worked in personnel, since you were dealing with consular officers. Presumably the bureau wants a lot of input into there, or did they?

LEININGER: Yes, well CA, I think, of all the "functional bureaus, "carries the most weight in the assignment process. That was the case then, and it is still the case today. CA's wishes generally prevail over those of geographic bureaus in terms of selection of personnel for consular sections overseas, even though the geographic bureaus technically "own" the positions.

Q: It does not only prevail, I would say the geographic bureaus didn't care.

LEININGER: With very rare exceptions. They generally will take CA's word for it. It started out, I think that they didn't care, because they didn't regard their consular jobs as very important. Since 9/11 the jobs are clearly more important to them, so much so that they don't want to be responsible for making a bad selection. They want to make CA be responsible. "You put that section chief out there who failed to have her people check the main data base and find out that this guy was a terrorist!" So it is the same phenomenon, but for completely different reasons.

Q: Did you ever find that you felt a certain type of assignment was desirable for someone and CA either didn't want that person, or had its own agenda, and did that cause trouble?

LEININGER: Right. 90% of the time we in the consular counseling division could come to a consensus with CA, maybe not always giving every officer exactly the one job that he or she wanted, but one of the top three. We could agree on the merits in terms of where this person had served previously, and what kind of skills and experience they had, whether it was a hardship job they previously had, and other special needs they might have. Children who need special ed, for instance, or they needed to be near the United States because of an elderly parent situation. Easily 90% of the time we could find some happy meshing of interests, I would say.

Q: And with the consular bureau's wishes as well.

LEININGER: Well, we would sit down, literally - I am sure you did towith the CA/EX analysts, and with a personelist from the geographic bureau executive office, and we would go over the vacancies, consular vacancies one by one. These are the bidders; these are the equities. These are the ones, we think, who would be good candidates. Bureaus might have something to say, CA would have something to say, and we would almost always come to a consensus on 90% of them. So 90% of those assignments were easy "done deals" no conflict. With about 5% of our bidders, we had officers who, shall we say, failed to appreciate their own standing in the grand scheme of things, and whose reach exceeded their grasp with respect to the kinds of positions they felt were suitable for themselves versus those that were actually reasonable. Sometimes these bidders would insist on being put up against the bureau candidate in forms of "shootouts" up or down votes at the assignment panels. We as their representatives were obliged, as you know, to bring their names forward to the assignments panel, even over a bureau objection, if the officer really wanted to be "run" for the job. In most cases we as CDOs had no good reason to argue that the bureau candidatwho most of the time was also one of our own consular clientwas unqualified for the job. In maybe 10% of those 5% cases, however, our reading of the facts would incline us to lead toward the challenging bidder. We felt there was some inequity there that was being discounted by the system. More hardship service, for instance, coupled with family needs. My God every once in awhile even a blind pig finds an acorn, and we could actually get that job for our bidder over bureau objections. If we did have a potential conflict of interestwo consular officers going after the same jol and my deputy would separately present their cases to the panel.

In about 5% of consular assignmentthis is now the remaining percentage of assignmentwe would find that there was a person or persons in the CA bureau who, by virtue of previous experience with this officer, or by word of mouth about this officer, had such a deep seated antipathy toward that person, that that bidder would be in effect black balled from any consular assignment of any consequence whatsoever for the rest of their careers. It was an injustice during my first HR tour, and it was being still perpetrated during the time I was in charge of the mid-level counseling and assignment division of CDA for my last assignment. Same type of experience. These were people who 15 years ago might have had a run-in with someone who now was a CA principal, who then was in some other incarnation, and that bad experience was just lodged in the back of that person's brain and it stayed there forever. So these folks get shunted off to RP or INL or some other type of exile. It is simply not fair.

Q: Talk a little bit abouthere is a lot of discussion, you certainly hear it today, and you heard it then - about the question of discipline and the notion that it had basically become impossible to assign somebody to a place they didn't want to go. That as a practical matter you couldn't. Did you find that to be true, and were you worried about that?

LEININGER: I didn't find that to be the case. Vincent and I several times assigned people to places they didn't want to go.

Q: That is interesting.

LEININGER: "This is the job that is left. You didn't bid realistically the first couple of times around. We told you those jobs were going to be heavily competed. If you would have aimed your sights a little more realistically in the outset, you could have had a middling acceptable position. This is what is left, and someone has got to go."

Q: Would you say that would be down in about the 5% category?

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: So maybe 90% of the people got something they seemed to be satisfied with.

LEININGER: Yes. I mean trying to see that people were satisfied with their jobs was not to be taken lightly. It is central to good morale and good performance. You have to take the employees' preferences into account.

Q: Oh, I know.

LEININGER: Well, I think readers of these notes have to understand it, because if you have an assignment system that blithely forces people to go where they don't want to go, you are not going to get very good performance. Morale is going to go to hell in a hand basket; everybody working around them is going to be miserable. So the goal of the system of making happy marriages, not shotgun weddings, actually serves the larger interests of the Service.

My own view is that the discipline argument is really overblown. You used to hear it a lot. It was all blather. If you look at the statistics on the number of hardship posts people serve at, it is amazing. I did a study when I was appointed to be the Director of the Director General's Policy Coordination shop. I looked at the assignment histories of people who were promoted from O-2 to O-1. This was a study of about 168 promotees, over two assignment cycles. They had been in the service at that time an average of 13.2 years. They had served an average of 2.2 overseas hardship tours, meaning, four to five years each. In addition to that, they'd served an average of five years domestically. So in fact, they had served more than half of their overseas service at hardship posts. That is average.

Q: It is surprising the number people were willing to go to the hardship posts. There were various incentives. There was a group of people that liked them.

LEININGER: They were the hardship post junkies.

Q: Exactly. They found the relationships useful and the sense of cohesion in the posts to be much better than in European posts.

LEININGER: And many of them often liked the freedom. Because those posts were smaller places, and they would be in charge of a section as a three.

Q: Exactly. Well talk a little bit about multi functionality and what it meant.

LEININGER: I am not going to do that today. It is 4:00, I am getting tired, and this is a long involved thing.

Q: It is, I know. Well we will talk about it when we resume again. That is where we will stop for the day.

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Okay, we are here again with Wayne Leininger. This is March 10, 2004. When we left off Wayne was working in personnel as the head of career development for consular officers. One of the major things that he worked on when he was there was called multifunctionality. Can you give us an explanation as to how that came about, where it fitted into the context of other events in the Bureau of Personnel, why it was important.

LEININGER: This was in the days when Personnel was still Personnel. We weren't yet the Bureau of Human Resources. We were still PER/CDA, Bureau of Personnel, Office of Career Development.

Q: And your years there were 1988 to '90.

LEININGER: It was in1989 that we coined the term "multifunctionality," to describe FSOs who had a blend of various and complementary skills and experience. First of all, to go back in an historical context, there was a growing perception of the need for Foreign Service Officers to do work other than the kind of jobs that fell into the traditional four cones: the administrative (now it is management); economic; political; and consular. There are always some sorts of jobs that are betwixt and between, such as science and technology reporting; environmental reporting; and to an extent labor reporting, although that was often regarded as a sub field of politics. And then there is refugee work, which is part of column A and column B, political and consular work.

The problem was that when someone went off to do one of these non-traditional assignments, they were stacked up in promotion panel reviews against people who were doing hard-core "real" conal work. Now, since the whole goal of the promotion system is to identify and move up to the next level those people who have the potential to perform effectively there, the boards had to weight conal performance heavily. At least, that is the way the promotion precepts were drawn. Thus, the people who were doing these non-traditional, out of cone assignments, which had very little content related to their home cones in them, were at a distinct disadvantage in the process, even if they had done very good work. If they were absolute superstars, and maybe had personally saved 200 refugees by fishing their drowning bodies out of the South China Sea, okay, fine, maybe that would get you promoted. But if you were just a political officer who had done a refugee tour of duty, you had put yourself at a disadvantage. So as a consequence, Foreign Service Officers being rational people, in the classical economic sense, the supply of people willing to do these jobs went down, because the reward for taking those positions was minimal. So while there was an increasing institutional need for people to take these jobs, there was an individual reluctance to do so. This was the micro scale.

Now on a macro scale, the system also, over time, came to appreciate the fact that you couldn't continue simply to float people into the Senior Foreign Service, where they would be encumbering jobs such as office director and DCM and principal officers and ambassadorships, who were one dimensional. That practice was, history proved, a disaster, usually for lack of managerial skills on the part of the so-called substantive people. They were in charge of large enterprises, large institutions, and were not able to weigh conflicting prioritieday-to-day management realities, versus what they considered to be their primary role, that of promoting U.S. foreign policy interests. They would slight their roles as managers, in favor of an affinity for the substantive part of the job. So, over time, it became apparent we needed to round out our cadre of people being promoted to senior ranks, by making sure in some way, shape, or form, that hey had exposed themselves both to substance and to managerial concerns during the course of their careers.

Q: Substance being the old traditional notion about policy, about policy reporting and analysis and recommendations about policy. That is what the term substance came to mean.

LEININGER: Again, as we discussed last week, consular officers and administrative officers, who do this kind of work in an overseas environment invariably deal with substance, policy, and political concerns, because of the environments in which they are working. You just can't get along in any overseas environment without taking the bilateral political relationship and local political and economic systems into account.

Q: So this was perceived to be a problem.

LEININGER: This was perceived to be a problem, and that led to an institutional desire to improve the care and feeding, the breeding if you will, of the Foreign Service cadres as they marched through the ranks, in preparation for going into the Senior Foreign Service, and at the same time generate a supply of people able and willineager, eveto take some of those "non-traditional" positions.

Now, a couple of external developments started to press the mix a little bit. First of all there was a review in Congress of our alleged failings in certain areas of running our own personnel business properly. A commission, which came to be known as the Thomas Commission, reviewed the way we recruited, trained, promoted people through our system, and came to the conclusion after long study that our traditional four cones simply weren't doing the job, for some of the reasons I indicated before. People were not being rewarded for taking assignments to these non-traditional but increasingly important jobs in the latter part of the 20th, and now we are in the 21st century, given the realities in which we live. These kinds of non-traditional jobs are becoming more and more important. We are creating more of these kinds of positions. Yet, Thomas rightly foresaw that we were not going to be getting people, quality people anyway, to come forward to take these positions, because the real go-getters, the ones who had ambition and talent, are going to be sticking to traditional conal work. Thomas recommended we create 15 cones. Every micro field you can imagine would have its own competitive career track. Now that, from the standpoint of a non HR, non personnel professional, might have sounded attractive, because everybody would be rewarded for doing his or her work within their own little fields, and that would make everybody happy.

The problem was that the number of actual positions that could be accorded to any of these sub-fields, like science and technology, say, over the entire range of Foreign Service position classifications, from the FS-3 through senior levels, would be perhaps three dozen, total, worldwide. So we would have a cone which would be comprised of three dozen positions and maybe four dozen officers, because you always have some people off in training, out-of-mini-cone jobs, or on leave without pay. This small group would essentially be locked into dancing through these same few positions, competing among each other for these same few promotion opportunities, forever. The fields would simply be so small as to preclude any real movement, geographically, substantively, or promotionally. Once someone got promoted to a job, the only way you would ever get anybody else to move up is if someone else at the top died. And one or two people might "attrit" in a given year at the top, and one or two promotion opportunities would trickle down. This is the way promotion opportunities are calculated you recall. Having micro cones simply was unworkable. You were never going to have that happen. But the Department was reluctant to stiff the Congress completely on the basis of that technical argument, as sound as it was.

Q: It is important to note, there were a big, you touched on it, but there was a big proliferation of in effect sub specialties in the '80s and '90s, environmental, you already had labor. You began to get narcotics, you know, science and technology, some of which would spill to environment, some of which wouldn't. Then all of the little subsets within the field of international organization. Not just the UN mission but food and agriculture. There was a whole series of things they wanted people to be able to do but the traditional system they didn't know how to fit them in to a career path to do this stuff.

LEININGER: That is what we are getting at. That is a good explanation, for the non-professionals who might be reading this. Anyway, that was one recommendation that the system had to consider and respond to. We had to answer to Congress on this. We couldn't just say, "Get out of our business." Department principals would be called to testify. Every time we had a nominee go up, a new DG, a new Undersecretary for Management or something, they always got grilled. "Well what are you doing about these recommendations?" Well sort of as an internal defense mechanism, the State Department management commissioned its own report to look at how we were managing our human resources. Were these four cones sufficient or not? This was headed up by Jerry Bremer, who these days has gone on to much bigger if not better things in Iraq. But in those days, he was a relative neophyte to the business. He was a protï¿½gï¿½ of, I think, the then undersecretary for management, and was more or less given an unwritten mandate, "Give us something we can use to counter this thing we have got from Congress. We have got to respond to it." Well, he went at it long and hard, drawing on the internal resources of the Department, and came out with his own version of what we should be doing, that boiled it down to "two cones." We would have "substantive officers," getting back to the traditional definition of "substance." They would have to deal with foreign policy and negotiations and so forth. And "management," into which consular affairs and administrative affairs would fall, as would certain other areas, say, refugee program administration.

This schism between "substance" and "management "was and is of course ongoing, but in those days it was even a greater divide between segments of the Foreign Service populace. These terms, "substance" and "management skills" were used as buzz words to slag each other. Political officers who ascended to DCM positions and failed were poor managers, and conversely consular officers or administrative officers who vied for such positions and were denied them were denied them because they lacked substantive experience. The whole business of who is on top, and who is better, and what do we really need, was only going to be exacerbated by formalizing that kind of divide into a permanent hierarchical structure within our HR system, as the Bremer proposals would do. This is the considered view of the professionals within PER. Not just of Foreign Service professionals but also of our civil service colleagues. I have to give major props here to people like Alex De La Garza, who was at that time head of PER's Office of Resources and Management analysis, and who later went to be become a DAS in the Bureau.

Q: He was very astute.

LEININGER: He foresaw the consequences of and pitfalls of both the Thomas and the Bremer commissions, because neither one of them would ultimately result in the kind of fully integrated, harmonious, and productive workforce we wanted, one with a wide range of skills, and one that would not be at each other's throats, competing for all these various opportunities. So PDAS Bill Swing?

Q: You mean principal deputy assistant secretary for personnel, Bill Swing.

LEININGER: ?yes. Bill more or less got Ray Ewing, who was my immediate boss as director of CDA, and Alex De la Garza together in a room, and told them, "Fix this thing. Come up with a proposal that will satisfy the underlying thrust of these reports, without wrecking the system entirely." Ray very quickly delegated CDA responsibility to me?

Q: CDA being career development and assignments.

LEININGER: ?to sit down with Alex and come up with an alternative to both of the reports.

Q: Why did they put that to you? Was it, I mean there were a lot of people working there, why do you think they gave it to you?

LEININGER: Partly, I think, because I had been more or less prepping for this kind of work my entire career. I had been a co-coordinator of a training division here at FSI. I had been on the Board of Examiners. I had taken the public administration masters degree program in public administration at USC, and I had a decent amount of experience within the personnel system and my experience as head of the Consular Officers Association. I knew the way these things were supposed to work; the way promotion opportunities were calculated. No one had to tell me the way RMA and the Office of Performance Evaluation (PE) went about doing these things.

Q: So Ewing asked you to take this question on.

LEININGER: And Alex and I went round and round with each other in trying to figure out a way to reward people who were doing these non-traditional jobs, but that wouldn't so divide the population down the road that we would have internecine warfare over this whole thing. We wanted not to have it be an exclusionary elite of multifunctionality. We figured that sooner or lateand in this we were more prophetic than we knew at the timthat having a multifunctional designation would mean that you were perceived as being "better" than straight conal people, because this combination of managerial and policy skills was, after all, what management was saying it hoped to develop in order to have a more versatile and talented Senior Foreign Service cadre. From which, in turn, would be selected our DCMs and ambassadors and so forth. So we didn't want to create a simply stand-alone multifunctional cone. That would only serve to exacerbate the rivalries within the traditional cones. Moreover if it were going to be a standard stand-alone cone, we'd have to get down to this business of having to identify specifically for promotional purposes a number of specific positions that could be used to comprise the cone, and that would be a monumental undertaking.

Thus, the difficulty of identifying multifunctional positions in each grade level against which promotion opportunities could be calculated was another technical issue that drove us away from the idea of attempting to establish a stand-alone exclusionary fifth cone.

It was just about this time of year, March, '89 that I was in the middle of a training run for the Boston Marathon, the eleven mile mark, coming up the road from Accotink Park in Springfield, when, like a flash of light, the solution came to me. Instead of having a separate, stand-alone, exclusionary cone that would have to have dedicated promotion opportunities and in which, people, once entered, would be stuck forever, the new multi-functional cone would instead be billed as an "alternative primary skill code." Now what does that mean? An alternative primary skill code simply means that as long as you had the multifunctional skill code, you could compete for promotion that way, and compete in your home cone. How do you acquire that skill code? By serving in a job that embodied those aspects of multifunctional expertise that previously you lacked. If you were a so-called substantive officer, you took a managerially-inclined job. If you were a so-called managerial officer, you took a policy-inclined job. Now, certain positions, in and of themselves, were so inherently well rounded, like DCM positions, that completing a tour of duty in them could get you multifunctional designation. Even an FS-2 could be in a DCM position, embodying characteristics of both management and policy, and that service in that position would qualify you to hold that alternative primary skill code for the duration of your time at that grade. So you could then compete for promotion on that basis with others of your grade who had similar kind of well-rounded experience to get up to the next level. At the next level, you lost it. It wasn't a permanent designation. Once you got promoted to the next level, you had to have a similar kind of qualifying experience in order to again compete along multifunctionally. If you didn't want to compete along those lines, that was fine. You still had your original conal identity to rely upon.

Q: But the key thing was a certain amount of numbers of promotions would be set aside for the people who had done God's work, if you will. In other words if you had the skill code, then you would be considered for promotion against others of that skill code against a certain amount of promotion numbers. That is the carrot to get people to do it.

LEININGER: Right exactly. And yet it wasn't something people could just do once in a career and rest on their laurels. They had to continue to renew it if they wanted to continue to compete as a multifunctionalist, as well as a conal specialist. This "two chances to be promoted" in the same year became popularly known as "two bites of the apple."

Q: Because in a given year, if you had both skill codes, you could be considered in both categories, and considered against promotion numbers in both categories.

LEININGER: Correct.

Q: So this idea comes to you in the spring of '89.

LEININGER: Spring of '89. Now we wanted to get this done, because we had at least in principle some sort of deadline set up by the Congress. We needed to be able to testify. But the promotion panels were going to be sitting down in June, and precepts for multifunctional promotion did not exist. Nothing. We, Alex and I, were sort of saying, "Well, we did our part. Now this is going to get tied up with AFSA for at least six or nine months. We'll have lots of time to do all the background work to get this up and running for next year's promotion cycle."

Q: AFSA being the American Foreign Service Association.

LEININGER: The American Foreign Service Association, which has bargaining rights on matters such as this, the means of promotion. Not on promotion numbers, but on means of promotion. So Alex and I were almost relying on AFSA to throw a spanner into the works, to slow it down, so that we didn't have to do a crash project and come up with some meaningful operational program within the span of the next two and a half months before the promotion panels were sitting. Somewhat to our dismay, AFSA rolled right over and bought into this program in about 10 days.

Q: That is amazing.

LEININGER: It just threw us for a loop. We had to advertise the program, and solicit people to self-nominate the first time around. We had to have CDOs of all the self- nominees examine their recent assignment histories, to determine whether or not their service in what kinds of jobs, at what grades, over what period of time actually met our criteria. I had to draw up the regulations that defined those criteria. Just sitting down and writing regulations is something I had never done before. Putting all this into Volume 3 of the Foreign Affairs Manual had to be done, and, traditionally, it took months to get even the most innocuous of regulatory change cleared through the system. And all of these details had to get approved by AFSA. Well, once they bought into the principle, it was "Just let's go for it, full bore." Rather surprisingly, we did get, I think, a first year population of about 600 people, across the span of the eligible grades. Now, we didn't include seniors in the multifunctional program because seniors compete classwide anyway. But those at the three, two and one levels could compete. We didn't include junior officers, as a mater of principle, because we regarded the junior officer responsibilities as not sufficient at that level to qualify an officer as a promising multifunctionalist at the mid-grades. You had to begin doing it as an FS-3. So junior officer rotational jobs, for instance, JORPS, just never entered into the calculation of someone's qualifying experience for multifunctionality. Beginning at the FS-3, -2, and -1 levels, we looked at the self-nominees' credentials as to where they had served, under what conditions, and the substance of the job. We often had to pull position descriptions of these jobs, which was hard to do because the system was in no way set up in those days to do it. None of the PE position descriptions were computerized. You had to actually go into someone's old EER files and look up their work requirement statements. Then you get down to this little Solomonic thing. What percentage of this person's position was devoted to management as opposed to policy? What proportion was sufficient? I remember we convened in-house wise men's panelvery sexist, but they were in fact all men. Harmon Kirby was head of PE at the time?

Q: This is performance evaluation, which organizes the promotion panels and so forth.

LEININGER: Harmon helped decide which positions overseas, or domestically for that matter, could in and of themselves be considered to be multifunctional. How does Harmon Kirby know what is involved in every position? There is no logical reason to conclude that he knows more than you or I. But through the sort of panel we put together, we tried to obtain a consensus on what jobs we all could agree on, and there was a whole range of ones that well maybe you want to do more research on, and so on. It consumed us, in the early spring and early summer of that year, '89, putting together those lists and devising the program modalities and bringing it actually up and running. As I said, we had about 600 people. The balance between cones was relatively in proportion to the conal populations, which was surprising. And then that first year, we had actual multifunctional promotees, that first fall, come out of it. It was very gratifying, because in many cases these were people, good officers, who languished in grade six or eight years as, say, threes, which is excessive. But they had gotten stuck because they had in been doing these non-traditional, out-of-cone types of jobs that were valued by the system in its rhetoric, but had never been rewarded before in terms of promotion. So we did in fact move people up who were doing good work, who were very able. These people had been getting extremely good reports. But again, going back to the way the conal panels had performed their duties, they were obliged to look for good conal performers at the next level, not broad gauge people at the next level. So we did release a whole pent up wave of people to move up the ladder who previously had not had a chance, or a miniscule chance, of advancing in their careers.

Q: And also you got the attention of everybody else who saw that promotion numbers would be available in this category.

LEININGER: Yep, and that sort of leads us to the next stage in the evolution of the multi-functional program. Once officers began to see that this was in fact a viable means to being promoted faster, the two bites of the apple, more and more people began to seek out-of-cone work. This was a great boon to bureaus like Refugee Programs, which previously had to scuffle for officers to staff its positions both abroad and domestically. International, IO, Organizations, liked the program. A lot of bureaus, such as INL, International Narcotics and Legal Affairs, that previously were on the periphery, began suddenly to have bidders seek them out, because they wanted to have this multifunctional credential added to their portfolios. This, of course, was one of the goals we had in mind in creating the multifunctional program.

Q: Right. Even unattractive desk jobs began to have a little cachet about them.

LEININGER: Now this also presented some minor conflicts for career development officers, because most of us, again, were conal in nature, and at least we consular CDOs worked hand in glove with the Bureau of Consular Affairs. We liked to see to it that important consular jobs got filled with good people. Yet we also had an obligation to our counselees to give them the best possible long-term career development advice, which in some cases meant, "Step away form consular work, George. You have been doing it 12 years in a row. You haven't been doing anything else to round out your background as a full-fledged Foreign Service Officer that will make you competitive, eventually, for principal officer, DCM or other broad gauge positions." So we sensed this conflict. Elsewhere in the Department, the previously second-class functional bureaus, as they were called in those days, such as INL and RP and IO, and Human Rights, began now to have some clout in the recruiting wars against the geographic bureaus. The geographic bureaus traditionally controlled the really important Washington jobs, the desk officer positions that helped make or break your career in the eyes of people who were higher up in the hierarchy within the bureau. And those people eventually being the ones who sat on DCM committees and helped select people for leadership jobs. The geographic bureaus in the past had very large amounts to say about not only that, but also about overseas follow-on assignments. If you got somebody good into your desk job in Washington and they did a bang up job for you, then you could get them that chief of section position in Tokyo or in Bonn or where ever they wanted. And so the geographic bureaus, before we had multifunctionality, really had things rolling in their direction when it came to having the pick of the best officers for their domestic positions, because they held out to them the promise of being able to assign them to their overseas positions at will. It was a wonderfully closed circle, and they were happy that way. Once we introduced multifunctionality however, and the functional bureaus started to have a little cream-skimming ability of their own, there grew to be increasing tension among the domestic bureaus for competition in recruiting wars that previously hadn't existed. Now you can say this is a healthy thing. It is the marketplace having its way here, and officers got to have a little more negotiating room as well, because they might be being wooed by RP, on the one hand, and they were hoping to be getting EUR's interest on another position. Officers were much less at the bureau's mercy, to be left dangling for weeks and weeks, while the bureau made up its mind. Officers could play a little card and say, "Look, RP wants me now. They have offered me the job. Am I a candidate or not?" So to an extent it empowered a bidder to have his other jobs out there, and other bureaus interested in him, for what were now promotable positions, which in the past were not.

Well, let's take this now to the next step. The functional bureaus that had real jobs that actually met the definitions that we originally envisioned for multifunctionality, that of rounding out people's substantive portfolios, professional portfolios, substance and management, were benefiting. There were other bureaus that had jobs, or even some jobs within those same bureaus, that had virtually no content at all. They were strictly procedural paper shuffling jobs, staff aide positions being foremost among them, and for that matter a lot of the jobs in the Secretariat, S/S, on the line. They were operational, completely oriented toward moving paper and information, bringing matters to other people's attention so that appropriate action could be taken. Very little if anything meaningful was being done by the officer involved at all. We who were in charge, objectively we hoped, of assessing the equities and qualities of the jobs that were coming up to attempt to qualify people for multifunctionality, gave very little credit to positions like that, and we were turning people down, again and again. This made both the affected officer and the sponsoring bureau unhappy, but we were able for a while to hold the line. Well, the first chink in the system of principled analysis of these positions came just a couple of years after the creation of the program.

