

BARRY FULTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Fulton]

Q: Today is November 2nd, 1999. This is an interview with Barry, B A R R Y Fulton, F U L T O N, any middle initial? Okay. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well, let's start at the beginning, could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your past?

FULTON: Yes, I was born in Western Pennsylvania, a small town, Stoystown.

Q: How do you spell that?

FULTON: S T O Y S T O W N. Town of three-hundred and fifty people.

Q: What year were you born?

FULTON: Born in 1938, town of three-hundred fifty people, my father was a rural mail carrier, went to school in which we had four grades in the same room. When one left the first grade instead of changing rooms to go to the second grade you'd change rows. Row one to row two to row three to row four, so you had the advantage if you didn't get in the first year you could always pick it up the second year. I spent twelve years in that community and then went off to Penn State (Pennsylvania State University).

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about the background of your father and then of your mother?

FULTON: My father, born in 1902, in this same little town, decided that his fortune was somewhere else, kind of a town you want to get out of, and he came from a family that was richly talented in music, everybody played some sort of instrument. He left town as a professional Jazz musician. Traveled around the east coast until the depression hit. He got married at about the same time, and that meant he needed something more stable. He came back and Uncle Sam was hiring in the post office. He got this temporary job in the post office but it lasted for thirty-five years.

Q: Good heavens.

FULTON: Never went back to being a full-time professional musician. My mother was born in a neighboring town. When she was growing up she met this dashing young musician. He looked like a guy that was going somewhere. They got married. They spent their marriage in that small town. My mother's still alive, she's 92, living now in Florida.

Q: What was Stoystown like back in the 30's, 40's?

FULTON: If you visited the town today you'd find it just about the same as it was then. I have recently. It looked like the proverbial small town. I don't know if all small towns were like that but this was almost stereotypical. Down the center of town was main street, and sort of one or two of each, two grocery stores, two churches, two funeral homes, one drugstore, one schoolhouse, and it was the center of a rural community, people were farmers or miners in that community and so on Saturday they came to town to do their shopping, and the rest of the week the town was fairly quiet.

Q: Stoystown is located compared to what larger cities?

FULTON: It's about sixty miles east of Pittsburgh.

Q: How about your family? How large was it?

FULTON: My parents had one son who died before I was born and then I was the second. I have a younger brother born three years after me, so there were the two brothers and my parents.

Q: What was, what did you do, you were in school, was there a library, did you read, did you play sports? What sort of things were you up to?

FULTON: We did have a library, and we had boy scouting, I spent a lot of time boy scouting. Everybody in a small community like that plays sports one way or the other. I wasn't blessed in being a natural athlete, and growing up in a small town that's a real handicap, and if you're not then you lean towards something else, so I leaned toward the academic side. I spent more time in the library, more time doing school records than my friends. I was always aware there was something outside of that little community, in part because of stories from my father who always kind of regretted he had come back there. He wanted to go somewhere else, so I heard about that, and when I was a teenager I became an amateur radio operator, sort of reached outside of that community, and I was set on going somewhere out of that town.

Q: How about music? Did your father's talent pass on?

FULTON: Well as they say in our family I got my mother's musical talent, which was not. To his regret. To round out that story, because it was for me a recent high emotional point, a Foreign Service colleague of mine who I served with in Japan twenty-five years ago, long since retired and he's doing a history on the sociology of Jazz. This man is now, must be in his 80s. I ran into him about a year ago and he told me he was writing this, and I said "You know, my father was a Jazz musician." He said "Oh, I didn't know that." So I told him, and I said "Yes, he played with a little band that made the first recording for RCA Victor of Sweet Georgia Brown." He said "Is that a fact?" So about four months ago we got a call from him and he had tracked down that record and he had bought it from somebody, I don't know how he found it, because I'd never heard it. He called me and said "I have that record for you. You can hear your father's band playing Sweet Georgia Brown." I have not heard it yet, waiting 'till I get a professional transcription of it before we play it.

Q: Well now, you say you like reading, can you think of any books that particularly struck you when you were a young kid?

FULTON: Yes, when I was young, I read all those Tom Swift books.

Q: Tom Swift and his Electric Submarine and?

FULTON: Yes. All those, I suppose that's why I, that was part of imagining that broader world.

Q: How about, you were pretty young, but did World War II intrude at all?

FULTON: One of my first memories was the end of World War II. There were two events during that period that I recall, and one was when FDR died. In my family that was a tragedy, and they all knew that, and I remember that. I remember more vividly when the Japanese surrendered and I remember a friend of our family drove back to our house, he had heard it on the radio, we had not, and said the war was over. My mother was shopping in a town about fifteen miles away, my father thought he knew where she would be. I remember we all got in the car and went down to that town and found her, and we carried with us some bells. An old cowbell, and some other bells for this celebration. That's one of the earliest memories I have.

Q: How did you find the teachers in this small school?

FULTON: The first three years I had the same teacher because we moved from row to row and she was dedicated and very able. Then, as small schools do, we consolidated with some larger schools and each class got its own teacher. Most of the teachers in those days were women. Most of my teachers were women in the grade schools and the junior high school and the men tended to teach in the high school. I don't remember any, there may be one or two exceptions, but most of them were very dedicated, very good teachers, and I remember them fondly.

Q: How about high school? Is that a different type of school compared with the elementary school?

FULTON: Those people who did go to college were primarily women who went to teacher's college to become teachers. So in my graduating class of forty-nine people there were six women who went to college, five of the six went to teacher's college, Carnegie, then Carnegie Tech, and I was the only boy who went on to college. So although they didn't have an academic curriculum per se there were a couple of very talented teachers that helped prepare me enough to get me in college.

Q: Were there any in the town or the community around there, were there any nationality or ethnic divisions or anything like that?

FULTON: Yes, the town itself, this little town had the merchants and the pastors and the undertakers and the barbers and the doctors. Outside of that town a lot of little communities, they were mining communities which had started out early in the century as company towns. They were communities that attracted immigrants, many of them, non-English speaking when they first came to town. As my father was a rural mail carrier and drove this twenty-five or thirty-mile road every day when I was growing up I would go along with him sometimes. One of the things that you quickly saw as you went through these little communities, was a lot of people spoke with an accent. It wasn't clear until many years later the kind of social stratification that that represented, the children of all of these people of course who were born in the United States were my classmates and they were accent free and in my school I don't remember there being ever any class distinctions, but certainly among the adults there were.

Q: How did your family feel about you heading off to college?

FULTON: Oh I was encouraged. For as long as I could remember I was encouraged to do that and I had cousins who had done that. My father had in his bedroom a series of books called the Harvard Classics.

Q: Oh yes.

FULTON: Also called Dr. Elliot's five-foot shelf of books. I remember him telling me if I learned everything in all of those books I'd be well on my way. I remember when I occasionally balked at reading those, asking him if he had read them all, and he said not yet, but he was getting around to it. So there was a great ambition in our household.

Q: Well where'd you go to school? To college?

FULTON: I did my undergraduate work at Penn State.

Q: You were there, I guess '54 to '58?

FULTON: '56 to '60.

Q: '56 to '60.

FULTON: As an undergraduate.

Q: What was Penn State like from your perspective?

FULTON: For me it was very hard, it was challenging. I had come from a high school where I didn't have to work too hard to excel. I had found at Penn State that a lot of people had come from such high schools. Had to work very very hard. Practically everything about it was a wonderful experience. I wasn't too surprised at how hard I had to work, I'd heard about that. But it was a new world that was opened up to me about different kinds of people than I had known and I enjoyed it immensely.

Q: What was your major? What concentration?

FULTON: I majored in electrical engineering. Since I knew I didn't want to be a teacher, I understood when I was growing up that if you went to college and didn't go to college to be a teacher you'd go to college to be a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer. I didn't know there was anything else, because I didn't know anybody else who'd gone to college in any other profession. Being a doctor or a lawyer seemed like an awfully long and expensive route, but being an engineer was a possibility. I had a cousin who was an engineer and he encouraged me in that. It was the only thing I had an interest in when I applied. That's what I studied and I graduated as an electrical engineer.

Q: I wouldn't imagine that you had the sort of the mathematical background and all to be an electrical engineer through high school?

FULTON: I had a knack for mathematics and I did have that background that I had in high school, I had good mathematics teachers. So for me in college that was the easy part.

Q: Did the wide world, international world, and other world of domestic politics begin to open up for you at the University?

FULTON: Not as an undergraduate, that opened up a little later. Certainly the world of domestic politics had been wide open, even before I left home I've always had an interests in politics. In the small town where I grew up my mother was a democratic committee woman, and when election time came up it was a question for her of getting people registered and getting people to the polls and all these things that committee men and woman do. I have a very strong memory, when I was in the sixth grade and the first television set came to town to the local hardware store of going up and watching Harry Truman on that TV set. I followed with great interest, I remember the first TV campaign, Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson in 1952. So politics were in my blood all along. When I went through my undergraduate years, I didn't have international interest or connection or context. That came next.

Q: Well did you find that the world of electrical engineering pretty confining as you got along? Well you know you'd been working on a lot of reading and all this, and then when you get into something like electrical engineering I mean it's pretty much a lot about electrical engineering.

FULTON: It sure is. Well that's what happened to me, I had mentioned earlier that I started out with an interest in amateur radio and when I left high school I was involved in doing some high school programming at a local commercial radio station, and when I went to Penn state I got involved in the student radio station. My interest during my undergraduate years at Penn state moved from the technical side to the program side. So that my the time I graduated I was program director of this local radio station at Penn State. An important thing happened to me, in the summer between my junior and senior year. I got an internship with AT&T (American Telephone and Telegraph), an engineering internship in Pittsburgh and I spent the summer working at AT&T. It occurred to me as I looked around that some people who had just started working there the year before and some people who had been working there for twenty years and some people who had been working there for thirty-five years, that I was going to spend the rest of my life doing what I had been doing for the prior three years. Should have occurred to me long before that, but it was very clear at that moment. I thought that's not really the way I want to spend my life because what I enjoying doing is working at this radio station on the program side. So I went ahead and finished my degree at Penn State, thinking that it would never hurt me to have that degree, and I immediately applied to stay on at Penn State in the liberal arts program.

Q: Well now let's talk a little about the radio station, what was it like at that time, what were you doing and what sort of things were happening?

FULTON: I started out on the technical side, quickly moved to an interest in programming. I was able in my junior year to get a program of my own that I produced once a week. It was purported to be a humor program, occasionally listeners thought it was. By my senior year I became director of programming for the station, and the station had looked probably like most every student station at the time would have. It had a mix of news programming and public affairs programming, classical music and some light, popular music, special music, folk music and jazz. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to organize all of those people who came to us with the volunteer talent to produce a whole out of these pieces as program director. For me it was a great experience. I learned a lot about management of an organization and began then to open up some of the worlds that I have spent most of my life in.

Q: Well, sometimes, particularly in the university people involved in the radio or student newspaper, you almost have to pick up an issue or a cause or something like that. Did you get involved in any of these?

FULTON: No, this was a few years before we were interested, before university students at least at a public university like Penn State were taking on causes. That followed.

Q: Well then, when you were at the university were you taking any part-time jobs or doing anything of that nature?

FULTON: No, I was not.

Q: How about, when you went to graduate school at Penn State, what was, it's now liberal arts, what was it?

FULTON: Well in my senior year, I thought with my interest in broadcasting that I could probably get admitted to an additional year and get a Bachelor of Arts degree, particularly because the Department of Speech, which then included broadcasting was in the liberal arts college. I'd only worked at the university station but I had taken some courses in broadcasting and writing and producing and so forth. As I followed that path through I learned that if I went back to summer school and picked up a few additional courses I could in fact get admitted to the graduate program. This kind of surprised me that they took me with so little in the way of undergraduate training, but they did. So I started that fall after I graduated, and then January I started as a master's candidate in the Department of Speech with a specialization in broadcasting.

Q: What did this involve?

FULTON: It was mostly a professional course, and there were courses in television at that time. I had done most of what I wanted to do in radio and I don't recall, I took maybe one or two courses in radio but most of them were in television broadcasting. At that time a master's thesis was required and we spent a good bit of time, I spent two years doing the master's degree, and most of the second year on the thesis.

Q: What was the subject of your thesis?

FULTON: I looked at listener motivation and examined, set out to drawing on theories of Abraham Maslow to look at those things that would hold a viewer's interest in dramatic programming, basically looking at dramatic programming, and tried to find if there was any correlation between the programs that were most popular and interests of the sort that Maslow had laid out in his theories. I found some correlation as one hopes he will when doing such a thesis, and laid out, for my own understanding of what was going on and to the extent that such theses are ever read by others, a framework for doing a program analysis.

Q: Did the university have a TV station there?

FULTON: They did not have a TV station at the time, that was 1961, '62. That came a little later. I was still then with the campus radio station, and then as a faculty advisor.

Q: Did the outside world intrude any more? The 1960 election between Kennedy and Nixon engaged a lot of young people, did this penetrate your world or not?

FULTON: Yes, absolutely. Actually, as I began to choose a dissertation thesis topic I chose for my topic the Nixon-Kennedy debates. I spent a good bit of time trying to tease out of the debate tapes, transcripts, some fundamental principles of how people had received the debates, what the two had done, and so on. I eventually gave that up, not because I lost interest, but because I hadn't started the project early enough to know the kind of objective standards that I needed to reach conclusions that were more than a gut reaction. That is, I was just learning how to do social science research. I didn't have the right tools to do what I set out to do, one of the reasons I changed topics, but that was my first interest.

Q: How about the world, I mean did foreign affairs raise any interest in your radar?

FULTON: Well, to the extent that it was part of the campaign. Quemoy and Matsu (islands off the coast of China controlled by Taiwan).

Q: Quemoy and Matsu. Yeah, we were all worried about Quemoy and Matsu.

FULTON: Which we had never heard of before.

Q: And never since.

FULTON: That's right. So to the extent that foreign affairs was an issue of that campaign I found it fascinating. I had, I must say what was probably the first real intellectual interest in anything outside the United States.

Q: Well now, so you graduated what, in '60?

FULTON: '62.

Q: '62. Whither?

FULTON: This all happened during the days of the draft. As an undergraduate at Penn State all men were required to take two years of ROTC. It was a land grant university, that was one of the requirements. At the end of those two years I thought that, having invested two years it would be better to take two more years in officer training and to get a commission if I could. I thought that would be more interesting than being drafted when I graduated. So I did that as an undergraduate, and I did get my commission which was deferred while I was in graduate school until the time I finished. As soon as I finished I was obliged to spend three years in the Air Force. So I was immediately in the possession of a set of orders that said, "You are being shipped out to APO (Army Post Office) such and such as a commander of detachment 124." And I called somebody, that had sent me this, and said, "Where is APO such and such?" And they said, "We can't tell you that on the phone." (Laughter). So I didn't know where I was going until I reported in, and I learned that I was going to southern Turkey, to Incirlik airbase. I found somehow people talk about how the military misuse their people. Somehow they gave me the perfect job, they asked me to go there and set up a TV station and a radio network in the country for the GI's.

Q: Oh my goodness!

FULTON: And that's what I did.

Q: That really launched your career didn't it?

FULTON: There it was, with my engineering degree and my broadcasting degree I thought I couldn't have had a better assignment in the world, and when I arrived there, there was a small five-person radio station that broadcast on the base to the airmen on the base. When I left there about twenty months later we had four radio stations in the country and we had a TV station on the air and I was as pleased as punch.

Q: Well tell me, what was your impression of the base in Turkey when you arrived?

FULTON: The base at the time I arrived there had recently been in the news, because this was the base from which Frances Gary Powers had flown the U2. That part of the operation was being phased out of course, at the time I arrived. It wasn't long after that, and I have to say that the way my unit operated, my headquarters were in Germany, and I reported to a guy in Germany, so I had total autonomy to run this operation, set up this TV station as I liked. They sent in the equipment and it was up to me to find local people to install it and up to me to train the people to broadcast it, and for me it was a great professional opportunity. It was also a great cultural experience, because here was a chance, my first time outside of the United States to learn about another culture, and that took place in two phases, the first phase was really as a young second lieutenant living on a compound occasionally going outside. While in my first year there of course, this was 1962, something called the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted and you recall that there was threatening talk about retaliation by the Soviets if we retaliated in Cuba and that retaliation was going to be directed at Turkey because we had missiles in Turkey. So all of a sudden Turkey became newsworthy again. It was during that period that I met some gentleman who worked at the consulate in Adana who said he was the director of the local USIS (United States Information Service) operation, and he wanted to provide us some materials that he had to broadcast over our radio station. That's the first time I heard about USIS and that's where my interest began. So that was the kind of inside the confines of the base view, and about halfway through my tour as they took on some new responsibilities at the base they found they were short of housing and they looked for volunteers to move off the base and move into local houses. I was one of the first volunteers to move into Adana itself, and here was this whole rich world in front of me. There was a combination of knowing what this gentleman did for USIS locally, living in the city, and recalling a professor of mine from graduate school at Penn State, Robert Alber, who before I left Penn State had said nice words to me about a promising academic career. He said, "Before you go into that academic career, after you get out of the Air Force, you have to get out in the world and have some real experience," and he said, "I think the best place for you to go is the Department of State." And I basically was, "Well, what do they do?" So the combination then of living in the city, making friends with a USIS officer there, living in that culture and those words echoing from my professor, for whom I had a great deal of respect, led me to think that that's something I wanted to try.

Q: I would have thought, I had some experience ten years before in Dhahran where I was vice consul and I had a small air force contingent there, and they were continually running into trouble because, of course, Saudi Arabia is a very fundamental country. Your signals are not limited are they to the base at that time? I mean they would go out, there might have been sort of cultural problems, I mean, legal problems with what you're producing. Did you have to be sensitive to this sort of thing?

FULTON: The radio signals went well beyond the base and they certainly extended into Adana. There was never an issue with those. I suspect the great majority of the population there did not understand or speak English so they heard the music if they wanted and those who did speak English welcomed it, at least the people who I met in the community who knew about the radio station welcomed it, so we never had that issue. It took us something over a year to get the TV station on the air and broadcasting, but the TV station in fact was confined to the base, we did not have a signal that went off the base for the TV station.

Q: Well did you get any repercussions at all from the local community? I mean there were some, I don't know what you would call them in Turkey, but the equivalent to a Mullah, who might raise a complaint?

FULTON: No, there were none. None in the time I was there. Technically all the bases were Turkish bases, they weren't American bases. Most of the people on the base were American of course but they were Turkish bases and the relations with the local community were very strong and there was no resistance at all. Now the community itself was very rural and the base was sufficiently removed from the city of Adana that there just wasn't much opportunity for problems, most of the airmen who were on the base did not go into the city. There were recreation opportunities on the base for the airmen, so you didn't have the kinds of problems that you sometimes have in a port city when the ship comes into port.

Q: What was the base doing for the most part?

FULTON: After the U2's left it was to host fighter planes. They rotated in and out, and the rest of us there were support for these fighter units.

Q: Was there much of an effort made to sort of integrate people with the community?

FULTON: No. Not very much. There was the base commander and others I'm sure did, there were proper and necessary calls on local community leaders, but as a whole it was surrounded by fences of course, as bases are, and most people who were on the base stayed on the base. Those of us who had the chance to move off into the town I think had a rare opportunity to see something of the town, but there weren't more than a dozen of us who did that.

Q: Well then, in '65, were you talking with this USIS contact you had about what USIA (United States Information Agency) was like as a career?

FULTON: Yes.

Q: Did you sign up for an exam or anything like that?

FULTON: Not at that point, no, that happened a little later, but that was an idea that began to percolate at that time.

Q: Well, with '65 coming up on you, what did you think you were going to do?

FULTON: I left Turkey, I went as a second assignment in the Air Force to San Antonio, to Kelley Airbase as protocol officer. Before I got there I wondered what in the world that is, and I arrived there, and was assigned to a particular officer and I said, "What does a protocol officer do?" And the people in that office said, "You know, we're not sure, we haven't had one for years and years." You'll have to sort of work this through. It was the quietest period of my life, I did come in to work each day, and we didn't have any reason to have a protocol officer. San Antonio, Kelley Airbase is a base that at the time basically overhauled B-52's. There aren't a lot of protocol visits to a repair shop.

Q: No, no.

FULTON: And sure enough, I'd been there about a year, and he came here saying he was going to fly in in his own plane, and that was the first visitor that we had that required protocol. So I stepped forward and said, "Here I am, the Protocol officer." The base commander said, "Lieutenant, this is one we're going to handle." So I don't recall I did anything in a year and a half. But I did prepare myself to go onward from there and I had decided while I was there I wanted to go back to graduate school, and that I wanted to study communications. I wrote to a former professor who had just cast his eyes across all the schools that had diplomas in communications and I told him what I was interested in and asked him for a recommendation. He said, "Well, um, the school that came out at the top of our list, with a serious reservation, but it came out top of our list in terms of what you described as your interests was University of Illinois. The reservation that we have is that they don't prepare the people there for anything practical. It is highly theoretical, highly conceptual. It's the best in the business, but it's not a good place to go unless you really want to spend the rest of your life in an academic career." And by that time I'd thought yes, that's what I do want to do. I want to spend the rest of my life in an academic career, but I'm going to take the advice of my old professor and I'm going to spend the first couple years if I can in the Foreign Service. So I did apply, it was the only place I applied to, to their doctoral program. Got accepted into the program, and I spent two and a half years at University of Illinois, and I did apply for the Foreign Service soon after I started, to sort of get the jump on things so if I passed I could go right into it.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the theoretical side of communications and all? What sort of things was the University looking at? What were you looking at?

FULTON: I went in, I had a dual track in communications, and one of the reasons the department there had a reputation for such strength was that that department existed, with the exception of the dean, that department existed as a consequence of all of the other departments who taught courses related to communication in one form or another. They didn't have a faculty of their own. They would go to other departments, particularly to other professors who had an outstanding reputation, and say to that professor in, essence, "The course you're teaching in political theory is largely about communication, such and such sense, we would like to classify this course as a communications course." So you'd find it in the catalog as political science 401, communications 401. Or what have you. Such courses were cross-listed in a number of departments. It meant that the school could re-invent itself as new professors came and went and they were not obliged to hold tenured professors if they weren't working out. My two particular interests as I started in that school were in social psychology and attitude change in particular, so that was the one focus, and the other focus that I had was in the behavior, at least in theoretical terms of large systems. They had at the university at that time probably the leading theoretical figure in the field. He'd come here as an exchange professor from Great Britain. He had his courses cross-listed in the Department of Engineering and the Department of Biology and the Department of Communications. He taught the behavior of large systems, and it was the combinations of the attitude change and systems behavior that I specialized in and on which I did my dissertation.

Q: Did you complete your dissertation?

FULTON: Yes I did.

Q: Had you taken the Foreign Service exam while this was going on, towards the end?

FULTON: It started in the summer of 1965, and I applied for the Foreign Service exam soon after I enrolled there. I took it in December '65, and then in the spring I learned that I had passed it. I applied for an internship at USIA for the summer of 1966, and I was accepted as an intern at VOA (Voice of America), and I came to Washington for that summer as a VOA intern on the East European news desk.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

FULTON: The oral exam, when I took it in 1966 was administered by three people, sitting at the back of a table much as you and I are sitting now. I guess, the two things I recall and maybe these misses were ones that stick with one more than one's successes, because I must have answered some of the other questions better.

Q: Oh yeah, in all my interviews you always remember the ones you flunk.

FULTON: The first question I got was after I had established that I was working in Washington for the summer, first question I had was, "What do you read? You're here alone for the summer, you must be doing some reading, what are you reading?" And the night before I had thought a very good question would be just that one. So I scurried through the little efficiency apartment I had and I put all the books together that I had been reading and I put them by my bed and I just reviewed them in order so if that question came up I'd have an answer just like that. One of those books I remember was a book which was at the time thought to be semi-scandalous called Candy.

Q: Oh yes. Terry Sutherland.

FULTON: Yes. I had that book on the top of that stack. When they asked me the questions, in my mind I saw that, I saw Candy, and I thought. "I'm not going to start with that, because I don't know what these guys are looking for. So I'll just pick out something else." My mind went blank. I couldn't see another title, I couldn't think of anything else, all I could think of was Candy, and I said something like, "Well, maybe I could get back to you on that." It was a really stupid answer, I felt terrible.

Q: How about, were there, was it a USIA-focused exam or was it sort of generic?

FULTON: No, at the time one had to apply for either USIA or State Department, and I had applied just for USIA. Given my background and my interests at the time USIA was a natural for me and that's what I applied for, and it was focused on USIA. It was focused, at the time they had a record from your materials that you had submitted of what you had done, so they did ask questions about my programs I'd produced at Penn State when I was there, they asked some quick questions about my dissertation topic and they asked questions about what I'd done in Turkey. It turns out now of course they're not allowed to ask those questions on exam.

Q: Yes, well in a way it's a shame because?

FULTON: Absolutely.

Q: But the idea is to completely make sure that no bias creeps in that it becomes a very sanitary type of operation.

FULTON: Yes, very serious mistake. In my mind it's like interviewing a candidate for a doctor and not asking if he's gone to medical school. You ought to know that.

Q: But while you were working on this communications thing and you're taking the exam to come into USIA and all, were you focusing any of your reading, your studies on Foreign Affairs?

FULTON: No, I was not. The program was highly theoretical and my interests I had chosen for that reason, and I was trying to build my own expertise in a certain field on attitudes and systems, although I followed international relations with great attention through the New York Times and otherwise, I didn't do any study on them at all.

Q: Did you have any problem getting into a highly theoretical field, having just spent, well I mean a good bit of time running radio-TV, radio stations at the University, and then on the base? Practicality begins to take over. Sometimes there becomes a certain amount of impatience with theories that don't seem to have much pertinence.

FULTON: Not really. As I mentioned before, I had a certain gift for mathematics, and one tends to choose professions where he can use his gifts. This course of study that I set out was one where I was using some abstract mathematics. I fit into that comfortably and enjoyed what it was, and what it has brought to me is a certain perspective on what good I've done ever since then. Not that I have frequently used it in an academic sense, but I think in a gut sense it has helped form my view of a complex world in a way that we, and the field that I've been in, public diplomacy, interacting in the world.