Q: I saw it when I was?

LEININGER: It was in '91, when I was in the policy coordination shop for the Director General. S/S?

Q: Just to interject by bizarre accident of history since both of us are sitting here doing this interview. It happened that I ended up following Wayne Leininger in personnel position, and it fell in to my hands to be the coordinator of multi functionality.

LEININGER: That is why you find this fascinating, and all the rest of the readers are falling asleep! It was S/S, first of all, that felt the bitthe loss of some of its prime candidates to other bureauand that had the inclination and the muscle to put the arm on CDA, and tell HR that, "You have got to change the parameters in designating jobs multi-functional, and you will start with our jobs."

Q: Exactly. I mean this is the question that I was going to ask you; I saw the system working myself, and implemented a lot of it. I thought there was a great deal to it, but what I began to see was that the political and economic side of the house, God bless them, began to or set out because the key thing that they saw was not only the issue of developing desirable officers, people who could manage and also write good reports and so forth and analyze political terms, but simply could get promotion numbers. Let's be realistic about the system. What many of them began to attempt to do was to get jobs classified as multifunctional that they happened to be in, or going to go in, that really to an external observer of this system really were not multifunctional at all. Because it wasn't a question of having the political job be a political job. They wanted to go into a political job and come out of it with a multi functional cone, skill code designation, to compete for the promotion number. The probable places like the Secretariat was it seemed to me, that if they were, or not, if they were anything. They obviously performed an important function, no question about that, often a very critical function. But how to denote that, and if they were one thing or another they were basically not multifunctional positions. They just weren't. You weren't writing political reports. If they were anything at all, they were managerial jobs. What this meant was?

LEININGER: But even that was minimal. It was procedural managerial rather than?

Q: That's right. You weren't running a budget or managing other people generally.

LEININGER: Also it has to be pointed out to the reader that those jobs became their own rewards in terms of onward assignments. So they were still "salable" positions; just not so much as before.

Q: Oh, they were. They were great onward tickets, but Foreign Service people immediately wanted to be promoted from them. So you began, and also as you mention, all around the Department there are people who function as staff aides to all kinds of principals. And the principals who managed the staff aides naturally wanted to get the staff aides promoted, and they also began to push for having these jobs designated as inherently multifunctional, when in most cases it was making sure the principal made it to the plane on time.

LEININGER: Exactly, or having the right papers in the brief case. Again I don't denigrate that function. It is very important to keeping the wheels moving, but it just was a problem, trying to square that activity with the original concept of multifunctionality.

Q: Especially now, when you put it in context of what was originally hoped for, is to develop people who had essential skills for senior leadership in the department because here is the thing that I saw, and you can comment on it. This isn't my interview, but the consular and admin people really took this stuff to heart and began to jump regularly into what you would thing of as substantive positions to get a multifunctional designation. I really did not feel that on the other side of the spectrum, the political and economic were doing anything like the contrary, where in turn they were trying to change the rules of the game and the definitions.

LEININGER: And co-opt the program.

Q: In essence.

LEININGER: But in the early days it was more bureau driven than individual officers. Well, I take that back. In the very early days, we were classifying individual positions. That is essentially what was happening. People were arguing their own position descriptions, PD's, as the basis for "my job should be multifunctional." That did phase out, once we completed the initial, universal cut. But the larger issue came back again later on, when I took over CDA/ML. No one was arguing individual jobs. When I went back to head up midlevel career counseling and assignments, in the time period of 1999 to 2001, we had the entire Global Affairs conglomerate, which covers five or six bureaus, approaching the Director General at the time and demanding that all the positions in G be designated as multifunctional across the board, all of them. They argued that they needed that designation as a recruiting tool. And our DG rolled over. To me, that was the beginning of the end. Promotion panels could discern no perceptible MFL elements in the EERs of officers in those jobs, and the negative feedback along those lines began to taint the program and led to questions about its standards. Now multifunctionality has been declared dead, but in a way was reborn in a manner truer to its roots by the new emphasis on "generalist" credentials.

Q: Right, isn't that interesting.

LEININGER: But to me particularly as one of the godfathers of the cone, and to others who had attempted to interpret it and apply it fairly?

Q: Not the cone but the skill code?

LEININGER: I have to correct my own terminology. Those of us who tried to administer the program objectively and clearly, this drove us nuts, because we did see it as a perversion of the original intention of the program. It had never been intended to be a means of recruitment advantage of one bureau over another. Least of all should we have been changing the definitions of multifunctionality to suit the aims of a given bureau. MFL's goals were to take the meat and potatoes, real work of the Foreign Service and make sure people were motivated to come forward to do it and recognized and rewarded for doing so.

Q: Right, but also for producing people in the long run who had both skill sets if you were going to be senior managers, senior directors of things.

LEININGER: Right, in the process we'd make better Senior Foreign Service Officers. But as I was leaving ML in 2001, I was seeing more and more of this lobbying for across-the board MFL designation. It was discouraging.

Q: Well, we will come back to that because that is a way of when we get up there, of in kind of assessing over a decade what all this sort of meant because you saw it at both ends, at the beginning and after.

LEININGER: But I do want to comment. When I said "discouraging," I meant in the abstract. The program was still doing some good when I was in ML, too, because we had three political cone CDOs doing CDO work, which was not advantaging them at all in competition with their political cone colleagues for promotion. They were out of the mainstream, but all three of them got promoted, multifunctionally, during my tenure there.

Q: I know. There were people who could see the point of it.

LEININGER: Two from O-2 to O-1 and one of them crossed into the SFS.

Q: That is amazing. Very good.

LEININGER: And as you well know, dealing as a CDO with a clientele base of several hundred, dealing with bureaus, dealing with your own HR hierarchy, and dealing with several co-related programs you usually had as a sideline projects, staffing of hardship posts or whatevethat is inherently managerial work.

Q: Absolutely, and you weren't writing political reports in Personnel.

LEININGER: But the aspects of analysis, and forecasting long-range impacts on our employee base, were things that most political officers never think about.

Q: No, exactly. It was an excellent training ground for me. So you got that up and running.

LEININGER: Got it up and running.

Q: This is in '89, an so '90 was the second year.

LEININGER: Second year, and we did follow-up analyses, and found we had a good participation rate.

Q: In fact it began to be a critical thing that people had to be notified of the annual MFL open season, because a number of officers came forward and claimed they never got the message, and were never allowed to compete, and were in a sense able to grieve the system and get extensions, and so it was kind of interesting. So it became a very intense production to get everybody?

LEININGER: The program became, to an extent, a victim to an extent of its own success. I mean, if it were perceived as meaningless and trivial, people wouldn't have gone to such lengths to protest having been excluded. But in some cases it was obvious it was our fault in some way, we hadn't gotten the word to people. Sometimes it was a systemic fault. The people doing Pearson details, assignments to state governments for instance, in those days we had no out-of-building email. We relied upon the U.S. postal system. Maybe we had a correct home address and maybe we didn't, and maybe the announcement got delivered and maybe it didn't, who knows? So there were a lot of justifiable instances in which people weren't notified, and didn't get to come forward.

Q: Well that is a very interesting summary of that. What else were you doing in personnel? Is there anything else you want to get into in that period?

LEININGER: Well my other adjunct responsibilitand this came back to bite me a few years latewas as CDA's internal coordinator for response to the women's class action suit claims. This is in '88 to '90.

Q: Do you want to talk a little about the women's class action suit?

LEININGER: Sure.

Q: It is a pretty important social historical thing.

LEININGER: I know. Well the class action, headed by a woman named Alison Palmer, essentially accused State Department of systematically discriminating against women in its hiring, promotion, and assignment policies over a period of at least 15 years. I think the original claims went back to the early '70s.

Q: Approximately when did she initiate the suit?

LEININGER: I think the suit was actually filed in the late '70s. It was based on several years of experience, brief experience at that time, with the cone system. Then, as time went on, we annually produced statistics on the number of officers assigned to DCM, principal officers position. The plaintiffs asked that those numbers be broken down by gender, and consistently women were under represented. So the Department was in a defensive posture on the basis of statistics.

Q: Yes, right. Their argument was that you had to get into certain jobs to get promoted. Then you had to be promoted to get into certain other jobs.

LEININGER: Well, it goes back a little farther than that. It challenged originally the Foreign Service exam, especially those portions related to coning decisions. As a result, the exam had to be revalidated to make certain that the questions asked in various substantive fields were relevant to the work of the Foreign Service in general and the specific cones in particular. So BEX complied with that, using state of the art validation techniques, surveying successful practitioners in the field. "How valuable is this field of knowledge to the success of people who want to be an economist in the Foreign Service? How much weight do you give to history, and political science, if people are political officers? and so on. So the suit originally went back to the exam, and then to the rates of selection off the registers, and then the cones into which people were assigned. This last, particularly, was a bone of contention, because even though those women were accepted into the Foreign Service, a disproportionate number of them, and this is the words of the suit, were "consigned to the low status consular cone." Now of course to you and me, being consular officers, them's fightin' words, and they raise all kinds of hackles. In any event, if you look at the numbers, on numbers alone, without looking the credentials, the experiences the people brought with them into the Foreign Service, and what people themselves signed up for voluntarily to dyou just look at the numbers, and the outcomes were indeed disparate. And within terms of the law, and the stands the courts were taking in those days, the numbers themselves raised the presumption that discrimination existed. The numbers found you guilty, and it was up to you to demonstrate innocence in some way, shape, or form. Now at this stage, I wasn't dealing with any of that kind of sophisticated legal analysis. All that had already been fought out, or conceded. By the time I got to PER/CDA, we were handling individual complaints of specific female class member, Foreign Service Officers, who asserted that they had been denied an assignment to position "X," and were seeking to be made whole under the terms of the consent decree.

Q: But the point is that a finding was made by the court that the women's class action suit was a valid thing, and that remedies had to be provided in some way.

LEININGER: And we were operating under a court order to work through these things, and assess the entitlement of individuals within the class to specific remedies. To the extent that they could demonstrate, for instance, that they had been wrongfully denied an opportunity as a DCM, well then an extension of logic could be made that they were then disadvantaged in the promotion process, and that they at the end of the day should be made whole with retroactive promotion. With regard to promotions, we usually brought them back to the average time-in-class. That is, if they had exceeded the average time-in-class before they eventually were promoted, then their ultimate reward would be a promotion retroactive to their time-in-class that would have matched the cohort with whom they were competing. There was also a part of the settlement that said, in current time, that members of the class who wished to be given the opportunity to get certain types of assignments that were seen as more promotable than otherso-called "program direction" positions.

Q: Right, that was one form of remedy.

LEININGER: Yes, and what that meant was they could pick the jobs they wanted to apply for, and they had to get one of those jobs, unless there was some extremely good reason that would satisfy the court, if it came to that, why they didn't get these assignments. Now, even before a class member could get to that stage, we could present a reasonable argument that that person was not made DCM to Paraguay in 1976 because of valid, objective factors. That process entailed going back into the bid lists, not only of the individual class member/ officer, but also those of all the other officers competing for DCM Paraguay in '76, and determining who had gotten that position, and ascertaining what that person's background skills and experience might have been. And in instances where we could determine, "Yes, you bid on a DCM position Paraguay, and your candidacy was written up by your CDO at the time and went forward to the DCM Committee as you had asked. But the committee, noting that you had never previously served in Latin America, and did not have Spanish, chose an officer who had instead spent the last seven years doing work relating to central South American affairs?"

Q: Right, and spoke fluent Spanish.

LEININGER: Those were the kinds of instances, and positions, where there were reasonable factual arguments to be made, and individual claims, requests to be included in the class, could be disallowed. At this stage in the thing, '88 to '90, that is largely what I was doing within CDresearching previous assignments and bidding patterns of the individuals who were coming forward self-identifying as potential members of the class. A preponderance of the officers coming forward were consular officers. They felt themselves initially to have been disadvantaged for having been assigned to the consular cone. Now, this is when I initially experienced some frustration with both the lawyers in L, and with PER management, because in looking at the backgrounds of these individual claimants coming forward, I was able, looking at the personnel audit reports - which we now call employee profileand what other material we had in CDA files, it was clear that someone who had a degree in sociology, and had been doing inner-city counseling of disadvantaged children, who is coming into the Foreign Service is likely going to be more capable of and inclined to do consular work. That profile, in fact, was part of the problem. The universities in those days were not churning out Ph.D.s in political science to female candidates. The women who would come into the Foreign Service lacked in many instances the comparable kinds of political science and economic backgrounds that their male colleagues had. Now you can call it institutional sexism; you can call it whatever you want, but in point of fact, these individuals who were coming forward to be either assigned a cone, or even self-choosing a cone, came in with backgrounds that made it more likely in the first place that they would become consular officers. To my mind, this seemed to be factual evidence that could have been adduced and evaluated by the court, as a means of assessing the validity of discrimination claims. You'll recall as well, as I said last time, that I had looked at the profile of consular officers in 1976. Of whom, something on the order of 52% were women in those days. Of those 52%, 66% did not have a college degree. Now it is not particularly hard to understand why someone with that kind of background is not going to be as competitive broadly for leadership positions in the Department of State - Principal Officers, DCMs, or, for that matter, even going to go outside of consular work to do other sorts of things, not ever having any experience, training, education, inclination, or other preparation for doing that kind of work. That their rates of promotion would not be comparable to those of exam officers, both men and women, was beyond doubt. They did not get promoted as rapidly. Their time in class was vastly in excess of the average exam officer. Yet that same statistical group of people was used by plaintiffs in asserting that women were not promoted at a rate comparable to men. Well women were, when their backgrounds were comparable.

Q: So you did this analysis?

LEININGER: And it didn't go anywhere. I kept pointing this out to people. "See look, this is why it was so. It wasn't discrimination; there were valid reasons for this. Plaintiffs ought not to have been allowed to use those statistics; it was apples and oranges." Management essentially said, "That's interesting, but it's too late. It's just water over the dam, under the bridge, and there is nothing we can do about it." State Department management at this time was of a mind, "we just want to make it go away. " They were already at that stage.

Q: So there you were.

LEININGER: Well the experience was interesting, this reluctance of L and the Department's management to get into the legal trenches. It comes back in a later assignment. Not with the WCAthat is what we called it?

Q: The women's class action suit.

LEININGER: ?but in dealing with the lawyers on another issue, in Hong Kong, which I will get to. That time I got into it early enough to help frame our strategy, before they gave away the store. But in any event?

Q: So you spent a long time on the WCAS, a lot of work on this between '88 and '90.

LEININGER: And it was, essentially, qualifying people for inclusion in the class or, again, giving specific reasons why an individual's claims of not getting a specific job were not well founded.

Q: And as you say, by then the Department's view, I experienced some of this too, that they did not want to hear any problems, somehow take care of everybody and don't mention it anymore. I mean that was it I think in essence as you are describing it, so a lot of the people to be frank about it, a lot of the women who attached themselves to the suit it seems to me had very little valid claim, but that didn't make any difference. Often when people were bidding on assignments, I found that huge numbers of unrealistic assignments and in essence the senior people in personnel said we don't care give them one of them. I thought it was all it was. Because the remedies we were using, like one assignment or one promotion or something like that, and so if they were coming up for that assignment, if you didn't give them one, you had to be able to explain to the lawyers who would go back to the judge, and the government didn't want to hassle with any of that. It seems to me it produced, not a gigantic, but a fairly significant number of really outrageous assignments, and in many cases people then failed in those assignments.

LEININGER: Yes. Some simply weren't prepared, but some might have suffered backlash among males who felt they were now being treated unfairly, through no fault of their own.

Q: Well it was very clear the assignments thing that affirmative action was at work. Every DCM meeting, every principal officer meeting, you had to have women candidates and you had to explain, if they weren't assigned, why that was. I don't know, maybe that ultimately righted the balance, but it was an interesting phenomenon.

LEININGER: It was, but when I went back to HR10 years later to handle mid-level assignments and counseling, the issue was dead. Women were competing on the DCM and principal officer level without any special consideration. At all. You are right, it might have seemed excessive to us at that time, but it is like hitting the donkey over the head with a 2x4. Once you get his attention, then the donkey stays on the straight and narrow.

Q: Well also, you would have to say as a broader I think the point you made earlier about what educational backgrounds a lot of women had when they came in, in the '60s and '70s, by the '80s and '90s the general society was churning out people that were at least as good if not better backgrounds than men did and that was that. So that was your other major portfolio.

LEININGER: I might have mentioned this last week, but I can't remember if it was here or in other conversations, that one of the other things I did was at the request of Ivan Selin when he came in as Undersecretary for Management. He went around to the bureaus and consulted with people who served overseas, and he was continually taken aback by the number of consular officers who still in those days felt themselves to be aggrieved and perceived as second-class citizens, as the women's class action suit would have had it. By not contesting that assertion in the lawsuit, the Department seemed tacitly to endorse that view. But he asked, "Why is this. Why are consular officers perceived to be this way?" That gave me an opportunity to sit down at my little Wang word processor and put into a briefing memorandum and awful lot of the kind of stuff we've been discussing herabout, historically, "this is from where the consular cone drew its personnel." It was a mish mash cone. It had a minority of exam officers. It had people who had failed at other cones. It had people who were aspiring from the staff corps, some of whom were very good, doing straight consular work, but who did not have the ability or the desire to do much else. Consequently perception of the cone, in certain other parts of the Service came to be as less than full-fledged officer material. To this retrospective I included a little coda however. I said, "Ironically, even though the cone has been accused of being the 'less than prestigious consular cone' into which women's class action members were "consigned," it is going to be," and I put this prediction in writing, "women's main avenue of success in the Foreign Service. They are going to be promoted at a rate in excess of the general Foreign Service population for the next 10 or 12 years." And it came to pass, across the board. Our consular stars for the last, I would say, eight to twelve years now, have been primarily women.

Q: Right, exactly. More power to them I guess. So you are there for two years, and then what did you look into doing next?

LEININGER: Oh, this gets into more Bureau of Consular Affairs history.

Q: Okay, bring it on. You were looking at one of the top grades in the Foreign Service, minister-counselor.

LEININGER: Right. Early in my first year within CDA I was promoted to MC, the fall of '88, on the basis of my work in Tel Aviv. Oh, this is an interesting sidelight. I made MC, two years after I was promoted to OC; I was promoted to MC in two years, which is the minimum possible time. Your first year you lie fallow, and the next year I was eligible again and I got promoted to MC. Now that meant that under the rules in effect at the time, I would have been out of the Foreign Service within six years, since hardly anyone ever gets that final promotion to CM, Career Minister. I would have been out by 46. Something like that, age 45. There was one other person in that category with me, Pat Kennedy. Now, this was a time that, for whatever reason, RMA was examining the entire?

Q: RMA being?

LEININGER: The office of Resource, Management, and Analysis, in the Bureau of Personnel. The same office that Alex De La Garza headed up. They were examining of the career paths of Foreign Service officers from the standpoint of, "Is our flowthrough - the passage of FSOs through the rankfair and predictable, especially with regard to our obligations to the American Foreign Service Association, under the terms of the Foreign Service act of 1980?" Under the law, management is obliged to make FS career progression patterns relatively predictable and stable. That means that, for instance, in times of relatively depleted rates of attrition from the Foreign Service, because the outside economy is awful, for instance, you could have fewer people resigning voluntarily. But we would still promote slightly in excess of the actual needs, to maintain some consistency. Other times, when you have rapid attrition from the Foreign Service, you have to be conservative with your number of promotions because in previous years, you might have over-promoted. What RMA uses is a relative smoothing of promotion opportunities, over a five-year rolling average, to make them relatively stable even in hard and lean times. You also have to have a general model in mind that would support a normal career span for a typical Foreign Service Officer. Suppose someone comes into the Foreign Service at an average age of 32. It has varied, in my time, from a low of about of 28.8 to 33.5. But it has settled back around that middle area. Suppose you also wanted to be sure that person could at least retire, especially if involuntarily retired due to time-in-class limitations, with a pension. You have to get him at least to age 50. Even if he is a superstar, and gets promoted very rapidly, you have got to get him to at least age 50. To do that you have to build in certain holding areaminimum time-in-class rules that make employees ineligible for promotion at certain stages of their careerso that even if they are promoted at the first chance possible, they would at least have a 20 year career. Otherwise you get a situation like Charles Thomas, and his famous suicide, when he was involuntarily retired before he was eligible for a pension. Now, at present, we have administrative rules in place that allow us to just carry someone until the pension kicks in, but that is not the way you want to run a railroato carry a lot of people who otherwise should be out of the Service. It is better to make a predictable career progression, so everybody can more or less count on getting through to a pension, and, barring catastrophe, a 30 year career. Well the old system worked well up until the senior ranks, until along came people like me and Kennedy. I entered the Service at age 22, at the old FS-8, and made seniors in 15 years, OC in 86, and MC in 88. I would have been, again, out of the Foreign Service completely after only, what does that add up to now, 23 years. Pat would have been in a similar situation. Anybody in that circumstance of having been promoted so rapidly ostensibly has got something valuable that the system would like to retain for a little longer period of time. Especially since they are likely to be relatively young, vigorous and still able to serve with a certain degree of zeal and enthusiasm. I don't know that Kennedy's and my promotions of that year actually put the proposal over the top, but it the senior TICtime-in-class rulewhich had previously been eight years as OC and six as MC, time in class, were changed to a combined 14 years OC-MC. So regardless at what point you might make the leap from OC to MC, your total senior TIC will not be less than 14 years. As long as you made MC. If you got stuck at OC, then the maximum TIC was still eight. If you got promoted to MC rapidly, as I and a couple of other people did, then you could have a total of 14 years as a senior officer.

Q: So there you are, the changed it?

LEININGER: They changed it so I could have a futuror at least that was the net effect!

Q: So you are looking at assignments.

LEININGER: I am looking at assignments. As I indicated before, a couple of things were happening in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. This is the time that in some quarters is referred to as the reign of terror of Betty Tamposi.

Q: Right, Elizabeth Tamposi of New Hampshire.

LEININGER: New Hampshire. She had connections with the Administration. Political appointee, no previous experience in federal government at all as far as I can recall, certainly not in consular affairs. I had been watching her from the relatively safe distance of PER/CDA for about a year and a half, as one after another my clients were trashed and thrown out of the Bureau because they had come up against her crosswise on?

Q: It was very difficult and voila?

LEININGER: ?any particular issue. Staff aides were chewed up and spit out like sunflower seeds. These were some of the best people we had to offer, and she could not make peace with them. At the time I was coming up for reassignment, she had yet to fire Mary Ryan as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. But the tom toms were beating, the smoke signals were going up.

Before I bid on any "regular" vacancy, I had expressed interest in and was fortunate enough to be selected for the Senior Seminar. Ordinarily it is not open to MCs, but Pat Kennedy and I had got promoted to MC before we had barely gotten our feet warm as OCs. Usually it is OCs that go to the Senior Seminar. So Pat and I both pocketed these Senior Seminar offers. We were to become classmates. Well, I no sooner had gotten that offer,, and heaved a big sigh of relief than Betty Tamposi herself came to my office and said, "Wayne, how would you like to be the Deputy Assistant Secretary for visa services?" I said, "Ma'am. Thank you very much for the offer. I am extremely flattered. Let me think about it, but I have this once in a lifetime opportunity to go to the Senior Seminar. It is the most prestigious training program we have. If I hope to have a longer term future with the Department which I do, and in doing things other than consular work, which I do, then it would be very valuable for me to take this year sabbatical, extend my horizons, fraternizing with people from other agencies, military services, being exposed to overseas foreign policy issues and domestic issues of importance to the United States," Blah, blah blah. I laid it on really good and thick. I went on, "Then, after my year at the Senior Seminar, I would be pleased to come back to CA and take whatever position that may be available." So she wasn't particularly happy about that, but she couldn't do much about it. So she walked away, and I think eventually Diane Dillard?

Q: Diane did go into that job.

LEININGER: But in the meantime of course I am off doing the Senior Seminar. I think- [End tape]

Q: So you went off to the Senior Seminar in the summer of 1990. You might still sort of wondered, "did I do the right thing with respect to turning Betty Tamposi down for a DAS job? I mean DAS jobs don't come around, and they never did come around for me. But within a relatively short period of time, months, in the fall of 1990, Mary Ryan got fired. It is important to note Mary Ryan was an extremely popular and capable person in the State Department who held a wide range of big jobs including an ambassadorship to Swaziland I believe, and had come back to be the senior deputy assistant secretary, number two person in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Like a number of other people she was not able to work with, arrive at a modus vivendi with, Betty Tamposi like many other people and was subsequently fired about in the fall of 1990. It is interesting because later Mary came back to be the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, replacing Betty Tamposi, who was fired in a bit of a scandal in the fall electoral campaign in 1992. Mary then became the Assistant Secretary of the bureau, where she spent eight or nine years in that job. So it was another example of a very unfortunate political appointee leading to all kinds of disruption? Anyway, Mr. Leininger wisely had taken himself off to Senior Seminar, and that went on...

LEININGER: Senior Seminar was, well for everybody who went through the old-style seminar it was a full year of renewal, of growth of ?

Q: Just about what you describe in your answer to Betty Tamposi.

LEININGER: I was not exaggerating. We were fortunate in having as our dean, Bob Pugh, who had been ambassador to?I want to say the Central African Republic.

Q: He had suffered personal tragedy. His wife had passed away.

LEININGER: His wife was blown up on a plane that the Libyans blew up.

Q: Oh passed away. I didn't want to be graphic about it.

LEININGER: No, but it is important to get this in because this is what happens to Foreign Service people. That, in addition to the bombing of Pan Am 103, the Libyans also blew up the UTA plane, and the Libyans just settled it financially recently with the French. The Libyans blew up a plane, a French airliner, I think UTA, somewhere over Africa. The only American on that flight who was killed was Bob Pugh's wife. I am sure the people who cared about Bob in the department in a professional and personal way were thinking "Let's give him the Senior Seminar. He won't have to do very much, just recover." But to his credit, he did not just sit on the sidelines. He threw himself into that year and helped to make it for all of us I think, one of the most rewarding experiences we could possibly imagine. He wasn't at all commanding or directive as a dean. Maybe the loss of his wife had made him not so inclined anymore. He gave us all a lot of liberty in devising our own curriculum. Gave us certain general categories. U.S. domestic interests and issues having to deal with drugs, AIDS, the economic effects of globalization. We got into globalization back in the early '90s, because the effects of job loss were apparent in certain geographic areas, but then, on the other hand, we went to South Carolina where BMW was putting up a new plant, so global trade also worked to our advantage. We did field trips as most Seminars did, depending on the travel budget. We went to Alaska, and to other domestic sites largely connected with military. In San Diego, we visited the submarine naval base there, and the Seabee facility.

Q: How many people in the Seminar?

LEININGER: Most had between 25 and 30.

Q: How many from the State Department?

LEININGER: About 12 from State, and a couple from USIA, which in those days was a separate agency. Two or so from USAID. Four were military, the Coast Guard was represented, the FBI, a CIA person and another agency person more secret than that.

Q: And these are all senior level people in government.

LEININGER: Senior level, or on the threshold of becoming senior level people.

Q: For, in effect, a sabbatical with a lot of foreign policy involved.

LEININGER: For State folks, it was to forge, a certain degree of understanding of these other agencies' roles in the grander scheme of things, allowing us to see how we would hope to interact with them down the road. We are going to have to interact with them, realistically, so the goal was to figure out how best to make that as fruitful as possible and as conflict-free as possible. You got the idea that it would be useful to have a team, having gone through that kind of experience, that could actually talk to one another. What a concept!

Q: Did you do an overseas trip as part?

LEININGER: We did a couple. Mexico is not exactly overseas. We didn't cross the water for that one.

Q: It was foreign policy though.

LEININGER: It was tremendously so. We did immigration and drugs and economic development. We went to a dirt-poor village about 2 and a half hours outside of Mexico city, riding on a bus is still infamous in the Seminar's folklore, because the portajohn in the back was clogged and overflowing. Every time we hit a good rut in the road, a little sloshing occurred up and down the aisle of the bus. We couldn't stop it. Put it this way. Going to that third world village, getting out of the bus, was a welcome experience. It gave us a real flavor, if you will, for the state of development. But our major overseas trip was to the Soviet Union. Of course this was towards its waning days. This is now the spring of '91.

Q: No pun intended.

LEININGER: Yes, waning days, got it. I touch upon this one because you might find the historical coincidences amusing. During my assignments, or within two or three years of my departure, every major government of every place I ever served has fallen. I claim no credit. But we are talking historical proportions here. The Conservative Party lost Canada to Trudeau's Liberals. The Christian Democrats in The Netherlands lost to the Labor Party. The whole Soviet Union collapsed. The Labor Party lost Israel to a Likud/religious coalition. Hong Kong reverted to PRC sovereignty. And the Congress Party in India, which had never been out of power in the history of the country, lost to the BJP.

Q: And the sun comes up after the rooster crows every morning, but the rooster didn't make the sun come up?

LEININGER: ?but it makes him feel good! Anyway, I was a veteran of the old USSR, as was Bill Hill, who as a vice consul had worked for me there in the early '80s. Oh, let me explain a bit about Senior Seminar selection policy. Almost all participants are senior level, newly minted seniors. But every year the tradition had been that the officer evaluated the highest at our FS-1 level in the competition for selection in the War College got instead promoted, if you will, to the Senior Seminar. Bill Hill was an FS 1. Which was very fortunate for our return to the USSR, because his Russian was so much better than mine. But he and I organized the entire thing, set up agendas, worked with Embassy Moscow in getting briefings both in-house, and for that matter, we even got people from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to speak to us. We were briefed by the mayors of both Moscow and Leningrad, in those days it was still Leningrad. But while we were there, the debate was ongoing. They were going to hold a popular plebiscite to decide whether or not to change the name back to St. Petersburg. Now, Bill and I were looking at each other out of the corners of our eyes while we were walking around town. We were seeing people declaim on street corners in favor of, or against this change, handing out leaflets and so forth. There were no guys in leather jackets hovering at the back of the crowd waiting to take them away.! You could go to the Arbat in Moscow, which is sort of a central marketplace, not a fresh fruits and vegetables area but a vendors' kiosk type of thing, and people were giving out copies of the Bible! And no one was getting busted and dragged away! This was such a tremendous turn-around from our experience there, which had only been about eight years prior.

Q: This was in the spring of '91.

LEININGER: '91. I think the place was already busting out with quasi-democracy, far beyond anything we could ever have imagined in our day. As I said, in the old days, I was getting people arrested just for having visited me, and here are people denouncing Lenin and promoting the Bible, and speaking against government policies. It was amazing.

Q: So you did this for a year, and then what?

LEININGER: My son wasn't quite graduated from high school yet. I still didn't want to go overseas. I didn't want to go back to CDA again, but had no strong connections with any geographic bureau. I was still more or less homeless in terms of a home base. There were no senior level positions available, by happenstance, within CA. So I was driven back into PER again. I became the Director of the Policy Coordination shop for the Director General.

Q: What did that mean?

LEININGER: The director general's office of policy coordination is, if you will, the implementing arm to make things happen bureau-wide when the front office makes a decision that calls upon people in PE to talk to people in CDA to talk to the people in RMA, and so forth, when otherwise there would be no one to ride herd on all those different cats. They each tended to guard and run their own fiefdoms very closely.

Q: In sum, it is a staff shop.

LEININGER: Personnel policy coordination. It is a super staff shop.

Q: Not a line job, not dealing with day to day?

LEININGER: We had certain day-to-day responsibilities. We housed the labor management office. We conducted all the labor-management negotiations for the Bureau. We did all the regulations and legal changes. We maintained Congressional liaison with the oversight committees that were looking at us. We did all of the Women's Class Action stuff from a policy standpoint through our office, and we did conflict resolution that fell short of the actual grievance process.

Q: But in other words, you are not dealing with client work on a day-to-day basis. These are issue questions.

LEININGER: These are issue questions some of which were our primary responsibility, and others for which we had coordinating responsibility.

Q: So you became the director of this office in the summer of '91.

LEININGER: Late summer, early fall of '91. I was to stay there until '93.

Q: So what did you find when you got into that job as the central questions?

LEININGER: Well the bureau itself was in the final throes of a major reorganization, largely in response to Inspection recommendations. The Inspection had taken some functions out of certain offices and assigned them somewhere else. Some of the discipline stuff got taken out of PE and put over into employee relations. Regulations writing got taken out of someplace and put into PC. I had a lot of "dogs and cats people," who were taken from other functional officers landed in PC, none of whom knew the other person's job sitting next to them, had no cross training, or even an interest in learning the other person's job. And I had at least one employee who had bounced around three or four HR offices, and whose performance had consistently been sub-par. But she had a pending EEO grievance hanging over the bureau, so they were reluctant just to let her go.

Q: How many people were in this office?

LEININGER: All together we had about 13 people.

Q: All in all, pretty good size for a department office.

LEININGER: For a department size office, but again, it was a bunch of dogs and cats. Nobody could cover for anybody else. And we also played temporary host to a string of FSOmostly senior officerwho were on "overcomplement" status. That is, they were not formally assigned to a "real" position; they were just parked with us while awaiting, for instance, resolution of a security violation problem or, more favorably, a Presidential nomination. They'd be given special projects to work on, such as the proper configuration and workloads of SEPSmall Embassy Posts.

Our long-term mandate, if you will, was to try and come up with some kind of "workforce 2000" planning. "What is the State Department going to need in the way of staffing after the turn of the century, "trying to look ten years ahead. Having seen the wonderful way the old Soviet Union worked on five year plans, I wasn't too optimistic that any ten year look into the future was going to be very meaningful, but nevertheless I signed up. But in the short term, at least in the first year, the bureau was still undergoing major adjustment problems after that reorganization. RMA had lost some of its people. I think it is where the regulations people previously had been, in RMA. And in other respects we were still fighting old battles. The women's class action suit was still going on, and we still needed to get everybody to agree on what kind of remedies would be appropriate, dealing with L/EMP, the employment division of the?

Q: ?Legal bureau.

LEININGER: Legal bureau/employment, on how we were dealing with the remedies. They, in turn, worked with the Department of Justice, which was overseeing the Department's defense, such as it was, at the outset of the case, and later in the compliance phase. I, personally, of all people, had to do things like calculate the back pay to which people would be entitled for these retroactive promotions. I had to do it.

Q: Oh, people got back pay?

LEININGER: People got back pay.

Q: Wow I would think some kid got substantial amounts of money then.

LEININGER: It amounted to sums between $25,000 and $52,000 in many instances.

Q: Wow, I never knew that.

LEININGER: You know, the problem was that our payroll computer programs were never integrated full with our promotion histories. Those promotion histories, kept on the personal audit reports, could in no way be linked to payroll. So you could not automate any hypothetical change in that history. "Let's just take this person who was actually promoted in October of 1989, and presume instead they had been promoted in October of 1978. And calculate at the increments every step increase, every cost of living increase to which they would have been entitled since, and come up with the difference." No way. I had to do all of that by hand. Dumb!

Q: So you had that issue.

LEININGER: Had that issue. We also did the first issuance of regulations that enabled specialist-to-specialist conversions. An employee hired, say, as a communicator, who instead had ended up doing significant GSO work over several tours of duty, previously had no way to change specialist tracks. So we had to decide what was the minimum period of time doing that kind of work in order even to qualify to be reviewed; and, once becoming eligible for review, what standards could be applied to determine whether or not this person was competitive as a future FS-3 GSO, as opposed to an FS-3 communicator? Now, that work was very handy, it became very handy, because seven or eight years later, when I went back to CDA/ML, we actually devised a specialist-to-generalist conversion program for the first time; that had never ever been done before. You had specialists on excursion tours, and people would do two or three on end, and do very credibly, but were not able to get themselves out of their previous incarnations as specialists.

Q: Now you worked with Congress you said. You had the Congressional liaison function.

LEININGER: Congressional liaison functions for HR, nothing outside of HR,

Q: What did you find in those days, do you have any memory of any particular issues with Congress from personnel.

LEININGER: All I remember was writing Q's and A's for various confirmations. I had such a tour; constant turnover. This is one of the reasons why we never had any long-term visions come out of my shobecause we never had any long-leadership out of the front office. During my time we had two Directors General and one Acting Director General in a span of two years. We had two different Principal DASes. So we had five different willful people, many whom didn't overlap, or didn't talk very well to one another, who never could come to a consistent vision of where they thought the Foreign Service ought to be going. And oh, yes, we also had two different Undersecretaries for Management.

Q: What do you attribute that to?

LEININGER: First, we had a change in Administrations, so automatically all the Undersecretaries resigned. It was also the tag end of one full-time DAS's tour. There were DGs angling for Ambassadorships. There was a delay in naming a new DG that lasted five months. And then there was a period of about five or six months of getting used to the new person. And that person's lag time in figuring out what was going on, in a bureau in which he or she had never served.

Q: Well this is what I was going to say. Didn't you find sometimes that senior people sometimes came into those jobs in personnel who knew almost nothing about it?

LEININGER: Almost always they were totally unprepared. Absolutely. Including the PDASes.

Q: Why was that would you say? I mean you don't have to get into individuals. But I mean, was it more that senior levels in the department didn't pay attention to that subject very much? How did those appointments get made, would you say?

LEININGER: Well first of all I think you have to look at Directors General. That is a most prestigious post to which to be assigned, more so than most overseas ambassadorships. If you're a senior officer and want to be assigned to a job in Washington, aside from being one of the major Undersecretaries or Assistant Secretaries of the major geographic bureaus, Director General of the Foreign Service is a post to which no less than Mary Ryan, for instance, aspired for her entire career. I had an opportunity to read her file while serving on a Presidential Awards committee. Every year, in the employee's statement box, she said, "I want one day to be Director General of the Foreign Service." She put that in there every year for ten years. She never made it.

Q: So why did people want it?

LEININGER: Most people wanted it as a prestigious post, and an influential one, in times of change. We have had some very impressive Directors General. George Vest just knocked my socks off. I was just blown away.

Q: Hadn't George Vest worked around personnel at some point?

LEININGER: Yes, he had.

Q: That is what I thought.

LEININGER: I think all the more effective Directors General had had some kind of previous exposure to the system at large, and didn't have to spend a lot of time being educated. Keep in minand this is a major shock for almost everybody in the Foreign Service, who at least believes they know how the system works in terms of promotions and assignments and disciplinthe Director General is also the director of personnel for our civil service work force. That is something I had to learn when I went into PC. I had equally as many responsibilities in terms of conduct and discipline rules, and hiring and firing regulations for civil service workers. I didn't know diddly about that; neither do most Directors General.

Q: What would you say is the proportion between Foreign Service and civil service in the State Department? Do you have rough numbers?

LEININGER: Civil Service employees outnumber Foreign Service Officers, to my recollection by about 55% to 45%. But if you add in Foreign Service Staff employees, it tilts the other way, by about the same proportion.

Q: How interesting. Hardly anybody thinks that, do they? That is fascinating.

LEININGER: If they do they aren't members of the Foreign Service. It's out Civil Service colleagues who know how important they are to the work of the Department.

Q: Wouldn't you think that very senior people, by that I mean the Secretary or the Undersecretary or whoever makes assignments like the Director General, would think about that at all or do you think maybe they don't?

LEININGER: I don't think they do. Or they didn't, until Secretary Powell came aboard.

Q: And what does that say about the institutional culture of the State Department?

LEININGER: Well there is this whole business about "what does it take to be a manager?" I mean, super Foreign Service officers like Tom Pickering probably can do everything in terms of policy. He could be Undersecretary for political affairs, but I don't think he could have managed the HR bureau or our personnel system; it just wasn't his temperament. But in practice you do have people who sometimes take that job as a holding position until their next overseas ambassadorship opens up. But then they often make the mistake of choosing as their principal DASes people with whom they are familiar, who usually are people very much like themselves, and who therefore don't have a hands-on background in the HR game. Therein lay one of my prime grievances as I led DGP/PC. I was still dealing with numbers, and statistics, and long-term personnel hiring firing trends. "What happens if we do this with this cone, or this, with that?" "How are we going to put this waiting period in the promotion scheme of things?" Most of the DASes just didn't have any interest in or capability of following that train of logic and that quantitative discipline. The one best person we ever had at that, in my estimation, in the HR front office, is Ruth Whiteside. She has got that kind of analytical capability and interest. She recognizes that a decision made today has consequences five and ten years down the road, and she can follow statistical arguments that will build to that.

Q: She was a civil servant, right?

LEININGER: Well originally she was a Foreign Service officer.

Q: Oh, I see.

LEININGER: Then converted to civil service, and then managed somehow to get a Senior Foreign Service temporary appointment for her first incarnation in HR. I don't know exactly how it was done. If you read the law very closely, it seems you aren't supposed to have temporary Senior Foreign Service appointments. But anyway... She became associate dean, what do they call it, deputy director, of FSI, and now, again, is the principal DAS in HR.

Q: Is she really?

LEININGER: That is the job she was born to do. She is excellent. She can keep all the transient DGs out of trouble, if they listen to her!

Q: So she was somebody who provides some continuity. Because one of the things that struck me about personnel was that it was unlike some of the other bureaus, that had at least one or two very senior civil servants. Like you think of whatever that man's name, that lady, who was the senior person on the economic bureau all those years but worked with George Katz. He was executive director for years, who really provided this continuity and institutional knowledge. There didn't seem to be people in personnel like that, not at the senior level.

LEININGER: The only person close to that description, for many years was Alex De La Garza.

Q: That's right.

LEININGER: He was an office director in HR/RMA, and then eventually became a DAS.

Q: Oh did he? I didn't know that.

LEININGER: When Ken Hunter left to take over CA's Passport Office, the DAS portfolios were semi-fixed. There was the principal DAS, who oversaw CDA, employee relations and that sort of stuff because that was really hands-on with Foreign Service people. It had consequences for careers. One DAS, oversaw RMA and special projects such as WCAS compliance. Then there was the Civil Service DAS, who for most of my time was Ken Hunter. Everybody else was perfectly happy to let that DAS handle all Civil Service matters and Civil Service discipline. That is the portfolio that Alex took over.

Q: I remember going to meetings with Alex with senior people, and he would start to explain some things, and you could see that their eyes would glaze over. They weren't interested it seemed.

LEININGER: Not interested, or simply not able to follow his presentation of the numbers.

Q: So it was a somewhat frustrating period for you.

LEININGER: It was; it was. We as a bureau were still coping with the Inspector's recommendations that had come about as a result of the inspection in 1988, I believe. It was that, and the follow-on compliance review. Here it is in the fall of 1991, three years later, and we were still grappling with how do we respond to this. Can we comply with that? Do we want to comply with that? And so, again, I had a churning front office. "Do we want to fight the OIG on this? Do we want to roll over on this?" I'd ask. "Well let me think about it," I'd get back. I had one of the PDASes during this time, who will remain nameless, who had three boxes on his desk, "in," "out," and "too hard." Any issue that he just didn't want to go on record making a decision about went into the "too hard" box. And it never came out. If somebody started to get really exercised about it, jump up and down, yell and scream, and demand an answer, then he might rummage through the box and review it and consign it back elsewhere, re-staffing it. And the process would repeat itself. So things would go in there and just disappear for five or six months. "In," "out," and "too hard." In other respects, people took the path of least resistance in coping with problems, against and over objections, mine and others, such as resorting to the unconed junior officer entry program. That is one of the greatest abdications of leadership I can recall.

Q: Talk about that for a minute. Was this something new? Certainly they had been bringing them in in cones for many years.

LEININGER: They'd been bringing them in in cones for many many years, and there was a time when you just picked your cone yourself. You decided what conal register, or rank-ordered list, you wanted to go on. If it was a long and competitive register, as usually the political cone was, well you knew you were diminishing your own chances of being selected, because even though you might have a slot starting out 16 names from the top, as new people qualified by passing the written and oral examinations and other evaluation processes, they might come up with a score higher than yours, and you might be leapfrogged, and you could therefore sit there in the middle of the pack forever, until your candidacy expired, which was three years after you got on the register.

Q: It is important to note the system worked. You passed a written test, then an oral. Then you went on a waiting list.

LEININGER: Well, there were other factors that went into assigning a final register score. They were driven about 70% by your test scores.

Q: But you went on a waiting list, and in some cases as Wayne says, it is much easier to get off the waiting list in consular and admin and a little bit off econ than off political because the political cone was considered to be if you will, the ambassadorial cone.

LEININGER: Clearly that is the perceived core purpose of the State Department. All the schools of Foreign Service studies were turning out people of a political bent.

Q: So people have been coming in coned.

LEININGER: Coned, but again there were several means of coning. In the earliest days, when I came in at least, you simply chose your cone, so you were responsible yourself for your own fate in essence, whether you got picked or whether you didn't. Now you could have other qualms or quibbles, about whether all the questions on both the written and oral examinations processes that were posed to you actually had relevance to the work of the Foreign Service, which is another basis for a legal challenge, but at least the basic process by which you put yourself on a conal register was clear cut, and your own choice. Then they added another component to this. You had to actually take a test relevant to the work of that cone. Now originally these results were only advisory. The conal test scores were taken into account by the final review panel that evaluated your total candidacy and assigned you the final register score, but they weren't determinative. They went on to make someone have to pass one of the conal tests, which were included with the basic written examination at the outset, for a candidate to be put on a register in one of those cones. The intent was to prevent political officer wannabes from "false flagging" themselves as consular or administrative cone candidates, in the hopes that, later, once in the Service, they could re-cone. But this also is the point at which we started to run into legal problems with the test, because it was screening out women, primarily, from the political cone, and over-populating the consular conal register with women. Again, to my mind, that gets back to traditional educational opportunities or interests open to or pursued by women in the late '70s early '80s.

Q: Right.

LEININGER: That is what the applicant pool consisted of. They might have aspirations in other areas, but they hadn't done the preparation. Well, keep in mind now we were still in the middle of compliance with the Women's Class Action Suit. Still trying to work off various remedies, and assuring the courts that we are doing everything possible to insure that disparate outcomes in our selection promotion, and assignment practices were minimized. Well, rather than attempting to in any way validate those conal tests, or otherwise to justify a system that set minimal qualifications to be assigned to a specific conal registry, which would take time and monethe estimated time, as I recall, was between nine months and a year to go through this procesthe decision was made at an executive level, to simply say, "Let's just wait and see. Let's see how people perform in the Foreign Service, and then cone them."

Now, initially, that might have some intuitive appeal, because I know that to an extent, even among my entering classmates in the early '70s, we had folks who said, "You know, we are making these choices of Foreign Service cones without any experience in the Foreign Service. We are just reading your literature and making a blind choice; I think I want to be a consular officer. I am not sure" Well, it was our free choice, maybe on limited information, but it was our free choice. We made it. But when someone first came up with the proposal, "Well, let's see how people do in the Foreign Service first, and then let them make a choice," it had the intuitive appeal of addressing that kind of objection to the "choose your own cone, sight-unseen" program. Let people get into the Foreign Service, and experience it, and then make a choice, had a good gut-level feel to it.

Several major problems, however, were not addressed in the rush to go in that direction. First of all, people failed to appreciate that our junior officer jobs, into which people would be assigned during their first two tours of duty, were predominately not going to be of the full range of the work of the Foreign Service. They were going to be, often, consular and administrative jobs at the junior-most levels. So very few people were going to have direct hands-on experience with all aspects of the work of the Foreign Service. They might get to look over the cubicle desktop of the guy next to them to see, "Oh, this is what a political officer does, clips those newspapers, wow how interesting." I didn't say that! Did I say that? But that is the joke, we know.

Q: Of course we do.

LEININGER: But the point is, that not everyone, first of all, would have the exposure to the full range of the work of the Foreign Service. So many career candidates would still be making a choice, after four years of experience in Foreign Service, without full knowledge of what it is they were getting in for. Large numbers of them. But in a parallel manner, the system would have no way of assessing their suitability for the work in those cones at that stage. It would still be left as a matter of a person's own choice.

The next problem then became, "how you decide which of those personal individual choices get honored and which don't?" Well, we had nothing in place to give pride of place to one person's preference over someone else's, other than the rankings of the commissioning and tenure boards, a process for which they were never intended. Their only mission was to assess in general someone's ability to perform though the mid-grades of the Foreign Service, up to FS-1. Has this person shown enough promise, breadth, flexibility, dedication, intelligence, all these wonderful characteristics, in order to demonstrate that promise. Now, they could make that overall assessment on the basis of someone's past performance in one or two of our areas. The Boards might have felt more comfortable in doing it if they had someone's cone attached to the name, but they could make a reasonable prognostication, we believed, of someone's prospects for a decent career through the mid-grades of the Foreign Service. But the C&T Boards never rank-ordered people, say,1 to 176, in a batch of applications before. Tenuring was a simple yes-or-no decision. So in essence you were taking what had been just a go or no-go process, and attempting to impose on it a forced ranking of people.

Candidates who were denied tenure altogether didn't have to worry of making a selection for a cone, because they weren't going to have a career with us. But all the people who were to be tenured, from those who just barely scraped by with a bare yes all the way to the superstar category, they all then were offered opportunities to select their cones, in accordance with their rank-order. The higher you were ranked, the more likely it would be that you would end up in the cone of your choice.

The final element that was not taken into account, or was sort of shrugged off by the people in positions of leadership at the time the decision was originally made, is what then do you then do with people who are dissatisfied with the cone they ended up with. Candidates who had the opportunity to say, first, "I want to be a political officer; failing that, then I want to be an economic officer; then I could maybe get by as a consular officer; and also I have to put down admin officer, so I will put down admin officer fourth." Well, somebody always ended up in the fourth quadrant, by default, so there ended up being a lot of unwilling admin officers. So we had at least six years worth of intake of officers whose final assignments into cone were done in this manner.

I think RMA did the analysis. Something like 72% of the candidates got a first or second choice, and about 15% got a third choice, and then there was a bedrock cadre of 11 or 13% who got that which they wanted the least, and who became very unhappy performers. Such that, by the time I was in charge of CDA/ML from '99 to 2001, we had 20% of all our 0-3 admin officers had never served an admin tour of duty, and had no intention of doing so. Yet they were carried on our central skill code data base as admin officers.

Q: And had to compete there.

LEININGER: Had to compete there for promotion. And, no surprise, they were major consumers of the multifunctional program. But the fact that they were counted as admin officers on the books meant that we didn't hire new ones to fill vacancies that on paper didn't exist. In real terms the vacancies were there, because these officers never filled those admin jobs.

Q: Couldn't they in effect identify those people and say take an admin job or go, leave, or did that prove to be impractical?

LEININGER: Oh, Michael, me lad, you know the scant number of times we identify people for assignments in the Foreign Service, and it when it happens it very rarely if ever comes down to putting people into functional areas for which they are ill-trained and in which they would be a disaster waiting to happen. I mean, we will make a political officer who doesn't want to go to Gambia, go to Gambia, or a consular officer go to Lagos who doesn't want to go to Lagos. But only to do the work of their cone. You don't want to set people up to fail functionally, as well as in morale terms. It just wasn't workable to send these non-admin admin officers into O-3, crunch vacancies in Africa. Bureaus wouldn't want such people, and posts didn't want them, especially if they were small places. They'd rather have an empty chair.

In essence, the failure of people to make hard choices about finding a legally defensible conal selection process at initial intaka dereliction of duty by deciding not to decidleft the fallout for their successors, once or twice removed down the road. After four years or so the first group came up for assignment to cones, and we had a large body of disgruntled people at the end. So in response they cobbled together a conal appeals process. People could present evidence of having done work in their desired cone of exceptionally high quality, and so forth, and ask to be reassigned to that cone, in competition for an extremely few number of opportunities each year. The people who didn't have a track record in their desired cone were totally out of luck. There was no "conal rectification," as we called it, for them. It sounds very painful, but that was the name we all gave it, "conal rectification."