Q: While you were doing that at the University of Illinois, I would think that if you got into theory it would be very easy to get into America-centric theory. In other words, I mean we think in certain ways and then you build your theories around that. Yet communicating to the Asian world or to the Soviet world or what have you would be different, I mean were you up against this at all?

FULTON: No, I guess I really need to underscore theoretical, because we studied abstract systems, I'm going to mislead you if I say without regard to nationality, which is what I began to say. We studied abstract systems, the behavior of large systems, whatever those systems might be, whether that system was a beehive or whether that system was a community, whether that system was a nation, whether that system was an interaction between two people. It happened that the professor that most influenced me and one of the reasons that I chose Illinois when I got down to that point, was a man by the name of Ross Ashby. He was the British professor who had come over on an exchange program. He had been director of an institute in Great Britain that specialized in schizophrenia, and he was a psychiatrist by training. After the war he had gone to India to do his duty for his country at that moment and he practiced as a psychiatrist in India and developed his own international perspective on things. There began to be some writing right after the war from the people who had developed some of the technology that was used in radar, for example, Clod Shannon and William Weaver writing on mathematical theories of systems control, writing on cybernetics. This particular man, Ross Ashby thought to himself, asked himself, "Could we understand what goes on in the mind of a schizophrenic by applying some of these theories that are heretofore applied only to machinery? Is there something in that?" Out of that he developed what became, for a period of probably ten years, the leading explanation on cybernetics and system study. It was with him that I studied. So in fact there's no U.S.-centric or any national-centric study, it was a conceptual system for understanding behavior of large systems, and the role that clear or less clear communication channels play in maintaining a measure of stability, and the role that communication plays in disrupting stability to change these systems. That's been my interest, and there are certain probably obvious ways that that can apply to an understanding of what happens in international communications and diplomacy, but the less obvious ways that it can be practically applied, that's up to one's imagination.

Q: Well back to your internship. I would have thought that you would have found the East European part of the Voice of America to be a hotbed of ethnicity and seething conflicts and everything else, what was your impression?

FULTON: Amen. I can't improve on that. Most of the people on the desk were immigrants and most of them were settling some old scores. I was welcomed by the people on that desk when I came there as this fresh young intern, you know, until one fateful day. That was the day I came back from taking the oral exam. They told you at the time, at the end of the exam whether you passed or not. So when I returned, I announced to the people I was working with that I just passed the Foreign Service exam. They said, "okay," and they went back to their work. I expected at a minimum somebody would say congratulations, but I noticed that I got the cold shoulder for that day and the next day. So then the person at the head of the desk, I said to him after a couple of days, I said, "Everybody was friendly as punch until two days ago, what happened?" And people on the desk were all civil servants, and he said "Well," he said "Everybody passed." Then he said "You know, you've been here what, three weeks?" And he said "You would agree with me you have a lot to learn about news writing, wouldn't you?" I said "Oh, absolutely." And I have to say that I did learn a lot, I learned a lot about writing because that's no-nonsense writing. I learned a lot. It does not necessarily follow that being in graduate school teaches you how to write. Working under VOA news desk for a summer, that teaches you how to write, I learned a lot. So he said, "So you don't really know as much as the rest of the people here in the desk. Probably when you leave at the end of the summer you still won't beat people that have had this ten, twenty, thirty years." Yeah. He said, "Well, that's the problem, because you're going to go in the Foreign Service and you're going to go overseas for a couple years and you're going to come back here and nine chances out of ten, you'll be my boss. You still won't know any more than you do today, and you'll tell us how to do things." He said, "We really will resent that, as we do all these Foreign Service officers who come in here and tell us how to write news when they don't know anything about it."

Q: Oh boy.

FULTON: I learned something there too.

Q: Oh yes, absolutely. Well did you find yourself at all conflicted between theory and practicality? In a way you're talking about USIA as about as practical as you can get.

FULTON: Well I had every intention of spending three or four years in the Foreign Service and returning to the academic world. That was my intention, and if at that point somebody had said, "You have to choose one or the other, you can't do both." I'd have said, "Well then I'll go into the academic world right now." But I thought that not only because I had a professor I respected recommend this, because it made good sense to me. I would be stronger as an academician if I had a bit more practical experience, and so there was no conflict in my mind in terms of going in and doing this. When I first got in I had some real misgivings about my choice.

Q: You came in when?

FULTON: I finished my degree in January of 1968 and I joined the Foreign Service in January of 1968.

Q: Well you came in in '68, and I assume you went into a basic officer's course, did you?

FULTON: Yes. At the time we, USIA and State officers studied together in what was then the A-100 course.

Q: Could you characterize what some of the people were like and how the course was and how it hit you?

FULTON: Yes, it was a splendid course. It was one of the best training experiences that I have had, in large part because of the course coordinator, a then recently retired Foreign Service Officer. He retired the year before, his name was Ed Adamson. Still lives in this community and has remained. After he stopped teaching at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) he went into professional writing and professional acting. He's been in a number of Hollywood movies since then. He had a flair with words, he had an understanding of the Foreign Service, he had a passion, and he communicated all that to us. We were from USIA, about ten or eleven strong, and from the Department of State, my recollection is thirty to thirty-five, so forty-five total. USIA, we were six men and five women. State Department was one or two women, all the rest men. USIA was a little ahead of State at the time and encouraging diversity in its workforce. This is 1968, the height of the Vietnam war and the State Department then had a program wherein all of their first term officers would be assigned immediately to Vietnam unless they had already served there in a military capacity. Leon Furf was one of my classmates at the time, now Vice President, and I remember that he was one who did not have to go to Vietnam because he just returned from Vietnam with the military. USIA, on the other hand, had a different policy. Their policy was to send nobody to Vietnam on their first tour. So within the class there was a little bit of conflict about who were the real men and those kinds of questions, who has to go to Vietnam and who goes to some soft spot. It was for me a very very fine introduction to the service, and in some ways so fine that it was misleading in terms of what I found in reality on the ground.

Q: Where, did you have any place in mind where you wanted to go, and how did that work out?

FULTON: Of the eleven USIA people in our class, ten of the eleven of us asked for an African assignment as first choice. We were still living in the shadow of JFK's aspirations, and that in some regard had motivated us, in addition to other motivations I've described to give that kind of service, so it was first choice for all but one person. There weren't enough positions to go around for eleven people to go to Africa at the time, and my second choice was India and I was assigned my second choice. I was assigned to go to New Delhi, and then assigned to come to FSI and study Hindi, which is what I did.

Q: How did you feel about India?

FULTON: Well I said I was assigned to go there, I didn't say I went there.

Q: Okay. Should have known better.

FULTON: Because when I finally struggled through the completion of Hindi and reached the required minimum score I got a call from USIA personnel and they said, "Well, we have a change and we're going to send you to Pakistan instead. Hindi and Urdu are essentially the same aren't they?" I said, "Well, spoken language is essentially the same and the written language is totally different. It turns out that everybody else in my class has been studying Urdu except me, and I have been taken out of class to study Hindi script, so I don't know a word of Urdu script." So I got extended for two more months to study Urdu and then went off to Islamabad.

Q: So you were in Islamabad from when to when?

FULTON: I got there in November of 1968.

Q: And you were there until when?

FULTON: I was there until February of 1970, and then I went to Karachi where I spent a year additional.

Q: When you arrived in Pakistan 1968, what was the political situation there, social situation as you saw it?

FULTON: Well, Pakistan's one of those countries where history keeps repeating itself, and there was then an exiled former leader by the name of Bhutto who was about to come back to the country. There was a military takeover of the country. The Americans were off base to official Pakistanis in the capital of Islamabad. At the time the capital was brand new, very small. The diplomatic community was just then moving into the capital from Karachi. The official Pakistani community was not allowed to spend any time socially with Americans unless they had permission.

Q: Why was this?

FULTON: It was one of those down periods of our continued ups and downs with the Pakistanis. But we disapproved of the military government that had taken over officially in the same sense that we do today, not loudly and belligerently but we did and the government decided that they should have hands off. There were no newspapers in Islamabad per se, although there were in nearby Rawalpindi. There were no Universities in Islamabad with the exception of the then fledgling University of Islamabad that had all of six students. The Headquarters of the Pakistani television service was just recently moved to Islamabad so there were people in USIS had contact with them, but in short I guess what I'm leading up to is there was very little professional contact within Islamabad itself. It was a sterile new city and the life that I had imagined in the Foreign Service was not one that any of us in that city found.

Q: Who was the ruler at that time?

FULTON: Ayub Khan.

Q: What were you doing? It sounds like USIS wants to get out and meet the folk and get to work on the students, all six of them, and do the newspapers. It sounds like your work was cut out for you. Like being protocol officer.

FULTON: Yes, something like that, it really was. I eventually ended up in Karachi where everything I just said was totally the opposite. We had a large, thriving intellectual community. What we had in Islamabad, just to retrace my steps for a second and describe the geography in the way we operate, the population center was the city of Rawalpindi, and Islamabad was built in the foothills of the Margalla Hills about fifteen miles from Rawalpindi. This was a little longer commute than that sounds because traffic doesn't move too fast there. On the outskirts of Rawalpindi itself, closer to Rawalpindi was the American Embassy in a place called Satellite Town. Through the whole time that I served there the Embassy was still in Satellite Town because although they had broken ground in Islamabad they hadn't finished construction of the buildings, so people worked out of these temporary quarters in Satellite Town, and USIS had its main offices split between Satellite Town and the city of Rawalpindi. In Rawalpindi we had decent, good sized, attractive library. As a new junior officer in training, I rotated from section to section, and so I spent as officers did in those days several weeks in the cultural section, several weeks in the information sections and several weeks in the political section, and several weeks in the economic section, so I moved all around the Embassy and ended up spending most of my time as a trainee in the American center, Library and Program center. At the end of the training I became director of that center. Now the center, being located in Rawalpindi, not in Islamabad, in fact was packed with students. In the city of Rawalpindi there were several good colleges. So we had a very large student clientele in that city. With very few exceptions, we did not have a professional clientele, because during that period of time the people really came there at their own risk, it was not encouraged.

Q: You say you were packed, who?

FULTON: Students.

Q: I mean, these were students in a way, somewhat out of the line of fire.

FULTON: The students didn't have any prohibition on their coming there. It was people in positions of authority who were advised that they should not accept invitations to the Center. It was one of these xenophobic times, and in Pakistan where the U.S. was seen by some as the enemy, but foreigners in general were enemies in Pakistan during that time. In the new capital and around the new capital it was not easy to have a social meeting at any level. This wasn't just with those contacts that USIS would normally make, but the same extended to the ambassador. Soon after I arrived, a new ambassador was assigned there, Joseph Farland, who had been written up by the Reader's Digest from an earlier assignment as the 'People's Ambassador'. He had an interview in the Washington Post before he came out and he said he was going to take the Embassy to the people. We shuddered when we read that he was going to take out the good silver and the candelabra and go out to the villages and set this up in the village square and invite people in. I tried to imagine how that would work. He didn't actually do that, but he did insist when he came in that, contrary to his predecessor who didn't seem to have entertained many Pakistanis, he was going to fill the official residence with Pakistanis. We were his agents to make sure that all of our contacts would come to all of the official functions. We couldn't, people did not come. They were polite. They either said, "No thank you, I can't," or they said, "Yes, I'll be pleased to accept," and did not show up. We had great spreads, buffets laid out at the ambassador's residence with Americans and other third country diplomats and third country journalists and academics and others present, and almost no Pakistanis.

Q: It must have been a very sterile time.

FULTON: It was.

Q: Who was in charge of USIS there?

FULTON: Gib Austin, Gilbert Austin was the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) in Islamabad, and he oversaw that headquarters operation as well as branch post operations of considerable size, in Karachi, Lahore, and Dacca, and lesser operations staffed by national employees in Rajanpur, Chittagong, Miram Shah, and Hyderabad.

Q: Well it sounds like it was a pretty extensive operation.

FULTON: It was a large operation.

Q: Was there any thought, when you got there were people saying, "Well we're going through a rough patch but we're keeping the apparatus going and eventually things will work out."

FULTON: I was the third of three JOTs to arrive in Pakistan within a six-month period, and the other two had each left a few months after they arrived. This did not reflect well on the post. That is, they resigned, left. That did not reflect well on the post. So by the time I arrived, I didn't realize that immediately, but I was given kid glove treatment. Because they didn't want a third person to leave. The other two left for different reasons, personal reasons that were not relevant to me. In fact I nearly left as well, basically because I didn't see any chance to do there what I thought I had joined the Foreign Service to do. We were a headquarters operation and we were top-heavy and we were, like the classic top-heavy headquarters operation basically giving support to people in the branch posts. We thought they were meeting with real people doing real things. This was not the time to bring to bear my baggage of conceptual knowledge, because we weren't top-heavy with conceptual guidance, we were top-heavy with bureaucracy. That's quite a different thing.

Q: Were you picking up any of the tensions between where you were in West Pakistan and East Pakistan? Because it wasn't too much later that all hell broke loose.

FULTON: It had to break, even while I was there, and fulminated sometime after I'd left. As part of my rotation, I spent nearly a month in then East Pakistan, traveling around. It wasn't evident in travel that there were tensions, it was evident in reading the press that there were political tensions. In travel what was evident was, it was a totally different culture. I remember telling the story when I got to Dacca, to the PAO who was, Brian Bell. I remember telling him about a recent event that had been held at the Ambassador's residence and how a handful of Pakistanis had shown up. Brian said, "Well, you know what happens here? We look at capacity, and we figure for this event we can accommodate a hundred Pakistanis, and we send out fifty invitations to Mr. and Mrs., and we get fifty acceptances. When they actually come, we have a hundred and fifty people show up. We always get more people than we invite. Because they tell their friends, and they bring them along, because they love it here." The Bengali culture I am sure has been significantly different than the culture in Punjab.

Q: Well I would have thought, you were there '68 to '70 in Islamabad. I would have thought that with the Nixon Administration and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, I mean later there was a tilt towards Pakistan. Even so I would have thought that things would have been sort of opening up a bit. I would have expected that our relations with Pakistan would have gotten somewhat warmer and less confrontational.

FULTON: Well, during that period there was a Nixon visit to Lahore with Henry Kissinger, and the tilt was already obvious in our terms, The receptivity was fairly cold on the Pakistani side at that moment. Before I left Pakistan there was a general election and Bhutto did come back into power during that time. Bhutto had a mixed relationship with the United States. On the one hand I think he admired parts of the American culture. He did after all send his daughter to school here. On the other hand, he was playing the Soviets against the Americans, and he was not trusted by the Americans, in the period that I was there, at least at the level I was operating, and junior officers aren't privy to everything by any means. There were probably things going on that I don't know even today, but certainly from where I sat at the time there was no warming of official relations. Now, when I moved to Karachi where I was center director, Karachi was far enough away from this very sterile center of Pakistani government, and relations were quite warm at that level.

Q: Was anybody a little more senior sort of sensitive enough to, you know, this is a pretty bad time and say, "Other places are much more exciting, we're just going through a bad patch."

FULTON: Well, I had a particular respect and regard for the PAO, Gib Austin. He was a person who was a good mentor and was encouraging in that regard. I was fresh out of graduate school and probably a little bit full of myself, and I suspect I was regarded by some people in the staff as a bit of a smart ass, and probably with some good reason. Where I was sort of wanting to get engaged in some way, I was restless. It was in part because of that restlessness that I got transferred to Karachi. I think if I had sat back, I would have spent my whole tour there. The PAO had to pull some strings when a job opened in Karachi that looked like it would be an active job, and I did get transferred there and that worked out well. On their part I think they were very understanding of where I was and what I needed, because I had not joined the Foreign Service to sit at my desk in a sterile city. At that moment I still thought that I would spend several years in this profession, and then go back to teaching. That's what I thought I would do. The reason I decided to do that was to get some real life experience, and I was getting nothing except experience in a sterile bureaucratic headquarters operation.

Q: Okay let's talk about Karachi, you were there '771. What were you doing there?

FULTON: Karachi was then not nearly as large as now, but still a bustling, large commercial capital of Pakistan. What became the American consulate had been the American Embassy before the capital moved to Islamabad. As part of this, there were very large conflicts. There was a very handsome American center, the American Cultural Center. I was director of that center and that center had a collection of about ten-thousand books. It was the most widely used library in the city, even though there were larger libraries, there were no libraries that were so easily accessible, or friendly as ours. We had a hall that seated a hundred plus people, so we could have lectures and performances and we kept that busy several nights a week. It gave one a chance to interact with all levels of the community, it gave one a chance to run an operation that was very professional when I arrived, I just took over this operation that had been well-run by others. It was my first exposure to doing what I thought the Foreign Service, this USIS part of the Foreign Service, was about.

Q: How was it to explain Vietnam.

FULTON: It wasn't the task that I had feared it might be. I made peace with myself when I joined the Foreign Service in the early part of 1968 when after our training by the Foreign Service institute and when the eleven USIS people went back for some further USIA training, we were all specifically asked about that at some length together: can you support American policy in Vietnam? My answer was a simple answer for myself, and satisfied those people at the time. My answer was simply I can represent American policy in Vietnam, I can represent with clarity, I can represent American policy without exception, without any ifs, ands or buts, whether I personally support it I think is not important. I thought, by that time I had come to the conclusion that we were wrong, as many people had. I argued that it wasn't wrong as long as I officially would represent it with clarity, and that seemed to satisfy people, and I was prepared to do that. In fact, in Pakistan there wasn't much of an issue. Middle Eastern policy was a big issue in Pakistan, and anything, any tilt in any way by the United States that was perceived to be taken toward Israel was a major, major issue. Our relations with India were a major issue, our relations with China were a major issue. Vietnam was hardly on the screen.

Q: How about dealing with the Israeli issue?

FULTON: The press in Pakistan is not free, but it has various degrees of freedom. There are both governmental influences on the press and religious influences on the press. American policy toward Israel was consistently misrepresented. I don't think that any of us, to my knowledge, ever had any influence in correcting that. It is not as though the reporters were ignorant of our policy, or not as though they didn't hear us out. They did hear us out, but there was an official line in that. And, at the time, part of maintaining the power in Pakistan is defining the enemy. Israel was easy to define as an enemy, and to the extent that the U.S. propped up Israel it was easy to define the U.S. as a bigger enemy. And that was one of those immovable forces. The Israeli-U.S. perception. I remember one of the people, one of the national employees on my staff, once we were talking about that, said to me, he said, "I'm open-minded and all, you know." But he said, "This, this is a different thing." Then he went on to say, "What does a Jew look like anyway?" I said, "Well, have you ever talked to Dr. Wolman?" who was one of my colleagues on the staff. He said, "Yes." And I said, "He's Jewish." He said, "No no, I mean what does a Jew look like?" And I said, "Joe is Jewish." And he said, "Well he seems like such a nice guy, he seems like a regular person, I wouldn't have imagined." That in a way was the kind of mindset that was there, and it was one that we, I don't think, at least as represented in the public press that we affected at all, as represented in friendships that we made with people. People were very sophisticated, and they knew this was a misrepresentation.

Q: What about, both in Islamabad and Karachi, our relations with India? How was the Indian relationship dealt with?

FULTON: Our relationship with India at the time was one of considerable ambivalence, and if anything with Nixon as President and Kissinger as National Security Advisor our tilt was clearly toward Pakistan. That was not necessarily perceived by the public in Pakistan because it again served the interests of many people to allow it to be thought that America was tilting toward India, and that was a terribly emotional issue of course, as it has remained since then.

Q: Well did you get any feeling while you were in Islamabad about Ambassador Farland? Were we trading barbs back and forth between our embassy and New Delhi and Islamabad or not?

FULTON: No, no. He came there with the idea of lifting U.S.-Pakistani relations from the depths they were in when he arrived. He had the idea that through force of his personality, he had a forceful personality and was a very gregarious, outgoing person, that he could repair that. I left the country before he did but he left the country with great disappointment, because the first thing that happened on his watch was one of those recurring terrible storms in East Pakistan where thousands, tens of thousands of people's lives were lost. One hears every several years ago, the worst storm ever and what is now Bangladesh, each storm seems to be worse than the one before, but this was a killer and many lives were lost, and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) was there under Farland's personal supervision very early, very fast. Without adequate means of distribution on the ground, it didn't do what we intended. We didn't control the provincial distribution and there were scandals about the grain that was brought in being sold on the market for exorbitant prices. All those things that happen when you have a disaster. Farland was very disappointed by that. Then of course while he was there, there was the breakup of East and West Pakistan. So when he left Pakistan he was Ambassador to a smaller country than he had arrived. It was a great disappointment.

Q: In Karachi when you were able to talk to people, what were you hearing, and also from your colleagues who had dealt with him before about Bhutto, what were you getting?

FULTON: Well everyone recognized him then as a very shrewd politician. Bhutto was a rich landowner, had his own resources to bring to bear, and at the time (we're really talking 1970 when the cold war is about as hot as it gets, our involvement in Vietnam, Kissinger planning a secret trip to China) Bhutto was perceived as a very crafty player in power politics between all the major powers, between China and the Soviet Union, the United States, and certainly the United States admired his shrewdness and did not trust him.

Q: Were you picking up stories from your colleagues who were old Pakistani hands about Bhutto?

FULTON: Well, I have summarized the general perception. The stories that built that perception have faded somehow into the distance after thirty years, but yes there were a number of people on the staff who had been in Pakistan before and knew the Bhutto family and recorded some perception on that issue. It was thought to be a mixed blessing for the United States, because here was the United States, as is often the case, caught between the outcome of a democratic election which it didn't much like and an efficient military government, which it didn't much like. And there we are in 1999.

Q: How about Pakistanis who went to the United States? Was there a significant number of them?

FULTON: There's never been the number there has been from India or other places that have a particular attraction for the United States. I knew some Indians and Pakistanis when I was in graduate school, so I had a sense of their culture before I ever got there. There are more similarities than differences, but there are some profound differences as well between the two cultures. Particularly, religious differences, as everyone knows. Several Pakistanis that I came to know while there subsequently traveled to the United States and contacted me after I was in the United States. I stayed in contact with one Pakistani family who, since that time, has spent some time living and working in Texas, and is now back in Pakistan. Both their children were educated in the United States and both are working in the United States. They keep up some ties, but there has not been the large flight out of Pakistan as there has been, for example, from India.

Q: Well, your time as directing the cultural center in Karachi, did this change turn you around a bit about what you wanted to do?

FULTON: Well, no. That wasn't the turning point because that was part of the plan, to do that for a couple years, then after that to move back into the academic world. In short, it was immediately after returning from Pakistan that that turn began for me. It happened quite by accident. I'd been out just over two years and came back to the States through New York City, and a colleague of mine from the University of Illinois in the meantime had also graduated, and was on the faculty of Hunter College in New York. My wife and I looked her up, we were family friends with her and her husband. We looked her up in New York and she said, "Barry" she said, "Wonderful news." She said, "There's a position opening at Hunter College, Communications." And she said, "What a coincidence that you're here, because it would be the ideal position for you and I know you've thought about coming back, and I know you wanted to do that in three or four years, but would you be interested now?" And I said "Well, I don't think so." She said "Well, would you agree to be interviewed? Because you never know what's going to come up." I said, "You know, you're right" I said. "My next assignment is kind of up in the air. I'm supposed to go to Italy but then there's some doubt. Maybe I'm not going, and my experience hasn't been wholly satisfactory. Yes, why don't I go ahead and have that interview? Might as well." So she set it up on short notice and I went to this interview. Satisfied, I guess I was a little arrogant at the time. Satisfied that they wouldn't be able to resist me, because after all when I left Illinois I had a number of offers to go into teaching, to which I said "No, thanks." And now I was a little further along to my own vision of what I should offer them with the academic career and with this professional experience. So I had the interview, and my old friend was on the interview committee, she and three other people. Of course, I had all my credentials and so on. At the end of the interview she said, "You were terrific, this is great. You will hear from us soon." So she called me in two days and said, "You were turned down three to one." I said, "I hope you were the one that voted yes." She said, "Yes" but she said, "You were turned down by everybody else. They said you weren't sufficiently academic, in your background. Off running libraries, doing things in strange places. They just had no interest." She said, "I argued your case, and they wanted to know what you published." And in fact I had published two things while I was overseas and I thought that was pretty good given what I was doing, and it didn't impress them. She said, "I'm dumbfounded that you couldn't shoot your way onto our faculty." My response was, "Well, I never wanted to go to a party I haven't been invited to, maybe this is not the path that I want to follow."

Q: This is a good place to stop. So why don't we pick this up, I'll put at the end of the tape here, the next time we're in 1971, you've come back, you were turned down three to one by Hunter college, and so we're talking about maybe continuing on your regular career and we'll pick it up then.

Q: This is the 17th of December, 1999, all right, what are we talking, 1979?

FULTON: 1971.

Q: 1971. And what was happening?

FULTON: When I returned from my first posting in Pakistan, I returned to the States with an onward assignment as Assistant Information Officer in Rome. The tantalizing proposition from the PAO, Public Affairs Officer in Tokyo to go to Tokyo as the Special Projects officer in what was thought to be a new look for USIA. That I already had the new assignment in Rome was obviously an attractive proposition to hold onto. Who wouldn't want to go to Rome? But the chance to try something somewhat different was appealing to me and after a few rounds of discussions with people in Personnel and people in the area office, those discussions concluded with the Area Director saying to me, "Well, you know, anyone who has any doubts about going to Rome I think won't fit in there, you'd better go off to Tokyo." And so I did.

Q: So you were in Tokyo from '71 to?

FULTON: '71 to '73.

Q: '73. And what was your job?

FULTON: Well I carried this title that was made up as far as I could tell for the occasion, Special Projects Officer. The special projects that were underway were to revamp a program that still had some of the cobwebs on it from the reading rooms that had been set up all across Japan just after the end of World War II. These were, important at the time, institutions and communities around Japan. But they were feeling by 1971 a little bit threadbare, they weren't sufficiently supported to keep them modern, and whereas at the time Japan was full of modernity in a lot of ways, consumer electronics and the flash and dash, these were well worn institutions that no longer attracted young people. Our idea, or the PAO's idea, Allen Carter, his idea was that these should be so attractive that young people would come to them and could find in them the latest literature and the latest films and the latest everything about the United States. I had the good fortune of being able to help articulate and put into practice that vision, along with a very very talented group of people who had largely been recruited by Allen Carter to do just that.

Q: Well now let's talk a bit. In the first place, how did you see the situation vi- a-vis the United States in Japan in this 1971 to '73 period?