There is also, as you know, within the Foreign Service, a general skill code conversion process. But that is available only at those cones and grades where there are identified deficits. There historically have been few if any deficits in the political cone at the O-3 level, or largely, the econ cone. It just doesn't happen. So the standard conal change process, even if one had spent three tours of duty in a row as a political officer, couldn't be used to ask to be changed to the political cone, because there was already an over abundance of political officers at that cone and grade. So that wouldn't work. The only opportunity for these people was the conal appeals process, and that didn't satisfy everybody. That is why we still today have this hard-core wrongly-labeled cadre of "admin officers" encumbering the admin skill code, clogging the system in terms of numbers, but who are not admin officers in anything other than name. That is a functional problem that is not going to work its way out of the system for another five or ten years. Sooner or later some of these people will in some way reconcile themselves. But the whole era of uncertainty in which those junior officers grew up resulted in the largest losses in terms of resignation, and the most severe public denunciations of the State Department management as incompetent and uncaring, that it has ever suffered.

Q: Really?

LEININGER: That's according to an outside study that HR itself commissioned, to see how we were doing in the "war for talent." The junior officers who were in the system in the middle of this realized what happened to the first tranche or two tranches of people and recognized that, "I am going to come up and face the same kind of roulette wheel crapshoot." I'm mixing gambling metaphors here. They couldn't conceive how anybody could run a railroad that way

Q: Well and this started in the early '90s.

LEININGER: It started in the early '90s. I know the director general who made that decision, and he did so over my objections and Alex's objections and others.

Q: So I get the sense that this job was a somewhat frustrating position for you.

LEININGER: Yes! In retrospect it was the most frustrating thing I have ever done in the Foreign Service. It also was the most educational thing I had ever done in the Foreign Service, in terms of learning more than I cared to about the way sausage was made, if you will.

Q: Yes, right. So you did that for two years. Then what did you look at?

LEININGER: Well, I was wanting to go abroad.

Q: Your son has finished his?

LEININGER: My son was now off to university. Actually he was gone for the second year of my stint there in PC. Now, my bidding dilemma was a reflection of the state of affairs of the senior consular cone. By this time I had held senior consular positions in Moscow and Tel Aviv, and I didn't have any Spanish language. As a rule they don't train you in Spanish at that advanced stage of a career, because there are lots of other senior consular officers who already have it. So our many senior consular positions in Latin American were effectively off-limits. So I was left with only English-language speaking posts at that point. I didn't want to go back to Moscow and use my Russian. You don't go back to where you have been before. So I was basically limited to Philippines, Hong Kong or India. Manila wasn't coming open. India wasn't coming open. Hong Kong was coming open. So I bid on that, in addition to several DCMships. Now, I was, I think bridesmaid on at least three DCM lists, in terms of the rank-ordering that the bureaus and the central system had proposed to the sitting Ambassadors. And I had very nice, pleasant conversations with them, and they all said, "Yes, I have heard great things about you. You have been around for a long time consular tours and you have done great work. What do you know about my country, Whackistan?" And I was, "Umma, umma, umma," tap dancing as fast as I could, and of course I was unconvincing. Which leads back to this business, I think we talked about earlier, about spreading yourself too thinly geographically.

Q: Well it is also in one sense what you say maybe a drawback of getting promoted too fast.

LEININGER: Oh, that too.

Q: That you don't get the sort of, what ever you want to say, fill in, that a slower career, in a sense, could give you. This is what a lot of people don't realize as they try harder to get up the ladder.

LEININGER: By the time I left Con Gen in 1978 and got promoted to 0-2, there wasn't a job in the African continent that was at my grade, anywhere.

Q: Exactly right. You did the Russian but that only qualified you for one country and not for very many jobs. You know, for all the time you had to put in to learn it.

LEININGER: Well, there was principal officer in Leningrad. My competition there was somebody who had already spent two tours of duty in the old Soviet Union, during a much longer career and who was one of EUR's elite on the EUR/SOV desk. It is perfectly understandable that the people making decisions about who is going to get these positions are going to go to known quantities, people who have done good work for them in the past. They'll nod and tip the hat to somebody who has got a good quality reputation in other respects, but all other things being equal, are going to take the person who has got both the reputation and extensive hands-on experience in their geographic region. I'd make the same decision! I can understand this in an intellectual sense very well, and harbor no grievances for being number two on everybody's selection list. So for one reason or another all my DCM and PO options did fall, and it lasted all the way until April, I think, before the last one fell off my radar screen. But CA had supported me for the Hong Kong consular section chief job all along. EAP was perfectly happy that someone like me was interested in their job. Both bureaus were hoping against hope that I wouldn't get any of my DCM positions. Nothing did come through, so we went very happily off to Hong Kong. It was going to be a job along my favorite lines of consular work, a consular job that had integral political undertones.

Q: This was the summer of '93.

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We are back with Wayne Leininger here. He is just getting ready to go to Hong Kong in the summer of 1993. So tell me a little bit about that.

LEININGER: The overriding factor was that Hong Kong that was facing reversion to PRC sovereignty on July 1, 1997. My tour of duty would go through the summer of 1996, and in my consultations in the Department before I left it was clear that our goal would be to resolve the many outstanding questions affecting Americans, especially dual-national Americans, before I left; nobody wanted to be scuttling around as the days counted down trying to put out fires. So it was clear that Hong Kong wasn't just going to be a run-of-the-mill consular factory, though it was in fact very busy. At the time I arrived it was the only post in the world in the top ten in both nonimmigrant visa and immigrant visa processing. We had 12 consular officers in the section, and one consular associate, a cleared American employee with a wide range of functions. More so then than is allowed now. And, oh, goodness. We were probably doing 120,000 to 130,000 nonimmigrants and about 14,000 immigrant visas a year, along those lines.

Q: Is this because you were processing for Taiwan to there?

LEININGER: We didn't count any of those figures in our workload statistics. For years the consular jurisdiction of Hong Kong was nominally extended to Taiwan. In fact, the Hong Kong consular section chiefs' signature sliders, back in the old days of the Burroughs impression visas, were used to "sign" the visas that were adjudicated and issued in Taipei.

Q: But when those visas were issued, did they say Taipei on the visa?

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: Oh they did, but they were signed by a name in Hong Kong.

LEININGER: Yes. It was kind of bizarre. That is because of all the business of not recognizing Taiwan as a state, which we don't. It is part of China. We had a one-China policy and Taipei, Taiwan is part of China. Hong Kong is now part of China, too, although it is a special administrative region. In any event, was okay for a consular officer accredited to Hong Kong to "sign' visas for those people who resided in Taiwan.

Q: Interesting. So you had a big section.

LEININGER: A big section but again it wasn't simply cranking out the visas and passports. We had 37,000 resident Americans in Hong Kong; about a third of them were dual nationals. Most were simply ex-pat Americans living abroad, representing corporate interests, and academics, and missionaries and who knows what. Hong Kong being a major international metropolitan city, it attracted all kinds of quite reputable types of folks by the time I got there. When you and I got into the Foreign Service in the early '70s, Hong Kong was still sort of thought as third world, seedy, corrupt, and a purveyor of third rate handicrafts and stuff like that. Well 25 years after you and I got into the Service. Hong Kong was definitely a first-class first world city, an international center of banking, commerce, finance, and insurance. The local business climate had been enhanced by the passage of some very strict accountability and anti-corruption laws.

These were enforced by the ICC, the Independent Commission against Corruption. I guess that would have swung into play sometime in the mid-to-late '70s. So it had had about 15 years of operation by the time I got to Hong Kong. It really did serve to clean up the place. It allowed the boom times to happen, because it established the rule of law. One of the problems India continued to face when I was there later in the decade was that American corporations, any major multinational corporation, found it very difficult to enforce contracts, for instance, because people would pay off judges or otherwise fix the system so the case never came to court. Lawsuits never got heard. Terms of trade and contracts could not be enforced. Well Hong Kong, to its credit, realized that in order to really occupy a prominent place in international trade, they had to clean up the legal system and the corruption. This enhanced credibility if you will, of the society and the legal system, was of more than academic interest to us doing consular work, because it meant when you got a letter from a bank saying somebody had a bank balance of XYZ dollars, deposited over a period of ABC months and years, you knew that was a good letter. We never in my three years there ever came across an instance in which we got a letter on official letterhead from an official major company or banking institution in Hong Kong that proved to be a forgery. It was certainly amazing. So it made rooting out fraud pretty easy.

Our major problematic visa cases in Hong Kong were almost entirely derived out of the PRC front companies that have been established in Hong Kong to do business there. Any documentation we got from them about their employees, about the size of the enterprise, or the volume of trade, was all suspect. They were starting at that point to gin up the use of the L-1A, inter-company transfer visa as a major means of alien smuggling. Establishing a one- or two-person shop in Hong Kong as the branch office, and using it simply to serve as a funnel for people to come from the mainland and onward to the United States to go who knows where to do who knows what, was the only reason they existed. But apart from that, bad cases were very identifiable, which was a good thing. You knew who your bad cases were likely to be. In our walk up visa population, we had three kinds of passport holders. Some had a real UK passport, which identified them as full citizens of the United Kingdom. Some had a British National Overseas (BNO) passport, which did not entitle the bearer to the right of abode in the UK, but nevertheless identified them as a long-term resident of a British dependency, and that is what most Hong Kong people had. Then there was the final variety, which was a Hong Kong Certificate of Identity. That was issued to newly-arrived immigrants from the mainland. People who had been in Hong Kong for seven years or less got the certificate of identity. Our refusal rate among people in that category was over 50%. Our refusal rate among people who carried real British or British national overseas passports was only about 3-5%. At one point, we were implementing worldwide screening criteria to decide who could benefit by the then-new visa waiver program, you recall. One of the benchmarks that had to be passed was a low rate of visa refusal in the home country, as well as a low-rate of denial of entry and overstays in the U.S. We went back and forth in dialogue with EAP, CA, and especially, the lawyers, to determine whether or not we could, for the purposes of visa waiver, segregate out holders of Hong Kong certificates of identity from holders of British national overseas passports and actual UK passports. Ultimately the Department said, "No you can't. It is still an aggregate population of this entity known as Hong Kong, regardless of the kind of travel documents they hold." But if we had applied that kind of standard, it was pretty clear at that point that real "Hong Kong people" that is a term of art by the wawould have qualified for the visa waiver program. If you hear on the news that people are demonstrating in the downtown area for more democratic freedoms, and you have some politician get up and say "Hong Kong people want?" "HongKongpeople." It is one word. "HongKongpeople" probably could have qualified for a visa waiver. The unemployment rate among "HongKongpeople" at that point was something on the order of 1.8%.

Q: But wasn't there a sense of certainly a lot of wealthy Hong Kong Chinese wanted to get some kind of lawful presence established overseas, because they really couldn't guarantee what would happen when the PRC took over?

LEININGER: This was one of the major preoccupations of the moneyed class, to find some place to parachute to. We have had, in our immigrant visa law, ever since I have been in the business some kind of provision for extending an immigrant visa to investors in the United States' economy. The Congress overhauled that program again in the Immigration Act of 1990. They set various standards of investment. A million dollar investment in any area of the United States, or $500,000 in an area in which the unemployment rate was 150% of the national rate, was enough to qualify an applicant for an immigrant visa. That was a "targeted investment," they called it, to attempt to relieve stressed economic areas. So we were hopeful, when I was preparing to go out in '93, that we would be able to scoop up our fair share of these fat cat Hong Kongers, and get them to invest heavily in Seattle or San Francisco or whatever. It didn't happen, and it didn't happen for one very straightforward and simple reason. That is because our IRS, in its wisdom, takes the position that a green-card holder's entire worldwide income is taxable, not just that portion of his income earned off holdings in the United States. So for the fat cat Hong Konger, who had steel mills on the mainland and a local, regional shipping line, which he used to move goods around the entire Far East, who had just bought a motel outside of Spokane or something, the IRS would want to tax his entire worldwide holdings. Hong Kongers are not stupid. They didn't do it.

Q: Did the Canadians treat that differently?

LEININGER: The Canadians did indeed treat that differently, and so did the Australians. They would tax people only on that income derived from their holdings in those respective countries. So we lost out on the really big spenders. There were some people who did, indeed, completely retire, retire to the United States. But they just sold everything they had and packed up and moved. That is fine, but it is not the really elite people we hoped for..

Now this whole investor visa program was so relatively new, and in terms of investments so complex in so many ways, that the adjudicators of the applications in the INit was the INS at that timhad difficulty in parsing out what was an actual investment that met the terms of the law, and which ones didn't. By sheer happenstance, we had an officer on staff named Paul Stephenson, filling an FS-4 immigrant visa interviewing slot. He had been scheduled to go to the mainland, I think to Shanghai, as the chief of the econ section. But his wife was Chinese, and shortly after they had started to make arrangements to go, her family started getting threatening phone calls made by the Chinese security officials. So our people, a little belatedly, broke his assignment to the mainland and said, "Gee we trained this guy in Mandarin, and now where can we put him where we can make some use of it so we haven't wasted his training?" There just happened to be a hole in our staffing pattern in Hong Kong. Here was an FS-2 econ officer, now, filling an 04 immigrant visa interviewing slot, one of the most routine jobs in the Foreign Service. Yet by sheer happenstance, his expertise in economics allowed him to take a look at these deals coming forward, such few of them as we had, and he found all kinds of holes in the documentation. Most of them were some form of a ponzi scheme, where investors put in a little money in the beginning, and signed a bunch of promissory notes, and then the whole aggregate investment was somehow credited by INS toward their qualifying for the visa, when in fact they only actually put down $50,000 out of the $500,000, and never did have to pony up the rest of it. He busted this scheme, and we must have sent 40 cases back to the INS. Eventuallit was only two years agthe attorneys in Arlington who put these things together finally were getting sentenced to jail. As a sidelight, this FS-2 econ officer, filling an -04 immigrant visa interviewing slot, got promoted as an econ officer to FS-1, because we wrote him up on the way he used his economic expertise. Sheer serendipity, and it worked out for everybody concerned.

Now apart from that, our major concerns had to do with what was going to happen when the PRC took over. As a worst-case scenario, we had to ask ourselves, "Well, what happens if the tanks actually start to roll through the streets, or if they start knocking on the doors of people known to associate with westerners, or, worse, having worked for Americans? On that account, in the 1990 immigration act revisions, the Congress had put a special law into the books benefiting the FSN employees of the Consulate General in Hong Kong. The standard provisions for an FSN anywhere in the world to qualify for a special immigrant visa to the United States required someone to have worked for us for a minimum of 15 years under "exceptional circumstances." The law for Honk Kong employees said, "seven," and by definition it was regarded as "exceptional circumstances," because no one really knew what might happen. In order to avoid a mass exodus of our local staff from the Consulate General in Hong Kong as 1997 approached, the Congress said, "We are going to give special consideration to anybody who sticks with us during this time." So everybody who was working for us, almost everybody, for just this modest period of time, seven years, could count on a parachute to safety, if in fact things went lousy in Hong Kong. So our own employees were pretty well taken care of.

But what had to be decided was, how would the PRC allow the local government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to manage the things like entry and exit rules. Would Americans, who had always been able to visit Hong Kong temporarily visa free, be allowed to continue to visit visa free? Or would the mainland system of visas be imposed? Would people who had the right to work in Hong Kong continue to have that right, or would they again have to qualify under the mainland's rules? Would dual nationals, Hong Kong-American dual nationalas I said we probably had ten or eleven thousand of thewould they be allowed to move in and out of the region using American passports, or would they be forced to use Hong Kong documents? All of these things nobody knew the answers to. We had to hammer them out as we went along. And we wanted definitely to get it all done by the time I would be leaving, which was the summer of 1996. We didn't want to leave any issues hanging in the air during that last year in the transition. We wanted a crystal clear understanding of what the regime would be like for Americans, American business people, American travelers, tourists, and especially the dual nationals, who were sort of in limbo land.

A sort of special subcategory of dual nationals were those Hong Kong dual nationals who were serving as sitting members in the Hong Kong legislative council, the LegCo, which is the governing body, a mini parliament. There is a governor and a LegCo. I think the overall membership in LegCo is something like 120 people. At that time, they were all direct-elected. After transition most of them would not be direct-elected. Most of them were going to be appointed by a special PRC-constituted commission that was formed in the run-up to the transition, and a large subset of the remainder would be elected by designated constituencies, professionals, bankers, lawyers, business people, all of whom oddly enough, were aligned with the mainland authorities. You would think, "Whoa, these are the capitalists. These are the moneyed interests. They would be pro-democracy, right?" No. These were very conservative people. These are the people who wanted to strike deals with the communists, nominal communists, the overseers, so at least some element of predictability was maintained. These were the guys who had been doing business on the mainland for decades already. They figured they could flourish within any system as long as they knew the rules and had a good understanding of them. So they tended to choose, and elect under their designated constituencies, candidates who were pro-Beijing. A handful of freely elected democrats, Martin Lee and Christine Loh among them, were what you and I would actually call free-thinking liberal democrats, one-man one-vote types of people. They are the people who are still pushing for change and an accelerating timetable now for Hong Kong's choosing its own government, and governor, with a free election slate being put forward. They are still there. They haven't been jailed. They haven't been making a lot of progress, but they are still in a position of standing up for the average people in the street.

In any event, in the run up to transition the PRC authorities made it clear that they knew that a proportion of sitting members of LegCo were dual national. As I recall, they actually prevailed upon the Hong Kong Government to identify all those who were known to possess the nationality of other countrieHong Kong/U.S. Hong Kong/Canadian, Hong Kong/ Australian, Hong Kong/Brit, Hong Kong/whatever. They said, well in the future, after we take over, only 20% of LegCo members will be allowed to be dual nationals. At the time something like 50%, had acquired other nationalities as a means to protecting themselves. They felt they had to. Well, this pronouncement put a number of people in difficult positions. They really wanted to stay on in Hong Kong. The majority of their families lived there. The majority of their financial holdings were there. And they were sitting in the LegCo, arguably in a position to try and ensure that this transition went as smoothly as possible and as peaceably as possible, in a way to ensure there would be harmony and prosperity for the region. They felt they couldn't just get up and walk away from it. So they were forced, they believed, to renounce American citizenship. We had almost a half a dozen come in voluntarily, and take the statement of understanding, and think on it, and come back the next day. I remember one sitting in my office, tears running down his face, as he took the oath of renunciation. He really hated to do it, but he felt no choice, to ensure the best interests of himself and of the people nearest and dearest to him in the long term, but to renounce his American citizenship. Now, remember what happened with the Black Hebrews in Israel. I am waiting for these Hongkongpeople, about ten years from now, to retire. They'll be getting out of government. They are going to come back in to the Consulate General and make impassioned arguments that in fact they were under duress, a larger threat of coercion, to renounce. And that this choice, supposedly freely made at that time, was not in fact their true heart-of-hearts free choice. I am just waiting for someone to make that argument. I am just really interested to see how they deal with it in CA/OCS/PRI, where the lawyers live.

Q: Now did you negotiate or discuss any of these issues with PRC officials yourself? How were these things put forward; you said you had a lot of questions on how it was going to work.

LEININGER: Right. We had to deal at one remove, in the main, on these questions. We would discuss them with the Hong Kong government authorities. The Hong Kong government authorities would go to Beijing. And it wasn't just us of course. The Canadians had the same concerns, as did the Australians. We had a consular working group that would get together and decide if we had to have this, or that, or the other rule clarified for the future.

Q: Was Hong Kong really that self governing despite the official status as a Crown Colony?

LEININGER: Yes. There were a lot of British civil servants interwoven in the hierarchy of the bureaucracy, but only the governor, Chris Patten, was appointed by the Queen. But apart from that, the LegCo was 99% HongKongpeople. There were dual nationals, as I mentioned, but as far as I recall, no pure ex-pats were members of LegCo. Ex-pats, meaning anybody not of Hong Kong citizenship. All the local power positions in the infrastructure had long since gone over to HongKongpeople, the newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce, even the jockey cluall were HongKongpeople. The banking institutions, all the major corporations, the steel companies, the shipping companies. You know a couple of the richest people in the world, Richard Li, Li Ka-Shing, the Kwok brotherbillions and billions and billions of dollars people, all Hong Kongers. So, yes, it was self-governing, and its intention in forming this principle of "one country, two systems, "was to retain a "high degree of autonomy." After the transition, Hong Kong would be in charge of its own civil law and criminal law. It would be in charge of its own immigration system. It would not maintain a foreign policy. Obviously, Beijing, as the sovereign, was to be responsible for foreign policy. But in terms of internal self-governance, it was to have remained, and you can argue to what extent it has or has not so remained, self-governing.

Q: So were you able to get answers back from?

LEININGER: Yep. We got answers back on almost all of these things, and in almost all cases they turned out to be favorable to our interests. Americans still do not need visas to go to Hong Kong, although they need visas to go to the mainland. We had all kinds of protections understood, in some cases actually written out, with respect to visa-free entry, and the ability to stay and work with certain types of professions. And we established an understanding that dual nationals will not be singled out for any negative Chinese attention, as long as they used U.S. documents to establish themselves in the Region.

Q: So China seemed to be quite forthcoming on these matters.

LEININGER: Yes. They wanteand this gets back to the whole Taiwan questiothey wanted things to go smoothly with Hong Kong so as not to send a negative signal to the Taiwanese about how operating under a "one country, two systems" scheme might actually play out. So they seemed to find it in their interests to be restrained, and, arguably even today to be rather forebearant, if that is a word, with respect to how rigorously they would act in treating Hong Kong, for fear of how Taiwan would react.

Q: Do you think that is the reason why, since the fact of the matter is they could have taken the place over at any time in about six hours. The British certainly couldn't have put up much of a fight about it. No, and yet they were willing to go through from 1949 to 1997 on the terms of the old lease, which was almost 50 years. Do you think the major reason for that is they had the Taiwan example in mind or they just got varied benefits from Hong Kong or satisfaction?

LEININGER: I think more the latter. I mean they were having trouble with Taiwan all through the '50s. The Quemoy, Matsu and all the shelling incidents, and all that sort of stuff. But their treatment of Hong Kong sort of evolved, as Hong Kong became the entrepï¿½t to the mainland. We used to say at the Consulate General, "Hong Kong is the entrepï¿½t of the mainland." It served as a funnel for Western investment. Something like 60% of all foreign monies that were invested on the mainland came through Hong Kong banking institutions. Sixty percent, incredible. Then there is the actual physical movement of goods also. Hong Kong is the world's largest port. The greatest volume of stuff in, and stuff out, anywhere. Most of it was not staying in Hong Kong. It was moving right on through right across the border. The major truck entry and exit points in the New Territoriethe mainland-bordering area of Hong Konwere operating 24/7, with huge vans lift vans of stuff, overtime. So Hong Kong grew to be the jewel of the Far East, and the PRC didn't want to do anything to dull its glimmer during the time of the transition. They wanted to be, or to show the world, and I think they still do, that Hong Kong could flourish as much if not more under Chinese administration than it did under the British. I mean the mainland Chinese really have it in for the British going back a long time, to the Opium Wars and the way that Hong Kong got into the hands of the British. But they saw what happened under British administration, and they are practical. For all the spouting ideologies and stuff over the years, the Chinese people at heart are among the most practical people I have come across. What works? For goodness sake, the Peoples Liberation Army has the greatest capitalist enterprise than the mainland. They own a lot of production facilities. They invest in washing machine production, stuff that has no military application whatsoever. The PLA is largely self-supporting on the basis of its capitalist investments. It is amazing.

Q: So besides these issues that you have targeted, what else?

LEININGER: The major investment of my time, I still think about it to this day, was the problem of what to do with the remaining population of Vietnamese boat people who were in refugee camps in Hong Kong. This was actually a special problem related to the transition, because the PRC had made it clear that it did not want any residual refugee population left in Hong Kong on July 1, 1997.

Q: How many were there when you got there?

LEININGER: There were still, altogether, something on the order of 7500, as I recall, when I first arrived. Of those, there was a hard core of five or six hundred who had been screened-out for resettlement, not because they were not held to be refugees according to the international definition of a refugee, but because they were crooks. They were murderers, thieves, prostitutes, drug dealers. I mean hard-core felons, whom no country would take.

Q: They couldn't be shipped back to Vietnam.

LEININGER: They couldn't be shipped back anywhere. And they were in their own private penal colony, barbed wire. They lived there all by themselves on a remote island. That was it. But beyond and above that, there were several thousands of people whose cases had been reviewed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) twice, three times, and by the voluntary agencies, and by the Hong Kong Government's refugee coordinator's office, and these cases just simply did not meet the minimum standard of a well -founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, political affiliation, or membership in a social group and so on. Our position, and the position of the international organizations, including the UNHCR, was that these people should just go home. The position of many human rights activists in the U.S., religious activists in the United States, and anti-communists at large in the United States, was that nobody should ever be forced to go back to a communist dominated country, regardless of whether he or she individually, personally, had a well-founded fear of persecution. But that, of course, was what the law said. So what else was there to say? The Vietnamese were not Cubans, and therein lies some of the hypocrisy of the whole refugee issue, when you do treat people differently depending on where they come from.

In any event, as a means of addressing this issue regionally, all the participating countries who had received Vietnamese refugees (knows as countries of first asylum), all the countries who were serving as countries of final settlement, and the various agencies, including the UNHCR, came together and formed something called the Comprehensive Plan of Action, the CPA. The CPA was a scheme whereby the countries of first asylum, those places in which the boats would wash up ashore, would be assured that the countries of final resettlement would do everything possible to resettle those who were resettelable, and that we jointly would do things to help discourage an unwanted additional influx of boat people, who were putting themselves at risk out there in the high seas, which is partly what prompted the CPA, the convening of the session. Large numbers of people who were setting out on such a course; not only were people dying, being preyed upon by pirates, but they were also getting to be burdens on the host countries, the countries of first asylum, to the point where they were engaging in what was called "refoulement" pushing the boats back off out to sea, and letting people just fend for themselves. Well, under the CPA the countries of final settlement agreed, "We will work through the population. We will do what we can to resettle those who can be resettled, and we will discourage other future influxes. Just don't push anybody else out to sea." Well, one of the things that was seemingly encouraging additional immigration was that if those people got to Hong Kong, and they didn't qualify for refugee status, but had a basis to apply for an immigrant visa, we would process their immigrant visa application in Hong Kong. Our sister posts in Singapore, or Kuala Lumpur, did likewise. Now, we didn't have a presence at that point in Vietnam, hadn't set up Ho Chi Minh City as a consular operation. We were, however, doing the Orderly Departure Program, operating it out of Bangkok, but for some reason people in Vietnam didn't want to go through that. They were perfectly willing to take a chance and get on a boat and sail to nearby countries so they could have an immigrant visa application processed there. This didn't set well with the countries of first asylum, on the one hand, and it continued to expose these folks to danger as they traveled. So as part of the CPA, we and the other countries of final settlement said, "Well, we won't do those kinds of routine services any longer for people who have fled Vietnam. They should go back home and work through the ODP." That policy, it was thought, would discourage future dangerous exoduses, and still allow the applications for immigration to be processed.

That decision promptly got us sued by various groups in the United States, who came together saying, "Those people are there in Hong Kong. They have the right to apply for their immigrant visas. You should go ahead and process their application." Now, quite frankly, what I learned from the Women's Class Action Suit, was that you have got to get in early with the policy makers on a decision, otherwise they tend to lose focus on the long-term consequences of giving away the store, and the lawyers tend to just want to make the thing go away. In this case, it was the Bureau of Refugee Programs, and to some extent EAP, that had a policy interest in preserving the CPA. The Bureau of Consular Affairs, on the other hand, originally took the position, "We don't have a dog in this fight. We'd just as soon go ahead and work these cases off; after all, there are only a few hundred of them." What CA didn't appreciate was that "few hundred" was only the tip of the iceberg, and that more would be forthcoming were we to continue to do this processing. CA didn't much care that violating our commitment under the CPA would affect our working relationships with the governments in the region, most especially with the Hong Kong Governmenwith whom we were still working closely on other transition matterand with the UNHCR. We were all party to that multi-lateral agreement, and the U.S. would be walking away from it.

What I had to do was point out to CA that in fact it did have a stake in preserving the Department's right to tell people where and under what circumstances they could submit their immigrant visa applications. We had for the previous decade been phasing out immigrant visa processing at most constituent posts all around the world, centralizing it in one post per country, for reasons of efficiency. After the fall of the old Soviet Union, we took that principle a step farther, and made people from Byelorussia and Ukraine, for instance, apply in Warsaw, Polananother country altogether! If CA wanted to maintain its principled right to tell people where they could apply for visas, and when, and under what circumstances, it had to stand up for that principle here, as well. If it became the right of the individual to decide where and when they could apply for an immigrant visa, then CA's right to make a determination for efficiency's sake, or for future foreign policy reasons, would go away.

That argument finally got people's attention. We first had to rewrite and strengthen that section of Volume 9 of the FAM that dealt with place of application, because there had been no regulatory basis for CA's deciding to go ahead and consolidate these immigrant visa processing operations elsewhere in the world. So they quickly swallowed hard and said, "Oh, yes, we have got to beef that up." So they rewrote the regulation. The case went to Federal District Court. The District Court didn't quite get it. It went to Supreme Court, and Supreme Court first put a stay on the original adverse ruling and, eventually, found for the Government. I mean this took three years of filing, and counter-filing, and of depositions, and claims of who did what, and who didn't do what, within the Consulate General and within the Hong Kong Government, and within the UNHCR. I have to give the Hong Kong government and UNHCR people some major credit, because in these cases they were being attacked for the way they had conducted refugee screening. I had to take depositions and get voluntary statements from counterparts in those agencies. I must have executed a half-dozen affidavits myself with regard to what do we did in the Consular Section in Hong Kong, processing the applications of the boat people. Three years worth of this stuff. It didn't end until after I left Hong Kong. The Supreme Court eventually directed the District Court and the Court of Appeals to find for the State Department, upholding its visa processing prerogatives. And so that is where the issue stands now.

Q: So were you able to get some of these people in Hong Kong cleared out?

LEININGER: Yes. Some additional folks were resettled, some went back to Vietnam voluntarily, and some were deported by the HKG. By the time I left there were only about 11 or 12 hundred unplaced people left in the camps. Just before the July 1, 1997 deadline, the HKG granted all the residual boat people residence rightthough some were still serving jail sentences for their criminal activitieso there were no "refugees" left when the PRC took over.

Q: And the others had stopped trying to get out of Vietnam because basically the Vietnamese themselves had agreed to allow an orderly program. And that was actually working?

LEININGER: It was up and working. That was another aspects of the lawsuit. Our colleagues in the Orderly Departure Program were furnishing affidavits to the court, and writing letters to people like Representative Chris Smith, who was a very strong advocate for the boat people, saying, "Look people can come back and apply. If they do come back, they are not being persecuted here during the several months it might take before they leave." There were all kinds of horror stories floated out in advance of this whole thing, about the feared persecution that people would be subject to, but it didn't happen,

Q: So it was not like the stuff in the old Soviet Union when you helped them get out. The Vietnamese Government didn't obstruct their departure?

LEININGER: I think by this time the Vietnamese were quite happy to get this "contaminated" population on its way. Don't let them hang around and start talking to people about the way it is out there in the big wide world, for goodness sake!

Q: Also they could get remittances from abroad from the people who had gone abroad and succeeded, which I suspect would be a sizable piece of change to add to their economy.

LEININGER: Absolutely. To the extent now that you read stories about how people who have "made it" here have gone back to Vietnam. Did you see the thing in the Post just two or three weeks ago? A U.S. citizen went back to open up a shrimp farm.

Q: Exactly. So you got a significant number of them out of Hong Kong and were able in effect by insisting on this, to stop the flow of boat people. You don't seem to read much about that anymore; it just stopped.

LEININGER: But the Vietnamese eventually allowed us to do this processing in situ, in Vietnam, processing people for departure in Ho Chi Minh City.

Q: So that was the other major thing.

LEININGER: The other major thing, yes. First, the U.S. citizen issues relating to transition, and then there were the Vietnamese boat people, and place-of-processing and the visa lawsuit. Oh, the other major worldwide trauma that beset consular sections during this period of time was the imposition of the machine readable visa application fee. Were you in the field at the time?

Q: Yes, as I recall, I was in Italy until about 1995. I think people had to get visas, Italians didn't, but I think people came through that did or we had student visas. It was a heavy a $50 fee.

LEININGER: It started as just $20, and then went quickly to $45. What was new was, it was an application fee. It was not refundable. You paid it up front. You paid it whether you got your visa or whether you didn't, and the really hard and horrid part, I will use both of those words, from the standpoint of the field, was this thing was simply announced, and we were told we would begin to collect it with about two weeks notice. You think, my God, all that cash. Where are we going to put all that cash? Twenty bucks a person and we have 200 people a day come in? My God. we are going to need an armored car every other day! Literally, the money built up so fast there was no room in the safes for it. We had to devise new means of receipting, new lines. Another window had to be opened up. Everybody paid. Previously we had no reciprocity fees for Hong Kong. People there didn't have to pay anything for visas at all, so we had no cashier near the NIV unit. There were certain categories of applicants for MRVs who didn't have to pay, but basically all non-official applicants did. All of these things had to be worked out on the fly in the space of about two weeks. A lot of folks in overseas consular sections just rebelled. They said, "No, we can't do it. NO. Full stop. Give us another month and we will get back to you." And the orders from CA said, "No, you will begin collecting the fee." Now there was one post I know of in southeast Asia that did not begin collecting the fee on time, and as far as I recollect that chief of consular section never got another consular job in his career.

Q: Yes, because they didn't want to hear about his problems.

LEININGER: He became an ambassador anyway, but he never got another consular job. In any event we were hard pressed to come up with the physical means to collect that much money, but we were sitting the banking capital of the world. Electronic fund transfers were already the wave of the future. In Hong Kong everybody had a little debit card they carried. They swiped them everywhere to pay for almost everything. So we hit upon that solution, and got it cleared in principle through CA in about 48 hours, and got little points of payment terminals wired into a little antechamber we had built into a porch out in the front, the waiting area. People would swipe their cards through these things. We would end up having no cash, so it was wonderful from the standpoint of malfeasance, automatic receiving done by machines, automatic accountability at the end of the day. The machines would tell us how much they recorded, and they would have copies of all the receipts that people would present. It was beautiful. Moreover, it cost us virtually nothing. It cost us a telephone line. It cost us like 1.5 cents to collect $20, when in many instances CA was wiling to pay up to 15% of the collection cost for overhead, hiring additional cashiers if necessary, printing out receipts, all this sort of stuff. It cost us virtually nothing. Now, we ran into trouble I guess about a year and a half down the road after that, when it became clear that every time the user swiped his card, as just now when you go to an ATM, they got charged a service fee. They got charged 50 cents or something. Now by law the charge for the machine readable visa application was supposed to be $20. $20.50, the lawyers eventually concluded, was a violation of the law. We weren't charging that; the bank was charging that. But the Department eventually said, "You can't do it that way, "so that went out the window. But since then all kinds of innovations were made; in a lot of places they collect fees in all kinds of innovative ways that have been since made legal. It has been made a lot more efficient than simply carrying around bundles of cash in a wheelbarrow. We pioneered that.

We had one political flap over a visa refusal. First, for background, you need to understand that we in Hong Kong worked with the Department on a new way to apply the provisions of IMMACT 90 [Immigration Act of 1990], that allowed you for the first time to get people excluded from the United States, or refused a visa, because of reason to believe they were going to be agents of criminal activity. For the first time, you didn't have to have a record of a criminal conviction, or a sworn admission of having committed a crime in the past. We pioneered, using the Chinese Triads as our targets, the use of profiles, a signature crimes, and behaviors even as a juvenile, that could give a consular officer that "reason to believe." Now the guy is 25 years old, and has naked ladies and dragons tattooed up and down his arms, and was convicted of breaking and entering and assault in his minor years, and has no visible means of support today. Bingo, he isn't just a 214-an intending immigranhe instead becomes a criminal exclusion, INA Section 212A-2, on the basis of his involvement in signature crimes associated with Chinese triads. We could infer that his sole reason in going to the United States, not just his principal or ancillary reasons, his sole reason was to continue these kinds of criminal activities. We worked out these profiles. We had the approval of the Visa Office. We applied those profiles vigorously. We probably refused 100 visa applications in a year in this manner.

Q: Were you able to make those stick?

LEININGER: Every one did stick. Now, that model was then used successfully later on when VO had to do the same kinds of profiling with Russian organized crime, or the Japanese Yakuza. All those kinds of patterns of behaviors, signature crimes, and other activities that were characteristic of an organized crime syndicate, can now be used against individuals who fall into those patterns.

Now why did I tell you that story? Because, on that basis, we refused a rather highly-placed member of Hong Kong society. And being a rather highly-placed member of society he had previously gotten visas to the United States. This came as a real shocker to him, for us to be so bold as to actually refuse him. But he had many friends in high places in the United States, including a rather prominent Congressmaa chairman of a rather important committee in the House, who aspired, after he left the House, to an ambassadorship in one of my future countries of assignment. Our applicant prevailed upon this relationship, in attempting to get his visa refusal overturned, and this Member of Congress wrote several letters to us, with increasing vehemence and increasing obtuseness. He wasn't reading between the lines when we told him we had the goods on this guy. He persisted in arguing that this man is a "fine upstanding citizen" and "ought certainly to be given a visa to the United States" and blah, blah, blah. The Department stood firm in backing us. Well, eventually, when his hearings on his ambassadorship came up, this entire record of correspondence came to light, and his colleagues in the Congress decided the better part of discretion was would be for him to withdraw his candidacy for the ambassadorship, because he was on the wrong side in defending a crook of major international proportions. Sometimes our colleagues in Congress can go overboard, and the system catches up with them.

Q: So you spent three years in Hong Kong.

LEININGER: I could have extended, and we did love it there. I would ordinarily have done so, but being the kind of very forward-looking of person that we are here in the Foreign Service, I knew that my time in class as an MC was going to run out in the fall of 2000. At that point I would be given one year's grace for mustering out purposes, as was administrative practice, so my separation date would be September, 2001. But that meant that if I wanted to get a full tour of duty in back in a domestic assignment, for two years, I would have to be back in the U.S. by 1999. So I had to leave Hong Kong by '96, to take another overseas assignment for three years. And then I'd come back here in the summer of '99 for my last two years. Now why come back at all you ask? Fill in the blank.

Q: Well, to be ready for your post career activities.

LEININGER: More important than that, locality pay, which is not a factor in the calculations for your pension when you are overseas; it doesn't count at all. You count it only when you are here in Washington. It was the old problem we have had for years: when people are overseas, allowances and differentials aren't part of the base salary calculation, so even if you are making a 15 or 25% boost for the hardship or something, or other things across the board, that isn't included in your pension calculation. If you come back to Washington, locality pay is. Even in those days the difference, was about 9.5 or 10 percent. And as it happened I came back for only two years, instead of three. They do a high three year calculation for your pension, so it is a difference that keeps on giving for the whole rest of your life.

Q: Yes, I agree.

LEININGER: So I wanted to come back in the summer of '99. I could only stay three years in Hong Kong followed by three years someplace else.

Q: So what did you look at?

LEININGER: Well here again I was in that same conundrum that I mentioned last time around. There were precious few English-speaking senior consular positions overseas where I hadn't already served.

Q: Right, exactly, having finished with Hong Kong.

LEININGER: I have to leave Hong Kong. I have been in Moscow already. Philippines, again, was not coming open. They weren't going to teach me Italian to go to Rome. What a terrible thing! So it was Delhi. Again, I had DCM prospects on and off through most of the assignment cycle, but Mary Ryan just kept me on the back burner. She said, "Wayne when you are ready just let me know. We will make it happen." Yes, Mary, right. Now of all places I have been I think that Delhi was simply the hardest to live, on a daily basis. Even harder than Moscow. You couldn't drink the water without boiling it and filtering it. You couldn't breathe the air. You couldn't eat the food without soaking it in Clorox water first. It was the filthiest place you have ever seen. Virulent diseasedengue fever, tuberculosis, the plague?we had the plague!

Q: All these things you could do in Hong Kong, drink the water and eat and so forth?

LEININGER: Absolutely. Right. Even in the streets, from the vendors, not a problem.

Q: You have extensive pollution in Delhi.

LEININGER: Heavy particulates; soft coal and cow dung ash. And the weather is abominable.

Q: Meaning?

LEININGER: Meaning that four months a year was livable. Eight months a year is either hot and dry or hot and wet. Now by hot I mean like 115 degrees, 117 degrees, 120. From about halfway through March until halfway through October it is always above 90 degrees. I remember one news report on CNN covering a heat wave in the U.S., mentioning that Dallas had had seven days of over 100 degree temperatures. We all chuckled, because at that point we were well into our third month of 100 degree temperatures! The heat was unrelenting, day and night. It is hot and dry from March almost until the end of June, and then the monsoon season starts in. Now that doesn't mean it rains every day but it rains very frequently, and then is very humid. The temperature goes down from 120 all the way to 97!

Q: ?In Delhi in the summer of 1996. You were explaining that the conditions of living were very demanding. What was the nature of the consular business there?

LEININGER: Well India is one of those happening places of the third world. It is emerging from a period of relative economic stagnation. The Government was attempting to do things to make the investment climate more favorable to international businesses. Its own indigenous intellectual wealth has never been doubted. There is a very high premium placed on education. The export of Indian physicians, Indian-trained computer technology people, is famous worldwide. It is only lately, however, that conditions of doing business in India are getting to the point where they can support an internal software industry, and hardware industry, for that matter. Now, the population is just over a billion; there were 920 million when I was there. It is forecast that the population will exceed that of China by the middle of the 21st century. There are very few breakthroughs going on in terms of birth control anyplace in that country. Even if you posit it, then, that the middle class of India is only 10% of its population, or 15% of its population, you are still looking then at a middle class, visa-seeking, qualified population of 100 million to 150 million people. Nonimmigrant visa workload was growing at a rate between 25 and 40% per year when I was there, so that in the course of my three-year tour of duty, workload doubled. Completely doubled. It was already the third largest immigrant visa producer to the United States when I got there. You can't increase those numbers very much because they are largely in categories strictly limited by law, and they are right up against the ceiling. But the visa sections in India were in danger of going under.

Q: You had a supervisory role.

LEININGER: I had a supervisory, coordinating role for all the consular sections in India, including the ones in Calcutta, and Chennai, formerly Madras, and Mumbai, formerly Bombay. Mumbai is actually the largest of the consular sections in India. It had nine or ten officers as I recall. Calcutta is just a one-officer post. Chennai fell in the middle, but as time has gone on, and since it is located in the heart of India's version of Silicon Valley, it has become the focus of this booming growth in the H-1B visas, the special professional category visas issued to the highly trained computer folks who come to the U.S. And the H-1B issuance in turn drove an upsurge in the regular B-1, B-2 issuances. My Chennai colleagues did a little in house study in which they demonstrated that every time they issued an H-1B visa, it generated an additional 2.2 regular visitor visa applications. Well who were they? Well, Junior would get his H-1B and go over to the United States, having gotten out of the India Institute of Technology with a BA in computer science. He would get himself set up in a $45,000 a year job in some suburb of Palo Alto, and get himself into a little condo. Within the next year Mom and Dad would want to go over and see how Junior was doing. It was lovely. By his third year Junior would be back in India, advertising for a wife, arranged marriages still being the order of the day. Very educated and very civilized populations. There would be pages after pages of personal ads in the Times of India. "Computer professional H-1B (or green card holder, that is really to be desired) in the United States seeks homely Indian wife." "Homely" in this case does not mean Cinderella's ugly sisters. Homely means a homemaker, a stay at home person who will keep the hearth fires burning. That is a traditional family structure, still is, in many respects.

Q: So the workload is jumping.

LEININGER: Workload is going over the top.

Q: How big was the actual section in Delhi?

LEININGER: In Delhi we only had five officers and a consular assistant. The section was adjudicating, at the time I left, about 120,000 NIV's a year, and 12,000 immigrant visas.

Q: How do they do that?

LEININGER: We were damn good, he said modestly. The consular sections of Indil went out of my way to get the workload statistics of some of the other major visa factories of the worlthe consular sections of India were the most efficient we had anywhere, in terms of staff hours per case. Now efficient, I don't know if that means we were perfectly correct in everything we did or not, but in terms of churning them out, we were the most efficient in the world.

Q: What kind of refusal rate would you have in a place like Delhi?

LEININGER: Well that was one of the easy parts of consular work in India: it very largely still is a country of haves and have-nots. The haves easily qualified for visas. The have-nots are the easy refusals. There is very little gray area where you have to agonize over, "is this guy barely across the line or under the line?" So, of our Punjabi agricultural workers, we'd refuse 60 percent, but of our Delhi metropolitan area business professionals, we'd issue 90 percent.

Q: You don't find a lot of Indians tending to disappear in the United States, because they go on legitimate H visas and then they are able to adjust. It is perfectly legal, rather than people getting visitors visas and disappearing.

LEININGER: Right. And as I said, the haves are really so qualified that there are legitimate channels to get here.

Q: Can you verify that the computer applicants were genuine?were you worried about fraud?

LEININGER: Addressing that was one of our signature achievements during my tour, the means by which we were able to verify some of these credentials from the software services industry. Interestingly, the impetus for getting this resolved was derived from the H-1B issuance cap, 65,000 a year. We were all facing this. We, meaning the industry, we as administrators of the program, the Indian Government, and the Indian software services industry as a whole, were facing this cap. We all had a reason to make sure that we issued those precious visas only to people who deserved them, and who in fact were going to be able to go to the United States and do the services for which they had been contracted. Intended to, and had the qualifications to, and followed through and did it. Well, as sure as God made little green apples, whenever an avenue to get into the United States opens up, there will be people who will duly manufacture credentials to get on it. So a certain percentage of these H-1B visa credentials, when I arrived, were fraudulent. And, as would be expected, those applicants never reported for duty in the United States. Well, this concerned the India software services industry as much as it concerned us. They didn't want the reputation of their computer workforce to be sullied in this way. It was they who prevailed upon Indian state university systems, the India Institutes of Technology, and the major universities with a computer science majors, to open up to us, on an online, passworded basis, access to their graduation and education records. If somebody came to us with a diploma from the Indian Institute of Technology in Chennai, we could type in the name, give our passworded access code, get to the central academic records, and verify that this diploma was genuine. They made similar arrangements with every member company in the software services industry association, with respect to job histories. We could have online access to visa applicants' job histories. We'd never find this stuff otherwise. Can you imagine the state university system of Virginia opening up its graduation records, academic records to the Indian Embassy in Washington?

Q: The advantage of being number one!

LEININGER: It just would not have happened.

Q: The people who came in for visitors visas and so forth, could you label or generally verify their documentation?

LEININGER: For most applicants we couldn't and we didn't depend on documentation. I mean, unlike Hong Kong where almost any piece of paper brought to you was reliable, in India we couldn't depend on paper. For instance, in Delhi 60% of our workload was from Punjab. They were all Sikhs, and most of them would be farmers. They'd all come in with tractor registrations, land ownership documents, proof of having sold last years crop for X amount of rupees, and so forth. We didn't care. I mean they either looked and sounded and behaved as prosperous farmers who knew what the hell they were doing, or they were obviously dirt poor, and could not possibly have afforded these parcels of land and a tractor. As a matter of fact, we very often would have seen that same tractor registration in the previous week, because there were document vendors out on the street in front of the Embassy, who sold those documents to the applicants as they lined up every morning. And they re-sold them the next day to the next batch of applicants, and the next, and the next. So documents in India didn't mean a damn thing. We did sort of gestalt types of interviews, in which everything they said on the application had to match their physical appearance, and had to match how they presented themselves orally and conducted themselves in the interview. All that had to fit in with the purpose for which they said they wanted to go to the U.S., and, in the end, it all had to fito make sense.

Q: So did you find then that in general practice that you didn't have much problem with visitor visa issuance?

LEININGER: There were not that many problems, aside from volume. Our refusal rate was about 32%, and as I said, they were very easy refusals.

Q: So you were able to churn out a lot of applications.

LEININGER: Not just able to, we had to. Now, there was an organized fraud ring that sort of sprung up under our noses as we watched. That had to do with P-3 visas. These were performing artists of a non-professional nature, almost always Sikh bhangra dancers. Bhangra dancing is the traditional folk dance in Punjab, sort of like square dancing in the United States, where you get together and have a hoe down. In Punjab they get together at Sikh festivals and they have bhangra dancing. People play instruments, and people dance, and people sing at these festivals. There is a large Sikh population in the United States, and for years there had been a tradition of two or three dozen groups a year going from Punjab to New York City, Chicago, certain other areas of Sikh concentrations in the United States, to perform during these holidays. Well, all of a sudden instead of issuing one or two hundred of these visas a year in groups 25 to 30, the demand, the number of petitions filed, and the number of people attempting to get the visas, shot up to 1200 to 1300 a year. In other words, a hundred a month. No way, we said. There aren't that many venues in the United States. There aren't that many groups of Sikhs in the United States to receive these people. It was clear that there were ringers being smuggled in, intermingled with the bona fide folks, many of whom had already had two or three visas previously. We did some surveys of groups of 30, and found only 12 of 30 came back. Eighteen of them were ringers. So we resorted to the traditional first line of defense: "Perform for me. Dance. Sing. Play your instruments." Of course, two thirds of them couldn't, and two thirds of them were refused, and most times that meant that the entire tour was canceled. Well, the organizers of these scams, being no dummies, shifted tactics. Instead of charging these people $3,000 for just being included in their group, they charged them $5,000. The $2,000 extra was devoted to a period of 30 days or so training, singing, dancing, or playing instruments. They were giving a package deal! The applicants learned a skill, and they got a visa to the United States! So, after awhile, everybody could in fact play and sing, at least rudimentarily. We couldn't just rule them out that way. Well the other weakness in this whole scheme is they didn't really have any venues booked in the United States. They didn't have any sources of income from impresarios, really. So we demanded, up front, that the organizers show us prepayment of hotel rooms, prepayment of auditoriums, prepayment for air fares, round trip, for everybody. And for a group of 30, who purported to stay in the United States for a period of four to six weeks to perform, this was usually up to $100,000 or more. They didn't have that money. They didn't have it. The groups themselves, the smugglees wouldn't pay the organizers the balance owed until they got to the United States. So as soothis was about the time the movie Jerry McGuire came ouas soon as we went, "Show me the money," the demand went right away. We went right back down within a matter of three months down to our traditional levels of the numbers of petitions. But we had major feedback with the INS offices in New York and Philadelphia, especially, on how they should be screening petitions in the first place. They took our screening criteria and started to apply it to petition adjudications. So that choked things off at the source. Then along with that, we did get one lawyer in New York disbarred for her involvement in smuggling people. And there were criminal charges filed against her as well.

Q: I want to ask you this question about visas and politics. I seem to remember one story from the '70s when Jimmy Carter went to India and Brzezinski was with him. The first question the Indians brought up was about visas. Somehow I have in my mind the anecdote when President Clinton went to India for some prime minister or premier, again it was something about visas that was on the very top of the list that the Indians brought up. They wanted more?

LEININGER: The old days, right, exactly, stood on its head. In the old days it was "brain drain. You are taking away our best and our brightest." By the time the H-1B ceilings were getting bumped up against every year, the Indians had gone over the other way. They wanted to export that brainpower for the remittances it brought.