FULTON: A couple things happened during that period that remind you of what we were winding down and what we continue to deal with vis-a-vis the Japanese. At the time I was there, there was a special negotiator assigned to the Embassy to negotiate the return of Okinawa to Japan. That happened during that period and put a mark of conclusion of U.S. occupation of Japanese territory. A second thing happened during that period, and that was a continuing friction between Japan and the United States on, of all things, trade issues. I recall one day when USIS had a call from one of the major newspapers, and the caller said, "We understand that the President has dispatched a special trade negotiator to Japan and that he is arriving here today. Is there any truth to this?" The person in question was to have been one Ambassador Kennedy, the then predecessor to the Special Trade Representatives office. We checked with our sources in the Embassy because we hadn't heard of it, and we called and reported back and we said, "No, there's nothing to that." And several hours later the reporter called us back and said, "If you check at the New Otani Hotel I think you will find him in room so and so." And in fact he had been dispatched and in fact the mission did not know about it, and in fact soon thereafter the Ambassador was recalled, the State Department lost confidence in the Ambassador.

Q: Who was he?

FULTON: Ambassador was Armin Meyer. The Department had lost confidence in him to deal with trade issues, because as today it is often that story that jumps out of the press at you for one reason or another.

Q: Well, let's talk about what you were doing. In the first place, how did we see, what were the target groups that USIA was interested in reaching particularly in this '71-'73 period?

FULTON: We knew both from the polling data, and in a way it was obvious even without the data, that there was a generation who had lived through the war, who had lived through American occupation, who had seen, had come to understand that American occupation was both positive and largely benign, and who in one way or another knew Americans. There was a younger generation coming along as there always is who did not experience that, who did not know America nearly as well, for good or for bad. We understood, we believed that it was in our interests to develop relations with that generation. We had good relations with the other generation, we had good relations with the press, we had good relations with the academic community, and those were people at the time who were beginning to retire and whose successors were less well-known to people at the Embassy. The Embassy being what it was in some ways reflected Japanese society. It was staffed with a lot of senior people, and therefore older people. One of the things USIA tried to do was bring in some younger people who could in fact relate better to this younger generation of Japanese. So that was the primary push that we'd set out to effect, hoping along the way that we would not also stop attending to the people who continued to be influential in the press and academic circles.

Q: In the '71 to '73 period, and we're talking about youth in Japan, the young people in Japan, this was a time when, although one refers to it as the '60s, the '60s really moved way into the '70s in the United States in youth movement and all that. Was there a comparable youth movement in Japan and alienated and all that?

FULTON: Well, far less so. I think the Japanese in style then and still frequently follow the West, the United States in particular. After a few days you begin to see and fear the echo of American culture in all ways, including its discontent. I used to say, a few months after I got to Japan, I thought I had it all figured out. By the time I left two years later I understood that I didn't know very much. Because Japan on the surface and Japan underneath are very, very different. That country was not at the point where there was anything approaching the real discontent that American youth showed, although it had that appearance.

Q: Okay here you are. You've got the sort of dowdy reading centers or cultural centers around Japan which are pretty threadbare by this time. Here you are, the new boy on the block, and they say, "Okay Barry, this is yours." What did you do? What would you do?

FULTON: I had that role of pulling together a lot of thoughtful people who knew a lot more about Japan than I did. We had a good number of people on the staff who had experience with Japan, and some people who had little Japanese experience but who had some visions for change. What we decided to do, and in this particular case, although I don't think I'm known for my modesty, I would underscore the we, this was not a Barry Fulton enterprise. I was an organizer of a lot of thinking and a lot of talent. What we decided to do was to try to make our former reading rooms look like a contemporary bookstore. We wanted to have on the shelves, the week after they were reviewed, books that had just been published. We wanted the people in Japan who after all had sufficient resources to conduct their own deep research on anything, we wanted to say we are contemporary, we are your source of helping you interpret what's going on in America, we have a view of what's going on and we would like to influence your view by what we present to you in an attractive manner. We understood at the time that that meant we should, as the Japanese were doing, use the latest technology. Everybody would agree with that today. Not everybody agreed with that at the time, technology was not the buzzword as it is today. At that time Sony corporation was just developing home video recorders, Betamax recorders. We had the first consumer recorders in our libraries anywhere in the world, including anywhere in Japan. We talked to Sony and we got the first issued. We got the congressional record and congressional committee prints on microfiche, and we had a complete collection of these. Now this isn't something that appeals to young people but it does appeal to young researchers. We were using fax transmission to communicate between our branches at the time. Now it was another ten years before that was commonly used, although I have to say it had been used in Japan by others prior to that. We were, at the time, in Japan out on the leading edge of the use of technology, and we began in Japan to use computer-supported addressing and record keeping so that we could better target the people we were after, and then that was probably the first large-scale use of computers to do what is now routine.

Q: Everything we did really depended on our clientele to speak English. Pretty much.

FULTON: We did all of our programs with simultaneous interpretation. Japanese students universally read English, and they read English at a high level of proficiency. At the time very few of them spoke English, that's changed somehow. If you go to Japan you find a lot of people who speak English. But at the time there were very few. We made a decision that one of our investments in technology had to be high quality interpreting equipment. That was a change, simply because funds weren't available, the equipment wasn't available. Many programs had been done prior to this change in English, because it's easier and it's cheaper. It's very expensive to do good interpretation. We happened to have on our staff one of the better known interpreters in Japan, and he was born Japanese, raised in the Midwest United States, came back to Japan. He was the person who the Japanese, the TV network would have, would hire on contract to do the simultaneous interpretation for the space shots, for example. So he was really a nationally known figure. He was on our staff, and he set up a training school for young translators, so we could expand our translation ability and we got this good equipment, and everything was done simultaneously.

Q: Did you all try to tackle the American military nuclear question, which you know is a very touchy one?

FULTON: Oh, the biggest, probably after trade at the time the biggest issue between Japan and the United States. We've since all learned a good bit about that, or at least allegations of the press. Speaking for USIS at the time we had a company line that we used and that was always that we, on any ship's visit, we fully observed and respected the agreement between Japan and the United States. The direct questions then were often, "Well, are there any nuclear weapons aboard this ship?" And the answer was, "We fully respect the accord between Japan and the United States." We never discussed the presence of nuclear weapons. Now, the accord between Japan and the United States was such that one would therefore conclude that there were no nuclear weapons aboard that ship. Now, subsequent to that we understood there were side agreements, and I don't know to this day any more than I knew at the time.

Q: Yes, it always was touchy, and I think sometimes the question rested on, were they in Japan if the ship was docked, I mean, you know, in a way it was fully understood by the people and authority on both sides what was going on. It just was not one thing, and probably rightly so. I mean otherwise it could spin out of control and you had peculiar manifestations that you had to offload on a ship outside the three-mile limit or something like that. Was USIA, your organization, tackling trade with Japan?

FULTON: Yes.

Q: How would you do that?

FULTON: Mainly with the press. Like any good USIS operation the time, resources were roughly divided between information and education/cultural work. The Japanese press is terribly important not only in Japan but outside of Japan. It's frequently quoted. The Japanese are voracious readers, there are six or eight major dailies in Japan and regional dailies from all the prefectures many times over. We had branch posts in six places outside of Tokyo. The branch PAOs were all tasked with keeping in regular contact with the regional papers and Tokyo itself, where all the national dailies, practically all the national dailies were headquartered, we had very active relations with them. Trade was right at the top of the agenda, but when we could bring through a specialist on trade issues, if we had anything to say about it that person did not get out of town without dealing with the press. As I said earlier that was almost always done with interpretation, when we had the chance then to explain our views. We had easy access to the press, I should say. It was not, this wasn't shooting our way into the front door, the press were eager to hear from us. So it was a matter of a phone call and an easy meeting and was something that was easy to do if we had a position to represent it frequently got good attention. We initiated a magazine at the Embassy called Trends. Long since it was first started, Trends in fact has been privatized and sold to a private entrepreneur. I don't know if it's current, but when it started, trade was one of the major issues covered in this magazine, It was a glossy heavyweight magazine and targeted to influential people in Japan, and there was not an issue of it published, came out every other month, that did not have some trade-related story.

Q: For the embassy, dealing with political and economic affairs, how important was it to make good contacts away from Tokyo?

FULTON: I think you'd find a dispute on this question. Japanese political life and cultural life is highly centralized. Tokyo is to Japan as Paris is to France, it's not decentralized. On the other hand, the population is dispersed widely across the islands, and we believed a lot of future leadership would come from outside of Tokyo and we believed it was important to have a reach outside of Tokyo. Hence we operated centers that had long been in existence in Osaka and Kyoto. We opened a center in Nagoya because it was a regional population center of some significant, and we continued centers in Fukuoka and Sapporo. At the same time we closed some smaller reading rooms where population size didn't warrant the continuing expense.

Q: How about our troop presence there, was it becoming a problem more than it had been, say the generational change?

FULTON: No it wasn't, with the exception of Okinawa, where the question of sovereignty was a major question and was resolved through the negotiations, there was not any major discontent about U.S. troops on Japanese soil. All things considered it was seen as positive. There was the occasional incident, but they were very infrequent.

Q: Did you use these posts, these reading rooms as sort of listening posts? Were things coming from them, different regions back to the Embassy?

FULTON: Well, yes and no. Yes in theory, one of the things that we frequently argued is that the better contact we had with people and the regional centers the better we could be advising on policy. In practice that didn't happen often. Busy people who run programs don't frequently do reporting. I don't know if that's your experience in branch posts, but that's usually the case. In practice State Department colleagues of ours who do reporting infrequently come to programs. Happened occasionally, not routinely. Should have.

Q: Armin Meyer left shortly after you arrived?

FULTON: Yes, it had been six months, he left, that was because of discontent within the White House or the Department with his role as concerns trade negotiations.

Q: He was replaced by Robert Stephen Ingersoll.

FULTON: Replaced by Robert Ingersoll who in particular had Kissinger's confidence, and Ingersoll stayed in Japan for the best part of two years and then returned to Washington where he became Kissinger's deputy in the State Department.

Q: How did you find relations between USIS and the State Department?

FULTON: In the time I was in Japan they were exceptionally good. It seems to me that that element which always contributes to good relations between the two has been whether there was this professional respect across the two. State Department had, as I think it frequently does in Japan a very, very strong contingent of officers and it happened the time that I was in Japan that USIS did as well. That appreciation that crossed that line was very, very strong. It couldn't have been any better. Ingersoll came to town, he had not served in a mission before, although in his business life he had a bit of foreign experience. He had a very, very broad strategic view of what U.S.-Japan relations should become. He used all the resources of the mission and orchestrated that mission in a way that could be a model anytime.

Q: Well I assume the feeling on the part of you and your colleagues was that Japan was a major player in the situation, in our policy in that part of the world.

FULTON: Well, it was so perceived certainly at the mission, and I think it was perceived that way in the Department as well.

Q: Were you all trying to paint the Soviet Union, I mean make sure the Soviet Union was getting the bad press or not?

FULTON: No. The Japanese had their own view of the Soviet Union and it was in most regards complementary to ours. We didn't spend any time on that.

Q: How about Vietnam?

FULTON: Ah. The irritation with the U.S. involvement in Vietnam escalated during that period in some ways reflecting what was going on domestically in the United States. I don't think it ever reached the fever pitch that it did actually in the United States, but we saw the same discontent reflected, the question of whether we were there as an imperial power, the question of how long we would stay, the question of whether commitments would be honored in terms of withdrawals. All of the issues that the United States confronted at home and around the world were present in Japan. We dealt with those as best we could. During that period we had a policy that was very much in transition and that was a difficult policy to explain, and we did our best.

Q: Was there a problem in Japan that you often have in a country that is dependant on the United States, we were their military power? You had China to the west and the Soviet Union to the east, it was not a friendly neighborhood. And yet as we see in other situations that you can get this sort of Ying and Yang, this mighty United States and we don't have any control over their military or some of their policies and all, at the same time for God's sakes don't leave us alone here, I mean was this a problem? Were you seeing this deflate out in the Japanese body politic?

FULTON: Well, you have well-described the dilemma that the Japanese faced, and dilemmas don't have solutions. On the one hand we were disruptive in the neighborhood by our presence in Vietnam, on the other hand we were essential to keeping peace in the neighborhood. The Japanese appreciated that, they appreciated the role we were in. One can imagine a Japan split between those two views, groups in the street opposed to U.S. policy. In fact there were some. It wasn't as though half the population felt we should be there with our military presence and our economic might and half thought we should not be. Probably half of every Japanese felt on the one hand and on the other hand, this is, we were both destabilizing and stabilizing in certain ways. All things considered, our relation with the Japanese was highly positive.

Q: What about the Korean-Japanese relationship? I was wondering whether we were trying to say, "Why can't you all learn to love each other again?"

FULTON: It wasn't an issue for us and it's clear that since that time the Korean-Japanese relationship has matured somewhat. But that came about through the efforts of the two sides, we were not party to that.

Q: Was Okinawa within your province?

FULTON: Well, we had a center on Okinawa when I arrived there, we had a USIS officer, and as I mentioned earlier we negotiated the return of Okinawa during that time. Had that not successfully happened that would have become a major irritant. It hadn't reached that stage but it could have. As I said it was a question of sovereignty. There were very complex issues on Okinawa that the Japanese themselves then and still face: economic disparities, and the U.S. troop presence that continues. We negotiated at the time a settlement that all parties thought was just for the return of Okinawa to Japan.

Q: Did you find on mainland Japan, referring to the three major islands, much interest in the Okinawa thing, you know, with your reading rooms and all that?

FULTON: There was enormous interest in the national press. I didn't sense that there was much interest outside of Tokyo in that question, apart from that generated by the National Press. But there was great interest in the press because it was a question of Japanese sovereignty.

Q: What about the national press? What you were getting? Although this was not your major area of responsibility, I mean you were still in the apparatus that was dealing with this, among other opinion makers. What was your impression of the Japanese press? Because it's so big and seems to be a little hard to put a handle on.

FULTON: Well, the Japanese press was not then, I can't speak for it today as I've not followed it closely, but I would suspect we have some of the same situation today; it was not a totally free press in the sense that we understand it here. One has to be careful with these definitions across cultures, because a Japanese journalist would take offense at what I've just said. But certainly there was a very close relation between reporters who covered various aspects of the Japanese government and those government ministries. If you were covering a certain ministry, you had privileged access to that ministry. I don't want to suggest that doesn't happen here on occasions, too. But we are talking about an access that is unusually close in Japan, and if you are a reporter covering that ministry and you do not cover it in a way that is thought to be fair, at the time you could be cut out of the news in a way that could not happen here. So one sees across the spectrum of the Japanese press a similar line and a line that certainly at that time was well orchestrated by the ministries.

Q: Who was running Japan at this time? Where did we feel Japan was being run?

FULTON: Help me out with that question, let's go a little further.

Q: Well, I mean, in the sort of Foreign Affairs apparatus we always look for power centers. If you're looking at the United States, you'd say who runs it, I mean it's obviously the White House and the Foreign Affairs National Security Council with the President. The Department of State, Congress, Defense Department, conflicting things, so where did you feel, as far as, particularly American relations were concerned, who was calling the shots?

FULTON: You know, I'm tempted to give you some answers but I'm going to resist because I was not, when I arrived there and when I departed two years later, I was not a Japanese specialist. I was not a Japanese language officer. I had a particular role in trying to help restructure and recreate a new USIS operation. Probably two-thirds of the people I served with there were experts on the politics of power within Japan and could answer that question with much more validity than I can, so I'm not going to try that.

Q: I'll accept that. By '73 how did you feel, by the time you left how'd you feel the program of updating, modernizing, reattracting clientele was going?

FULTON: I was satisfied that we had accomplished what we set out to do. What we set out to do was to make the centers, and that is not only the books and periodicals that were there, but also the programs that took place in those centers with visiting American experts, to make those attractive places that young Japanese would feel attracted to. Our attendance shot up, our book usage increased even though we had fewer volumes on the shelves. We weeded out a lot of things that never circulated and brought in newer things. Then attention of the national press increased to the centers. One of our designers who helped design the centers, an American who served in Japan for a couple of years, of American and Japanese ancestry, he was awarded by a Japanese design professional association their highest award for one of the years he was there for design of the centers. A Japanese encyclopedia, that is the equivalent in Japan of the Encyclopedia Britannica, used our centers to illustrate modern design. We got attention, which is what we were trying to do. We called, instead of calling them libraries we called them "infomats." That would work in 1990 easily, in 1971, 1972, 1973, some of our critics said, "Well, that's sort of a gimmicky title." Well, it was kind of a gimmicky title. But we were looking for that gimmick to say this isn't your traditional library, this is something new and you can come in here and look at videos and you can come in and listen to audios and you get the latest books and get the latest magazines. We're not your father's library. We're your library. And that part of it worked.

Q: How about the school system? I'm thinking more about the grammar and high school gymnasium system. How was that, was that a prime target of you all?

FULTON: No it was not. Our target was at the college level, and I think you could make a good case that you should target people much younger. I think you could make that case intellectually. One finally is constrained by the budget, and so we did our targeting at the university.

Q: And also, it's a different clientele. It's noisier and the more high school kids, the less college kids you get.

FULTON: You'd have to do it very differently. Target worthy, we were targeting college kids and their professors.

Q: Did you get involved in exchange programs?

FULTON: Yes. Japan and the United States have one of the largest exchange programs. That program is a genuine bi-national program, in fact the Japanese contribute more to that program than the Americans do, and the Japanese have traditionally had a large number of exchange students come here. I don't recall the number at the time, there are around 50,000 here now. The exact numbers would have been on the same scale at that time. Far fewer Americans going to Japan, and one of our interests over the years was getting more Americans to Japan. But the exchange program was a core part of the whole thing. It probably underwent less change than any part of the program, because it was working very well and still does.

Q: Okay Barry, 1973, whither?

FULTON: 1973. After two great years in Japan I came back to the United States. With the intention of being reassigned to Taipei as part of a three-person team to oversee the modernization of all of the USIS posts in East Asia, the then Area Director, a political appointee by the name of Kent Crane had come to Japan, liked what he saw and said, "This is something that should happen everywhere in East Asia. And how did this come about?" After he asked some questions he decided that there should be an implementation team and there were to be three of us. One of the three was a librarian and one was a designer, and I was the third, with responsibility for overall vision and implementation. We cooled our heels in Washington for several months, not knowing ourselves that even among political appointees there is sometimes some serious infighting. We did not know at the time that this man was on his way out. Nor did he. One day the axe fell and out he went and his acolytes, by which time I had become one.

Out he went and the three of us were then made available to personnel for reassignment, and I was assigned to a small office in Washington that was involved in Resource and Operations Analysis. I was assigned as an analyst in that four-person office. Within a year I became head of that office, and I headed that office for the ensuing three years.

Q: Which were?

FULTON: 1973 through '77. I headed that office of Resource and Operations Analysis.

Q: Well let's talk about resource, what did this mean?

FULTON: You know in retrospect, I came to understand that there are some jobs that sort of sit on the sidelines where people who are not sure where to assign get assigned to. I think that was one of those jobs. Resource and Operations Analysis, that sounds so?

Q: That could mean anything.

FULTON: That's a job you could probably do without. So as I looked around at the staffing at that office it was fairly clear we were a group of people they weren't quite sure what to do with. They defined the office as 'That office that would have Foreign Service input into the budget process.' The people who set it up said, "You know, budgets are pretty well put together by budget analysis without sufficient input from the Foreign Service, and this office is to look at program operations and to make recommendations and to work with the office of budget in putting together an annual budget." And that's what we did. It happened because of my background with the training and the social sciences and because of my interest in programming that for me it was a wonderful fit. I spent four years there directing. There were two or three major studies a year, and I would not claim that those studies had the influence I hoped they would, but we were staffed with four who did some studies that reflected the experience we had all had and helped the agency overall move into the use of better communications, technology, something that came out of my personal interest and experience in Japan and helped the agency in some modest ways deploy its human resources more logically than it had. We looked at, for example, the overall importance of various countries to our Foreign Policy and we built a model reflecting the way we should use our resources proportionate to those interests. That model changed the way we assigned people to some places and the number of people we assigned. So, that's the kind of thing it was.

Q: When you're thinking about this, although you say a small sort of office off to one side, as soon as you get around to how much money, personnel or something assigned to a country, I mean you're talking about some gnomes down in the bowels of the operation who have quite a bit of clout.

FULTON: Yes, we were those guys.

Q: I would imagine that maybe indirectly through your next in line above that there'd be some magnificent battles in your trying to explain maybe Costa Rica's not number one on our list of priorities, but the Ambassador and PAO in Costa Rica think this is the navel of the universe.

FULTON: You know we were the guys at the table and decisions were made, and you know how difficult it is to change anything in a bureaucracy. We were the guys at the table that had collected the data, the guys that had done the analysis and the guys who were saying, in a way, without emotion, if you were going to put your resources where your interests lie, and if there were no emotion involved then you would do it this way, and you would increase your staffing at X, Y and Z and where you would decrease it in, absent factors that we could capture in our data. Basically the people on the other side of the table were those saying, "Wait a minute, those factors are important too, and after all we do have rich relations with such and such country and it provides an input to such and such country." So it generated a healthy debate, our conclusions were not accepted, did not dictate decision making, but they certainly influenced it. I think we built up over that four years in looking at the role of libraries abroad, where we urged a slow transition from conventional libraries to resource centers, looking at the way personnel assignments were made, the way language assignments were made, looking at the way the wireless file was transmitted. For example, we were involved in the first test of computerizing the wireless file from the old teletype system, which is now done across the world. We did one of the first tests of using satellite transmission for Voice of America. So we were assigned to be out on the cutting edge of technology. For me, given the background I described in my interests of this, I got a perfect assignment.

Q: Well did you find yourself being sort of labeled Mr. Future or something like that? Because you were in a way outside the normal cross-cultural type, but yet we're not at the exhibits level or something like this, I mean the very technical level. How did that work?

FULTON: Your suggestion would have been a nice one, Mr. Future. No I never heard that one. I was thought at the time, as my staff were the research wonks in the back room. I think our role was appreciated up to a point, but with any kind of a research that's done, I think it's true today as well, there's always somebody that says yes these are the numbers, but this isn't the real world. I think any wise decision process brings both to bear. The fact is, that's what happened. I think we had, out of the kinds of research we did, and let me qualify that as I speak, we didn't do any public opinion polling or general research. That was a totally different operation. This was all, we were an internal consulting operation is what we were. Out of that, along with the other forces that were at play, I think came to a series of wise decisions. One of the things that we did do that I think the agency deserved to be proud of and I think we made some small contribution to was keeping the agency, USIA, close to, not always at, but close to the cutting edge of technology. For any communication agency to succeed, whether it's motion picture projectors in another age, or whether it's telegraphs at another age, to communicate effectively you need to be close to that edge. I think we were.

Q: And also, '73 to '77, we were on the cusp of what became known as, you know, I don't know what it'll be at any other time, but we're talking about the computer, word processor revolution, which really has changed things tremendously. This is just the beginning of those rather exciting times. People were, I know we were experimenting with visa records on a computer. On one screen, type thing, and all that.

FULTON: That was a time when the Department was making its decision to go with Wang computers, and we had some input to that decision at the time. Incidentally, although much maligned in recent years, at the time it was a good decision.

Q: Well yes, Wang also gave service overseas, which other outfits wouldn't do.

FULTON: It was a time when one of our larger posts, Belgrade at the time, went from using address graft plates to using a computer at a time when the Department would not allow an overseas post to acquire their own computers. We found something that was not called a computer but it sure looked like one, called a Data Input Station. So as far as I know Belgrade, was the first mission in the world to have anything on-premises that sure looked a good bit like a computer.

Q: And was called Data Input.

FULTON: That's right.

Q: Now who was the director of USIA during '73 to '77?

FULTON: When I returned from Japan, Jim Keogh was director of the agency, and let's see, he was succeeded I guess in '77 by? I've gone back to the election, '76 election, Jimmy Carter?

Q: Head of USIA was?

FULTON: John Reinhardt. The first career officer of USIA to be named director of the agency.

Q: Was there support from above either at the director level or down below for saying, let's allocate our resources properly and let's sort of modernize and all that, was this part of the culture?

FULTON: It has been part of the USIA culture over the years, and even in the predecessor agencies to USIA. Voice of America, for example, continually modernized. USIA printing operations continued to the last day of USIA to be among the best printing plants anywhere in the world. Whatever kind of technology is introduced has been part of the culture. We had very strong support from Jim Keogh. When I came back to look at all the alternatives to change, and when the Carter administration came in John Reinhardt became director of USIA, one of the first innovations in planning and budgeting with the Carter administration was, you will recall, zero-based budgeting. And our agency had grabbed hold of that right away.

Q: Well you were basically doing that in your operation, weren't you in a way, I mean looking at money and all?

FULTON: Close. We were certainly that part of the operation that was closest to doing that and zero-based budgeting had certain particular rules of engagement. Our office was the natural to take that on and we managed that for USIA. Later after that first cycle, as you recall, zero-based budgeting was not a big hit after the first year. It got encumbered with a lot of rules and not as much wisdom as it should have had. But we were recognized in an article in the Wall Street Journal as being among those who had best understood zero-based budgeting. This comes again I think from the culture of USIA. We had to keep re-inventing ourselves. We had to or we would have become irrelevant.

Q: In '77, whither?

FULTON: As a consequence of one of the studies we had done for the European Area, I was one day invited by the European Area director Jacques Shirley to sit down with him. He said, "I'm going out to Rome as Public Affairs Officer, we have an opening in Florence as branch PAO, what would you think about going to Florence?" I said, "Well, I think that's everybody's dream. Going to Florence as branch PAO." But I said, "I think my talents would not be best used in Florence as a small operation. It's a one-man operation, you need somebody there, I think, who is a hands-on person doing full-time work with influentials in that community. I would love to do that but I think my talents are in organization and management and that's the kind of position I'm looking for." So he called me the next day and said, "How would you like to be my deputy?" I said, "Now you're talking." So that's what happened, I went to Rome as the deputy PAO in 1978 after several months of language training. There for four years.

Q: Now you were in Rome from when to when?

FULTON: '78 to '82.

Q: All right. You arrived in Rome in '78, what was the USIA operation like in Italy at that time?