Q: They weren't complaining about the refusals. That wasn't the hassle.

LEININGER: There certainly weren't enough visas being made available. And that led of course the American computer industry lobbying very hard, and that led to the revision of the law, which, at least temporarily, raised that H-1B cap to a 100,000 and then 120,000. Now we have brought it back down to 65,000.

Q: So in other words these things do have political implications. Now do you have an opinion on this argument as to whether the American companies are using this just to get cheap workers or do they really need these people, because there was simply a deficit in the United States?

LEININGER: I think it's yes, and yes, both. They are needed, and are available. They are willing workers, and because they are entry-level employees with no previous experience, even if they are paid on a U.S. pay scale, they are paid on the bottom end of that U.S. pay scale. Whereas most of the U.S. workers who would be out there job shopping from one company to the next would have been in the business five, seven, ten years, and would expect and demand a higher wage than the entry-level employees. So I don't think the American employers are being exploitative in the sense that they are underpaying the Indian workers with respect to their overall levels of expertise and experience. They are not. They are paying them appropriately. But compared to either retraining an American worker, which is expensive, or hiring an American experienced worker at a mid-level pay scale level, they are saving money. Whether they should or should not do that, that is an argument for the economist and the politicians to watch.

Q: So was there a lot of pressure in effect from American companies to move these things along in a hurry?

LEININGER: Oh, yes. But we weren't the backlog. It was getting petitions approved through INS. I mean, it would take three to six months to get a petition approved. Once the cleared people walked into us with a notice of approval, we took an afternoon. They had their visa by that same afternoon.

Q: Did you get much pressure from the Indian government about various types of visas, especially if you turned people down. Did you find?

LEININGER: India being one of those places where networking among who you know, and who knows whom down the line, is a way of life, we often heard about it when a visa was refused to anybody of even marginal consequence. Three removes from somebody of stature, a Member of Parliament or what not, you would still get a call. But we just stuck to the mantra that, "Everyone must qualify for a visa in his or own right. We definitely appreciate your interest, but this gentleman simply did not meet the requirements."

Q: Did they go to the Embassy front office much, or the political section?

LEININGER: They usually went to the front office. They'd claim that they'd met the Ambassador or the DCM at some reception somewhere. Of course Ambassadors and DCMs being what they are would sometimes feel obliged at least to inquire of us, "What's going on with so-and-so?" But generally they were not pushy at all. Especially to Richard Celeste's credihe was a political appointee Ambassador my last two years there; former Governor of Ohio, Director of the Peace Corps, and Democratic Party strategizer, who was involved in some of the early efforts to address the health care situation, before the Clinton effort there fell aparhe was extremely understanding of what our obligations were under the law, and how far we could go, and how far we could not go. He just took the simple position, "I'm sorry, I don't know anything about visas. You'll have to ask my Consul General." Moreover, we came up with two or three dozen instances in which Members of the Indian Parliament had sponsored personal servants to travel with them to the United States, given hand written letters. "This is my body servant, please do the needful and issue him a visa." Of course you would ask the body servant, "Well, how many bathrooms are in sahib's home?" "I don't know." "What kind of car does he have?" "I don't know." These guys would know nothing about their reputed employers. We made all those members of Parliament ineligible for visas as alien smugglers. 212-6E, permanently ineligible.

Q: So that caused a little ruckus?

LEININGER: It did early on, but it was, again, at the stage of India's coming out that they wanted to try an put on a better face to the world, trying not to appear to be a totally corrupt society. First of all we would go to the Foreign Ministry, to the Consular and to the Americas divisions. We said, "Look, your people in the Parliament are not doing your parties any credit, they are not doing the Parliament any credit, by coming forward with these palpably false statements on behalf of these unqualified visa applicants. You really better do something." So the Ministry would contact the Speaker of the Parliament, and he would send out these little blurbs. 'Everybody clean up your act." So, when we eventually just cut off people, they were perfectly understanding about it. We didn't have a problem. But Celeste, was actually pleased with us, because he paid attention to these things, and he honestly felt that India had to address its corruption issue if it ever was to emerge, just like Hong Kong did twenty years before. Ashley Wills was the DCM at the time; he'd been our USIS chief when Ambassador Frank Wisner and his DCM, Matt Dailey, left. Wills and Celeste are neck and neck with Zimmerman and Hartman as the best front office tandem I ever worked for. We were inspected while they were in charge, and they got the highest rating on the OIG questionnaire that employees filled out rating the front office that the OIG team had ever seen. Human understanding, able to make decisions when necessary, moving things along under hard times. The last year there was hard for everybody, because it took place under the cloud, literally, of nuclear testing. India and Pakistan got into this whole business of who has got the biggest, and who can throw it the farthest, nuclear weapon. We had been on the verge of signing major technology change agreements with India, scientific exchanges, military contracts. All of that went straight in the toilet. So our colleagues in the Defense Attachï¿½'s Office, in the political/econ section, in the commercial sections, were all in the dumps our last year there. And the situation had fallouto make another bad puinto the consular section too, because the technology alert list program was being revamped. This is a special program, in which, you recall, visas used to be refused to people suspected of illegal technology transfer to the Eastern bloc. Upon the end of the Cold War, it shifted focus to those who might be misusing certain areas of knowledge gained in the United States, bringing it home to their home countries to assist in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Okay, so you had Indian physicists, Indian mechanical engineers, and Indian chemists, who had been for years going to the United States to attend international symposia of various kinds, who now fell under this new regime. Suspicion. And until we had cleared their names by running them personally, and the purpose of their going to the United States, past the appropriate officials in the Washington intelligence/scientific community, they couldn't go. A lot of the problem back here was there was no real system set up, at that early stage, of organized wise people who could really say, "Yes, well this has a military application, and no, that really doesn't." Some things were so theoretical that no one knew what it was all about. Where that dividing line could and should be drawn between what was permissible and what was not was still up in the air. So we would send applications back for review. We often just wouldn't get an answer until after the deadline for their attendance had passed. Now that raised hackles. Because these were respectable people. They had gotten many visas to the United States before, but we were refusing them outright in some cases, and in other cases we just couldn't get them an answer in time for them to attend these meetings and symposia. And of course that had repercussions, reverberations within the American academic community, because this whole issue of openness, academic freedom, free exchange of ideas, came into question. "We are America; we are supposed to be welcoming this kind of thing. We were not supposed to be secretive and closed?" Well, welcome to the latter part of the 20th and now the early part of the 21st century, folks. We are not going to be that open anymore. So the technology alert program goes on as we speak, even more so in the post-9/11 era, but it took awhile before people understood what the ground rules were. We had people refused to come to attend one of these scientific presentations, and then two weeks later, they would want to go and come in and apply to go to their niece's wedding. Okay, they could go for that. The refusal was not to the individual, it was to the purpose of travel. "Now how," people said, "how do you know when he went in for his niece's wedding that he didn't go and talk to some scientist?" Obviously you can't control that. But, at least, whatever major event or exchange that had been scheduled previously was by the boards by that time.

Q: Did you find Americans who would run afoul of this notoriously complex Indian bureaucracy one hears about, and find themselves in terrible complications.

LEININGER: Not so much with the regular bureaucracy. I think most Americans in that part of the world just sort of shrugged their shoulders and didn't expect anything particular of the Indian bureaucracy. If they were trying to get a driver's license or a residence permit or anything else, they knew it would take weeks. They knew they would have to pay off somebody. This horribly disturbing cable out of Bombait was still Bombay at the timabout three months after I arrived there that sort of set the scene for me. The reporting officer took a slice of life of middle Indian man, not middle American, middle Indian man, going about his or her daily life. In attempting to get a telephone line installed, in attempting to get electricity turned on, in attempting to get medical attention for an injured child, in attempting to get that child into school of choice, in attempting to apply for retirement benefits. At every stage of the way, Mr. Middle Indian had to pay somebody off. For every single one of those routine services. Nothing could be done without somebody expecting and taking a bribe on the side, and what's almost worse, the service-seeker expected to have to pay it. Top to bottom. India was rated in the toor bottom, depending on how you look at these ratings on international corrupt societiethey are in the top three or bottom three every year. In is endemic. I mean it is just the way of life. Again, Americans, most Americans in India in my day were rather worldly-wise travelers; the real Amcit services problems, having to do with naï¿½fs traveling, were back in the flower- power, hippie days, when people would go to India to seek enlightenment, and study with the Maharishi in the upper reaches of the Ganges. Those are the folks who had no clue about how to survive outside of the United States at all. And there they'd be in a place like India, where nothing is as it was. "We are not in Kansas anymore Toto!" Those folks got themselves in trouble. But most of the Americans there when I was there knew the lay of the land. There were organized tour groups, who paid attention to our tips to travelers on where to go, or where not to go. We didn't have a lot of people going around Kashmir, getting themselves taken hostage. That had taken place about six years before I got there. We still had missing people, whom we presumed to be dead bodies by that time. Once in awhile the American relatives would come over and implore the Indian and Kashmiri officials to please keep looking, but nothing ever came of it.

Q: But you didn't have, there weren't many cases of Americans who either disappeared or who got into terrible trouble.

LEININGER: Well, there were the annual numbers of mountain climbers who fell off on of the Himalayas. We just hoped against hope that they would have signed up for their medevac insurance, so that the helicopters could fly into the base of the mountain and get them out. There was usually one or two of those a year. There was one horrible, terribly sad death case I handled myself. A 22 year-old American came to India prior to his scheduled marriage to the 21 year-old daughter of an American Congressman, for a ritual spiritual cleansing. The historic Ganges is sort of like the River Jordan. If you bathe in it, your sins are forgiven, which was a lot of fun when you went white water rafting, because every time you fell off the boat you could say, "Well I can go and sin again. I am clean, I can start all over." But this kid went up into the Ganges at the wrong time of year. He went up there in late February, early March, which is the beginning of the snow-melt season. At that time of year the Ganges runs at a sort of pace as the worst of the Colorado River does. You have seen those scenes where you see nothing but whirls and whirls of muddy roiling churning water, beset with eddies and whirlpools. Well that is the way the Ganges gets at that time of year. He went down to river's edge one evening to have an evening ablution, and slipped on the rocks and got sucked under in there, and his body was never found. Never ever found. That, according to the police and the army. We had a company of Indian soldiers mustered out to do the search for us. The Defense Attachï¿½ was able to prevail upon a contact to have them do a search, but the general rule was, if somebody goes in there, you don't find them.

I was on the phone personally with the Dad on this one. He wouldn't believe his son was dead. He wanted to come and see for himself. I mean you can't argue with somebody in those circumstances. We tried explaining, "Mr. Smith, there really isn't much to see." By this time his son's body was likely to be 12, 15, 20 miles downstream. I didn't want to tell him that actually what otherwise happened was the body got lodged under some rocks on the bottom of the river, and was being eaten by catfish. But he flew over. The plane got in at 11:30 at night. We had the duty driver meet him at the airport, take him to the railway station. He took a 1:30 in the morning train to the upper reaches of the Ganges, was met there by the Indian colonel of the army in charge of the search, taken to the banks of the Ganges. He spent two minutes looking at it, said "Thank you very much, Colonel," turned on his heels, caught the train back, caught the plane back. I never even saw the man, but he had to see for himself. That is just the way folks are.

Apart from that, most Amcit services matters were minor. We had only three to five Americans in jail at a given time, usually for dope. But three to five, that is nothing. You would expect far more. We had a couple of suicides.

Q: Was there a lot of American tourism to India?

LEININGER: Not individuals. They would come in tour groups, which is the preferred way of doing it. Each one of these groups would generally have somebody who knew the lay of the land, kept the people out of the most nefarious of the tourist traps, put them in reputable hotels, took them to reputable shops. They didn't get ripped off. You didn't want everybody running around loose, God forbid.

Q: Because?

LEININGER: Well the individuals say an 18 or 19 year old American again going back to the old days, was considered to be fair game by the various cults. "Come with me. I will take you to the best place to get you some?" and they would get mugged and rolled and all sorts of things would happen. But we didn't have very many of those.

Q: Was there any hangover from the famous Bhopal case in those days, that Union Carbide thing?

LEININGER: No. I mean the Union Carbide executives didn't dare set foot in India. There were outstanding warrants of arrest for them. There was no way any extradition could proceed. As matter of fact a concluded extradition treaty in Hong Kong was my duties that was brought up until 1997. And then they had been negotiating one in India for nine years. I finally helped get that one brought to conclusion too.

Q: So it didn't apply.

LEININGER: It didn't apply to this particular instance because of the number of years since the incident.

Q: So you did find the living there very demanding as you said because of the?

LEININGER: Just the day to day burdens. Now there were compensations. I mean you didn't have to boil your own water. You had your servants do it. You didn't have to soak your own veggies and fruits; you have your servants do it. Going to the markets and dealing with the dirt. You didn't want to see the stuff at the butchers. You didn't want to see it in the food stalls at the market. You only saw it after your servants brought it home and cleaned it up. Then, too, we had a very small commissary for American goods at the Embassy.

Driving in India, my God. I didn't get behind the wheel once in three years. I had a driver all the time. It wasn't so much they drove on the "wrong" side; we drove on the "wrong" side in Hong Kong and it was just fine. But the prevailing philosophy seemed to be that the double yellow line down the middle of the road was meant to be the place where you aimed your hood ornament. You aimed the car down the middle of the road, and leaned full-time on your horn. People passed on the left; people passed on the right; people passed in the opposite lane going the opposite direction. The numbers of head on collisions you saw every day was appalling. There was every form of transportation since the Stone Age on the road at the same time in India. From ox carts with hand-hewn wheels, to Mercedes Benzes, and everything in between, camels, elephants and horses. Bicycles, motorcycles, three-wheeled motorized cabs, everything. Diesel trucks that spewed out more pollution per minute than the entire Virginia Electric Power Company does producing electricity for the whole state of Virginia. Just breathing the air there was the equivalent of smoking a pack and a half of cigarettes a day. After every run I'd take I'd purposely hawk and spit up phlegm until it wasn't gray anymore, just to try to be sure I got all the gunk out of me?I guess that falls into the category of "too much information?"

Q: Now say something about your general impression of Indian-American relations. India was for a long time my impression a kind of a neutralist maybe leader of the third world movement and so forth. Was that changing by the time you were there, or how would you characterize it in your observations and discussions with political people?

LEININGER: Well, the Indians are pretty proud folks, custodians of 4,000 years of civilization, of which they constantly remind you. You almost want to stop them and say, "Hey, look around you. What happened? Where's that civilization?" Ashley Wills, our DCM, used to refer to Indians at some of the private CODELs and staff meetings, as "the French of South Asia." Overly, particularly proud, and self important, with no apparent justification, at least in recent times. But I had a continuing sense, and I know that Celeste did, and I think the people who have been there since have had it, that they are coming out of that. There is, in fact, an underlying shared value of democracy. I mean, it is a clichï¿½, but it's true. The world's largest democracy in terms of population da, da, da. And we are the world's largest democracy in terms of area and da, da, da. They are really trying. But they operate under all kinds of traditionalist and hereditary and religious encumbrances that so circumscribe their ability to live in the 21st century. There are still areas of India where wives are burned on funeral pyres when the husband dies. The dowry system for buying wives in some of the backward states is just out of all control. Sectarian tensions between Hindus and Muslims are out of control in some areas, but not just between Hindus and Muslims. There are about17 different ethnicities within India, most with their own, official language. There are certain areas in the south which are largely Christian, which are relatively enlightened in terms of women's rights, infant mortality, education of women, job opportunities for women and so forth, that almost sound like Iowa, as opposed to these other places where women are getting burned on funeral pyres.

Q: But is their attitude towards the United States, has it?

LEININGER: Well this is my point. There is no single attitude. There are many attitudes towards the United States, as many attitudes as towards what it is to be Indian. I sort of had the idea about India as I did when I was in Israel. Had it been not for the fact that it felt itself under attack and practically at war with its neighbors, it would spin apart from centrifugal force, because there are so many internal rifts in that society. The rift between the haves and have-nots is incredible. The have states are getting really tired of supporting the have-not states, the ones that are willfully backwards, the ones that are irredeemably corrupt in their government structures. The more progressive stateyou can tell it by the way their politicians are declaiming themselvewere getting tired of shouldering that burden. So if peace ever comes between Pakistan and India, and Kashmir is settled, I want to sit back and watch what happens to India.

Q: That is interesting. So that's their problem. They may be doing well economically but they still have in effect you would say terrible poverty and things they are going to have to work out in a way just like the Chinese have.

LEININGER: Well Italy was not really a country until 1900 or so. So many internal principalities and so on, but at least they spoke the same language.

Q: Well, yes, we can come back to that another time.

LEININGER: Yes, but India isn't even in that mode.

Q: So you did three years there. Anything else you want to hit from your time in particular?

LEININGER: Oh, yes. One thing that we tried to do in India is take to heart this whole gospel of what used to be called "best practices," as preached by CA. As a matter of fact one of the things that CA PDAS Donna Hamilton, before I went, said to me, was, "Look, you have got to do something to try and modernize consular operations out there in preparation for what appears to be this huge surge in workload." Well, of course, by the time I got there, it was already up to our necks and rising. We did get, while I was there, four more American positions, and about 14 more FSN positions, countrywide. But workload doubled. So how did we cope? Well, we started finally to introduce things like drop boxes for the previously-visaed people. They never had drop boxes in India before. Like a travel agent's referral system for previously-traveled people, who otherwise could have personal appearance waived, with the standards in effect of the day. We looked into offsiting information services, to a local company, but we were hampered by the fact that India does not have a nationwide 800 number or a 900 number telephone system in place. You couldn't just call up toll free, or even charge a fee to the calling party, yet. It was coming. They kept telling us it was coming, so we started negotiations. First it was going to happen in Bombay. We looked into offsiting fee collections, but our financial management officer could not dream of having any U.S. money pass through the Indian banking system if he could possibly help it. He would die first. Yet the banks he would trust, the few branches of international multinational banks, Barclay's Bank and so on, were established only in so few cities in India it would almost be impossible to do offsite fee collection. So that one was dropped for awhile. But we started all those movements in all those directions, and we did in effect streamline a lot of the processing of our operations, so we did survive without any need to move into new buildings. Now, with cutbacks in the waiver of personal appearance program we have seen since 9/11, coupled with the imposition of the fingerprint requirement, I understand they are having to do something in the waiting sections both in Mumbai and Delhi, because there is just no more room for human bodies.

Q: They don't want people dropping visas off any more without some kind of personal appearance I think. We have to talk about that separately. So after three years there, you are thinking about time in class and wanted to come back to the United States?

LEININGER: For my remaining two years, and I knew there wasn't going to be any Assistant Secretary position fall out of the sky. What had happened in the meantime while I was overseas on the HR front was interesting. It started while I was arriving in Hong Kong?

Q: HR being?

LEININGER: Well now it is called Human Resources. The Bureau of Personnel renamed itself Human Resources. It reorganized itself. The Office of Career Development and Assignments, you might recall, was vastly downsized. They combined the functions of career development officer and assignment officer. Now, when this proposal was broached, it was about '93 or '94. My first year in Hong Kong. I went on record in sending cables both to AFSA saying, "fight this," and to management saying, "it is stupid to do this. I know it might seem inefficient, but it isn't." I was arguing that not only is there an inherent conflict of interest for someone acting both as assignment officer and CDO, but there aren't enough hours in the day to do it all, if you do it right.

Q: I thought those were full time jobs when I was in.

LEININGER: They were completely full time jobs. People used to come in on weekends to catch up.

Q: I did that often, yes.

LEININGER: Yes. You had to keep everything current. All the modernization and computer applications they installed did nothing to speed things up, just as on the consular front. It didn't speed anything up; it might have made record keeping after the fact easier, but it didn't make anything any quicker. To do both of these jobs properly, people would have had to have the wisdom of Solomon, and the strength of Hercules, and be purer than Caesar's wife. They would have had to resist bureau blandishments, on the one hand and clients' blandishments on the other. I just couldn't see how that was going to work out. So after about three or four years of fooling around with that, they declared it a failursurprise, surprise.

Q: They had put the positions together, right?

LEININGER: Together.

Q: With the hope of eliminating some positions, downsizing?

LEININGER: Right. They tried to make it work, but its failure was obvious in the complaints from both employees, who weren't getting any response from people who were supposedly to act as their career development officers, and from bureaus, who weren't even having e-mails or phone messages returned from assignment officers about getting people on agenda and getting assignments done. It was just an impossible task. So HR management spun around on their heels, eventually, and decided, just about the time now I am leaving India, that they were going to go back to the old way of doing thingre-establish an assignments division, and re-establish a counseling division. I became the candidate to be the head of the mid-level counseling and assignments division, which. I would, in effect be the CDO to the CDOs who would be in charge of counseling political, economic, administrative, consular, information management officers, office managers, and security people; everybody, all specialists and generalists at the mid-levels. I had 21 CDOs working for me. I would be working for, irony of ironies, Vincent Battle, who had been my deputy back in the old CDA/CON 10 years prior. He was to be the new director of CDA.

Q: So instead of the old system where you had a career advisor in your office but in effect they all reported to the director in essence. They put a level. So you went in below the director, but above all the CDOs.

LEININGER: There was a similar division chief at senior level and another division chief at entry level. Mid-level was the largest division, since most FS employees are in those grades.

Q: Ok, I got you.

LEININGER: And we also had a CDO who was in charge of care and feeding of Civil Service employees who were with us on excursion tours. We had 120 doing that at that time. No kidding. The whole downturn in junior officer intake during the lean years of the nineties left us at the end of the decade with a huge mid-level staffing gap. We just didn't have enough people to fill our existing positions. This is why CA had to push the consular associates program, and get family members commissioned to do adjudication of visas and passports. It was why we were taking on excursion tours from specialists, and why we were taking on excursion tours from Civil Service personnel. So we had 120 Civil Service people in the field, in the middle of tours of duty. Every year we assigned an additional 35 to 45. Now, these were jobs that had been left over, still vacant, as the end of the assignment cycle approached. We wouldn't start doing those assignments until February, so usually they were the hardest jobs in the worst places that we have. And they weren't just consular positions. They were in every area, political, office management jobs, economic reporting. We would hold annual Civil Service recruitment drives each year in the Department, and the central system worked out special re-employment rights agreements, to be sure these folks would have jobs waiting for them when they returned from their overseas tours.

Q: We are still talking with Wayne Leininger. We are going to fill in a couple of things here that we skipped over. One of them is something that Wayne wants to bring up about his time in New Delhi, so go ahead.

LEININGER: I just wanted to mention in passing the way we reacted, and the way many of the other immigrant visa issuing posts around the world reacted, to the imposition of a new, legally binding affidavit of support requirement for immigrants who were sponsored by relatives in the United States. Now to put it in perspective, for years and years, family members who sponsor other family members for immigration to the United States have always been required in some way, shape, or form or another, to put up evidence that the alien to whom we are going to be giving this visa will not become a public charge. They have an old affidavit of support, called the I-134, which the courts sort of looked at and chuckled a little bit and said, "Yes, that is a nice expression of intent, but it is by no means a basis for confiscating someone's assets or attaching their salaries or anything else." Well in 1996, Congress stiffened the requirement.

They were clamping down, as you might recall, on the entitlement of immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, to any kind of social welfare benefits. Along these lines, they said anybody who is going to legally come to this country and is going to be sponsored by a relative, is going to have that relative held legally responsible for this person not becoming a public charge a) until that alien accumulates 40 quarters of social security work; b) until that alien becomes a citizen him or herself; c) until that alien dies, or d) until the sponsor dies. At least the sponsor's obligation did not go down to the next generation! To that end, anyway, the Department of State, and the then-INS, got together and they drew up about an eight page document called, an I-864. It ithe way they did it, and it passed all the lawyers testsufficient basis to take somebody to court if their sponsored immigrant ends up on public assistance. Sponsors had that to show income and/or assets in the United States sufficient to support the incoming applicant and his entire family, and their own family, at a level of 125% of the poverty level in the area in which they are living. Now for our purposes, "the area in which they are living, "means just one of three. There is Hawaii, Alaska, and the continental United States. Now you know and I know that the cost of living in New York City is a hell of a lot more than in Omaha, but nevertheless, we have one standard for the whole of the continental United States.

This all sounds wonderful when you are sitting back in Washington drawing up these rules, and we say people are going to meet these tests, or they are not going to get their visas. This is the way we are going to stop people from ever going on public assistance, and if they go on public assistance, we are going to get the money back out of the individuals who sponsored them in the first place dammit! Yes! Well, in practice, there were several problems in administration that cropped up within the first two weeks of implementation. First of all, the I-864 it is the most complicated government document I have ever seen. It beats the hell out of any IRS form I have ever encountered. I have had immigration lawyers, whose business it was to handle these things, curl up in despair, not being able to make heads or tails out of that form or its instructions. Now, those are the professionals, the lawyers. Can you imagine some person who is not literate in any known language, having to send this to a relative in the United States saying, "Please to fill this out for me." Hello! The form has to have copies of the sponsor's income tax returns for the previous three years. It has got to be notarized. It has got to be signed in about three different places. If you have got a spouse's income that has got to be included, the spouse has to fill out a portion. If your combined income is still insufficient and you have another joint sponsor, there is another form added to it. Long story short, when this thing was actually put into play in 1997, the refusal rate of first time applicants coming in and presenting it to us at the time of their interview for the supposed issuance of their visa, the refusal rates around the world were between 75% and 85%. People just couldn't get it right. It wasn't usually that the income levels necessarily were lacking. In some cases they were, which was a valid grounds for refusal under the public charge provisions of the law. But, mostly, they simply hadn't dotted the i's and crossed the t's appropriately. They didn't have the number of copies, didn't have it notarized, didn't have the number of signatures, didn't have, didn't have. So there we were in India and other colleagues were in the Philippines, and the Dominican Republic, and in Haiti, trying to explain to these poor semi-educated people what it was wrong with this most complicated form the U.S. government has ever issued.