FULTON: The first day of my arrival I had lunch with the PAO who I would be working for. I didn't know him very well, and I remember he said something to me that surprised me when he said it, although I have since found it a good rule to follow. He said, "As my deputy, I expect that you will look at all the incoming traffic and all the outgoing traffic and supervise the branch posts and the IO (Information Officer) and the CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer). My only rule is that you do all those things just the way I would do it if I were doing it." He said, "That means that in the first several weeks you'll want to consult me frequently. But I'll take it as a measure of how fast you learn how little you consult me after the first couple of weeks." Well that's good advice. We don't have two operations here, we have one operation. I learned quickly from him that in very sharp contrast with what I had seen in Japan where most of my work was about process, because we were developing structure and changing process. Most of the USIS work in Italy assumed that the process had been perfected, and most of the work there was politics, as seen through the eyes of the then PAO. The PAO understood his job in Italy was to be not on the sidelines of policy, but to be at the center of policy. It turned out that one of the reasons he had chosen me as his deputy was to free himself from the management role which can take everybody's time and be an indispensable player in the policy process. He was a fluent speaker of Italian, and brought to Italy a very, very strong staff of people with Italian expertise. Therefore the role I saw and the role I played was a lot different than I had seen up 'till that time. In Italy as you know well the culture is politics.

Q: I'm not sure if I've mentioned it, but I just wish to put it in context. I am not an Italian expert, but I did serve as consulate general in Naples from '79 to '81, and that's where we met. One of the things that struck me in Italy when I first got there was how much time was spent on a political situation which was in constant movement but didn't change a bit. And you know the Italian scene of were the communists going to get thirty or twenty-seven percent rather than twenty-six percent of the vote, and who's going to be in the cabinet. I had a feeling it was a kind of a never-never land. The people were entranced with this, and it really didn't amount to a hill of beans. I'd like your impression.

FULTON: I agree with you that although there is reporting in the western press of the frequent changes of Italian government, the Italian government was in most ways more stable than most governments. The people shifted their seats, but from the end of the war through 1990, a period of forty-five years, you don't see much change at all. Bubbling beneath the surface, however, was a great deal of discontent with all the parties, and that discontent manifested itself after you and I had both left.

Q: Yes. Well, we're talking about '78 to '82. First place, let's look at the structure of American representation there, as represented in your particular thing by the cultural centers. I felt that we probably had too many consulates in Italy, I mean it's gone way down now but, how did you feel about staffing on USIA's side?

FULTON: One of the things that the PAO Jacques Shirley did when he arrived, and he arrived there a year before I did, so I had no role in this decision, the argument he made with headquarters was that unlike the example of Tokyo or France, Italian politics is very decentralized. He made the argument that in an era when branch posts, USIS branch posts, were being closed in other countries, this was the time to reopen branch posts in Italy, and maintain the ones we had. So we had libraries, reading rooms, centers in both Milan and Naples. But we opened a post in Trieste, or I should say reopened a post in Trieste. We downsized posts in Florence and Genoa so that at the end of the process we had public reading rooms and centers of both Milan and Naples as the two most important, and we had very small operations in the other four consulates in Trieste, Genoa, Palermo, and Florence. These were not public spaces, unlike the Japan experience, and the idea was that we would keep our infrastructure as inexpensive as possible, and our branch PAO's would be most effective if they got out of the office, out of the centers, out in the population and in fact out of the city in which they served. On the first day when I arrived in Italy I was told by the PAO that one of the roles he had developed for branch PAO's was that they would in fact physically get out of the branch city twenty-five percent of the time. They largely did that. There was one person who resisted that, but not for long. The others all did that. That I think was an accurate reflection of Italian politics at that time, it was very confused, and the interest in American culture was very great. Now whether that one man or woman traveling across the breadth of a large part of the country made much difference, I don't know. But I do know that we tried our best to get involved in the culture of Italy as opposed to the model in Japan where we tried to get the Japanese involved in the culture of the United States.

Q: How would you describe the culture of Italy from our post's perspective?

FULTON: This will take the next three or four tapes if justice is to be done. In shorthand, at the time I served there, the culture of Italy was very much in transition, the educational system was very, very uneven. Opportunities came to young people through the political affiliation of their parents. One was a Christian Democrat or a Communist or a Socialist or a Republican or whatever because the party had jobs to offer, had positions to offer. As I said earlier, one can't separate the culture from politics in Italy as easily as you can elsewhere. There was a political officer who, in a reporting cable to the Department the year I arrived, 1978, describing the Italian communist party as a Marxist party, wrote (more of the Groucho variety, less of the Karl variety).

Q: Groucho Marx being a well-known comedian at the time.

FULTON: There was a great admiration for the United States on the one hand, on the other hand the Italian communist party could rally to the streets tens of thousands of people to protest U.S. nuclear policy, or to protest decisions that were about to be made in NATO concerning the placement of short-range nuclear weapons. The Italian communist party, we in terms of American policy, traditionally feared as their election clout increased. When Richard Gardner was Jimmy Carter's ambassador, he set out to try to open a dialogue with the communists and in some ways succeeded. The complexity of what was going on, on the one hand supporting the democratic parties against the Italian Communist party, on the other hand recognizing that the Italian Communist party, although it received strong support from Moscow, was not the monolithic party that other Italian Communist parties were, created a fascinating political client.

Q: You say other Italian, you mean other European.

FULTON: European communist parties. The former Prime Minister Moro had been found assassinated in the trunk of a car in early '78, just before I arrived. Just before I left, an American General was kidnapped. General Dozier was kidnapped and actually rescued by the Italians with American assistance. The Red brigades were in ascension in the early 70s. By 1980 they had lost their political appeal to the Italian electorate as they overextended the level of violence that the Italian political system was willing to tolerate. It was a time when shall we say, the chickens began to come home to roost, and it was a time when Italian politics became more realistic, the Socialist party came into power during that period, and by coming into power they made their accommodation with the Americans. They differentiated themselves strongly from the Communists. That set the stage in a whole variety of ways for what was to happen in the 90s, which was the dissolution of most of the Italian political parties as we knew them in the time I was there.

Q: How about the media? What, how did we see the Italian media?

FULTON: Well the Italian media are among the most interesting in the world, I think. In sharp contrast to the way I describe the Japanese media, there is no Italian newspaper without a political point of view. The readers of that newspaper know the political point of view and so you get the day's events through the eyes of this party or that party, or this faction of this party or this faction of that party. The Italians read per capita fewer newspapers than any country in Europe, and newspapers write for political elite. The average reader of an Italian newspaper reads a couple of newspapers, and most people don't read any. People get their news from television and radio, and television likewise has a strong political slant to it. If you read several papers, and you read them through the eyes of somebody on the left and somebody on the right and somebody in the center, you're an open-minded person who can probably come to what we call objectivity here, but you won't get it from any one newspaper there. Like the Japanese press, the Italian press was very open to our engagements, not necessarily open to our influence. They were generally sure going to make their own call, but they were accessible to us to talk to them when they would listen to us and there are times when we had a point of view that we wanted to get across where with enough time and energy we believe we succeeded in doing that. It was an exciting time to be in Italy simply because of all the politics that I described and because the Italian press was so vibrant.

Q: Well, you came to this job of basically managing this organization and had been dealing with modernization and new techniques and how to do this. Did you find you were having to go back, could you bring these talents to bear or were you supporting sort of a system that had proved its worth over the years?

FULTON: We changed. I should give credit to the PAO, Jacques Shirley, who essentially changed the philosophy of programming in Tokyo from that which I described in Tokyo to one in Italy, where as I said earlier we would take our program to host institutions. We would not support the infrastructure of programming that we have traditionally had that I described in Japan. Nonetheless, there are more and less efficient ways of doing even that, and we used, in terms of identifying audiences, in terms of mailing things to audience members, in terms of contacting people, we used the best technology we had. That was greeted without any reservation by the people who were involved because by that time it had proved itself. It was not a place where I was involved in any innovation. It was a point where we were using technologies that had been developed elsewhere, some of which I had a role in and using them to actively engage in very dynamic political processes. I guess in a way in terms of my own growth what I was then experiencing was a movement from having been almost all process oriented in my own career to one of managing an operation that was very politically directed. It was dealing with issues that we believed at the time would be of paramount importance. In a mission where USIS had a seat at the decision table, you know this is not true in all missions. It is true as I suggested earlier to the extent to which people have something to bring to the process. We had both a PAO who was very knowledgeable, his successor likewise, my last two years, Stan Burnett, an expert on Italian politics. In the last years, Stan has just published a book on Italian politics which won an international award for its insights, and he knows Italian politics better than most Italians. We had a CAO for a year at that time who had been head of the Political Science Department at Yale and is described in Italy as the father of Italian social sciences. We had an IO who was absolutely fluent in Italian and knew his way around Italy very well. We had a group of people who were Italian specialists, I not among them, who made the USIS operation a key player in developing policy.

Q: How did you find the idea of Information Officers who were out in the field, getting out in the field. Did that work?

FULTON: It depended almost totally on how good the officer was. One can imagine an institution like an American center in Japan doing pretty good work even with a weak officer, because he or she is supported by other parts of the institution to do certain things. In Italy, it was all on that person's shoulders for the most part. You see a somewhat different operation in Naples, where we did have an institution surrounding that individual. But in most of the branch posts we did not, we had a person with a staff advisor and a secretary essentially. As I traveled around to the branches to observe the branch post operations - we had six branches - I visited each of them four times a year. So by the time I had left Italy after four years I had paid nearly a hundred visits to these branches, and I came to see some very sharp differences. I saw among our best officers operations that you would be very, very proud of, where our officers came to know their regions personally, where trust developed and where they sat down, and there was a mutual respect in discussing issues, political issues, economic issues, security issues. I saw, and I'm thinking of at least one operation in particular, and some hint of that in other places at other times where our officers weren't up to the challenge. If they weren't up to the challenge, you know, Italians don't have time for them. So there was a dependency on having somebody who understood and could talk the politics and culture of that country.

Q: Well did you find, I mean Italian's not that easy. I mean people can tell you, as you and I both know, trying to pick up Italian, particularly at middle age and all, is not an easy matter. So it really means somebody who's been there a number of times. I think the thing that struck me and I'm sure it struck you was how many people in our apparatus in Italy had been there the third or fourth time. But this can also bring localitis. I mean I used to get annoyed as hell about people who'd come down from Rome and look down their nose ...

FULTON: Yes.

Q: I had no particular grief, I was just assigned to Naples. But all of a sudden I became a very strong partisan of Naples. Those goddamn snobs up in northern Italy, what are they so snooty about? But did you find that you were, it's not just that but also Italo-centered and all that rather than U.S. centered in my understanding. Was this a problem from your perspective?

FULTON: Yes. It was a problem with a few people, and clearly a language skill was terribly important in Italy. Now I have examples of both ends of the extremes, I have one example of a person who had fluent Italian who in a way didn't have a clue about American policy or American interests. I had people who had learned Italian before they came but not served there before and grew in the time they were there, whose Italian got better and whose comprehension got better and they knew what they were about, and did just perfectly wonderful jobs. The Italians are quite forgiving of your language ability if they think you're genuinely interested and engaged, and so they will cut some slack for a person who is not expert in the language. But finally I think that has to come. The language has to come and I think on all occasions you need a balance in that post between those who have served there before and some people who were relatively new, and we had that balance, and I think overall it worked out pretty well.

Q: Talk about the two Ambassadors you had there. How did you see Ambassador Dick Gardner and his relation to USIS but also as an Ambassador?

FULTON: Dick Gardner was, in terms of his preparation, both in government, international organizations, the UN, and his dissertation on economics and his professorship at Columbia and his interest in Italy, he had a CV (curriculum vitae) that richly qualified him for the job. He had a very keen appreciation of USIA and called on USIA frequently. He was a fast study, he cared about politics, he cared about culture. You know most things that I can say about Dick Gardner are positive, but not everything. He had a colossal ego, and that ego got in the way of his judgment on some occasions. He was a person who wanted credit for everything he did. In some ways we all do but in some ways, with wisdom, we have to share that with others. And he, when he thought he wasn't afforded sufficient recognitions or given sufficient credit, he lost that political judgment and objectivity that he otherwise had.

Q: How about Maxwell Rabb? He was sort of given a very difficult time by the American press, was considered a lightweight political diplomatic amateur, a rather crude person.

FULTON: I served my last year in Rome under Max Rabb. Max Rabb had none of those qualifications that Richard Gardner had to be the Ambassador. He didn't speak Italian, he didn't have any of them. He had one fundamental qualification that served him very well as Ambassador. He had a political instinct, by which I mean recognizing what issue matters when there are a thousand issues to look at, and recognizing that above all your timing is critically important in politics. He could see through the politics of, I should say, he could choose from all those opportunities those moments when it mattered for him to be a player. I remember he once said, at an early staff meeting, he said, "Ladies, gentlemen, I am an amateur at this. I've never been an Ambassador before, I don't know anything about Italy. And what I am telling you today is that I will take whatever advice you give me. So when you come to me and say, 'Ambassador, I think you should do so and so,' I want you to know that I will then do it. So don't recommend it unless you mean it." And he said, "I'll do whatever you say. If it goes wrong after you've recommended it, then maybe on a second occasion I'll still take your recommendation, but if I see a pattern of it going wrong you can be sure I will never take your recommendation." And he said, but up until that point he said, "I am your agent to do whatever you tell me, so think it through carefully." People took that as a real challenge and as a consequence I think it served him quite well. He, on the other hand, on an early occasion when the Prime Minister was giving a speech on an important issue, I remember Max Rabb saying, "Look, while he speaks, let's have an interpreter here for me so I can hear what he says, immediately when he says it." And the interpreter was there and the interpreter did this simultaneous interpreting for Max Rabb, and I remember Max Rabb wrote a little note to the Prime Minister even before he concluded, and he wrote this note in longhand, and he said to his assistant, "Have this delivered immediately." And I remember the assistant saying, "Should we have it translated first?" And he said, "No no no no no, no you don't understand. I want it in my hand, don't do anything with it." Well, the Prime Minister had a note from the American Ambassador within thirty minutes. That's Max Rabb's political instinct. He was well regarded by the Italians, and they knew he didn't know anything about Italy, but they did know he understood politics.

Q: I'm just thinking of this '78 to '82 period, in a way, looking at that, and please correct me if I'm wrong, when the chips were down, when Italy really counted for us was during the SS-20 Pershing missile crisis.

FULTON: Yes indeed.

Q: And I wonder if you could describe what that was and how we performed, how we met the challenge, because it was really a major situation.

FULTON: Well it was, when NATO (North Atlantic treaty Organization) had to respond to the Soviet challenge on short-range missiles?.

Q: Could you explain what this was?

FULTON: The Soviets decided to position in Eastern Europe short-range missiles that were able to hit western European soil.

Q: This was the SS-20.

FULTON: Right. NATO decided to respond in kind. But in order for that response in kind to have any political validity there had to be a willingness among the NATO allies to put those missiles on their soil. Once you put missiles on your soil you not only stand up, as it was thought at the time, to the Soviets, but you also become a target. So this is not an easy decision to make. Great Britain early on made the decision that they would host the NATO missiles, and as it turned out in the give and take of NATO politics, Italy became the key country after which the decision would go forward, or without which the decision would not go forward. Within Italy, the Christian democrats supported that decision. But the Christian democrats did not govern without a coalition, and the Communists' support was not required. But the Communists could have taken to the streets, as they did in opposition to the pending decision, and they could have made it impossible for the decision to go forward. It happened that the key decision was one that was to be made by the Socialist Party. Craxi was then head of the Socialist Party. Craxi was looking for the Socialist Party to become more respectable and to distinguish itself from the rhetoric of the far left, a basic decision that he made that the socialists could become respectable internationally and govern with the Christian Democrats perhaps as a Socialist Prime Minister, as Craxi eventually became, and so the decision paid off. The Socialists after some time decided to support the Christian Democrats in the NATO decision to place short range nuclear missiles on Italian soil. The U.S. role was critical in this. We had the leadership of NATO because of our size. We in USIS spent a disproportionate part of our time doing programming both with the public floor, and more often with one-on-one discussions with journalists, describing how we believed that would be a stabilizing, not a destabilizing influence in Europe, and that it was part of a path that would lead to a greater peace, not disruption. We in USIS were very close to some think-tanks that did analysis of security issues, and there were a good number of people associated with those think-tanks who were advisers to Craxi and the Socialist Party. We knew that at a minimum they could convey the feelings of our government and the rationale to all the parties, particularly the Socialists. We know that that conveyance got through. Now what role we had, did we make a difference? I can't say, nobody can say that. I can say that we were players. Throughout the mission, from the Ambassador to the political section of the mission and USIS. And don't you know, the Italians did agree to the station of those missiles. The scenario that we played out at that time came to pass.

Q: Was it clear to all of you in the mission that this was really important?

FULTON: Yes. This was at the top of the agenda.

Q: Did the Achille Lauro incident happen while you were there, or was that later on?

FULTON: No, I'd have to refresh my memory, I don't remember. It was not a major issue in U.S.-Italian relations, but I don't remember when it happened.

Q: One of the things that broke up the political situation that had gone on for forty-five years or so in Italy, the one that you were dealing with in the Soviet '82 period, was the complete corruption of the system as far as it's leadership, jobs, you know all the things that you joined the party for were essentially corrupting elements, and the corruption came really sort of, eventually it destroyed the CDU (Christian Democratic Union). Were we aware of the extent of the corruption and do we have any way of dealing with this, or problems with this?

FULTON: Yeah, we were certainly aware of it. The corruption didn't stop with the Christian Democratic Party. It extended through most of the parties and even, but to a lesser degree, through the Italian Communist Party. Part of what in the American political system we describe as corruption in the Italian political system would be understood as just a way of doing business. Understood that if you have a government job that pays you wages you can't live on that there will be another means to supplement your wages. It's difficult in some ways for us to understand, given our culture, how that whole culture could have been perpetuated for so many years and generations. But it's not difficult to understand at a given point and time faced with the political reality that your party receives contributions to assist the leadership, that those contributions would continue to come in. It was finally the downfall of all of the parties. It began on one hand with magistrates in Milan, on the other hand it probably began many years before that with sort of seething discontent within the system that this is wrong, we have to do something about this. So the people were quite ready to do away with those excesses, even if the reformers themselves had motives that turned out to be suspect.

Q: Well, is there anything else we should cover on this long period?

FULTON: I think this is a good point to stop. I would just, in stopping, say that I feel, now with 20 years behind me that the U.S. Mission, including the part that I knew best, USIS, played a role in Italy during that time that we should be very proud of. It was a role that was not, for the most part, played behind the scenes. But it was a quite public role. We had one story and it was the same privately and publicly. It's one where a lot of very skilled people worked to the U.S. national interest in a way that has subsequently paid off big time.

Q: Great. All right, well we'll pick this one up in 1982, where'd you go?

FULTON: Back to Washington, Chief of Foreign Service Personnel.

Q: All right, we'll pick it up at that point. Great.

It's Valentines Day, February 14th, 2000. Barry, you were Chief of USIA Foreign Service Personnel from when to when, '82 to??

FULTON: '86.

Q: '86. I'm most interested in how the system worked. How had you felt about USIA personnel policy before you went there?

FULTON: Before I went into the job I was fairly positive on USIA personnel policy, considered we were considerably smaller than the State Department, and our relations with the assignment process were far more personal than my friends in the State Department had. I had found that the policy was both flexible and I felt, in terms of my own treatment, I thought it was wise, because I went to interesting places, so I didn't have that kind of beef that some of my colleagues did. I did wonder what all those people in personnel must do, because I had spent very little time ever dealing with them and I couldn't imagine why there were so many people working in the Office of Foreign Service Personnel.

Q: Well, I mean in fact this is one of the things that has intrigued me, I can understand some reason for it but in most major companies and all, personnel is just sort of a service place and it's not of the essence. But often an assignment in personnel, many of our top people have served in personnel at one time or another, because it sort of helped you get another job, and it seems to loom much larger in the Foreign Service than it does in other organizations. What about, well, when you went there were you given any sort of situations to solve or problems or was it just sort of 'keep it going.'?

FULTON: I went there, I had sought the job, I was interested in it, was interested in personnel work, interested in people. I was given carte blanche within rules and regulations to operate and manage overseas and lead the unit as I saw fit. I did have that one overriding question answered early on, why are there so many people? It's a parallel to what is described as banker's rule that they do ninety percent of their business with ten percent of their clients. Same is true in personnel. There are, most people in their careers toward the end of their assignment, before the next assignment of necessity spend a little time with personnel, and they spend some time ensuring that the paperwork is in order, but that doesn't require much. There are, however, a number of people and certainly not the same people, but there are a number of people at any point in time in the system that are dealing with some severe problems, and these are personal problems or they're marital problems or they're family problems. There are problems that the service has brought to the individual, they have to be evacuated from a post, they've been injured, a relative is dying. There were a number of tragic circumstances that involved both the movement of personnel, which is the easy part, and a good bit of time. It's a compassionate organization with these individuals to try to help them through a situation like that. There were problems with alcoholism. If it is a compassionate organization the last thing they want to do is throw the book at the person. But finally that is the last thing to do if you can't do anything else. But before then you can try to get help for that individual. These are all those elements that require time. I saw when I came into the office a group of people who were very dedicated to providing that kind of service even though the majority of people in the Foreign Service didn't experience those requirements. What the majority of people experienced on the other hand was the need to have some confidence that their talents and their desires would be taken into serious consideration when they came up for the next assignment. I felt, just in terms of what obligation I placed on myself, I understood very clearly that every assignment that we made for an individual would affect his career or her career in a very dramatic way. I understood that where you end up does indeed affect your chances for promotion.

Q: Oh absolutely, I've served on promotion panels, and it's the job that one looks at and say 'Gee, that must be a tough job, and how'd they do in that one as opposed to eh, it's just a regular job.'

FULTON: And I understood you know that the person who goes to the hardship posts that has already troubles of one sort or another, that it's going to affect him or her and it's going to affect the whole family, so I thought that it was a pretty weighty responsibility. I wondered as I began the job whether I would be able to go home and sleep easily at night, and somehow after doing it for some time I just turned off those worries. But during the office hours those were very heavy worries about the question of being fair. So I suppose that I spent most of my time in the first couple years of my tenure trying to A. organize the office so that we could be as fair as possible, and B. trying to portray that and try to develop a transparency to our clients so that they understood that to be true. I think we succeeded at the first, I'm very proud of the system we put in place to try to maximize that fairness. I don't want to say it was ever totally fair. I can't claim that. I'm less confident that was able to be transparent enough that people believed that to be true.

Q: Well now, it was Charlie Wick who was the head. This was sort of the solid days of USIA, wasn't it? You were getting the money and what you needed. Were you at least, from the personnel side, were you feeling that you were well-served budget-wise?

FULTON: At the time that I came in to the position, USIA had lived through a budget freeze of eighteen months. In the early days of the Reagan administration all of the departments had their budgets cut or frozen, as you will recall. The response to this in USIA before I came in was to eliminate JOT (Junior Officer Trainee) classes. In the short term you could get away with that, because JOT's don't turn up in full service jobs for something like eighteen to twenty-four months, depending on the language training and the length of the JOT tour. I turned up as Chief of Foreign Service Personnel at about the eighteen-month period when we no longer had enough people in the pipeline to satisfy the jobs that were coming in. Indeed you're right, that was the beginning of the salad days of USIA under Charlie Wick and the budget began to go up. But we, for a period of two years, we doubled the intake of JOT's trying to do catch-up. Trying to do catch-up is a tricky business in USIA because we were down over a hundred officers, so we were more than ten percent short. If you allow the system to run itself when there's a ten-percent shortage you will soon discover that the most difficult to fill places, which are often the most needy, are the ones that go vacant. We decided as a matter of policy that we would fill all overseas positions before we filled any domestic positions. What that meant of course was that we had continual vacancies in Washington over that period of time, but we did follow through on that. During the period of the high vacancies there was a point in time where we had no overseas vacancies, which we were very proud of. We also had almost everybody in overseas positions, language qualified, a very high percentage, and those were both priorities of our process. The Washington units on the other hand went through a period of a couple of years where we were not fully staffed and where in fact we lost some Foreign Service jobs because they were long standing vacancies. Office managers were crying for help and sometimes turned to civil service personnel and that closed the job for the future.

Q: Barry let's run through a list of some of the things that occur to me, how the system and you dealt with various problems, let's talk about alcoholism. How would the information come to you and then what were steps or methods to deal with it?

FULTON: First of all there weren't frequent problems, but the problems we had required a lot of attention. The first, I'll describe the first case. The rest in many ways are a derivative of that time. The first occasion we had assigned an officer to an overseas post, and after the assignment was made, somebody from the office where the post was located came to us and said this assignment would never do because this officer was an alcoholic. I had not heard that before, and I asked the obvious question, "How do you know?" Then I began to ask around to see if this was gossip or common knowledge, and I heard from a number of people that yes, yes I'd served with that individual and yes that person had a drinking problem.

Q: I take it this would not show up on the record?

FULTON: This is not in the records, this may well be in medical records but medical records are not available to people in personnel. So we had a counseling referral service at USIA at the time and I went to that service and described the problem, as I heard it. I was advised by one of the professional counselors, he said, "You know if you've heard this from eight or ten places, if you've heard it from two or three places, it's probably true. People don't tend to exaggerate that and in fact, probably the individual's family has been working unsuccessfully and probably the individual's friends, and by the time it bubbles up to the Head of Foreign Service Personnel the chances of it being true are very, very high. The best treatment we know, is you call her in, or call him in, and you say to that individual 'Your career's on the line. You're an alcoholic. You're not going to go to that post until you get treatment.' The person will then deny it, or threaten you, threaten to sue you, and you just look that person in the eye and say, 'You're an alcoholic.' Repeat that over and over. 'You're not going to that post, your career's in jeopardy until you get treatment.' And then you say to that person, 'Here's my number.'" This is the advisor telling me, 'Here's my number. You can sit at my desk and call that office right now, all your dealings with them will be confidential except that office will advise me whether or not you've gone into treatment. They will tell me that but they won't tell me any of the details. But if you don't go into treatment, your assignment is broken as of this moment.'" I said, "Well, what if I'm wrong?" He said, "Well, you won't be wrong, we've done this a lot. We've done this a long time. I'm a former Foreign Service officer as you may know, and as you may not know I'm an alcoholic. I have a doctorate in training. I can guarantee you that, given the stories you've told me that this person is an alcoholic. I'm also going to tell you the chances are fairly high that you will succeed if you stick with your story, but don't hesitate. Don't show any indication that you might be in doubt, don't say to that person, 'We've heard some rumors.' She'll talk you or he'll talk you out of it if that happens." I think that was, in terms of doing this for the first time without having done it before, for me that was one of the toughest things I did, although I hadn't had that guidance, and as it turned out very good guidance, I hadn't had the experience. We went through all that. Had a very angry person, assuring me that this absolutely wasn't true. I went through it all, to make a long story short she, or he ended up in treatment. Came to me, thanked me, went to the post, and is now retired but as far as I know no longer drinks.

(End Tape 3, side 1)

Q: You were saying you only had four.

FULTON: We had a total of four cases, and three of the four cases turned out happily, insofar as I know. One of them we failed to help the person at all. So I guess even though the numbers were small, these were all people whose careers were going down the tubes and I felt pretty good about it.

Q: What about various forms of discrimination? This is a time when more and more emphasis was coming within government and business ranks to look for discrimination for sex, for race, what have you. Was this part of your assignment?

FULTON: Yes, absolutely. USIA typically, classically I should say, had a very good record on hiring women and minorities. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1968, in our class of eleven people we had five women and six men, and our state counterparts at the time had a class of about thirty, with as I recall two or three women. So our ratio was very good at the time, and we had, I found out when I came in the Agency, we had a very active minority hiring program and we were able to recruit a number of minorities at that time. By the time that I arrived in Foreign Service Personnel the hiring and promotion of women looked to be pretty good. The hiring of minorities was not so good, and particularly the hiring of African Americans was not so good. I don't think, or I didn't perceive, nor was there a cry from incumbent minorities, that the promotion process was unfair, but it was very clear that we were not able or we were not successful in hiring African Americans. So with the Board of Examiners we began a very active recruitment program, and the USIA's office of Equal Employment Opportunity headed by a distinguished African American, Foreign Service Officer and then former Ambassador Horace Dawson did a good bit of the recruiting. But I'm afraid that we were unsuccessful after four years. We were unsuccessful for at least two reasons. When African Americans took and passed the Foreign Service exam, and we had people taking and passing the exam in unprecedented numbers, that we were very proud of. We got people in the room. We did that. When they took and passed the exam and the offer came their way, the process was such that the offer comes from the Board of Examiners and they, depending on the test scores, can usually choose between USIA and the State Department. Almost all of them went with the State Department and not USIA because, perhaps the offer coming from the Board of Examiners, I'm never sure whether it might have been tilted a little bit in favor of the State Department, but even if it weren't, the State Department for many people was a more attractive career than USIA. So we were losing out to our colleagues in the State Department in the recruitment, but both we, USIA and the State Department, were losing out to the private sector. People who were passing the Foreign Service exam were the people who were attractive throughout the country. I recall in particular one person who called us and said, "You know, I'd much prefer to go into the Foreign Service to what I'm about to do, can you increase your offer? The offer you gave me was \$26,000" or something, and he had an offer from someone in New York city of 52 or 53,000, it was just double. He said, "The cost of living's higher there so I wouldn't really need that much, but can you go beyond \$26,000?" We said, "We have to go by the table. I know you're class 7, we can't do anything more." He said, "I'm sorry, I can't come with you." That was the problem and I guess I would have to say at the end of four years in terms of actual numbers we failed.

Q: I think it continues to be this way for a variety of reasons. At least today my non-professional perspective, it seems the pool is relatively small, and we just don't offer that attractive a salary, although probably the career would be more interesting if they once got in and?

FULTON: Well it's a tough question because the most able minorities are very much in demand, not just because we want to be fair but because we need a Foreign Service that looks like the United States. We can't afford I think to have in this world a Foreign Service that is not at least broadly representative of what we are. I would, if I were back in Personnel, I would try some new things. And those new things would mean going outside of conventional recruiting channels.

Q: Here you had your personnel system and the Department of State had its personnel system and there were ratings and all this, but there has to be an overlap of supervision and all this. Were you concerned about how the Department of State Foreign Service was relating to and working with the USIA Foreign Service?

FULTON: We had regular meetings with our colleagues at the State Department. We worked fairly well together, we heard from our clients that our service was a little more personal than people seemed to get from the State Department. Again, I attribute that to size that we could do that. The issue where I recall we frequently had the most discussion was on tandem assignments, tandem assignments both within USIA and quite often tandem assignments between USIA and the State Department. That all creates a whole series of questions for the people dealing with personnel. Sometimes the tour lengths were different, sometimes, almost always the time when people got their assignments was different and usually one of the two was first, either State or USIA they didn't happen to fall on the same day. The other party had to hold his or her breath hoping that she or he would get assigned, and some of them, first party assigned to a post, then the second would often have a presumption that he or she would be assigned to the post. And if not assigned that there would be questions of whether we were playing fair, and if the person was assigned, there would be questions from all of those people who were not tandem couples, of whether we had played fair with them. It was the problem that continued to be most perplexing, with my heavy emphasis on fairness, how do you ensure that the tandems are assigned together to the maximum extent possible and we recognized that that's desirable for all kinds of reasons from family values to efficiency. There was no question about that desirability, but do you discriminate against an individual who is not part of a tandem couple in order to carry that out? Well, you can't do that either, can't consciously do that. That was always a juggling act that required some dexterity. It was difficult to administer that fairly when I arrived, it was more difficult to administer it fairly as I left because there were more tandems, and I assume that people who are doing it today find it even more difficult.

Q: One of the things I ran across which really surprised me because I really considered sort of the USIA-Department of State thing, little different jobs, but when you get towards the top they overlap so much that there really isn't much difference. During your time I think when I was Consul General in Naples I had to nominate who was going to be Deputy Consul General when I was gone. To me it was clear that the USIA man, Joe Bartot, was far more experienced than the Department of State political officer, who was rather callow. So I nominated him, and I found out that this caused a certain amount of heartburn up in Rome, you know. I mean really a State Department person should have that. To me, it just didn't make any sense. But I was surprised at that, did you run across any of this sort of thing?

FULTON: Yes, yes. I experienced it myself once when I was at NATO. A couple times I was named chargĳ½ at NATO. Since I was chargĳ½ for these couple of brief periods, people were very supportive on the one hand, but on the other hand it was, "But he's not a real State Department officer, why did they name him?" So yes, I'm quite familiar with that. Now I assume those problems have now been solved with the integration.

Q: Yes, but, what about, did you run across problems of people who were having real, real trouble at a post? I'm not talking about alcoholism but personality conflicts, chasing girls around desks, God knows what, but you know, I mean this type of thing. Could you describe some of, I mean these things I assume you'd sit down at the desk and all of a sudden they'd hit you square in the face just when you were feeling good with the world, and you had something like this. Did you get many of these?

FULTON: Well, I declared on my third year in Foreign Service Personnel that I was shockproof. I thought by then I'd heard it all, and yes, there is every problem like that, there is the problem of the Ambassador who demands that this person be withdrawn from the post immediately. There's the problem with the Ambassador who says, "I will not allow this person to leave post as long as I'm here." There are all, the whole range of problems of officers whose eyes fall on some other individual, male or female, and particularly during that period with the problems that caused in Eastern Europe when there was a non-fraternization policy. There were officers recalled for fraternization or alleged fraternization. I think there isn't any foible of human nature that didn't play itself out in one way or another, from bad checks to bad judgment in that. Having said all that, there were surprisingly few such problems that weren't resolved. They go on all the time, and we weren't quick on the trigger to pull people out, I recall once when Charlie Wick was angered by somebody at one of our posts, a post in London and I got a call from Charlie Wick's office saying, "I want so and so out of that post immediately." So I called the individual and I said, "You must have said something nasty to Charlie Wick because he wants you recalled immediately. We're not going to act on that immediately because everybody thinks we're slow anyway. So we'll be slow for about 24 hours and then I will send a memo back to Charlie Wick and ask him to confirm that, and my guess is because he has a hot temper but when he reflects on things he sometimes changes his mind." So I waited twenty-four hours and I sent a memo back to Charlie Wick and I said, "We're prepared to act on your instructions, please confirm in writing for our files that we should withdraw this person." And it didn't happen. So there are a lot of points where if you had a hair trigger on your assignments process you'd be moving people all the time, we didn't move them too much.

Q: How did you deal with Ambassadors? There were some Ambassadors both career and non-career who were very difficult, and they wanted to have a team that reflected themselves, and there were others that had other problems. I would think with the Ambassador business, you would have to work very closely with Department of State personnel to figure out how you would deal with that?

FULTON: Well all of our PAO assignments were cleared by the Ambassador before they were made. So that meant if we were doing our job well, our office knew something about the Ambassador's desires from having, not talked to the Ambassador but having talked to the incumbent PAO. The cable went to the Ambassador nominating the individual. But if we were wise, as I think we were most times, we would have convinced ourselves at least that this was the sort of individual who could get along well with that Ambassador. We wouldn't be crazy enough not to do that. So the formal nominating cable was just that, it was usually a formality where we have pretty well convinced ourselves that the Ambassador would agree. Now, occasionally that was not the case. Occasionally there was a surprise because, more often than not it was not because the Ambassador didn't want the person to be nominated, but because the Ambassador knew somebody else from some other occasion who he did want. It was a matter of coming in and saying, "This person doesn't appear to have a prior experience in X, Y, and Z but I happen to know so and so." And the so and so usually was in the middle of some tour at some other post, and I would say on almost all occasions that our process was thoughtful enough that we were able to convince the Ambassador of our nominee. We would not break another person's tour, Ambassador's friend or not, to bring him into a post. We did not do that. The Ambassador did have the right to turn down the person we nominated but did not have the right to pull another person in. In this regard, one incident, not typical at all, totally isolated, but I mention this because it says something good about Charlie Wick, with that legendary temper of his, there was also a man who had finally a sense of fairness. We had assigned an African-American officer to a post just before Ambassadors were changed at the post. The new Ambassador was nominated and came and called on Charlie Wick. I was not present at the meeting but he told me about what happened. The Ambassador, a political Ambassador said to Charlie Wick, "Well, can I select my own PAO?" And Charlie Wick said, "No." Because he had been briefed of course by us, "No, because we've just sent a new PAO to that post three months ago." She said to him, "But I understand he's black." And he said, "Yes. Do you think that's a handicap?" And she said, "Well, I think it just won't work out." And he said, "Well, you never can tell what will work out, but I hope if it doesn't work out it's not because you've heard he's black." Well, it was about two or three weeks later that she asked that he be reassigned. Charlie Wick said, "Let's reassign him. We'll leave the post vacant for her entire tenure." Which is what was done. Wick said that he shouldn't have to put up with that, but we're not going to send somebody else in there. I was really proud.

Q: Did you have to deal with the legendary placement of a subordinate Cultural Affairs Officer in Paris who was a friend of Senator so and so? I mean I've heard this ever since I've been in the Foreign Service that there are in Rome and London and Paris there were always some, particularly ladies who were placed sort of in the cultural side. Did you have some of those?

FULTON: Yes we did, we had one in Paris as a matter of fact. We had one in London and we had one in Ottawa. Yes we did, we had all those.

Q: Could you explain a little of the background of where they came from, you don't have to get into specifics, but I mean just how this type of?

FULTON: Well we would be told at some point that a decision had been made in the front office to assign so and so, and this was always worked out between an Ambassador and the Director of the Agency. This is an Ambassador coming to the Director saying, or in one case I think it originated on the Hill, that this was a question that happened, as they say, above my pay grade. We were told to process the papers and we had no other role in that. There were two occasions that illustrate some of the problems that this causes, there weren't many of these at any point in time. But they were always an irritant because they usually went to posts that were fairly attractive, and they went to posts in which other people had bid and all of a sudden the job closed. So if you're sitting out there and people in personnel are saying to you, "Look, we're running a fair system," and all of a sudden this unqualified person turns up in the post, that damns all of us even though we had nothing to do with it. There was one occasion when there was a demand from the Hill that an individual be assigned to a certain post.

Q: Now was this somebody already in your service?

FULTON: No, I think the individual was working in government somewhere, he was a political appointee. He wasn't with USIA and the demand came from the Hill from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that this person be assigned to such and such post. Charlie Wick wouldn't cave on it. He knew the individual and he said no, and I know that following calls came and said, "It's going to affect your budget." And he said, "No, thanks." He wouldn't do it. The Ambassador weighed in at the post, it was a political Ambassador, and the Ambassador said, "We want this person." I know there was some hammering in USIA, and Charlie Wick said if the Ambassador wants that person bad enough the Ambassador can hire that person out of the State Department budget. We are not going to assign that person, and the person did go, but went as a State officer and not a USIA officer. The other occasion that I got particularly involved in an assignment was, we did have a culture assistant, Cultural Affairs Officer, in Ottawa who came to see me and wanted to know what her prospects of reappointment were in the next administration. This was in the first four-year period of the Reagan administration, and I said, "I have no idea, because I don't have anything to do with the assignment of political appointees." Well, she said she had a three-year assignment and there would still be a year left at the beginning of the next administration and then if the Democrats won would she still get to stay for that extra year? And I said, "Well, probably not, because we all serve, we can all be recalled at any point, serve at the pleasure of the President, and typically presidential political appointees do not survive through administrations." Next thing I knew that story was re-told to me on somewhat different terms. Our director had heard that I had told her that the Republicans were going to lose the next time and she was going to be recalled. I was questioned whether I hadn't been indiscreet, and there was a good bit of back and forth between the Director of the USIA and the then political Ambassador to Canada, and the consequence was that her appointment was terminated early.

Q: Well, it sounds like you had good backing. Charlie Wick is a legend, and you know you hear pluses and minuses on him, but it sounds like he used his closeness to the President to be a seat of power, where he could say no, and you must have felt rather happy to have support there.

FULTON: Well, the answer to that question, because Charlie Wick is an enigma, I've come to admire him more since I left than when I was there, I will tell you. He and I are friends and he happened, he agreed to join a panel that I put together a couple years ago. My career ended in Foreign Service personnel in a burst of glory due to Charlie Wick, but I think that was not his intention. It does illustrate I think the complex individual that he was. I guess maybe about two and a half years into my, what was a four-year tour, an officer who was on my staff had been selected for, paneled for an attractive overseas position. Now this is a tricky thing when somebody on the Foreign Service Staff gets an attractive assignment, because there is kind of a rumor, belief that if you're in Foreign Service Personnel you take care of your own. I always said with some pride that we should not disadvantage anybody because they were on that staff, but we should not advantage them either, we should be able to post the names of the people on our staff that were assigned, and people outside of the staff should look at them and say, "Yes, that was fair." I'm not sure they did that but that's what I felt the standard should be. So one of our officers was assigned to what was a fairly attractive post and announced to me at the very last moment just before she was due to go to this post that she decided not to go. Well I said, "You know the rules better than anybody else, that this isn't a decision that you can make, you've been back in Washington for five years. You've been properly paneled, there were other people who were also attractive candidates for this job who did not get that job and were going in fact to lesser places, and unless there's a compelling medical or other reason you're going to go." "Well," she said, "look, you know we know each other, and I know you can break the assignment if you want to." And I said, "If you know me you know I won't break the assignment unless there's a reason." And she said, "Well, what's the option?" And I said, "The option is this: You know what the option is because you've been here when we've done it before. You are to turn up at the post in mid-January and if you don't turn up at the post in mid-January we will take adverse action to have you selected out of the service. You know that, I don't have to say it." So the next thing I knew is that this was escalated up to the front office by the individual and I was represented as threatening to have her thrown out of service, and I said, "Yes, that's just going by the rules. We treat the people on our staff the same as people outside, and if we treat them any differently we would lose the only thing we have, and that's trust." So she had some defenders, senior defenders from the career Foreign Service who thought that we were being unfair and unduly harsh, and so after some fairly angry words back and forth between some of the seniors, I was not involved in that exchange, Charlie Wick decided that he would ask our inspector general to look into the operation of Foreign Service Personnel. As he looked, as he laid out the ground rules for this inspection, decided that there would be no-one on the inspection who was not either scheduled to retire or who had already retired, that is nobody who would be affected by anything Foreign Service Personnel subsequently did, so they wouldn't be currying favor with us. They did an inspection that lasted fifteen months.

Q: Good God.

FULTON: As soon as it was announced, I got our staff together and I said, "Don't destroy any paper. Even routine stuff that you would normally toss out, that somebody will say we destroyed something. You keep everything open, everything is open to the inspectors. Show them anything, including anything that would embarrass you. Everything, everything, because most, when there's a problem it's usually somebody's tried to conceal something, we've made some mistakes here but we haven't done anything that we're not supposed to do." So they spent fifteen months with us and we got a beautiful report. They said we were doing everything right, so I was very proud of that.

Q: Well tell me, when we're talking about assignments, I was a consular officer during my career and I wasn't aware of the world of staff aides, staff assistants in the Department of State. But as I've done almost six-hundred of these interviews I've discovered that the real way to move if you can is to be a staff aide to somebody, call the principal, I mean assistant secretary or undersecretary or somebody of that nature. It's not a command job, but it means you have a sponsor, a mentor. This often is the way to be an Ambassador, is to develop mentors. Did you run across this problem in USIA?

FULTON: It's a little less true in USIA, but still true. USIA promotion precepts always, at least at the time I was in, I don't know what they'll look like in the future for the public diplomacy cone, but they always gave a preference in promotion precepts to the individual who had shown outstanding performance overseas. Well there aren't staff aide jobs overseas for USIA. There are for State officers but there aren't for USIA. So that staffer who was at the right hand of the Director of USIA or one of the Associate Directors gets very little credit just because he or she hasn't been overseas. Now that is not to say, however, that people who have been favored by senior officers in one assignment or another and who act as a mentor might not benefit from that, and I think I in fact had done so. I was, my early days of my career I worked for Allen Carter who at that time was some force in the Agency and I happened in later years to have worked for Jacques Shirley and Stan Burnett both of whom subsequently became Counselors of Agency, and I would be foolish to say that that didn't make a difference, of course it did. But I think overall the process was not as severe as it is in the Department, where promotions often come from Washington, not from overseas.

Q: This is, I think it's a serious problem. What about Ambassadors and the media, I mean you have people who are overseas who are designed to act as the spokespeople, to keep Ambassadors working well with the Foreign Media and all this. Did you have any problems where you were getting reports from your PAOs saying, "Ambassador X is a horse's ass? And I can't keep him or her away from making statements." I mean they're just not very good at this. Did you have problems with this?

FULTON: Sure. Yes, I mean there were, always will be some Ambassadors who know more than their PAOs, and they come in two varieties. Those who do know more than their PAOs and those who don't. The first thing to do is to try to distinguish which is which. Of course, there are Ambassadors who are very, very able and very able with the press and who could teach their PAOs a lot, because they've come up through the ranks, and there are others who have a tin ear for politics, tin ear for the press, and can't be taught anything. I don't know what, those two categories, each five to ten percent of the service I guess, and then the other eighty to ninety percent are people who have a pretty professional, compatible relation with the Ambassador. The Ambassador knows some things that the PAO doesn't know and vice versa. When I was deputy PAO in Rome and worked for Max Rabb, Max said something when he came in, it was just, it's the sort of thing every Ambassador ought to say. It was so brilliant. Max had never been an Ambassador before, he was getting on in years? were you there with Max?

Q: No. I have interviewed him though.

FULTON: Oh you've interviewed him? Well he said, at his first meeting he said, "I've never done this before and I'm not sure what to do. But I want to tell you this. I will do everything you advise me to do. I won't question your judgment. Until and unless I find you're sending me down the wrong path, and after that I probably won't do anything you advise me. So you each get to make your own judgment." Wow. You think that over.

Q: Well did you have any problems where you would get reports from PAOs, or was this on a different level, on some Ambassadors saying, "Look, we've got a real problem here." Or that wasn't your line of communication? I mean would they be telling somebody else in the system?

FULTON: Well, I would hear about it generally if the problem was such that the individual was about to be tossed out of the post. Or if there was a severe personnel problem. You know it's either the individual calling and saying, "I can't take it anymore, get me out of here." Or, "I'd love to stay but the Ambassador wants me out of here." I'd hear about that. If it was an issue between the Ambassador and the PAO that would be dealt with in another officer.

Q: What about staffing, let's take for example, Africa, particularly southern Africa, a lot of small posts, was there a problem or was this an opportunity? I mean did young officers like to get there because it was more of an opportunity, at this '82 to '86 period, how'd you feel about Africa?

FULTON: We'd put, as I indicated earlier, we put first priority on staffing the overseas posts, and we did not do our Washington staffing until we had the overseas posts set. Our procedure is a bit more flexible than State, as I've also indicated. But they required individuals when they began to bid to bid on three to five posts and those posts had to include at least one hardship post. The one thing that the officers got from us pretty fast was decent feedback when that wish list came in. The best career counselors, and again there were some who didn't follow up as often as I would like, but the best career counselors were back in touch right away with those officers saying, "We've logged all your bids. You're sitting there in Rome and you just came from Bonn and I see you've bid on all western European posts. If you want a credible bid, I suggest you revise this list. I can't in the give and take of horse trading here I can't responsibly represent you for another western European post. I will represent you, but somebody else who has spent the last ten years in hardship posts is going to beat you out and here are some posts that are open and I would suggest that you look at these." This give and take was very valuable for people and we were always looking at the hardship posts, we always had those on our list, and as the year went on and those posts cropped up unfilled, we would ask the career counselors to begin calling people who were unassigned and say, "Here's a post you haven't thought of. You haven't bid on it, we don't have any bidders, if you were to bid on this post we would have you assigned there next week, why don't you look at the post report." As a consequence of that system we had very, very few forced assignments. I don't mean by that that we didn't do some persuasion, but the forced assignment was when we assigned an officer to a post that the officer had not bid on. We had a couple of those, and I think I'm not exaggerating to say that by that standard in a given year we didn't have more than half a dozen forced assignments.

Q: Did you have any fallout from these forced assignments, I mean people just not going or resigning?

FULTON: Very, very little. I can only think of a couple of cases in four years.

Q: I would imagine that at a certain point, one of the hardest things to get people to go to a hardship post would be schooling. Was this a major factor?

FULTON: Yes, it was. It was a major factor, and it was a factor we took into account.

Q: It's a very legitimate factor.

FULTON: Absolutely, absolutely. Between two candidates, one of whom had a schooling issue and one of them did not, we would try to send the person who did not.

Q: Did you have any concern yourself with the localitis problem? Particularly, one always thinks of Latin America, where some people have spent almost their entire careers. I mean there's a plus and a minus on it. A plus is that people probably speak at least one of the two languages, and know how to deal with it and all. But the minus is they just don't really see America's role in the world, they see it in Latin America. Did you have any problems with sort of breaking this up, or did you want to break it up?

FULTON: We didn't have a systemic problem that we had to deal with. Henry Kissinger had dealt with that some years before.

Q: GLOP (Global Outlook Policy) program.

FULTON: We had a few individuals who wanted to stay at the same place forever. I brought to this my own prejudice in a way, and I'm sure it affected the assignment process. I have always felt that we're better off if our officers concentrate in a couple of areas and if they don't spend their whole career going from post to post to post. I, incidentally, am one who did that. But I think we'd build strength if we assigned junior officers to a post and then bring them back a couple times to the same post or at least the same region. But as I say we did not have a systemic problem, nor did we have a systemic policy. We are small enough that in some ways it's harder to enforce an overall policy when you have so few people who speak this language or that language. One thing we did do to try to make our officers more easily assignable in the future is we did establish a fairly strict language policy. I don't know if it's still in existence or not, but we did this after careful study, and we looked at what are the languages that are most in demand in our Foreign Service, and they're basically the ones you would imagine: French and German, Chinese, Arabic, and Portuguese, I believe.

Q: Spanish.

FULTON: I mean, I should have said Spanish. Our policy was fairly simple, we said to officers who were coming into the service that if they did not have one of those five languages we would teach them one of those five languages and send them to an onward post where they could use it. If they did have one of those five languages we wouldn't be contrary and say they aren't going to use it, but we try to enhance their future assignment possibilities by teaching them another language. It was quite simple, we tested them, if they had French or Spanish or one of the others they got to study a more exotic language. So we thought we would end up with a pool of people who were better language qualified than otherwise. I believe that is the case.

Q: Well, is there anything else we should touch on do you think?

FULTON: No, I would just take the opportunity in concluding this to say that it was in some ways the most rewarding of the assignments that I had. There was only one occasion when an officer made an appointment to see me and came in and he said, "I just wanted to come in and thank you." And I said, "Well we've never had that happen before. Most people come here complaining about something." And he said, "Well, I know, things are going pretty well and I just wanted to pass that on." I felt awfully good about that one occasion, but overall I was satisfied that even if not so perceived that we did have a system that was as fair as any of us could make it and that to me was the most important.

Q: This is tape four, side one with Barry Fulton. Barry, what about, in '86 whither?

FULTON: '86, as I was concluding my four years in Foreign Service Personnel, then I was one of those people in Foreign Service Personnel bidding on an onward assignment. I decided to bid at grade. I followed the rules and bid on assignments, both hardship and other assignments, and I was paneled into an assignment as PAO in Vienna. That was, at that stage of my career, not the most attractive assignment despite the fact that Vienna's a nice place to live, but that's what the panel decided on. My nomination was sent forward to the then-Ambassador and the Ambassador said he was leaving in several weeks and did not want to act on it because he couldn't commit his successor. The DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) who would then become chargi½ said that he would act on it when the Ambassador left, and so it sat there for four weeks. The DCM, when he became chargi½ by that time knew who the successor ambassador was going to be, and he said that he wouldn't act on it either. He would wait until the Ambassador acted on it, and then the ambassador designate was then Assistant Secretary of Defense Ron Lauder, and so the nomination went over to Ron at the Defense Department, and he came back with one question: Is Fulton a fluent speaker of German? The answer to Ron Lauder was no, he is not. He said he's unacceptable then because I want someone who will do drafting of my speeches in German. The Agency decided to persist and urged Lauder to meet with me and talk things over. So I met with Lauder, and he said he didn't know why we were having that meeting if I weren't a fluent speaker of German. He assumed I could not become a fluent speaker of German. I assured him that it was true, I could not. So he turned down the assignment. This took a period of several months for all this to happen, by which time there were no overseas assignments left. So there was the Chief of Foreign Service Personnel without an assignment. At about that time, when others were scratching their head, and I said, "This is above my pay grade, I can't assign myself, somebody else has to do that." The officer who was our Public Affairs Officer in NATO came in with the request to curtail for some reasons. That request was processed and that job was announced as an opening. There were two people who bid on that job, because most people were out of cycle at that time, it was late in '86. There were two people who bid on the job. I was one of the two, and the other person who bid on the job was actually a close friend of the Director of the Agency, Charlie Wick. Since he was going to make that decision, I knew I didn't get to make my own decision. It was widely assumed that he in fact would get the assignment, and I always thought if he had not called Charlie Wick at his home twice that he probably would have. I got that assignment and went to NATO in January of '87, and I spent four and a half years there. Professionally, in terms of doing public diplomacy, it was the most exciting part of my career to be at NATO from '87 to '91 when the Berlin wall fell and NATO changed it's policy, was absolutely exciting.