Q: What it turns into is a major workload you have to do, because you are the people who have to do this.

LEININGER: Right. Well, the initial refusal was the least of our concerns. That was a burden on the applicants to shoulder. The real problem was, they come back for re-interview, unscheduled, mind you, whenever they think they've got it right. When someone is refused on these grounds, it is a technical failure to comply with the requirements of the Act. That is a refusal under section 221(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. They can come back and re-apply for their visa at any time within the following year, without having to pay another application fee, without having to schedule an appointment. So they could come back in randomly. When you are refusing 85% of your daily workload, and that 85% comes back in at random over the next two months or so, your daily schedules aren't schedules anymore. Typically, applicants sent the forms back to the U.S. and the sponsors worked on them. And then the second time around they were still inaccurate 65% of the time. It was so bad that in that fiscal year, we were in danger, worldwide, of not being able to issue enough visas under the family preference category to meet the annual allocation of visa numbers. Now if you remember from your days in the business, those family categories, brother or sister of an American citizen or spouse of a green card holder, are backed up for years, because the demand is so great. It would be a scandal of the first water for us not even to be able to issue visas on an annual basis that met that annual allocation.

This is where my experience in putting together list serves, e-mail lists of consular section chiefs around the world, came to play in a happy way. First of all what we did is get together among ourselves via e-mail, and profile the most common failings in the completion of the I-864s we were seeing. We put together a little checklist and circulated around to all the major immigrant visa issuing posts in the world, and devised a nice, neat slimmed-down little document that document checkers could use verify whether or not the I-864 was in good shape or not. And then a tear-off sheet, a copy of those failings, was given to the applicant in writing, saying, "You failed to do this, that, and the other thing," that could in turn be sent back to the sponsor. So that is how we coped with that initial problem at post. But it was tremendously labor-intensive. The vetting of these affidavits was an immense drain on our resources.

So very early on, I got to thinking back to my time in Toronto, when we were interviewing stateside applicants, and we got all their folders and documents up before us in advance, before we ever called them to Canada for an interview, so they didn't get refused on the spot and get held over in some way. I said, "Look, it would be really great if somebody, somehow, somewhere, could pre-clear these affidavits of support, at least in a technical sense, to make sure that all the supporting documents are there, everything is signed and notarized properly etc., before they ever were submitted to us here at post." So I proposed to the Visa Office that NVC do this, for a nominal fee, of course. We wouldn't do it for free. But NVC would be able to deal with?

Q: That being?

LEININGER: The National Visa Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It serves as a master clearinghouse for all immigrant petitions and labor certification in cases that are generated in the United States; they are kept at NVC until their turn for processing arrives. In cases in which there is no backlog, as with immediate relatives of American citizens, they are assigned a case number and sent overseas for processing by us consular folks on the ground. But NVC, at least, is in a position, in the same hemisphere, in an English language speaking environment, to deal with directly with the relative sponsors who are required to file these documents. They are able, in real time, to answer questions on a 900 phone number. They began by handling the cases of only of the five largest immigrant visa issuing posts in the world, but now all I-864's that are required to be filed by the relative sponsors in the United States go to the National Visa Center first for vetting. NVC will go over them, as we did in the old days, with that little check list and say you failed to do this or do this.

Q: Do they charge them a fee for this?

LEININGER: They charge them a nominal fee for this. It is $70, but compared to what an attorney would charge on an hourly basis, that's a bargain. If there's something wrong, the affidavit goes back to the sponsor, with suggested corrections. The sponsor has another chance to get it right, and sends it back to NVC. NVC will reexamine it again and send it back to the sponsor. That's it. Two strikes, and that is it. After the second time NVC says, "You're on your own. You have gotten our best advice, go ahead and try and get it right." As the end result of this, only between 5% and 7% of these affidavits, as I recall, are now found in lacking in technical correctness. NVC doesn't do anything with respect to adjudicating the case substantively as to ineligibility under the public charge provisions. They are not consular officers. They are not empowered under the law to refuse a visa under 212(a)4, likely public charge, but they can give the sponsor a heads-up that, "It doesn't look to us like you are going to meet those standards," and can send them some suggestions on how they can alternatively meet the requirements of the law. If not with income, then with any assets they might own.

Q: Did you ever have any sense as to how serious this public charge issue was? I mean in the various posts that you worked and?

LEININGER: It was significant. It was significant in Hong Kong while we were dealing with Vietnamese immigrants, very poorly educated, no English language skills. Of the Vietnamese population in California, something like 65% of all the immigrants were on public assistance. First generation immigrants, that is.

Q: And this was after supposedly passing the public charge test.

LEININGER: The nominal one we had in place in the old days. Yes. But keep in mind that many of those Vietnamese had not entered as immigrants, but as refugees, and they ended up on public assistance only after their refugee benefits ran out.

Q: Did you ever have a sense that there was a lot of fraud with job offers, for example. That people would have offers of employment or was it something the relatives did?

LEININGER: It was almost always a family case.

Q: So the relatives who did the affidavits of support could not provide the support.

LEININGER: Could not provide the support, and in some cases, say with elderly parents, never had any intention of ever supplying any support. They brought them over and immediately got them on supplemental Social Security. It was a knowing and conscious scam, and that is what Congress wanted to slam the door on.

Q: So do you think the introduction of these affidavits of support had the desired effect. Leave aside your problem.

LEININGER: That's another question entirely. Do I think we have gotten higher barriers in place for people to leap over at the beginning of the process? Yes. I really do. I think it really has set the bar higher. People do have to come up with better evidence of their ability to support their relatives, and they are put on notice that they are subject to legal proceedings if they fail. But, as I always tell students, now that I am teaching this CONGEN, how do we enforce contracts in the United States? You have got to take somebody to court. So, somebody goes to Fairfax Inova Hospital and runs up a $12,000 bill in the neo-natal unit, and doesn't have the money to pay, and that person is a family-sponsored immigrant. Fairfax Inova has the option taking the sponsor, the immigrant's sponsor, to court. How much is it going to cost them to do that? How many lawyers are they going to have to retain? How long is it going to take to work its way through the system? They are going to throw up their hands and write it off. Now the same thing happens for any state and local government involved, too. Any time there is a state and local government handout of any kind, the only way of recouping any money is to sue the sponsor. I am not aware of any study that shows that at the end of the day people who do renege on these pledges are actually held to account.

Q: Do you think it is a serious problem or just an annoying item if you could characterize?

LEININGER: It is a localized problem in certain jurisdictions in this country. California, Illinois, New York City and its environs, Florida, those are the main pockets that are hardest hit. This is all state and local governments, mind you, and these are the areas in which immigrants are concentrated. There is no federal assistance for immigrants. The feds help out for refugees for a few years, but they don't help out for immigrants.

Q: So the states cannot go to the feds and say you have sent these people here, and you should help us out. They have no program.

LEININGER: No per capita grant of federal money to the states to help them?

Q: One would think that the way the political process works that local legislatures, that is Congressmen and Senators from certain states being presented with unhappy numbers would attempt through the Congressional process to?

LEININGER: They are outnumbered by the locales that art not impacted. There are far more senators at from places like Nebraska and Idaho, where it's "What's an immigrant?"

Q: Fair enough, yes.

LEININGER: Now certain countries attempt to spread out this load in other ways. If you are going to immigrate to Canada you get extra pointthey have a point system for qualificatioyou get extra points if you say you are going to emigrate to Manitoba, as opposed to British Columbia or Ontario. Everybody wants to go to British Columbia and Ontario. But those are the provinces, again, that bear a disproportionate impact of the immigrant population. Now, how, exactly, they enforce that after people arrive I don't know. I don't think the royal Canadian Mounted Police hunt down people who say they are going to Manitoba and end up in Vancouver!

Q: They can't do that. That would be like indentured servitude. You can't hold people prisoner in a locale.

LEININGER: Exactly. Not in a democracy as we have. Anyway, coping with the I-864 was one little thing we managed to work out. Over time, we in the field, and the folks in Washington, came to understand that we are on the same page; we are on the same team, unlike with the imposition of the MRV fee, just four or five years earlier. Both those field consular managers and the people who ran these programs out of Washington learned that it helps to be involved in a collegial way to resolve, hopefully anticipate in advance the problems that come up.

Q: Do you think that now the universal presence of the E-mail and other sort of immediate ways of communicating have facilitated a lot of this?

LEININGER: Yes, I think we have a new form of communication here. I think e-mail was almost perceived by some people in the Department as a subversive tactic by consular section chiefs around the world. Because we were e-mailing each other, and exchanging information. We weren't taking orders directly from Washington. We were coming up with ideas of their own!

Q: It didn't have a cable number on them.

LEININGER: Right. And no one signed off or cleared on it. We were just out there running out of all control! Well, when you start including people within the Visa Office, within CA/OCS, on the exchanges of e-mails, you make it again a collegial round-robin form, and that is all to the good.

Q: Just the fact that the information can go around now instantaneously, you don't have to go through these complicated maneuvers. No I think it was very good and revolutionary development.

LEININGER: To cite another example, again in the immigrant visa field, at about the same time as the new affidavit of support was developed, they imposed a requirement for the first time that immigrants to the United States have a required series of inoculations, vaccinations, immunizations, before they could be issued their visas, or they would be refused on health grounds. Now it wasn't but two days after this program was announced to the field that those of us serving in third world countries went in and said, "Hey look. People here don't have those inoculations, those vaccinations, for the simple reason that those vaccines don't exist in this country. Never have." In other areas of the world there were objections, in some cases, on the basis of religious belief to getting inoculated, and, in other instances, in which the administration of the vaccinations was not medically sound, not correct. During the early trimesters of a woman's pregnancy, for example, you don't want to expose her to live bacteria, even a weakened strain. So, very quickly, the Department and the INS and the CDC got together at the Washington end of things, after hearing all these initial rounds of difficulties with the program, and they drew up a delegated authority to consular officers to waive the medical ineligibility when those vaccines and vaccinations were simply not available, or when post panel physicians doing these examinations in connection with the immigrant visa application could certify that this person doesn't have the vaccine because it is not medically advised, or when there are religiously-based objections to its administration. Now people who just objected to it because they don't like to get vaccines had no "out." They could still appeal to CDC, but that was an individual waiver that CDC would consider and almost always refuse. What happens to those with waivers? Do they get admitted without the vaccines? Yes they do, but they are ordered to report to the nearest public health service office, and there is a follow-up procedure whereby people are inoculated within the first two years they are in the United States. Some of these vaccinations do take two years, with your initial shot and boosters. That was another objection to the original program. In order to get some of these vaccinations done you would have had to make people wait two years to complete the whole series, if you were draconian about it. Again people in Washington were thinking, "Yes, it is a good thing to get these people all inoculated." But then you translate it to an overseas setting and it doesn't quite work.

Q: But the fact is the information exchange enabled you?

LEININGER: It was there, and they very quickly responded to it, and they came up with a program that was workable. Those last couple of turnarounds, exchanges with the Department and the field, I thought were sort of a watershed, a change in the relations between Washington and posts overseas.

Q: Well let's talk about, I want to come back and ask you some more general questions about the way the consular business has evolved and so forth over your time. But for now let's talk about your last assignment, which was in personnel again, and revisit the situation you found. They had just gone back just to the previous system of having one officer that worked on assignments and represented the bureaus, and another one who worked on assignments and represented the officers by cone and grade and so forth. Tell me what you found in personnel.

LEININGER: It was an interesting time in CDA. The people who were still in place, in the second half of two-year tours of duty, had never really been an advocate solely for bidders. By the same token, those people who went over to the assignment officer side of the house had never been advocates for the bureaus. In times past, and now and into the future, you had one generation of CDO school the next as to their duties and responsibilities. It was an hereditary sort of philosophy they handed down, one generation after another. I got there at a time when there was no such institutional history. I had to be the institutional history. I had 21 CDOs working for me. I had my knowledge of the way the system used to work, circa 1988 to '90, when I was there.

Such simple procedures as outlining responsibility for putting assignment proposals on the agenda, for purposes of bringing them to panel, had to be spelled out all over again. All the technical things had to be re-taught. But then there also were questions of approach, and tactics, and strategy. When is it appropriate for CDO to put up a candidate against a bureau candidate? When do you do it? How long can you "hold" an assignment, and for what reasons can you hold one? "Hold" is a technical term of ours. It just means postponing final panel decisions. There are limits to how long this can be done. Why you should do it, and when you should do it as a matter of tactics and strategy, that has to be learned. Then finally, when you come down to real head-banging sessions where bureau wants candidate A, and candidate B, represented by his CDO wants to be run for the position, how do you "fight fair" at panel in the discussions? What information about the candidates is admissible for open discussion and what isn't? Is it all hallway gossip? Is it only material that has been written up in an EER in black and white? What parts of the EER can you read? If you check out the EER, as an assignment officer, can you just hold it and not show it to the CDO, or vice versa? We had to re-invent the ground rules. It comes down to everybody's learning that although assignment officers represent bureau interests at panel, and CDO represent employees' interests at panel, we don't work for those people. We work for the Director General. We work for HR. Our overall goal is to make the best match of person to job. In some instances it means that a CDO will have to 'fess up that Mr. So-and-so did not have the most sterling tour of duty in his previous post, but he really would like to go to this place, where he's a better fit, and we beg the panel's indulgence to cut him a break. You can't argue everybody as if he or she is God's gift to the Foreign Service. You'd lose all credibility. Yet there are other equities that can be argued. "Three assignments in a row at hardship posts." "A child who needs special education." Because we do value a certain degree of humanity, I think, in our system, these personal needs can be said to also constitute a "need of the Service" that also needs to be taken into account. It isn't always just bowing down in front of a bureau because they liked candidate A. And it isn't always just representing your client's interests blindly, "my client, right or wrong," to the end. There is a middle ground, almost always, that it is really our job as CDOs, or for that matter AOs, assignment officers, to reach, in a collegial way. So the overall balance and equity of the system is upheld.

Q: Let me ask you this question. Was the women's class action suit basically done by then?

LEININGER: Yes. Over and done with. We didn't have any of the remedial assignments to do. Nothing. During my previous time as director of policy coordination we had done the final calculations on back pay, as I told you last time. That basically was the last chapter in that.

Q: So what if any shall we say systemic issues did you confront in this tour would you say?

LEININGER: Ok, well, there were several. First of all we had a large number of issues arise concerning office manager specialists (OMS). That term of art, of course, was only recently coined. They were "secretaries" for the first 200 years or more of the Department's existence. Office management however is a term that largely came about since officers themselves became more proficient in using word processing programs and secretaries ceased to do the typing and the editing and the, "Put this in the file folder would you, Marge." No one does that anymore. You push the button and it is done. Over time the office managers did develop a greater range of computer skills. They served in broader capacities in terms of organizing the way the office ran, relief schedules and that sort of thing. Not just seeing that the Ambassador's chauffeur picked him up on time, but on the daily basis, within real day to day offices, the office managers kept things running.

Q: The number of these people declined say from 1990 to 2000, even if the offices were doing all this typing themselves?

LEININGER: No, not appreciably. But the jobs and the titles and the work requirements did evolve. Number one, many of the office managers became back up communicators, or, rather, Information Management Officers, at posts, and they were on duty and actually served for a couple of months at a time every year as the rotation of their professional IMO colleagues occurred, standing in, and they weren't getting any back-up pay for it. Now if another IMO had gone to post from Frankfort, say, then that person would have gotten extra. Well office managers weren't getting anything, and we fixed that. Next, the enhanced range of responsibilities that office managers were taking on were not reflected in our recruiting strategies. We were still bringing people in at the FS-8 level, offering only a very slow progression up to the FS-6 level. That was unfair compared to the way we were bringing everyone else into the Service. Within CDA/ML we had two professionals, two OMS, serving as career development officers for other OMSers, and one more senior OMS who was co-designated as the OMS coordinator. There was a special, direct line of reporting to the Director General on OMS issues, from the OMS coordinator. And she came to me and said, "Look, we don't think this entry-level policy is fair." I said, "I don't think it is fair either. Go ahead write it up." So from within CDA we put forward the proposal that BEX, the board of examiners, the recruitment and examination people, change their entry designation, grade designation for incoming OMSers. Which they did. So OMSers were brought in as a O7's. That left us, since no good deed goes unpunished, with the problem that there were still people in the system who were brought in as eights, and were still eights, who we then had to go back and retroactively promote to fix that. Long story short, I think we did justice to our colleagues in the service and got them recognition for them for what they do these days, and rewards for it, tangible monetary rewards. We also pushed for job reclassification of senior OMS positions in order to make that career track have a little more head room to it. A lot of people were just sort of peaking out at the FS-4 and that was it. "Just forget it. You can't get any higher than that." But we increased the number of positions graded FS-2 and FS-3 around the world.

The other major systemic issue we had to face during that time was that although we had something on the order of 6500 mid-level employees of the Department of State, that was about 1500 fewer than we had mid-level jobs. Why was that you ask? It was because in the previous four or five or six years we hadn't been hiring near to attrition in our entry-level intake across the board.

Q: Let's come back. So you had 6500 people and 8000 jobs.

LEININGER: Right. So that on an annual basis?

Q: Why hadn't they been hiring for attrition?

LEININGER: Because they cut the budget so drastically.

Q: Oh I see. So State's budget was cut.

LEININGER: At least for those purposes. Now what goes across to foreign aid, and military assistance, and other types of expenses is a separate pile of money.

Q: Warren Christopher and Madeline Albright were not able to get the money they wanted.

LEININGER: No. So for that period of five or six years, we didn't have sufficient junior officer intake that left us, we were falling short about 100 a year. Ordinarily we hired 225, but we were lucky if we were hiring 125. One year they didn't even administer the Foreign Service written exam, having reckoned that they were hiring so few people that they could just continue to draw down the existing registers, and so could save even more money! Anyway, we ended up those several years later with big deficits in the mid-level grades on the officer side of about five or six hundred, and on the specialist side of again about five or six hundred and with OMSers, about a couple of hundred. We had holes all over now at the mid-ranks. Those people who would have come in as junior officers and been promoted routinely up to FS-3 level, weren't there. We didn't have them. So what did we do? Well we were doing were a couple of things right along, such as Civil Service excursion tours. As I started to mention last time, we went out aggressively to recruit Civil Service personnel to fill unwanted, I have to say unwanted, and unfilled Foreign Service vacancies. Every year in February while I was there, as the main stages of the Foreign Service assignment cycle wound down and we were running out of Foreign Service bidders, there would still be hundreds of jobs left on the bid list. Usually in ungodly, hole-in-the-wall places, hardship jobs that nobody else would want to go to, though in a couple of instances I remember OMS positions in Switzerland that would go unfilled because no one could afford to go there. The OMS positions were classified too low, not paying enough, the cost of living being excessive, and the allowances not picking up the slack. But most of these jobs were in God-awful places. Now this is why we had one CDO whose job it was to look over the shoulders of the 125 civil service employees we had serving tours of duty at Foreign Service posts overseas in regular Foreign Service positions. They got limited Foreign Service appointments for the duration of their assignment. They could renew and re-up if they wanted to for another tour of duty.

In the old days, each Civil Service employee who wanted to go out on an excursion tour had to negotiate with the Executive Director of his or her bureau to secure "re-employment rights" the right to come back to the job that had been left behind when they went overseas. In effect, they had to talk that bureau into putting the job on hold. That person would still be carried on the losing bureau's rolls as an employee, even though it would not getting any work out of them. The bureau couldn't put anyone else in the job. Needless to say, a lot of bureaus were reluctant to do this, regardless of the long-term benefit in terms of employee development, and regardless of the benefit to the overseas post. So we had the Director General change the policy: we extended system-wide re-employment rights to Civil Service personnel who went abroad on Foreign Service excursion tours. That is, if for any reason their home bureau did not take them back into their own positions, the central system would guarantee them a position at their old rank and job series somewhere else in the Department. That got us a lot more volunteers!

You might think initially that we were robbing Petedomestic staffinto pay Pauoverseas posts, and to an extent we were. But the rationale was that headquarters could withstand short staffing far better than the thinly-staffed overseas posts could. And we spread the recruitment around. True, 25% to 30% of all these vacancies were consular, and so CA was the logical domestic source of Civil Service subject experts. But it was across the board. We were taking people out of INR to fill political vacancies, out of EB to fill econ vacancies. We were taking people out of what had been USIA, out of the bureau of educational and cultural affairs, and putting them in public diplomacy positions overseas. So boom. We were doing Civil Service people. We were doing in some cases robbing Peter to pay Paul within the Foreign Service itself, by taking Foreign Service specialists from certain areas that were not in deficit, and putting them into Foreign Service officer jobs, especially the admin subfields. A General Services specialist, you make him an admin officer for a tour of duty. Then, finally, this was the day of the EFM, eligible family member, employment. They were hired as consular associates, largely in positions overseas filling Foreign Service positions, for the duration of their spouse's assignment, in many places around the world.

Q: Did you get people then on the family member side, that might have been done two or three jobs in a row and then began to agitate for some kind of permanent status or some kind of?

Q: There was a long prior history of converting people who did not prove to be successful when they were promoted. I mean that was the long?

LEININGER: You are right, that is correct. We were very conscious of that. I mean I was very sensitive to that myself, because when I got into the consular business 30 years before, half the members of the cone were not exam officers, and I wondered, "Who are these people?!!!"

Q: The old staff cone was not a successful venture.

LEININGER: Yes. They put a bunch of dead end people into what they knew were dead end jobs.

Q: Well the people often got promoted.

LEININGER: To the level of their incompetence.

Q: Yes, exactly. Right. So you found that, if you had a spouse then for example who went around with his or her spouse officer. The spouse was and did a consular job two or three times in a row, and in effect could argue they were doing the same work, at least at the line interviewing people, and felt that they should get whatever, benefits or some kind of career status, you were able to keep that away.

LEININGER: Yes, keep that from being an entrï¿½e to the career Service. But there were some steps taken, which have never been fully implemented, to grant people with repeated tours of duty as PITs, part time temporary employees, some small degree of annuity rights and, when employed as PITs in the future, consideration for appointment at a higher grade, building on past experience. The next job is supposed to get paid at the next higher rate and the next higher rate, and the next higher rate.

Q: But no one has sued about that yet.

LEININGER: No, and as a matter of fact, when we did have people who were successful in their EFM tours as consular associates and who wanted to get in the career service, and we said "go take the exam, "fully 2/3 of them who took the exam got in. You know, we Foreign Service people tend to marry other people who are relatively intelligent, educated and capable. Not too many of us "marry beneath our station" to use an anachronistic term. The number of tandem couples alone testifies to that, those who came in together as officers. So it isn't surprising that a lot of spouses go ahead and take the exam, pass it, and come in.

Q: And you are saying all these alternative staffing schemes came about because the Department could not get the money it was asking for.

LEININGER: Right. And then we got Secretary Powell. Now there is a "diplomatic readiness initiative. " Secretary Powell was able and willing to march up to the Hilwell first he had to march up to the White House and get them to approvthen go up to the Hill and say, "Look, we have been doing diplomacy on the cheap" that was the phras"too long. It is harming us." Now he came out of DoD military background, where not only do they have to have all the billets filled in the front line units, but there is also a training float on top of that of 10%.

Q: As long as there is not a war on.

LEININGER: As long as there is not a war on, right. These days we have to dip down into the National Guard units and take people out of the reserves. But in just peacetime purposes, staffing is "plus 10%." That is for promotion; that is for training. It is for whatever purpose at all, to cover holes in the staffing pattern. So that was the next big thing. We are going to not only hire to attrition, we are going to hire to super attrition for all five years, I believe, of the overall initiative. This was the last year. We've been hiring over 335, something like that, new employees a year.

Q: FSOs.

LEININGER: Foreign Service, officers and staff. Civil service hiring is aside from that. This was going to fill up all those holes in the staffing pattern that we had, and leave us with a surplus, on top of that. It was my special project to figure out what that surplus should be, because nobody had a computer program that dealt with this. I had to total up, by hand, all the staff hours lost to people on leave without pay; people in long term training; people detailed to other agencies. All those activities would be covered by to the float. I had a talk with the registrar here at FSI, and got a report on the number of staff hours for people in long-term training. We are not talking about people who are doing mainstream jobs in the Department who come over here for a two -day seminar on effective public speaking. We are talking about people who would be enrolled in courses here for at least a month or longer. So we compiled all that together and totaled it all up and decided how many "men in motion" positions we would need on top of the vacant slots we had out in the field. That became the position base that we needed to hire to, over and above attrition, to actually make staffing come out right in the long run. And to Secretary Powell's everlasting credit, he was able to get everybody on the Hill and in the White House to sign on to this. So we had a great flush of people, new entrants to the Service. You can see it in the parking lots at FSI. These days, it is insane. The cafeteria is a zoo at mid-day! It wasn't just a one-year allocation of new resources. Once these people were aboard, there were salaries and benefits, housing, transportation, training, everything like that, from now until they retire from the Foreign Service 25 years 30 years from now, all had to be taken care of. So all of these needs have been built into the base.

Q: Do you think that it is because, I mean I had a theory for a long time that for military people resources are always a substantive question. Whereas for the people that often come in to the management of foreign affairs, resources are not a substantive question. Something else that somebody over there does while they do the substance of policy. Of course every military person knows you have got to have the jeeps and the bullets and the C-rations or whatever.

LEININGER: The Army marches on its stomach.

Q: And you have to have money for that. Therefore the resources for them are not a peripheral issue; they are a central issue.

LEININGER: They are a central issue.

Q: So that if you get military people around places like the State Department, they are prepared to invest their time and energy to put those things on an equal basis.

LEININGER: I am sure that is why Secretary Powell wanted Grant Greene as his Undersecretary for Management.

Q: Was he a military person?