Q: I would have thought you would have been a bit dubious, apprehensive, or whatever you would want to say about an assignment as Public Affairs Officer to Vienna, because I talked to somebody who was the Desk Officer, Country Director for both Austria and Switzerland, and Germany. And said, you know we talked a great deal about German affairs, and I said, "Well, what was your main job dealing with Austria and Switzerland?" He said, "It was really trying to keep our Ambassadors from making too much fools of themselves or becoming too much of a problem because these were political appointees who, Austria and Switzerland do not tend to get always the best political appointees. They have a bad reputation of?" Did you have any concern about that at the time?

FULTON: Well, I guess I should say in all fairness that I wasn't at all disappointed when I was turned down. I found myself in this precarious position of putting my bid forward and knowing that the whole world is watching, and if I had not been in Foreign Service personnel I would have aspired to something else and fought for it. I put my wishes forward and I did not get my first couple of choices. One can't complain about going to Vienna, but certainly I was not excited about going. I sort of thought that was probably a career stopper, to go to Vienna at that point. In retrospect it was a very awkward time to be there, you will recall that Ron Lauder didn't stay very long at the post, and you will recall he had a DCM who was involved in some espionage?

Q: Felix Bloch.

FULTON: Bloch. This would have been a post without much intellectual excitement and with a great deal of administrative headaches, whereas NATO, I can't imagine that there was a post in the world that would have been more exciting.

Q: You were in '87 what, to '92 about?

FULTON: Early '87 to late '91, '91.

Q: Who was the Ambassador and sort of what did the mission to NATO do at that time?

FULTON: When I arrived at NATO?

Q: This is in Brussels, of course.

FULTON: In Brussels, of course. You know multilateral organizations in the Foreign Service are always kind of, the step-cousins of traditional diplomacy. Most officers have been at bilateral missions and bilateral mission activities and quite clear and multilateral activated, whether it's the UN, New York or Geneva or EU or NATO, others look on not knowing exactly what they do. I didn't know when I got there, I arrived when Dave Abshire was Ambassador, and Abshire was just on the verge of leaving. I mean literally a few days after I arrived. He had brought some distinction to that post because he was a name, at the time well-known in this town because remember, at one point to be coming back as secretary of defense and he was of that stature. He was succeeded by Alton Keel.

Q: How do you spell Keel?

FULTON: That's K E E L. Keel, far well less known, had been the deputy to John Poindexter when Poindexter was head of the NSC (National Security Council), and as you know Poindexter left in a rush along with Oliver North and others over the Iran-Contra affair. Alton Keel actually moved up for a couple of weeks to be acting director of the NSC, and then he was reassigned to NATO as Ambassador. Alton Keel was not a skilled diplomat, although he was a very smart person.

Q: What was his background?

FULTON: He was an engineer by training, and he actually was that person who led the investigation, he was the staff director of the investigation of the shuttle mission that blew up in the sky.

Q: The Challenger.

FULTON: Yes. He had worked at the Pentagon and then came over to NSC. Keel, as I say, not trained in diplomacy was nonetheless very skillful in understanding the issues. Somewhat less skillful in pursuing them with his colleagues. I think it would be generally acknowledged that he had a way of irritating some of his colleagues. But he was right on target for pushing the American agenda, and the American agenda at that period was very much in flux in 1987, it was not at all apparent to anyone what was about to happen in 1989. But we did have a very aggressive program of arms control, and those arms control problems involved both nuclear long range, short range weapons and conventional weapons. A lot of the policy was being formed with our allies at NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and NATO was the action point for those operations, and Keel with his background, Keel had a doctorate in Engineering, so he had really no equal when you were talking about the technicalities of some of the arms control issues. He was a very able Ambassador up to the point where his inexperience showed in dealing with some of the allies and also in dealing with his own staff. I enjoyed a good relation with him, and he was open to the press and did what I think a good Ambassador ought to do, kept the press well-informed, was willing on some occasions to take some risks, I think you must do that in dealing with the press. He debated at Oxford, he joined the floor with the reporter of the Economist and other major papers, he spoke in major conferences around Europe. He kept the American message in the European press and with European academics, so I couldn't personally have been more pleased with my relations. Others in the mission would have a somewhat different take on that.

Q: Did you find, you were saying that he wasn't skilled in some of the diplomatic arts, which is often keeping your colleagues, other diplomats and all, happy and all. I take it that's part of the situation.

FULTON: At NATO.

Q: At NATO.

FULTON: Where there's sixteen people with equal rank.

Q: Well did you find yourself at all acting as sort of nudging his elbow or something like this, I mean trying to, when he wasn't sort of one-on-one with the press on a subject he knew very well, but in helping him get over sort of the, get into the diplomatic niceties and the necessity to build a consensus and all, did you?

FULTON: I wasn't the person who did that. I mean there were others who did, he had an extremely able DCM in John Kornblum, and he had a very fine political counselor, Bob Gray. Kornblum and Gray have both gone on to Ambassadorial positions since that time. In fact, you could go almost name by name with the NATO staff, half of which came from the Pentagon, and find the most able staff I have ever worked with. At the time I arrived there, there were a total of ninety-eight people in the mission from top to bottom from Ambassador down through the drivers. So given the size of the mission, it was a fairly small mission, no national staff. We had no national staff because of security requirements. There were a number of non-commissioned officers who did things that national staff might do in some cases. Fifty of those ninety-eight were from the Pentagon, and those fifty included three Rhodes scholars. That was a tough group in terms of their confidence, and he got good advice the whole way through, and I think it would be fair to give him mixed but overall fairly high marks for what he did there between two superstars, because Dave Abshire came out of Washington knowing everybody in Washington, being known by everybody. Then Alton Keel after two years was succeeded by William Howard Taft IV. William Howard Taft IV had just come out of the Pentagon where he had been a Deputy Secretary of Defense, and he moved from being Deputy Secretary of Defense to heading an office of ninety-eight people, ninety-five people. It might look like a step down, but as he found the U.S. mission at NATO doesn't only execute policy, the U.S. mission at NATO, if it works wisely and if it works consummately with Washington, with both the State Department and the Defense Department, and it develops alliances with the other fifteen members of NATO, can play a very, very important role. From 1989 through the time I left, 1991, onward, William Howard Taft stayed there another year, and he was a very key player in the change of NATO policy and the execution of NATO programs.

Q: We're talking about this '87 to '89 period before Germany sort of fell apart and pulled together again, did you find, I mean this was not particularly your expertise, I mean the military, the whole military side of things, you've been exposed to it. But did you find that you, one, had a problem with learning the military side of things, and also, did you have problems with the Pentagon spokespeople and all?

FULTON: I had a bit of expertise when I came into the job. I had spent, as I indicated earlier, I had spent three years in the military, and when I was in Rome as Deputy PAO (Public Affairs Officer) I had, for the USIA, I had the security portfolio. We were talking, and when the decision was made for the Italians to agree to the hosting of nuclear, short-range nuclear missiles on their territory. When I came back to Washington after that assignment, during the time I was working in Foreign Service Personnel, I had a detail to coordinate the overall USIA response worldwide to the question of short-range nuclear missiles. So I had that kind of experience which weighed in my favor in getting the assignment. Now having said that, when I arrived at NATO I of course discovered quickly that I was a mere amateur next to the people who, some of whom had spent a career there. The head of one of the offices in our mission from the Pentagon, Dr. Larry Legere, had been in NATO for about fifteen years, and he had no equal there or in the Pentagon in terms of his knowledge of NATO issues. So there was an awful lot of learning to be done, but I was very comfortable with that, was comfortable with the subject matter and I was eager to learn. I think that the people who watched me found that for the first couple months I didn't say very much, I was a very quiet person trying to learn a lot. I realized that unless I got myself up to a certain speed I'd basically be ignored in the mission. It's an integrated mission so that the military, political, economy, USIA were all operated as one, and we more or less got called on to the extent that we had a contribution to make. I carved out my role and my staff carved out their role with the media in terms of being able to speak the language of NATO and interpret it into the language of the press.

Q: How did you find the press at that time?

FULTON: The press that covered NATO was very, very able. There were a couple of thousand people accredited to NATO that had press credentials to NATO headquarters. They would show up, but for the most part we dealt with maybe a hundred people. And most of those covered NATO part-time. At the time I was there the NATO press office was on a very short leash and basically had permission to say very, very little and was not much of a source for the press. We were very much in flux during that period even though the Berlin Wall, even though neither had it fallen nor had anybody predicted it would, but we were still very much in flux because it was clear that Gorbachev was changing things in the Soviet Union. And we, I went to support the economic summit in Venice right after I got to NATO in which President Reagan participated and then he participated in the NATO meeting as well. Then George Bush came there once as Vice President, and I think three times as President during the time I was there. We had during that period, totaled this up when I was leaving, we had fifty-odd ministerial meetings in the four plus years I was there, so we averaged a ministerial meeting once a month. Ministerial meetings were decision meetings. We therefore made a lot of news and the press came to depend on the U.S. mission for its major source of news, along with, after the U.S. mission, the British mission, the German mission, and to a lesser extent the French mission. We were their source, and we had to be, we had to be up on issues or actually we wouldn't get called. We had to know what was going on, and I found it intellectually very exciting. I had a very able staff, small staff; there were just three of us. We worked long, and I told people after I left that I had the greatest respect for the press that was there, certainly most papers have their own angle and you could predict how this story might be represented here or there, two different lands, that's fair it seems to me. We had a couple of inaccuracies in the press, only a couple, and when we did on every occasion we had, any major inaccuracy we managed to have a retraction on a subsequent day. That reflected, I think, on the good relations that my staff and I had with the press. That we could get the retractions, we offered good reporting to the European press.

Q: Let's talk about this early period, maybe it carries over. Did you see any differences that you can characterize or examples of different approaches or relationships between the French and the Germans, the British, maybe the Italians, you know, their delegations or their missions?

FULTON: Oh, yes. That's what made it so interesting. Their ambassadors were representing policies that were on some occasions quite at odds with the U.S. Each of the Ambassadors brought their own personalities to amplify or minimize those differences, as the case may be. If you talk about just in our own mission the difference between Alton Keel and William Howard Taft, you know after policy was made, and as I said, strongly influenced from the mission itself, because there aren't a lot of places in the city where DOD (Department of Defense) and the State Department sit down and come up with common policy. There is only one place that that happens and that's in preparation for a NATO meeting, and that happens either physically on the ground at NATO or it happens with principals coming back to Washington, holding meetings. Because when a meeting is held, both DOD and Defense have to sign off on a particular issue. So each of those two Ambassadors took American policy and did their best to execute it. Now the difference between the two was that Keel would attend to a certain policy and pound the table and insist that others get in line, and with William Howard Taft the others weren't quite sure what our policy was until they agreed to it. All of a sudden they were supporting something that Keel had, that William Howard Taft had worked diplomatically with great skill. I remember an occasion once, an issue not of great consequence, but it was an issue that I was involved in on a fellowship program that was being done, sponsored by NATO, managed by their public affairs office, and there was a council meeting on the issue because of some differences within the council. But it wasn't one that the U.S. cared about deeply, and I was accompanying the ambassador to the meeting of the North Atlantic Council and I had prepared the briefing paper for him, and he had read the paper. We hadn't really talked about it very much, and as we walked into the meeting, the Ambassador, our Ambassador ran into the French Ambassador. The French Ambassador said, "What position will the Americans be taking today?" And it wasn't that the French cared a lot about it. Taft said, "We will take the same position you take." The French Ambassador said, "And how do you know what position we're going to take?" And Taft said, "We don't know. But when you take it we will second it, we will vote for it. Whatever it is." And the French Ambassador says, "Why are you doing this?" He said, "Because we respect your leadership in this area." So the French Ambassador spoke up with some passion, he said we should do this. Taft raised his hand and said, "We agree completely." And the chairman at the meeting said, "I think this is a first." Those kinds of chips that he gathered with such actions paid off on things that we cared about.

Q: Was there the feeling of, particularly the French-American relationship, the French were in NATO but not in NATO at that time. It was still that very peculiar thing where the military forces technically weren't in, but they'd been running exercises. Was there sort of a NATO view and a French view?

FULTON: Well, the French would, a representative here today would rapidly correct your assumption and say at no point did the French leave NATO, and the French were full members of NATO, and the French participated in all NATO meetings, except the military command.

Q: Which was what NATO was about.

FULTON: Well, NATO was about politics, first and foremost NATO was about politics. Secondly, NATO was about combining military command which had never, through that period of time, been used in hostilities, in exercises, yes, but had never been used. So what that meant in practice was that the North Atlantic Council, which is the supreme decision-making body, the French were not on the sidelines in any way, and they were full participants, and all decisions were made at the North Atlantic Council by consensus. This whole decision making process at NATO, just parenthetically, is just ripe for a whole host of doctoral dissertations on the decision-making process. It's a very, very complex and very interesting situation. But the French as a consequence could, if they wanted, could become anything, and they did, in fact. Or for that matter so could Iceland, or the Danes, or anybody. So these ministerials I talked about, half of those ministerials were meetings of Foreign Ministers, and the French were at all of those, and the other half were groups like the Defense Planning Group or the Nuclear Planning group, which were all command-related and those that were, the United States would be represented by Caspar Weinberger or Dick Cheney, and those the French did not participate in, because those were meetings of fourteen. The Icelanders did not participate either because they don't have a Defense Department, so there'd be fourteen at the meeting at best.

Q: Did you feel that there was a special burden of trying to bring the French on board on a lot of things?

FULTON: Yes, the French exercised their political authority with great skill, they assigned people to NATO who were very, very fine diplomats. It was during that period that the French were in a position of entertaining change. There was talk then about them joining the Integrated Military Command. The French were very active in all the political decisions, but, yes, there was always the kind of French counterview to a lot of positions. You would often find that American-British agreement on issues, that did not need a lot of special nurturing. The whole question of, as the Berlin wall fell and the future of Germany was being considered, the U.S.-German, the British-German, the French-German, the everybody-German relations became very, very important. Because it was not at all clear from day one that we would end up with the consequence that we have now, an integrated Germany, all of which belonged to NATO. When that idea was first proposed, it was considered by the French, by the British and by many of the Germans to be preposterous. That was an American idea, and it was something which, I think it's a story that's not been fully written, but it's a story that reflects very well on secretary James Baker and reflects very well on William Howard Taft and reflects well on the staff around Baker that managed to persuade a number of other players, including our allies, including the Russians that this was a stable, desirable option.

Q: When you arrived in '87, Gorbachev was beginning his program. I mean it's kind of pretty clear that things really were happening.

FULTON: Glasnost?

Q: Glasnost, Soviet Union. Was there, would you say, a certain amount of disquiet? I mean we'd gone for forty-odd years with a rather stable situation of two major powers glaring each other over a divided Germany and all of a sudden one of the major powers was going to change, and nobody knew exactly where it was going. Was this of concern or not, or was it delight?

FULTON: Well, it was a great concern. I suppose the height of the concern was the meeting in Iceland between Reagan and Gorbachev, because although they did not reach agreement, it was quite clear from the press reporting that Reagan was prepared unilaterally to overturn NATO policy. People at NATO were very nervous by that, and I assume, I assume we can read some of the accounts, people on the Reagan staff were nervous by that. If Gorbachev had been just a bit more daring, there would have been a major reversal of policy at that meeting. I think that meeting, nonetheless, although it ended in what was reported at the time as failure, changed the whole landscape for the future, and that is the kind of meeting then that gave real energy to the conventional arms talks and the nuclear arms talks. The conventional arms talks in fact had been going on in theory for years and years, and as a consequence of the mood that was created there, then they became very, very active as well as the nuclear talks in Geneva.

Q: Was there a certain amount of discomfort that things were beginning to open up? You know, the bureaucracy group, I mean they're comfortable with the status quo, and things were beginning, like arms control and all this which lip service had been paid to. But all of a sudden, I mean people were talking seriously about, not just arms control, but arms reduction, both nuclear and conventional. Were you dealing with a bunch of people kind of wondering, "hey, wait a minute, where's this going?"

FULTON: Now interestingly not, and it comes down, I think, to the bureaucratic question, because bureaucracies can't uphold the status quo forever. The reason, one of the reasons I think that NATO is such a right place for study in the decision-making process. NATO has a relatively small staff compared to say the EU across town. I don't have the figures, but maybe it's one percent of the size. Three percent or something. With the exception of a handful of people who have been grandfathered into permanent positions at NATO, if you get an appointment on the international staff at NATO, you get that appointment for three years initially. If you're doing well, you can get it extended to four or five or maybe six years. You almost never can get it extended beyond six years, and the rule is that if you're there seven years, then you can get permanent status. There was a period, I think, under Secretary General Luns, when he was there for a long time, where he extended a number of people, and there are a number of people got the permanent status, and those people are now at the cusp of their career. Some of them were retiring when I was there and by now a lot of them have retired. There are relatively few permanent members of the NATO bureaucracy. The bureaucracy, it's important in the decision-making process that all of the decision makers are there on temporary assignment. The Ambassador stays three, four, five years. The Secretary General stays three, four, five years. Like all people who go to any assignment, people go in and want to make a difference. I think there's the human tendency if you haven't created the policy to want to improve it. Therefore you see at NATO without that permanent bureaucracy, you see the momentum to change things. When there's an outside opportunity to change things, NATO moves very quickly. It doesn't move quickly in the decision process because all the people who want to change things don't necessarily want to change it in the same way. But if you have a skilled Secretary General and if the major Ambassadors are skilled in the art of diplomacy and the art of compromise, if they're skilled in that, you can find very rapid change. From '87 to '91, I watched, and in some ways participated, because our relations with the press were very, very rich and we understood that the press was going to affect public opinion and affect the change. We watched NATO change. I'd not say a hundred and eighty degrees. We didn't change that much, but I bet we changed ninety degrees.

Q: Well, when the Bush administration came, that's when William Howard Taft IV came in?

FULTON: Yes, he came in then.

Q: Well, the events of '89, first place, nobody sat, I mean, was there a policy that if Eastern Europe, the Soviet role in Eastern Europe collapses peacefully, this is what we'll do?

FULTON: No, not? you know one of the great pleasures I had there was I inherited from my predecessors a pattern of the USIS staff sponsoring European-wide conferences. These conferences gave the whole mission license to think outside of the box, and to say what's going to happen, which was something that was more difficult to do when you were making policy. But my predecessors thought that if you could have these kinds of open conferences, you could begin to, at the margins, affect the discussion of policy and begin to change the nature of the policy itself. So I had, as head of USIS at NATO, had been able to sponsor or co-sponsor about four major conferences a year, and we tried to have representation from all the NATO countries at least. We decided in the fall of 1989, before the Berlin Wall fell, but because there was a lot of movement, we decided to invite some East Europeans to the conference for the first time. That required some thought around NATO headquarters of whether that was a good idea and what signal were we sending. Everybody thought well, okay, it's a good signal to send, if we find who can come, and we had a couple of East European participants. We sponsored a conference called "Values: East and West." So it was well outside and beyond the usual security issues, but we thought that values were part of security issues, and we had as one of the keynote speakers a representative from Stern Magazine, German.

Q: West German.

FULTON: West German, a joint popular magazine, and he was posted in Berlin. We asked him to address the question of what Berlin would be like thirty years from now or something like that. This is in September, two months before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Stern is basically a left-wing paper, and in a way we knew this person would be a thoughtful person and we assumed in inviting him that he was going to describe a Berlin after unification. We didn't ask him to do that, everybody chose their own topic. I remember, it was so dramatic when he started. He said, "Well, I thank the Americans for inviting me here, it was very nice of you to pay my air fare and it's good to be among friends." And he said, "In a way," he said, "I'm kind of guessing, because the Americans are always doing this, but I was invited here today as the person who is going to describe the future of the united Berlin. Well," he said, "I'm going to surprise you, there will not be a united Berlin." He said, "This is an American fantasy." And he went on to describe all the reasons why there would not be a united Berlin in our lifetime, why it wasn't going to happen, why it wasn't desirable. Of course, it happened after that. So we were trying to test the limits of what might happen in this quasi-official forum, because that was not NATO sponsored, it was sponsored by the U.S. Mission and we were kind of outside of official policy.

You asked earlier what it was like to deal with Department of Defense Public Affairs people. I found in my experience that Department of Defense Public Affairs people were far more open to thinking about alternative futures than the State Department. The State Department tended to want to hold the discussion within certain bounds. We had some real encouragement from DOD (Department of Defense) and we were able in doing our programs to call on DOD people. Paul Wolfowitz came and spoke at one of our conferences and talked about alternative futures. I simply found, perhaps it's because military planners deal with contingencies of all stripes, that they were much more open to those discussions than the State Department.

Q: I'm thinking this might be a good place to stop, Barry, because we really want to talk, and I like to talk in some depth, about the fall. I mean we're starting, my first question will be, "How were we reacting when Hungary opened up its borders and the Czech business and looking at Poland and on how did we react at that time from your perspective and the people in NATO?" And then we'll come to, after this momentous occasion, come to Operation Desert Storm and NATO. And then what we're, by '90, late '91 there was time to begin to figure out what the hell NATO's mission was.

FULTON: Indeed. Good time to stop and maybe just to remind both of us that we open up next time with a short discussion of my debate with a First Secretary from the Russian Embassy at this period. It will set the stage.

Q: Wait, Soviet Embassy at this period.

FULTON: At that period, Soviet Embassy, great, thank you.

Q: Great.

Today is the 24th of February, 2000. Barry, you want to talk about the, talking to the Soviet diplomat?

FULTON: Well as relations began to change, Gorbachev was practicing glasnost (openness) as Eastern European borders were becoming more porous. There was certainly a sense at NATO headquarters that a new world was in the making. The conventional arms talks were back on track, the discussions on nuclear weapons were going ahead in Geneva. At about that time, this must have been about 1988 or early '89, there was a proposal from a university in Belgium that there would be an organized public debate between a representative from the U.S. Mission to NATO and a representative from the Soviet delegation. As it turned out, I was invited to represent the U.S. Mission in that debate. It was with some trepidation that I agreed to this knowing full well that there could be a good bit of press coverage (it turned out there wasn't any.) Knowing their might be, and knowing the Soviets at least in the past had used these kinds of occasions to make charges and claims that were outlandish. So with a good bit of preparation I arrived at the University for the debate, and the moderator had maybe fifty, sixty students, faculty members, in the debate hall. Asked which of us wanted to go first, we each said well we didn't care, it was up to him. So he asked that I go first, and I spoke, I thought convincingly, for ten or fifteen minutes on why it was in the interests of both the United States, NATO countries and the Soviet Union to try to reach agreements on reducing arms and why it was in the interest to try to reduce tensions, all those things that one might have said. Then the Soviet debater was called on to make his presentation, and he said simply, "Well, I agree with all that." Period. "I agree with all that." The moderator looked at him and said, "Do you have a statement?" And he said "No. I agree with all that." So it was, at that point I was obviously bemused, the students weren't clear what was going on, and the room was open to questions. There were questions and answers, and the debate which was scheduled to go on for most of the afternoon ended well short of the prepared time, because there was nothing to debate. In some ways, although he was ahead of his hard-line comrades in the Soviet Union, he was representing a very progressive delegation that had come to Brussels to see if they could do business with NATO.

Q: What was this delegation at that time? Was this an exploratory group or what? Had they established relations with NATO?

FULTON: At the time that I've just described, no, but it subsequently happened. It happened that Shevardnadze, then Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, was invited to NATO headquarters. It turned out that he was the first Soviet official, certainly the first Soviet official of any rank, to have been invited to NATO headquarters to meet with the Secretary General, Manfred Wörner. When he arrived, he was greeted in the entranceway by a hundred or so NATO international and delegation employees, and they applauded his arrival. He went up and met with the Secretary General. I am told that he asked the Secretary General if that applause was arranged or spontaneous, and he was told it was spontaneous. At the end of the meeting I'm told he asked again. He said he was surprised by this applause, and indeed was it genuinely spontaneous. The Secretary General again said yes, it was. What the Secretary General did not say, insofar as I heard the story was that in fact the NATO employees were asked to not assemble for the arrival, and it was genuinely spontaneous. On his way out he was greeted by the International Press at the front of the NATO building and he was told by the press that while the meeting was taking place that Ceausescu in Romania had ordered the military to strike back against the demonstrators and that so many people were killed and this and that. He was asked for a comment. Shevardnadze said on the steps of NATO, "Well I'm not thoroughly informed on what has happened, as I've been in here meeting for the last two hours, but if what you say is true, the Soviet Union condemns that." This was news. That a fellow Warsaw pact member was being condemned on the steps of NATO by the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Q: At NATO you were all watching developments in eastern Europe. As I recall, one of the first major cracks is where the Hungarians said, "We're going to open up our borders." How was this, were there other things going on at that time? I think things sort of moved from there.

FULTON: Even my sense of dates and time isn't good enough to comment on what was the first thing. I have a clear recollection of the sense of change around me, but whether it was the Hungarians opening their borders or not would be better left to people who are better informed on the dates and times. Then I recall, what I would want to convey is that the whole, starting with, say the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, aided by Gorbachev's glasnost, certainly moved along by the near-agreement in Reykjavik between Reagan and Gorbachev. I suppose if there were any catalytic cause of the opening, it was as I observed it in NATO, an understanding by Jim Baker and his immediate staff of the window of opportunity that had come to United States and the NATO countries to try to change the old relationship, in particular as the Berlin Wall fell. Baker's early seizing on the chance for a unified Germany, which many talked about, a unified Germany within NATO, which as far as I recall no-one else spoke about except the United States. I think, looking back on that, that that was a fairly small window. If he had not moved at that time, and engaged the allies with a team of his senior people who moved around Europe to very quietly develop support for this idea, I think we would have had a very different outcome.