LEININGER: Yes. Now, back in CDA, we were seeing the first wave of the year-and-a-half influx of new junior officers, under Secretary Powell's program. That was all to the good. Ironically, what we didn't have anymore were enough junior officer positions into which to assign them. What had happened during those years of the shortfall of junior officer intake is that junior officer positions went vacant at overseas posts, so a lot of those posts sort of put on their thinking caps and said, "Well, jeez, if we don't have any junior officers, maybe we can get an FS-3 to fill this position, if we make it an FS-3 job." So they ended up upgrading the job. You can see this trend play out in the inventory reports on the distribution of the grades of Foreign Service positions. About 20% of all junior officer positions migrated up to FS-3 in the early '90s to mid-'90which then, in turn, only aggravated our shortfall of mid-level employees, when the junior officer gaps of the early '90s became the mid-level shortfalls of the latter part of the decade!

Q: It should be noted FS-3 is the first grade of mid level that would be filled by tenured officers. The implication being that you have got at least four years in before you are an FS-3.

LEININGER: Right. So in that first year or so, we had not only a restoration of the usual influx of junior officers, but half again as many as even the original position base would have sustained. We ended up, the two years I was there, with more junior officers than places to put them. So what did we have to do? Where, again, did we have the vacancies? Well, at mid-levels! We ended up going over the entire mid-level position structure, CDOs and assignment officers working collegially here, with the bureaus' input, deciding which of these jobs could actually be filled by first tour junior officers if necessary, or preferably, by second tour people if they were available. Now you didn't want to, say, in consular terms, put a first tour officer in a single-officer post in Africa. For God's sake, that is setting up everybody for disaster. But if it had to be a second tour junior officer, someone not yet tenured, not yet an FS-3, so be it. Because we didn't have anybody else. Moreover, you could make them go there, because junior officer assignments are directed by the entry-level division. The officer has some input. He can express a written wish list, but it is by no means the same as a tenured employees bid list. They are ultimately directed assignments by the entry-level division. So you could get warm bodies out to fill those positions, to mid-level jobs that would otherwise not attract any bidders. This was not just consular positions. It was jobs of all cones across the board. All these were alternative staffing mechanisms we used. To sum up, we had Civil Service, EFMs, specialists, and, ultimately, junior officers filling mid-level jobs.

Now, okay, put yourself in my position. You are the supervisor of a bunch of mid-level CDOs, who are advising their counselees about what jobs they should be going after. Those counselees are hearing from every corner that "their" jobs are being given away to other people. Given away to Civil Servants, given away to EFMs, given away to specialists, and given away to junior officers. We had to mount a major public relations effort to convince these people that, "Look, the jobs that are going to those folks are not the kind of jobs that are career enhancing for you."

Q: ?this issue of the classification of FS-3 jobs and who was going into them and having to deal with people who might not have been too happy.

LEININGER: Well, essentially, the bottom line was we had to convince these folks that their careers really were not going to suffer. They were not going to lose the good, promotable jobs in the nice places.

Q: Did you reclassify them, any of these...

LEININGER: No, this is the thing. Central system doesn't do any of position classification on its own initiative. It has to be generated at the post or bureau level.

Q: There used to be an office at the department that coordinated that.

LEININGER: There is still RMA, resource management analysis, who will approve or disapprove proposals on technical grounds, with CDA concurrence. But RMA just reacts to requests for upgrades or downgrades or changes of skill code. The actual initiative to do the upgrades and downgrades has to originate at post. Now, we were of course hopeful that once junior officers performed well in what largely, historically, had been junior positions in the first place, that the blinders would be lifted from post management and bureau management and they would say, "Yes, that really is a junior officer job. Let's get it back on the entry-level vacancy list where it belongs." I think that did happen, to a large extent. Now, this is the last year of enhanced hiring, this upcoming fiscal year, and then we will go back to historical levels. So the pressures to find places for these new people to go will diminish.

Q: Well, now what's happening with consular staffing? This problem you have got on the visa side, you have got to interview a huge increased number of applicants?

LEININGER: Right. Personal interviews for nearly everyone. And you have got to interview them more carefully

Q: Right, and this huge number of people you basically waived through in the past, how is that going to be coped with?

LEININGER: CA is "buying" extra positions. Everybody knows, I think to some extent everybody now knows, that the machine readable visa application fee has gone to fund a lot of equipment upgrades in the department. There are computers. You have got the central database. There are high-speed landlines, satellite communications. It has bought all kinds of stuff in terms of material infrastructure. What is less known is that MRV fees actually pay the salaries of virtually everybody in the consular business, FSNs and Americans alike.

Q: Does the Department literally get to directly with withhold that or does it flow to the treasury department.

LEININGER: The Department gets it. It is not an appropriated fund. Now this is why, temporarily, in the post 9-11 era, CA got hamstrung. The Bureau of Consular Affairs got hamstrung. Visa demand fell by 20 to 25 percent, and the MRV feby then already $6was no longer sufficient to support our operating costs.

Q: For an MRV?

LEININGER: For a machine readable visa application, payable up front, in advance, and whether or not the visa was issued. That money was paid, because that is how much it took to support the operation. With that downturn in demand post 9-11, then that source of revenue, on which we'd become dependant to pay salaries and actually to accomplish the day-to-day work, was drying up. So they had to recalculate the amount, and it got bumped up from $65 to $100. A hundred dollars is what it costs for someone to apply for a visa to the United States. Visa or not, you have to pay a hundred bucks. That maintained the relative income stream. This same thing happened to our colleagues in INS when they went back to, in effect, a user fee, user pay type of system. They saw a downturn in their workload about ten years ago, and for a while they couldn't hire. They couldn't transfer people. I remember in Hong Kong, we had INS people whose tours of duty were up for six or eight months, who couldn't be transferred because the INS didn't have any money.

Q: But I mean, I remember a wise old admin advisor always said to me, "Don't confuse positions and money." So the consular function has this money, but the department still doesn't, I mean even if you bring in more FSOs you have a position limit. So what do they do, the can hire more temporaries to do this stuff?

LEININGER: Oh, no, they can buy positions.

Q: What does that mean?

LEININGER: Meaning they pledge that while the positions will be established at the junior officer level, a sufficient amount of resources are set aside to cover all amortized costs of those extra hires through the entire course of a career.

Q: That is astonishing.

LEININGER: Yes it is. CA is in effect right now a semi-independent corporation in the Department.

LEININGER: Do you recall the debate about "whither INS?" Because it was a dysfunctional agency and should it really be continued in its present form? Should we not maybe divide it up into enforcement and services branches? Okay, that much was pretty well agreed upon, when the Department of Homeland Security was brought into being. The next thought was,"? and by the way, since we are dealing with services, why don't we then merge the INS services side in the United States with the consular service overseas? Then you have one agency working opposite sides of the same coin. Well that was fine, except finally the powers that be in the Department of State, said, wait a minute. Consular work is far too important in foreign policy terms for us to give up. This is how far the worm has turned since I came in the business 30 years ago. Consular work was an appendage on the dog, and no one really cared if it got snipped or not. But no one wanted to lose it after 9/11. The assignment of the Department of Homeland Security personnel to certain consular sections was proposed and accepted, and DHS has some policy input, but the Department of State said, "We keep the operation here. You guys look after security aspects if you want by stationing people in certain areas, but the visa function is ours."

Q: Did the Department lose any function or persons to Homeland Security?

LEININGER: No. DHS has its say-so on security-related aspects of visa processing, but all the rest of visa policy and consular oversight is outs, I my understanding.

Q: None of the visa function or anything. Does Homeland Security now put people overseas in Embassies?

LEININGER: Well, of course, they inherited the old INS overseas district and local offices, so those people are still in our missions. But they are not performing functions that are post-9/11 DHS functions. They still do old-line INS type things, adjudicate petitions, do local field investigations, that sort of thing.

Q: Pre clearance I suppose. People at the airports.

LEININGER: Right, where we have worked out such agreements with host country governments. Now, what is gradually happening, but in a very limited number of posts, say on the Arabian peninsula, is that DHS will station people within consular sections who will have vetting rights on issued visa applications as they come through, to make sure that consular personnel have not screwed up on anyone. But they won't routinely sit on visa lines. They will not have a direct line of supervision over consular officers during the adjudications. They will in effect be consultants and to an extent have veto power over a case that they think we somehow missed. Now, it is really hard, the way the systems are configured, for us totally to miss something now. If the name comes up in the database, you cannot issue a visa just by pushing a button. You have to go jump a couple of extra procedural hurdles and actually explain to the computer, and for the electronic record, why it is that this name that has popped up is not your applicant. You can cite a cable number from the incoming visas clearance you get from the Department or something like that and the system then will allow you to issue the visa.

Q: Now when you say the Department will keep the machine-readable visa fees, do they also keep passport fees?

LEININGER: No.

Q: That still goes to the treasury.

LEININGER: Right. I think we might get to keep the surcharge for expedited, walk-in service at domestic agencies, but that's not my field of expertise!

Q: Do they keep any other immigrant visa fees?

LEININGER: No normal immigrant visa fees. We do get to keep the fee that entrants in the Diversity Immigrant Visa lottery program pay to participate, but that just goes to fund those operations.

Q: But they keep the non-immigrant visa application fee, though not reciprocity fees, if any. And you say they can buy positions. Does that mean they can therefore on their own sort of add 50 positions for the incoming junior officer business?

LEININGER: Yes, exactly. This past year there were perhaps 317 positions authorized in our regular budget. This is a slightly scaled-down version from what the DRI would have called for, but it's what was passed by Congress. Something like 317 positions in this last year of the diplomatic readiness initiative. CA was going to be buying 65 more. That is what it took. Because of these added interviewing requirements.

Q: These were people that commit to coming into the consular cone?

LEININGER: Well, no. They are junior officers NIV interviewing positions, through which we rotate junior officers of all cones during their first two tours of duty, pre-tenure.

Q: What I mean is if CA has added 65 positions, those people have to flow through for their career.

LEININGER: They will be coming through in all five cones. Most won't be doing consular jobs forever.

Q: But the gross number of positions will be assigned against CA's money though.

LEININGER: Yes.

Q: CA is looking at restructuring the consular position base?

LEININGER: Even when I was still back in CDA/ML, those people in CA/EX who do look at position classifications were making more fervent arguments for upgrades for many of the upper-middle and upper-level consular jobs, because of the expanded size of consular sections, and because of the complexity of what it is we do. Because of the seriousness of what it is we do, which has become ever more apparent in the post 9-11 era. In comparative terms, in consular work you will always have fewer executive level positions than the other cones, and as much as we wanted to get up on a soap box to orate against this, you have to concede that any service organization, whether it is Wal-Mart or Wendy's, is going to have more front line service providers than it will managers. It is just the nature of the business. People out front, in view of the public, are very junior, and the management structure goes up from there. So it makes pursuing career progression through the consular cone alone very problematic for people, because there is just not that much room at the top. This is why we have to get people into multifunctionality, doing something else. And we do get the twos, ones and seniors doing something other than consular work. Now here is the ironic postscript on that concept. In one of the last conversations I had with Mary Ryan before she had to make her unfortunate exit from the Department, she was scouting around during the assignment cycle for people to take the most challenging consular management jobs overseas, the ones in Manila, the ones in Seoul, the ones in Mexico City. She was in despair, because, she said, "All the good people are going to be DCMs and Ambassadors." The reason that they are able to do that, of course, is because ever since they were FS-3s, either their CDOs, or the Bureau of Consular Affairs, or both, were urging the rest of the system to give these people those out-of-cone opportunities. Be careful what you wish for!

Q: Is that true. This is what I wanted to ask you. You were there from 1999 to 2001. Your sense is really that a lot more consular people are getting these kinds of jobs now.

LEININGER: Yes, and a lot of them were those same women who, as I said, ten years prior I had identified, as threes and twos, as the stars of the future.

Q: Right. So many more of the ambassador, DCM and principal officer positions are going that way. You think that is true in general across the board for women and minorities in the Department? I mean you said the Women's Class Action Suit is basically over now.

LEININGER: Yes, I think it is. We are doing a far better job, I know, in getting women and minorities into and through the exam process. The percentage of people who sign up, and the percentage of people who sign up who pass, are both up significantly.

Q: Does Congress seem to be off the Department's case on this subject?

LEININGER: I haven't heard of any complaint, hearing, inquiry.

Q: There was a minority officer's suit that was getting going when I was leaving PER in 1992, for black officers. Did anything ever come of that?

LEININGER: That went hardly anywhere. When I was in DGP/PC at that time, there were about 17 people still left on the sign up roster, and I don't think any particular concession had been made by the Department in that area.

Q: Wow. So as far as you know, that did not?

LEININGER: I don't think that prospered. Now one major issue we did with the Congress during my last tour with CDA/ML, and with the OIG, was the question of tour of duty, length of tours of duty overseas. They were very much wanting us to adopt what had been the former USIA's policy of longer tours of duty at non-hardship posts.

Q: Now usually running four years automatically.

LEININGER: Right, automatically, across the board, in non-hardship posts. Now we were?

Q: Let's just say State generally had a three-year tour of duty.

LEININGER: Right, with the option of extending when you wanted to. Looking at the statistics, about 55% of everybody did. So we were getting fair return for money. But the arguments for a longer tour or duty were basically financial. If you rotate people less frequently, then you save transfer costs. Now we rebutted that, to an extent, because if you have longer tours of duty at post then you are also obliged to give people more R&R's and home leaves in the middle of those tours. So if you fly back families of four or five an extra round trip or two during a longer tour of duty, there is a little offset there. A longer tour wasn't pure gravy.

Q: There also is an argument about whether four years is going to make you better on your language or context, the substance end of your job.

LEININGER: There is that. People were saying if you have got a three year tour of duty, it is one year to get used to it, one year to work at it, and one year to plan getting out. I don't know. I don't think I was that slow to adapt or that much of a lame duck.

Q: But that is the argument.

LEININGER: Yes. We resisted this, not only because we didn't think the cost benefits analysis were particularly compelling. We also resisted it because in our Foreign Service as opposed to like CommercCommerce is another one that has longer tours of dutwe have far more hardship positions. Something on the order of 63%, I think, is the ratio of hardship, to 37% non-hardship jobs in the Foreign Service.

Q: Because we purport to staff the world. I think, and you can correct me, I think we are the only country that staffs every place.

LEININGER: I think we are, too. Commerce sort of cherry picks where it puts its commercial officers, in places of great commercial interest to us. Those tend to be relatively developed places. We didn't have huge USIA facilities in every post of the world, either. But we always have a consular section. We always have an administrative section. We always have a political section and maybe at least one economic or part time economic officer. Well, anyway, when you have almost a two to one ratio of hardship to non-hardship jobs, and then you are telling people who are going to non-hardship places that they can stay automatically for four years, that then freezes out the people in the hardship jobs from having as much of an opportunity to get to a non-hardship position.

Q: So what came of that in the end?

LEININGER: Well we fought it and fought it and fought it, and then for some real politik reason, I have forgotten exactly what, Mark Grossman, who was Director General at the time, just threw up his hands, and over our objections in CDA, said, "We are going to go ahead and do this. We are going to make them happy. We are going to get them off our case." It was a combination; Congress was raising this, and the OIG was raising this. This latter was a residual recommendation from the late '90s inspection of the bureau. So we did it. And they put it into play, and it lasted about 2 and a half years. Just a little more than an assignment cycle and a half. The number of complaints from everybody about it just grew to extraordinary proportions. The bidders didn't like it, because most of them were at hardship posts and wanted a chance at a better qualify of life next time around. The bureaus didn't like it, because they liked the opportunity to get people into their hardship positions by giving at least tacit assurances that the bidders who went there could count on the bureau for support on a bid on a comfortable post next. But there weren't enough comfortable places coming open! Finally, every post and bureau kind of liked the comforting thought that, "Okay, sooner or later this pain in the butt is going to be gone." When they had to guarantee a place to stay for four years, with an option under their policy of extending for a fifth, it got to be too much.

Q: Oh I didn't know that. My goodness.

LEININGER: Yes. A regular tour of duty plus one. It was just driving everybody nuts. And, again, the cost savings were not being realized at the rate the proponents had originally thought was going to be the case. And when you have people being recruited to go to places like Iraq, hoping after they go to Iraq, to be able to go to Paris?

Q: Yes, you have to do that.

LEININGER: ?you need to balance it out, to at least have some hope. So that change of tour of duty policy is gone by the boards. They went back to the standard tour of duty, which is three years at non-hardship posts, two years at most hardship posts except for senior officers, who still serve three. Then we have tailored tours of duty, for the real crunch places like Iraq. It is going to be only 12 months. We always have a couple of places like that around the world. I'm sure Afghanistan is in that category?

Q: So the consulate bureau, just to come back to this. They can as you say, in effect buy their own positions. Does the money come in? Does it go to them or does it go to management and it is doled out in conjunction with the consulate

LEININGER: The actual MRV money doesn't come in to the CA directly. It goes to what formerly was called the FMP, financial and management policy. Now I think it is called the Bureau of Resources Management. They dole out the money internally. So CA doesn't have its hands on?

Q: But what I mean is the money doesn't disappear elsewhere in the Department by any chance?

LEININGER: Well to an extent, it can't. Once everybody signs on the dotted line and agrees that these numbers of positions will be established out of the MRV money, then it is just carried on the system that way. No one is going to take it away down the road. But for the first easily ten years, I would say, of the machine readable visa program, I figure it was early '94, it is about ten years now. I think the overall percentage of money that actually has gone to CA operations is only still 40%. Sixty percent more or less, went to IRM, the Bureau of Information Resources Management, for infrastructure.

Q: Meaning computer systems and all that, which the Department right across the board could use.

LEININGER: Which we all needed. We built our consular systems on the backbone of stuff that is bought and maintained by our information management colleagues, and our data is transmitted over high-speed lines they maintain.

Q: That is an argument for explaining why the Department was so anxious to hold onto the consular function, because it wasn't just a function. It is a large bag of money that the department is able to tack onto a wide range of things.

LEININGER: Michael, you are such a cynic! Now the battle that is fought all the time with Congress is, Congress says, "Well look, you have all the money from the machine readable visa program coming in. Why can't we cut your regular budget?" Then the Department's management has to say, "No, no wait. Remember that money is dedicated. That only goes to do border security?"

Q: So they got a legal basis to collect and keep the money. Because there are very few parts of the government who can use the money that they take in directly as fees at all. They always have to go back to the Treasury and it was always reclassified. So that really is a revolutionary development.

LEININGER: Yes. Well I mean it took a tragedy to do it. It was the blind sheik, Omar Abdel Rahman, and the issuance of the visa that led to the first attack on the World Trade Center. We won't go into who was on the visa line where, when they did that, but it was in a larger sense the system's failure. People trying to look up a name in a dog-eared copy of the yellow lookout book, physical book, or a ratty microfiche. It just didn't work.

Q: So is it your sense now that having this stream of money will help, because one sees in the paper these statements that it takes three months to get an appointment to get an interview for a non immigrant visa and so on. Are they going to be able to cope with that under the new requirement of really having to scrutinize these visa applicants?

LEININGER: Well we were on the verge of eliminating all kinds of backlogs, but then they did impose this thing of going back to a broader based interview requirement. I frankly don't know, Michael. I haven't been in the field for a while!

Q: Let me just give you an example. If you are in a place like the Dominican Republic and somebody comes in that is 50 years old and has had four previous you know, four- year visas. Does that person have to be interviewed?

LEININGER: As long as that visa has expired only within the previous year, in the same visa classification, at your post, there are still provisions for waiving personal interviews for people in those categories. People younger than 14, people older than 65, these waivers of interview are still valid. But in most cases they will have to come to the consular section anyway, because most of them will still have to be fingerprinted.

Q: Are they doing it for certain nationalities though that you have to come in?

LEININGER: Yes. There are certain nationalities for which waiver of personal appearance is virtually impossible, and others on whom special clearance requirements, cable requirements are imposed. I can't mention that, even the name of the program, in an unclassified venue.

Q: No, that is fine. Have they beefed up therefore in these particular posts where they now really have to?

LEININGER: They're trying. But again, our intake pipeline is very long. And establishing positions and then getting people trained, especially in Arabic?

Q: That is what I was going to say. Are they trying to train junior officers in these hard languages? It used to be in the old days that you didn't train anybody in Arabic until the mid-level. Are they going to train junior officers then?

LEININGER: Yes, they have gotten a lot more liberal in the entry-level division about putting people into long-term hard language training, even when untenured.

Q: Therefore, meaning that the time for tenure would be hypothetically extended?

LEININGER: No it hasn't been.

Q: But they will give them the credit, because that was also an argument that you didn't have time.

LEININGER: To my knowledge these longer training times have not led to any detrimental effects on the tenureability of officers. That doesn't seem to be a problem.

Q: What are they doing as far as coning now? Does everybody come in unconed?

LEININGER: No. People now are back coned at entry, by their own choice. They sign up on a register, knowing in advance what the relative chances for being selected are. They will get information on how many people were brought in off these registers, by cone, in the previous fiscal year. I think BEX's website now even gives the candidates an idea of what the hiring plan is for the coming fiscal year, too.

Q: Do you declare that at the time you take the written exam?

LEININGER: At the time, I believe that you are notified that you have passed all these things, and that you are going to go on a register, what you register you go on is your choice.

Q: In other words that you have passed the oral, I see. So it doesn't make any difference, in other words if you are going in to the orals saying I want to be an economic officer. That doesn't have an impact on how you do on the orals. After you have done that, but then they say, okay, now you go on a register, which is in effect a waiting list. The waiting list is this long here, but it is only this long here or something else, and you can pick what ever one you think.

LEININGER: Right.

Q: But if you pick it, then you are expected to do the bulk of your work there, is that how they present that to people?

LEININGER: Yes. That is as it has traditionally been. If you are a coned political officer, the bulk of your career will be spent doing political work. Of course, as junior officers, you will have a varied experience. Everyone is going to do at least one consular tour of duty, still, and then your other assignment might be a split function. You might be a combined political-economic officer or a combined political/GSO.

Q: But you don't have the requirement now for variety. I remember when everybody came in unconed, then everybody had to get a series of assignments. Now if you come in coned as a consul, hypothetically you would only get consulate positions up through tenure. That would be possible.

LEININGER: That would be possible, yes. Absolutely. It is not healthy, I don't think, for that consular officer's longer-term career development.

Q: That is a different thing, but I am talking about the flexibility the system has. Well do you want to add anything about your time in personnel. Maybe we have covered most of it.

LEININGER: I think we have covered most of it indeed.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add as far as I mean we have established at least that in your view that the sort of minority and female representations are pretty much where they should be now.

LEININGER: As far as I know in terms of statistics, the lack of legal action against us, and what I see just on the basis of people coming through the ConGen at FSI, we have an extremely varied group. I think it is more diverse now than ever in my experience in the Foreign Service.

Q: And you think the quality is as good.

LEININGER: The quality is excellent. These people are motivated. They are, really, especially in consular terms. More people sign up now to be consular cone officers than any other cone. Did you know this?

Q: Is that because they want to do this, or because they think it is easier to get in that way?

LEININGER: I think it is both. I mean you have got to be prepared to do it if you sign up.

Q: What would you say the average age is now of people coming through approximately?

LEININGER: Among the main bulk of people it is still in the traditional range of 25 to 30, but we do have second career people come in out of the army, or other government agencies, or even from legal or banking careers at, say, 45 to 50. That will drive up the overall numerical average to say 32-33. But you know, I think 95% of the people coming through are going to have to have a 25-to-30-year career ahead of them.

Q: But still the main bulk are not people coming right out of college. It is generally at least four to six years or so, something else. Do you think that is a desirable trait? Would you have any view of that?

LEININGER: Well, I didn't have that experience. I think it gives, for most people, a better basis to be competitive at the exam stage. Hopefully that impression is based on fact and some actual knowledge, experience, background on which people can draw, to make them more effective as Foreign Service officers. I don't know, some people might have five or six years experience of BSing?which is not to say that is not a useful skill in the Foreign Service!

Q: Oh absolutely.

LEININGER: But I think you know, if you can say, "I served in the Peace Corps in XYZ country," or, "I was in charge of military supplies in the XYZ campaign," then that will make you appear to be a better political or management cone officer, for instance. If you have done real things, under hard conditions, in hard places, that should be reflected in and you will get credit for it in the exam process, and it probably will make you a better Foreign Service officer.

Oh, there was one other thing we ended up having input on in mid-level while I was there. It had to do, yet again, with the mid-level shortage, and that was the short-lived program, a mid-level hiring program, that had been, in principle in the regulations forever, but which was dormant. It was originally conceived as a means of addressing shortfalls in hiring of minorities and women. It went by the boards for many reasons. Lack of effective standards was one of them. Almost all the people brought in were virtually stigmatized by having been brought in under that program. But in those years,'99-2001, we were trying to find people in the grades of two and three, in certain cones especially. Management cone was one. PD, public diplomacy was one of them, and I think even econ at the 0-2 level, oddly. We ended up recruiting people for mid-level appointments to the Foreign Service. Our target candidate population was not the general public. It was other government agencies. We blanketed their retirement offices, military and civilian agencies I should say, with advertising for people who were interested in doing Foreign Service work in these particular skill areas at these particular grades. We worked to draw up criteria with the Board of Examiners. Niels Marquardt was over there, heading up the overall Diplomatic Readiness effort. He had previously been head of the entry-level division of CDA, and went over to BEX. So he had a good idea, obviously, of what kinds of people were needed to staff these jobs in the Foreign Service, having been a CDO and head of a division of CDA himself. So we were able to draw up a list of criteria, in terms of previous professional experience, budgets managed, people supervised, accomplishments, and publications, or whatever we were looking for. We had a modest-sized program. I think we hired maybe 15 to 20 people, total, in all of those skill areas, to help address those mid-level gaps. And this was, again, something that potentially had a downside to it in terms of public relations with our existing employee base, or with AFSA, but it was modest. It was targeted to cones and skill areas only in deficit. So it didn't really step on anybody's toes particularly, and we got AFSA's agreement to it very quickly and put it into play. It seemed to work.

Q: All right. You will have a chance to extend and amend your remarks. We will bring to a close. Thank you very much.

LEININGER: And thank you, Mike.

End of interview