Q: You know, looking at this, this trickiness of it, it was superb diplomacy. I'm not sure but I think the Hungarians sort of opened their borders to Austria, then the East Germans started coming into Czechoslovakia and going to, was it the German Embassy I guess, and you know getting in the compound. The Czechs weren't handling this, they didn't know what to do. Then they started shipping out, and then the East German people started. Day after day there would be demonstrations, peaceful demonstrations in Berlin and elsewhere. This must have been a very nervous time in NATO, do you recall? Because I mean the conventional wisdom up until then was, well the East Germans will call out the troops, and you know they'll shoot 'em down, and we want to keep the German, the West German righteous anger from doing something, and you know this is always the fear I think that we had.

FULTON: It certainly was the fear. In retrospect there was every sense that the change that was happening was momentous. There was no sense that it would take place so quickly, that it would happen overnight, and in fact what one wonders even had the policy been no different than it was from the East German side an anxious or trigger-happy young East German soldier with a rifle in his hand killing a few people might have changed it all, it might have changed it all. So I think that the flow of history was with us, and luck was with us, and the fact that we had some very wise policy on the NATO side, and I think in fairness a wise policy on the Soviet side.

Q: Did you, at NATO, was there a sense of, I mean, first place, with the wall coming down, you know, what the hell did this mean? For years we've been concerned that something might happen, and a unified Germany, a neutral unified Germany would have torn the heart out of NATO. Was this something that was buzzed about in the corridors of NATO?

FULTON: I don't think there was, certainly it was raised as the one scenario, but it wasn't the scenario that was predicted by anyone seriously at NATO. We had in Manfred Wißner a German, West-German Secretary General. We, the Germans and Americans, British were very close on maintaining a NATO unity, and that was never in the cards. What was not at all clear was what status after the Wall came down East Germany would have and how long it would take for unification. As I said earlier, very few expected that the final outcome would be for East Germany as part of a unified NATO.

Q: I think we were fairly fortunate, too, that you had a politician such as Kohl, Helmut Kohl, rather than a Socialist, an SPD person, because the SPD's always been a little softer in this. With Helmut Kohl, he was not a man to make concessions.

FULTON: Well, Helmut Kohl was very eager to establish his place in history and to preside over a unified Germany. It was probably earlier in his career only a dream that as it became close to reality, of course, there was no-one stronger than him. There was a sense of jubilation and hope at NATO during that time, and it was that I believe that, and the decision by the United States that helped move along this train much faster than it might have otherwise. I recall an occasion when after the fall of the wall, when the Soviets, and still then the Soviet Union before the breakup of the Soviet Union, when the Soviets were invited to have representation at various NATO meetings, first informally and then more formally. One of the conferences that USIA co-sponsored, we invited the Soviet Ambassador to Brussels and he'd speak at that conference. He had recently arrived in Brussels with a special portfolio on NATO matters. We were going to publish the speeches and transcribe parts of the conference, and of course I invited the press to these conferences. The night before the Ambassador spoke, one of his aides from the Soviet Mission that I came to know called me, and he said, "Could we ask you a big favor? Do you have somebody who could type the Ambassador's speech in English on a roman-character typewriter? We don't have time to do that." That signaled to me a kind of trust that would not have happened years before, and of course, we called somebody out and we did the typing, which gave us a number of things, the opportunity to see the speech twenty-four hours in advance, and a trust that worked there in a lot of ways because both sides wanted it to work, and both sides were fairly open to change.

Q: As the German thing moved rather rapidly towards unification and all, was there a sort of in everybody's mind the question of the need for NATO? You know, I mean, if Germany were united, I mean obviously the Soviet army threat was essentially gone. I mean things were happening in Poland and all, and there were still troops there, it meant that the Soviet border, military border was moved back what, five-hundred miles or something like that?

FULTON: Well, immediately after the wall fell, all of these discussions began. Some of them continue through today, as you know. But the person who had enormous popular following in Eastern Europe and also the United States because of the role he had played was Vaclav Havel. Vaclav Havel's early public position was that both the Warsaw Pact and NATO should fold. After some time, Vaclav Havel changed his mind, and that must have been over a period of six or eight months, when he said that he had come to understand that NATO was not an analog of the Warsaw pact, that NATO was a political organization whose purpose was to defend. He then thought, pronounced, that it would be useful, as the Warsaw pact was crumbling and by then I guess officially had crumbled, for NATO to continue certainly in its political role and its future role. He was invited to speak at NATO and he spoke to a meeting of the North Atlantic Council which I had the privilege of attending, as did Lech Walesa, and we heard from both of them about their division of being part of a united Europe and a united Europe that was protected by NATO. There is no question, or certainly there was no question after that in eastern Europe, nor in western Europe, with the exception of a couple of countries, about NATO's future role. There was probably more discussion in the United States about that than there was in Europe.

Q: One of the prime reasons for our NATO Atlantic policy was to keep the French and the Germans from going at each other, and certainly to have a military and political command that keeps an arms race from developing, and sort of keeps both these people under control is to everyone's advantage. I mean, once you strip away the initial rationale for this with the Soviet Union, but that was always only one part of it.

FULTON: Well, one of the first Secretaries General of NATO is reported to have said the purpose of NATO is to keep the Americans in, keep the Russians out and keep the Germans down. That, fifty years later, with a more sophisticated rendering, still has merit. Europe does not want a Germany that is the predominant power, and Germany does not want to be the predominant power in Europe. The United States and Europe have so many things in common that there is almost no need to argue the need for a close alliance. There is some obvious need to argue how that alliance should manifest, and what level of American commitment and American resources and American troops, that argument goes on. But as the then-Ambassador to NATO, William Howard Taft said frequently, and I believe very convincingly, that let's suppose that we were starting with no American troops in Europe or Asia, and we nonetheless decided that we wanted to have a standing military, as we do, and somebody said to you, what are the chances that you would require this military to be used in the United States? To defend our borders? Might say, well, very, very, very, very small. What are the chances that you would require this military to be used on some other continent? Well, they're greater. Would you then like to have some number, let's say a hundred-thousand troops, pre-positioned in Europe and a hundred-thousand troops pre-positioned in Asia with the host countries paying for a substantial amount of the cost of the bases in which these soldiers serve? Would you want to have that? And he says, yes, I think you would probably say yeah. I think that sounds like a good deal. And that's the deal we have.

Q: Well let's talk about Desert Storm. Desert Shield, Desert Storm. You were in Brussels in, what was it, August of 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait?

FULTON: Yes.

Q: How did this, I mean was this, initially, just something happening in a far-off land or something like that, or did NATO see that it might get involved?

FULTON: NATO, the NATO allies conferred on a whole range of issues, both in and out of the NATO area. NATO has always been a forum for exchange of information. I think all of the allies welcomed that kind of exchange, so as soon as that happened there were any number of emergency meetings at different levels from the North Atlantic Council to the Defense Council and so on. To discuss the issue. There was no sense that NATO would send a NATO force, as that was clearly outside of the NATO charter, as it was interpreted, but would NATO be involved politically? Yes. And eventually, would NATO become involved logistically? The answer was a resounding yes, and probably more so than was appreciated at the time, perhaps more so than it was appreciated today, there, NATO served as a coordinating means for what was a logistical exercise of nearly unprecedented magnitude and speed.

Q: Well, correct me if I'm wrong, but in a way we're saying, okay, NATO wasn't involved. But these were people who were using all the instruments at hand, including the men and women and equipment and the logistical things of NATO which you all had been holding in anticipation over the years to put it into action.

FULTON: By this time, I would emphasize in what I said that NATO did not send a force, was not involved in that way, but absolutely it was very richly involved in the logistics end. If you look at that whole operation, that the movement of five-hundred thousand American troops and armor in a relatively short period of time along with the contributions that were made by most of the NATO allies in one form or another, with ships or with fly-over rights or what have you, and then the whole, using the whole NATO logistical apparatus was a major contribution for NATO.

Q: Were there any, as this was developing did you see, were there problems with some of the countries, were NATO members unhappy or slow to respond or not?

FULTON: There, I don't think there was anything that has happened at NATO where some countries aren't unhappy with something or where some countries aren't slower than other countries. That's always the case. The amazing thing about NATO, as you gathered from my comments up to now, even after four and a half years, I was always surprised how NATO would, in a pinch, meet the challenge with a consensus that was often very wise. Now getting to that consensus was often very difficult, and there were moments of high frustration and moments of anger. I have seen people storm out of meetings. I have seen a Secretary of State sit at a meeting saying nothing for hours and hours and hours as the battle raged on around him and he decided, "I think our role here is to say nothing. Because eventually these two or these three combatants in this room are going to be very close to a decision and then maybe we can tip the balance."

Q: Very astute, very difficult to do. I take it this was Baker.

FULTON: Yes, it was.

Q: What I'm gathering, you were coming away with a very solid impression of Baker as an able Secretary of State who dealt with a very confusing situation and helped bring things into proper order.

FULTON: He had a very strategic view, he and President Bush had a clear view. George Bush was, twice as President and once as Vice President at NATO headquarters, and also to a NATO summit in Great Britain. He was actively engaged, impressively engaged in the issues and in leading as has been traditionally the American role, leading the NATO alliance to make these considerable changes that were required when NATO put on the table conventional arms reductions and nuclear arms reductions. It wasn't necessarily popular with every constituency in the United States. When NATO began its opening to the east, it wasn't clear where that would go, and all of the questions that were first asked, some of them still are with us, well, why do you have NATO if everybody's a member? I think if you watch what happens in the give and take of consensus building in Brussels, the answer is very, very clear, I don't know that we communicate that clearly if you're not present.

Q: On Kuwait, what was the French response? Because usually the French are often the odd-man-out, how did you find them?

FULTON: To tell you, I don't remember the initial response of the French. The French, as I think I said earlier on, traditionally sent very able diplomats to NATO and played a very strong role in the political decisions. Their role as it developed was, it was very supportive. What their initial role was I just don't recall.

Q: How about with the Germans? They couldn't send their troops abroad and all that. Were the Germans uncomfortable?

FULTON: Yes. The question of deploying German troops outside of German borders was represented as a constitutional issue, and Germans on one side of that question had no doubt that the constitution forbade it. Germans on the other side of the question said no, the interpretation is wrong, it was not forbidden under certain circumstances. But at least through that period of time there were both political and military considerations about German deployment outside of German borders for any cause, for supporting the effort logistically or otherwise. Will the rest of the world think this is a new expanse of Germany? Will Germans think that's their role? What will the rest of the Europeans think of it? It was a huge debate which I understand has been resolved sort of since that time, and there have been of course German deployments outside of the area now, and the constitutional issue has been settled.

Q: As an aftermath of the Kuwait campaign, did you see any change? I mean, here in a way the weapons which had been developed which hadn't been used, particularly American ones. Were you getting any concerns saying the Americans really have moved a quantum step ahead of the rest of NATO? Was this a matter of concern?

FULTON: I don't think there's any question about American capabilities even before Desert Storm. In the annual exercise of force planning, all the NATO allies know what each other country has. The United States traditionally talks about burden sharing, wants the allies to do more, wants them to pay a higher percentage of their GNP (Gross National Product) on defense. Some of them would like to spend more, have domestic constituencies or other constraints. The economies are not that strong in Europe right now. That means the change is very, very slow. But there were no surprises certainly among the military planners about American capability. Among the European public, on the other hand, to watch on CNN (Cable News Network) those missiles going down the streets of Baghdad and making a left turn at the stoplight, I should say astonished them, astonished all of us.

Q: Astonished the world, I'm told places in Africa, things stopped to watch this war on TV.

FULTON: So, yes, to see that happening in real time with live camera in downtown Baghdad surprised most people.

Q: The aftermath of this. When did you leave NATO?

FULTON: I was with NATO through the summer of 1991.

Q: So was there any disquiet about, you know we took a big hunk of our armor force and all, and then it didn't come back.

FULTON: Well, that was in the cards before then. It probably would have happened a little slower. But at the time, at the height of our involvement in NATO we had over two-hundred fifty-thousand troops stationed in Europe. As we began to redefine the NATO role and the need for deployment it was clear before Desert Storm that that number would come down. It was clear through budget hearings. It was clear through statements of intention that that number would come down to the order of a hundred-thousand. It was convenient for some of the units that had moved out to not move back, as you say. But that was not a surprise, the timing was a little different.

Q: Are there any other issues we should talk about before you left NATO?

FULTON: The last thing I would want to say, because many of these questions that you could ask of some of our political and military planners who were inside these meetings, could give you a much better description of the subtleties of the give and take of decision-making than I can. I was attending to the U.S. dealings with the European press, and cared a good bit about public opinion during this time. It was my role as Public Affairs Counselor. There are a couple of things to be said I think. One is the press itself, the European press, those that were not dispatched to the Gulf to cover the war, but those who were covering the U.S. political role as it was manifest in NATO, were surprising. I shouldn't say surprising, were particularly careful and objective in their reporting. If you were a European citizen reading serious press in most of the European countries, and I don't pretend to know what was written in Iceland or Luxembourg, but in the major European papers, you would have found a quite balanced view of the U.S. role, and the U.S. consultative process with its allies. The Americans are always in danger of being seen as a country so powerful that we make the decision to roll over our allies and inform them later. That did not happen. The consultation process was very, very rich, politically and militarily, from both DoD and the Department of State. I can't imagine how it could have been better. We did our best on the Public Affairs side to make sure that was accurately portrayed. The Press had very open access to what we were doing. We kept them informed, and I think there were a few things that were going on apart from actual targeting in Desert Storm. There were few things that were going on that we didn't know about as soon as decisions were made. As a consequence of this quite accurate reporting that we got, we found the American, the European public were very supportive of the NATO role and the U.S. role, with the exception of Greece and Spain. Spain was in a period of transition during that time about its role in NATO. So with those exceptions there was quite grand support all across Europe, and as the threat seemed to increase to all of the allies because of Saddam Hussein's invasion, we found support was very, very high for the American role. That was particularly comforting to me given the role that I was playing in public diplomacy.

Q: In Europe, as in the United States, but particularly in Europe, there were some visceral left-wing, and I'm not talking about far left, but I mean we have them in the United States, I mean anti-military, anti-government, what you tell us isn't the right thing and all, and this is built up at that time. Did you find that because of what Saddam Hussein had done that this cynical anti-establishment spirit was dampened in the press, would you say?

FULTON: I don't know if I could relate it in particular to Saddam Hussein. Certainly the trend in the '80s and '90s was for the public to be more supportive of the government position. These would be the Soviet Union and other perceived threats, in part because the threat level was seen to be decreasing with the Soviet Union. In part, people understood that even if you attributed to a particular time an event or leader, they understood that standing fast over a long period of time had a big payoff. And yes, Saddam Hussein's threat was seen as very real, and government policies were backed. So this leftist cynicism that you described was not very much in evidence. I think if one had been there in the '70s and early '80s that would have been a major issue. It was not a major issue. I just wanted to give enormous credit to the responsible press in Europe for the way they reported these very dramatic changes. Europeans have a diet, practically every day, of such issues, far more than we have here. One does not pick up the paper every day and read about NATO. During that period, you certainly could read about NATO, at least a couple of times a week, in most European papers.

Q: You mentioned Greece. Was Greece at this time very much the odd-man out?

FULTON: The Greek public is not very supportive of NATO, has not been for years and years. Historically this takes us back to some very strong anti-American feelings. NATO means American. Takes it back to even stronger anti-Turkish feelings. Turkey is a key member of NATO. The Greeks wonder if they're getting treated fairly vis-à-vis Turkey. There are historical reasons for the Greek public opinion. The Greek government has been largely supportive of NATO actions even when the public did not support the government. There were some difficult issues on conventional arms negotiations between the Greeks and the Turks, and therefore between the Greeks and the Americans and between the Turks and the Americans. On the western position on some of the arms negotiations, I would say that the Greek government, particularly because it did not have public opinion behind them, had to take some fairly bold moves in NATO to support and join the NATO consensus. When there is a ministerial meeting at NATO and a communiqué is issued, the first thing the reporters look at is whether there are any footnotes. The footnotes will signal that this country or that country did not agree with the consensus but decided not to break it. But it signaled that the country is willing to allow the consensus to go forward, but has not joined it. There was a time, if you look back over NATO communiqués when there were a fair number of footnotes. There were very few footnotes in the period '87 to '91 while I served there, and I'm not sure that there were more than one or two actually during that period, and that is one overt signal that there was a fairly broad consensus on NATO issues.

Q: Summer of '91, where'd you go?

FULTON: I left NATO in August of '91, came back to Washington as Deputy Associate Director of the Bureau of Educational Cultural Affairs of USIA.

Q: And you did that from '91 to?

FULTON: I was Deputy Assistant Director for a year, and the then political appointee who was Associate Director of USIA for Educational Cultural Affairs, Bill Glade, returned to Texas, to Austin, to teach before the '92 election. As there was not time to name another political appointee, I became Acting Associate Director of the bureau, a position that I held for about twenty months.

Q: I would have thought having had the momentous events of the fall of the Soviets, the Eastern Europe, the Soviet Spear and Desert Storm and all, to come back and do cultural and educational things in Washington? It was a change. After raw meat all of a sudden you were eating vegetables again.

FULTON: Well, you know the bureaucracy is a funny affair, the way it counts one's role in things. Yes, NATO was a heady experience. I suspect there were a few people who observed at NATO, or I'm guessing some other international organization, who have not returned from those tours believing that they'd had A. A rich experience, and B. As a consequence of that experience that they had a contribution to make beyond that, that they understood a kind of dynamic that's hard to see from a distance. I was one of those. I came back and I thought, "I'm four and a half years richer in NATO understanding, and I surely hope that there is a way in my Washington assignment that that knowledge can be applied." Who in the Foreign Service has not said that? But the bureaucracy rules otherwise, if the bureaucracy had decided that I would go in some unit concerned with that, of course that would have gone on, but I went to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. From those people looking from the outside who had not had that experience, that was perceived as a big move upward. I was in NATO, I was head of a unit consisting of three officers and a miniscule budget. All of a sudden when I became Acting Associate Director, I oversaw a budget of two-hundred and fifty million dollars a year. People used to say, "What do you do in the job?" And I used to say, "Well, I figured out we worked about two-hundred and fifty days a year and it just happens to match our budget figure, I have to spend a million dollars a day wisely." So the responsibility in bureaucratic terms was much larger, and indeed the management, the challenge was much stiffer. Because there were a lot of people, beginning with people on the Hill, and extending through possibly forty or fifty NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and any number of Universities who were concerned about the health of things like the Fulbright exchange program, training programs for the former Soviet Union at that point, and on and on and on. It was a challenging assignment, but totally, totally different, as you said.

Q: Well, you were doing this really at the tail end of the Bush administration.

FULTON: Yes, I was.

Q: Outside of maintaining how things were going, were there any great challenges or ones that would stick in your mind outside of trying to make things run smoothly?

FULTON: I came into USIA, Washington in the Fall of 1991, to work for Henry Catto, who had returned from being Ambassador to Great Britain, to come back and be Director of USIA. His predecessor, Bruce Gelb, had not distinguished himself because of some internal disputes with the director of VOA (Voice of America) and because of his relations elsewhere with members of the Bush cabinet. Henry Catto, on the other hand, was a person who was personally very close to the President who relished this job. Henry Catto brought to USIA a revival of spirit that had been missing for a couple of years. I happened to get this soon after he was named to be Director. He and his deputy, Gene Kopp, gave enormous support to the operations of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural affairs. Now one stereotypically thinks that the Democrats are more supportive of the soft side of diplomacy, and the Republicans less eager to engage in. With the leadership of these two, I found those roles reversed. In fact, with the Democratic Congress we had a brief two or three year period where exchange budgets were increased. I happened to reap the benefit of that. Who doesn't want to come into an operation where your budget is increasing? I don't think I'd ever seen that before in my career, and we had budgets that were going up, we had new monies to do training programs in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We had an energetic staff that was prepared to be responsive. One example that comes to mind was when the Congress appropriated new monies for training in the former Soviet Union, Bill Bradley, still in the Senate, had introduced this legislation. Bill Bradley said, "I want this done by some outside organization, the government is too slow. USIA is too slow, the State Department is too slow, we need an organization that can move faster." As the legislation was finally passed, and this would have been in the Fall of '92 when that legislation was finally passed, USIA was given the responsibility over Bradley's objection. We said essentially we need to show Congress that we can measure up to what a private outside organization could do, and let's see if we can't do it faster. We set for ourselves a goal in October that we would begin the exchange program. We would manage the selection of exchangeees, and we would have our first exchange group in Washington when the new Congress opened in January. And some people said, "Wait, you can't do that in three months." And others of us said, "Why not? Why can't we, if we had to why couldn't we do it in three weeks? We can certainly do it in three months." So in fact we did that, and we had the first group, when they arrived on the opening day of Congress, we had them photographed on the steps of the capital with Senator Bradley. And he was a big booster from that point on. But a load like that is, you know that's nice for Senator Bradley to see that, and he liked what we did, but that's just a brief moment in his day, that's a lot of moments in the days of a staff of people who say to themselves, "By God, we can turn this around. We can move things in a hurry when it's necessary." And my role, as I saw it, in the twenty months that I was acting director of that bureau, was to try to make that bureau as responsive to the changing events as we could be without being mired in the day-to-day politics that the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has as its charter, with the Fulbright act as its charter, long-term relations with other countries. And with the understanding that the payoff doesn't come for years and years, the payoff does not come tomorrow, but we believed in this article of faith in USIA and I trust now my colleagues in the Department of State that we can put in that investment now for what we can reap twenty years from now.

Q: By the time you left there, had the Soviet Union fallen apart?

FULTON: The Soviet Union fell apart soon after that, it did fall apart in the Summer of '91, it was soon after I left. So my only continuing role was really that piece of the action we had in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to set up these training programs for young Soviet entrepreneurs and young Soviet academics, you name it and we had one program or another.

Q: How did you run these programs? Did you go out and contact universities or commercial organizations? How did you develop these to make sure people were entrepreneurs?

FULTON: I learned when I came in the bureau that the bureau has a long, very rich history of working with non-governmental organizations, some of which were established in fact for the sole purpose of managing some of the bureau's programs. For example, that organization that managed the Fulbright scholar program did nothing except that. It was set up years and years ago to do that, and to ensure that the integrity of the program was guaranteed above and beyond the politics of the particular administrations. So that whereas our role in the Fulbright program was to set objective standards, allocate funds by region, allocate funds by country, to make sure that we were getting our money's worth, we had no role in the selection of the Fulbright scholarship. Properly, that role went to the organization that managed the program. That organization not only did the selection, but the day-to-day care-as-needed of the scholars and students. Anybody who was moving a family across continents needs some hand-holding when they first come in. That organization did that, we did not do that. I say that particularly, we could talk about the long history of how the bureau has dealt with outside organizations. Now when we had new funds for training Soviets and former Soviets, East Europeans in different ways, entrepreneurship was one of them. Then there was a question of sitting down and scratching our heads and saying, "What's the best way to do this?" We decided that we had to engage the outside community. We couldn't, we didn't have the resources to do that ourselves. We are a grant-giving organization. We are a grant oversight organization, the standard setting organization, but we don't manage the travel of grantees. So we tried a couple of different things, and we tried to find community organizations in different communities that would host some of these visiting trainees. By the time I left the bureau, we had relations with private organizations headquartered in the city, we had relations with universities, we had relations with community centers. We had a whole panoply of different relations, all of them based on announcements that we made in the federal register describing a program we wanted managed where we invited people who thought they could manage that program come in with a proposal, and we told them how much the budget was and we asked them for this amount of money. Under these conditions and circumstances how will you manage the program. We evaluated these proposals and we awarded the grants to these organizations. Now it was not contracting in the sense that the contract officer would do, these were grants where we monitored the outcome and where we could step in if necessary if the grantee wasn't performing according to agreement. It was pretty much a hands off operation. Now any of the leadership role in the bureau, any of us in a leadership role in the bureau in order to ensure that things were going according to the grant agreement, we would go and observe. I went once to Atlanta, for example, and met with some local store managers that were hosting young Soviet entrepreneurs. I met with the store manager of the store chain called Publix, that is a chain in the South. I met with a person who put up drywall, I met with an electronics firm. All of them had agreed to have these young entrepreneurs work as interns with them to see how it was done. That was on a trial period, and what I learned during my visit, my staff knew in greater detail than me, but what I learned during the visit from talking to the American hosts, the American hosts were all surprised. They were all surprised because, as the program was described to them, they thought that they were getting young people who, having worked under the Soviet system were probably fairly naïve and didn't quite know how to get started. Since the people who came here from the Soviet Union were competing in the Soviet Union, we weren't just getting some random people, we were getting the people who were the most competitive. All of these people had had some kind of entrepreneurial experience already. They weren't here to learn the basics, they knew that. They were here to move to the next level, and they were here so the kind of training program they were saying, "Well this is kind of interesting, but tell me, you know, if I'm going to start my own company like this, how do I make money? And by the way, are there any banks around here that might bankroll me?" So the whole thing as we saw was on a higher level than we first, and they first imagined. It was from that kind of feedback that we then, in the next iteration of the program, changed it. As I assume today it keeps being changed.

Q: Well in what, '90, late '92 or something you moved?

FULTON: No I stayed, I landed that job in '91, election held in '92. I became as I said the Acting Associate Director in '92, and I stayed in that job until Spring of '94, so I was there for about twenty months. It took a while for the Clinton administration to make a nomination for a political appointee to succeed me, and then it took a while for confirmation. So I was there until that time, and found that a very rich run. I enjoyed it tremendously.

Q: Was there any feeling within USIA about the Clinton administration? Did they come in, you know sometimes a new administration comes in, they come in with an attitude or something? What was the impression you got?

FULTON: Yes, they came in with an attitude. I wonder if that's some time, or every time. There came into USIA a group of people who knew that USIA had to be changed. Some of them had prior experience, and with that prior experience they were wise in understanding some of the changes that were necessary. Organizations have to be, in my mind, they have to be changed continually. So I have no objection to people who arrive with the idea of change. What we had, however, and as I say this I want to say it in a way that, if the person I'm going to talk about were listening that he would probably agree with. What we had in the Director of USIA, Joe Duffy, was the first person with rich academic experience. We had had businessmen and we had had journalists before. But we had had no academician come into USIA before. So there was a feeling, certainly in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, that this would become a new day for exchanges. Not only had Joe Duffy just come from American University, and before that the University of Massachusetts, but prior to that he had been director of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Prior to that had been in the State Department as Director of what was then in the State Department the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. So here was this man coming back with, as everybody knew, the ear of the President. It was assumed that that staff bureau would just expand. Joe Duffy took no interest in that bureau at all. There I was, Acting Associate Director, and there was almost no interest. Now when I came to him with a proposal, he was willing to listen, and he'd support my proposals for change. I had organized, when he arrived, a group of people to look carefully at the Fulbright program. I remember telling him a joke attributed to Mark Twain. Mark Twain coming out of a Wagnerian concert was asked how he liked it, and he said, "Well, according to the experts, Wagnerian opera is a lot better than it sounds." I told Joe Duffy that joke, and said that the problem with the Fulbright program is that in practice today, it's not nearly as good as it sounds. It's run downhill, and we have to revitalize it. So we put together a group of people, including some insiders and some outsiders, and we put together a proposal to circulate among the exchanges community. Certain elements of the exchange community reacted very negatively because there were some major, major changes we put forward. I asked the group not to be timid, and they were not, they went forward with them. I endorsed what they put forward and Joe Duffy endorsed what they put forward. But then as we began to get some very bad reaction from the exchanges community to the idea of change, Joe Duffy backed off his support for that, and simply agreed that whereas change was necessary, it probably wasn't necessary that soon and that fast. He agreed to manage the status quo in exchanges and as it happened, after that fairly large increase in staff that the exchanges bureau had received in the last two years of the Bush administration, with the decision by the Clinton administration to reduce the size of government, that fell. At least initially it fell equally on all elements of the U.S. government, including the exchanges community. The exchanges budget began to go downhill, and until this last year has decreased every year since then. At the time I left the bureau, we were still living through one of the larger budgets, and the first Clinton budget was about to come into play. Those who the political appointee, Jack Coello succeeded me, had the unpopular task then of having to roll back some of the initiatives that were allowed in the previous budget. I guess it was a good time for me to move from that bureau.

Q: What were some of the innovations that you wanted to push forward?

FULTON: I found when I came into the bureau an enormously talented staff. Somewhat under-appreciated staff, under-appreciated because they never had a story to tell today about yesterday's success. They had stories to tell about their predecessors successes. People being what we are, we do like to get some credit for what we do, and they were always in a position of getting credit for what somebody else did, that is the nature.

Q: Yeah, you'd bring these people in, and then they go back home and then they develop into something later on.

FULTON: And so I found within this, the ethos of the agency that the people who worked there tended to be somewhat under-appreciated and they weren't doing. They weren't making today's news, they weren't broadcasting as VOA was today, they weren't putting out the day's wireless file. They were doing these long-term things. Of course, the bureaucracy gets tired of people coming and going, and they always have a new guy in town, and for a period of time I was that new guy. What I tried to organize were groups that would bring forward all those good ideas that they had been sitting on, some of which turned out to be great ideas. Some of them weren't, but some of them were, and it's a cliché to say that you're going to try to empower your staff, but I don't know how to say it better than that. These people had joined this agency because they had some experience or at least some conviction, some belief in the value of international exchanges and cultural relations. They brought great skills. I wondered if we couldn't better tap those skills.

I will relate just one trivial story to make what I think is not a trivial point. Soon after I arrived, the Secretariat of our agency called me and said, "Your bureau is consistently late in responding to congressional mail. As you know from the bureaucracy this is a no-no. Congressional mail gets responded to right away. You have to do something about it." I was told by the Secretariat, and I said, "Sure enough, I will." So my first act was to go back to my office and say, "What happens when we get congressional mail? What goes on?" Well, here's what goes on. The Secretariat sends it to us, and it comes into this office, and we decide in this office where within this bureaucracy of several hundred people it will be answered. It gets sent down to the Officer of Academic Exchanges or the Officer of International Visitors or the Officer of Arts America or this office or that office, it gets sent down there. "Yes, and then what happens?" "Well then the Office Director there has to decide which division it goes to, and then it goes down to the division and then it goes down to the branch and then it goes down to somebody who answers it. That takes a while I would guess. A piece of paper, it moves through the mill. And then somebody answers it. "Dear Congressman, thank you for your letter of, we regret that _____, but we hope that in the _____, and the answer is proposed." The answer then comes back up, I'm told, and through all those levels and each of those people clear it. You know this from the State Department. But they don't all just clear it, most of them change it a little bit. So a word gets changed here and a word gets changed there and then it comes back up to my office, the Associate Director, and in my office there were three special assistants and each of them look at it, and they monkey with it a little bit, and then it comes to me. By the time it gets to you I'm told it has been seen by these, how many, eight or ten or twelve or fifteen people." "And what's more," said I, "I have seen these letters," and I said, "they're not really very good." "Well, yes, and that's the problem, we just don't have very good people down there in the bowels to do the writing." So after I consulted my staff, I said, "In order to meet the deadline, we're going to do the following: When that letter comes in, we will assign it to a designated writer, and we're going to go through the channels, it's going to go through a designated writer in the right bureau, and we're going to ask him or her to draft that answer and send that answer to the Secretariat, it won't be cleared by anyone." "What do you mean it won't be cleared by anyone!? My God, you know, look how bad they are now!" "I have a hunch they're bad now because of our procedures. The person who writes it doesn't give it any care because he knows fifteen other people are going to change it. Let's assign it to that person." People said that we can't do that, and the Secretariat said, "We won't allow you to do that." And I said, "Well wait a minute, you know I am Associate Director here now, Acting, and that's what we're going to do. They're going to be on time." And the Secretariat said, "But, you know, some of them are going to be terrible." I said, "Well that's probably true, but some of them are terrible now. So that doesn't change anything." That changed, within a couple of months all the letters were on time, and almost all of them were good, because the person knew that no-one else was going to see it until it got to the Secretariat. These people aren't stupid. They, and by the way if it turned out after a couple weeks they were, then we assigned it to somebody else. But after a while there were a group of people who understood what they were going to say, and they researched it, and if they didn't know the answer they went and asked those people. With that example, I tried in the time I was there to move authority down, to move responsibility down through the bureau and say to people, "We pay you a pretty decent salary here, we hired you competitively. We know you can write, we know you have good judgment, and I'd just as soon not see all this business up here because I don't think I can lead the Agency if I spend my day proofreading letters to congress." Worked beautifully.

Q: Well then in what, '92 you left?

FULTON: '93, no, it was '94.

Q: '94.

FULTON: It was '94.

Q: Well, in '94.

FULTON: In 1994, with the Clinton reductions mounting in terms of the percentage that the agencies had to take, USIA I think wisely decided, I say that because it was not an easy decision, and I say it in part because I had some role in the consensus that came to the decision, the decision was made instead of taking across the board a three point five or four percent, across the whole agency, cut that would be aggravated and taken in one place only, with the idea that if you did it that way you could have a genuine reform of that particular element. It was decided that if that worked out that in subsequent years they would do each element in turn, would take all of the cuts for that year, leading to the kind of reform that the Vice President was then talking about. The Vice President had set up this reinvention office headed by Elaine Kamarck. So it was decided that the cut in USIA would be taken in what was then called the Bureau of Policy and Programs. I as Acting Associate Director of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural affairs, and another Foreign Service colleague as Acting Associate Director of the Bureau of Policy and Programs were asked to co-chair a group that would re-invent that other bureau. The reason I was involved was that it was thought that one element of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural affairs, that is the element that supported overseas libraries, would be transferred into the new, re-invented bureau. Now it happened, and I say now luckily, although I had some reservations at the time, it happened just on the day that the Director announced that Bob Powers and I, my colleague in the other bureau, that he and I would head this re-invention effort, that the Vice President's office issued a statement on partnership with the unions, and asked every agency to form a partnership council, and partnership councils should be involved in major decisions. So both AFGE (American Federation of Government Employees) and AFSA (American Foreign Service Association), the then two unions representing respectively the Civil Service and Foreign Service, came forward and said, "This looks like a pretty big deal to us, and it looks like two old Foreign Service Officers are heading it, and if there's going to be partnership, we think we ought to be right up there with them." Joe Duffy and Penn Kemble, his deputy, without hesitation said, "Yes, that seems right to us, it's just come out of the Vice President's office, and yes, we don't need two co-chairs, I guess we need four." So there we were. I was one of four co-chairs, along with Bob Powers, and one each from AFGE and AFSA. Before it was decided to have four co-chairs, we had decided to have four working groups within this re-organization, re-invention effort. We had already selected co-chairs for those working groups, and they were people who were heads of various elements of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Bureau of Policy and Programs. The Unions said, "Wait a minute, we don't just want to co-chair at the top, we want to co-chair those working groups too." So we had four working groups, each with four co-chairs. So if you're keeping track, we had twenty co-chairs of different groups. We met once a day for five weeks, and in that meeting we carved out a new bureau. Now we had a very strict instruction, because since all the cuts were to be taken in this new bureau, it meant that the aggregate deductions in staff were going to be over thirty percent. You can well imagine that the unions wanted to revisit those decisions, because if the union was going to be part of the final resolution, the unions could hardly go back to their members and say, "We have agreed to a thirty-percent cut." That was obviously the core contentious issue, and we ended up as a group recommending, that is the two Acting Associate Directors, recommending somewhat less severe cuts than we had been instructed to take, but we were still in the same ballpark. So the union moved a long way and we moved a little way, and we were able with some very contentious and angry procession we were able to come to more or less agreement on that number. What it turned out was more, far more relevant to the final outcome, was how we structured ourselves. Bureaucratic turf is a pretty powerful thing, you know, and it occurred to people as they were involved. That is in these four working groups with four co-chairs each, each group having modeled the membership from the leadership to the rank-and-file. We had engaged each day over this five-week period, we had actively engaged a couple hundred people, coming to meetings at a couple different levels. The working groups were meeting each day and the working group co-chairs were then meeting with the overall co-chairs once a day to feed back in what this group had said and what that group had said and to try to put together a coherent package of what the new bureau would look like. It turned out that the major division, and it's interesting as you look across the landscape in much larger organizations it turns out to be a quite common division, but the major division on which we could not reach resolution at an early stage was whether we should organize this new bureau geographically or functionally. If you are a person who has been a geographical specialist, then by golly there's no question in your mind. Of course we have a Foreign Affairs Agency, and of course we organize it geographically, that's the way the world works. If you happened to be in a bureau that has far more civil servants than Foreign Service officers, ratio four to one, and you have been engaged professionally covering whether it's for the publication in a magazine or the then Washington File, speakers, if you have been covering American Studies or domestic affairs or national politics or environmental issues or drugs issues, then of course you understand that the world works functionally. So if one looked at all the flip charts we used and whiteboards, notepads that we used, you would see all of these different organizations with a geographical division into which each geographical division had functional divisions. There were functions at the top in which there were geographical divisions. Now out of this back and forth, what was a fairly conventional, territorial, bureaucratic argument, at one point, and I don't remember when, somebody said, "What we need in this new organization is a team-based approach." And I, since that time I have learned on a number of occasions I have been credited with that, and indeed, if I had thought of that, I'm not so immodest that I wouldn't take the credit. But I didn't, it wasn't my idea, but I don't know whose it was. It sort of came spontaneously in one of these large and somewhat cantankerous meetings, that somebody said we should have a team approach. It was the one thing early on that leadership and the unions agreed on. I think we all agreed to it because none of us knew what we were talking about. Because what is a team approach?

Q: I was going to say?

FULTON: And who can be a part of it? I mean we've all been on teams, and teams are better than bureaucracies. We've been on winning teams and losing teams, but being part of a team's a good idea, and it's warm and fuzzy, and the leadership, we all said yes, we should have a team approach. The unions said we should have a team approach because they understood the team approach would give them more authority and power than they had up to that point. We all agreed on the team approach, and we ended up with a structure for the new bureau that looked fairly peculiar. We resolved that question of whether we should have a geographical or functional organization by having both. We set out the functional divisions, and we set up geographical divisions and we gave them equal status, and then we set up an administrative support division, and we gave it equal status, we didn't burn it down to the bottom.

What we did was we set up four co-equal offices, a geographic one, a functional one, an administrative, and a fourth. We drew an interesting organizational chart. We drew those four offices in a circle, and in the middle of that circle we drew the office of the Associate Director, that was my office, instead of at the top we had it in the middle. Then with this spoke arrangement of organization we continued that onward so that each of these offices was further divided into teams. We had all agreed there would be teams, and that was the structure. So if you imagine this small circle at the center and then around that four larger circles and then around that twenty-five circles, that was our organizational chart. What we did in the course of that, again I'm not sure we knew what we were doing, but what we did in the course of that in reaching agreement was that we reduced a bureaucracy that had had an Associate Director, that had had four Office Directors before, each Office Director before had a Deputy Office Director. Then each of those offices had divisions, and each had a Division Chief and a Deputy Division Chief and each of those divisions had branches and each branch had a Branch Chief and a Deputy Branch Chief. And you know among all those chiefs and deputies and there were a few workers left. We eliminated all the deputies, with the exception to a deputy in my office, which was required for some bureaucratic purposes elsewhere in the agency. But with that exception, we eliminated all the deputies. We eliminated all special assistants. We eliminated one layer of the bureaucracy so no longer did you go from office to division to branch, but you went from office to team. Where was a Team Leader and there were no Deputy Team Leaders. Where were Office Directors with no Deputy Office Directors. We did what the re-invention people said would work in theory, that you could flatten the bureaucracy, and it was flat all right. We had two groups of people who thought this was a good idea. Those in the leadership of the bureau, myself and my deputy included and the four Office Directors, we all thought it was a good idea, well why not? We had all been part of the decision-making and had led to consensus. The rank and file thought it was a pretty good idea because they thought they were going to be a little closer to the action than they had been before. Now you can imagine the people who thought it was a terrible idea, it was those people who had, up to that time, had the title of Division Chief, Deputy Division Chief, Branch Chief, Deputy Branch Chief, because they understood that by the time we had finished putting all this together that most of them would no longer have titles like that. The consequence of the re-organization wasn't fully played out for about eighteen months after these initial decisions were made, but the consequence was that we had a staff reduction of thirty-eight percent. You cannot take a staff reduction of thirty-eight percent without making some major changes. The combination of that staff change, and the combination of deciding to go through team-based management meant that everyone had a new role. This was in the spirit of the Vice President's reinvention campaign, this was a genuine reinvention. I have seen other reinventions where offices are re-labeled. This was not a re-labeling, this was the real thing. Then we had to go through the very painful process of deciding how we would reduce the staff who would be affected in the reduction. That process in the Civil Service is nearly automatic, because people have status, as you know, because of their tenure, and if there is one job left in a particular series, the person who has seniority is going to get that job. We decided in order to try to heal the longstanding rift between Foreign Service and Civil Service that we would take proportionate cuts in both Foreign and Civil Service, and distribute proportionally. We decided that of the twenty-two or twenty-three teams we had that half of those teams would be headed by the Foreign Service, half would be headed by the Civil Service. We decided between the Division Chiefs, half would be Foreign Service, half would be Civil Service. Perhaps the most important decision to make was that we decided that all of the team leader positions would rotate every two to three years. All of them would rotate. Now of course people in the Foreign Service were used to that, but the people in the Civil Service were not used to that. We said if you are a Civil Service team leader, you will rotate every two or three years, and some of the Civil Servants said, "What authority do you have to do that?" And we said, "The authority's always been there, you can always move people to another grade, and the authority exists, but we will try to do it in an orderly fashion." By the time we had named the twenty-three team leaders, the dozen from the Civil Service having been named because of their seniority, and the dozen from the Foreign Service having been named for one of two reasons, one because they had been there in the old bureau, or they were most senior and so they naturally fell into certain jobs. Certainly some of them were named to those jobs because the cycle of assignments was such that most assignments had been made by the time we were able to name people, and these were basically people who were leaving post early for one reason or other, sometimes for compassionate reasons, sometimes otherwise. So we had a mixture of people, some of whom wanted to be in this job, some of whom found themselves in those jobs despite their best efforts to be somewhere else, and some of whom, particularly the Civil Servants who were strongly opposed to change. Why particularly Civil Servants? Since they got the jobs by seniority they tended to be the people who were around the longest, they tended to be the older of the officers, and they tended to have been there to watch a lot of other smartass Directors come in and announce that they were going to change everything. I was just one more of those. They didn't know me. It turned out that the greatest resistance was among the Team Leaders. The greatest resistance to this change. Some of them decided that Team was just a clever word for re-establishing the identity they had had before as a Branch Chief or in some cases as a Division Chief and they acted that way. But as I said none of us knew what teams were about. So we thought maybe, as we made these announced changes, and as we had agreement on it, and as we were reducing people, we were trying to make sure that people found someplace to land, either inside or outside of USIA. We decided we'd better find out what teams really were about, because we knew that there were real things going out there, in the production of the Saturn automobile, being built by teams. General Electric stock is on the way up because they reorganized themselves as teams. Good things were going on out there. So a couple of us did a good bit of reading, went to some seminars, and we decided we needed some professional help. So we called in about four or five consulting firms and told them what we were doing and asked them to bid on a contract to advise us on how to build teams. It was an easy decision for us when we selected a firm, it was an easy decision because of the four or five groups we brought in, all but one of them came to us with a solution to our problems, and one of them came to us and said they couldn't solve our problems until they studied us. That's the group we wanted, because the other groups were giving us something, it might have been good, who knows? But we knew they didn't know enough about us. Hadn't thought to ask. The other group said they would study us. We did hire them, and we wrote a contract that we could at any point in time, we could terminate the contract or they could terminate the contract if they weren't happy with it. So we thought along the way that we would get our money's worth. They sent a group of people in for a couple of weeks. They interviewed people, and they wanted to meet with all the other Associate Directors. By that time, I should say, the Director of the Agency had asked me if I would be agreeable to be nominated as Associate Director of the new bureau in October of 1994. It required Congress to act on the reorganization, and it required a Presidential nomination. I said, "Of course, I'm flattered, and would love to do that." Knowing it's a political position, this doesn't happen very often. He said, "Well, there's a catch. The catch is, I talked to the White House" said he, "and they will only give us that position for a career officer for twelve months. At the end of twelve months we would ask you again to step down and you would be succeeded by a political appointee." I said, "In that case, no thanks, because I know enough about organizational development and change to know that twelve months from the time we start this reinvention," by then we're talking in theory only, we hadn't started actually running yet, "twelve months from now it's going to look a mess. It will be on the cusp of some important changes, but it will look like a mess, and I don't think I want to end my Foreign Service career walking away from the bureau in that shape." "Well can't you do it faster?" And I said, "Can't do it faster than that." "Well could somebody do it faster?" "Well, maybe so, but I can't, because I know enough about group dynamics, and I've been involved in change all my life, and I know that we need a longer period." "Well how long do you need?" I said, "Well, for me, the minimum would be two years." He said, "Well, I'll talk to the White House." He did and came back and said, "Well, you can have, the White House will support you in there for two years, but at the end of two years don't resist, that's it, you know how much time you have." I said, "That's fine, that's fine." So I knew I was going to become, because I knew I would be nominated for associate director by the time we had hired this consulting firm. The consulting firm, after it asked a lot of questions, wanted to meet with the director of the agency and his deputy, which it did. Laid out how it would act in advising us. (I suspect there was a little bit of second guessing at that point from the Agency's leadership as to, you know, why do these guys who we just named to head all this, why do they think they need outside consultants? Don't they know enough? And the answer was we didn't know enough. We didn't know enough.) The consulting firm called a meeting of all the associate directors to explain what they were going to be doing, as they said to us, "We need the support outside of your bureau as well as in, and we need to explain it." So I turned up at the appointed time, none of the other associate directors showed up. The consultants said, "This isn't a good sign." And the consultants then said, "The first thing we want to do is have a group meeting of everybody who will be joining the new bureau." We hadn't finished the process yet of determining who the Team Leaders would be, at the time this meeting took place. But it was fairly well known, people knew their own seniority, and people had a good idea of who it would be. We just hadn't finished all the pieces of assigning people, but it was becoming more and more clear that that would happen. There turned up in the auditorium 200 plus people, with two consultants on stage, and the consultants introduced themselves and looked back at a sea of very hostile faces. I don't know if you've ever been in a meeting with outside consultants, but none of us bureaucrats like that, no matter where we are we don't like that. They showed a very fine film, now these people are producers, video producers, film producers, some of them from an earlier incarnation, magazine producers. They were all producers and they know what it takes to make a film. They're not overly impressed by any film, and the film was about paradigm shift. Here's some more jargon that has been introduced, and personally I love film, because it shows some things you wouldn't believe. But I know now that it was a little premature to show this film to people who weren't quite ready for anything and were still worried about their jobs. So they showed their film, and they started their presentation, and they had said something, if there were any questions at any point please interrupt, and they just got about five minutes into their presentation, somebody jumped up and had some question, provocative question and said, "Well, what are your credentials?" Then it started. There was nearly a melee in that group, and despite the fact that we had this union consensus that I had described, and despite the fact that we had a substantial percentage of the bureau involved in the consensus part of the project, there were still a good number of people who had not been involved, and these were the people who showed up that day. They were angry and they had seen it all before. I remember one person in particular, I didn't know who it was, but I was so taken by his anger that I was shocked by it. He stood up and he said, "Look! This is all just jargon. This doesn't mean anything. Do you know, we're all busy people, we come in every morning and we work all day to get out these products, we don't have time for these stupid meetings. These guys, Fulton and these other people, they've come in here and they're telling us they're going to change everything." He said, "Let me tell you, this is not the time to reinvent the wheel. These guys have it all wrong. None of this is going to work. We don't need high-priced consultants like you here." We had a post-mortem on the meeting right afterwards. My first words to the consultants were to apologize for the treatment they had, I said, "I'm sorry that this happened." They said, "Why are you sorry?" I said, "Well, you know, I thought our people would be a little more courteous." They said, "No, you're paying us a lot of money to come here, first of all. Secondly, none of that was directed at us. That was directed all at you. One of the reasons you picked us is so we can take the first blows. Because if you had been up on the stage, they would have been courteous because you're going to be their leader, you're going to affect their future, we're going to be out of here. But you got a taste of what you're up against. You got it for free today because they didn't have, that wasn't aimed at us, they don't know us, it's all aimed at you. So I hope we're with the right damn leader." So they said, "We have a long way to go. By a long way to go this meant that we want to meet first of all with the office directors." As I had said before in our talk here today, the office directors, they were pretty well with us, they had been part of the plan. That went okay. "We want to meet next with the team leaders." Team leader meeting was scheduled for two weeks hence, and team leader meeting was to start at 8:30 in the morning, and there were twenty-three team leaders. At 8:30 in the morning there were about seven people in the room. Now this wasn't a voluntary, this wasn't the PTA (Parents and Teachers Association), people were being paid to be there. They didn't show up, they didn't want to meet with them. And the consultants said to us, "This is typical. It's what happens." I said, "We'll get them there tomorrow. They'll be there tomorrow, I guarantee you they'll be there tomorrow." So some harsh words were passed down about showing up, and some words came back up. "Thought this was team-based management. Sounds like the same old drill to us. You show up or else, that's what you're telling us." I said, "Well, yes, there are some exceptions." "Sure, I bet they're all exceptions. This is all bullshit." So the next day the team leaders were all there, arms folded, and it was a kind of 'I dare you' exercise. Then this organization said, "We need a council in which there is broad representation from the unions and the leadership, and that council needs to be a decision-making council and the council needs to be public and open and everybody needs to know about it." So we formed a council, and we gave co-equal status to representatives from the union, and we gave co-equal status to representatives from the Women's Action Organization, and our secretaries and our organization were not organized, per se, but we invited one of the senior secretaries in to speak for secretaries. We had two days of training in how to give up power, if you were an associate director, and for how the union members and the other members could gain power in the decision making process. We set up a decision making process that was decision making by consensus. I have to tell you, by that time, people who were looking in from the outside had decided that this was a fatally flawed experiment. Meanwhile, in that group, that consensus group gelled and worked pretty well, but meanwhile the training that was going on with the teams, to try to turn bureaucrats into team members was not going very well. We were getting feedback from people whose views we respected that its trainers weren't up to the challenge. So it was at that point that we went back to the management of the consulting firm, Zenger-Miller was the name of the firm, we went back to them and said, "We're not happy with the team training that's going on." And they did just what they promised, they said, "Well, let's see how we can change it." And they pulled the trainers, the people who were doing the training, they pulled those trainers off the job, and they sent in what I later learned were two of their top troubleshooters. The two troubleshooters came in and they said, "Well, we've been assigned to take over team training. Give us your perspective on what's happening." I gave them my perspective and they said, "Well, we need a couple days to talk, and we'll be back." They came back and they said, "Well, we've heard a lot. We are going to change paths, there's some serious issues that have not been confronted and we would like to make team training voluntary." I said, "Look, if you make it voluntary, there are two or three teams that are going to volunteer to come take the training, and they are the two or three that need it the least, and the rest of them, because there's a lot of angst around here, the rest of them are not going to show up." They said, "Well, let's see if we can persuade you. We'd like to make it voluntary for the following reasons:" And again I resisted, I said, "No, it can't be voluntary." The guy who was head of the training looked at me and said, "Look, why'd you hire us? Did you hire us because you know more than we do about this? Or because you thought we knew more?" "Oh," I said, "because I thought you knew more." He said, "Well, I tried to persuade you it should be voluntary, and I have failed at that." And so he said, "I'm going to up the stakes. I'm going to put it this way. If it's not voluntary, you go find somebody else to do the training." And I said, "Well! You're calling my bluff here aren't you?" And he said, "No. I know what I'm doing. You hired us because you thought you did." I said, "Well, I have to tell you that I wasn't very pleased with the training that the teams have had up to now." He said, "I know that, that's very I'm here. I'm betting you're going to be pleased with it being voluntary. Let me put it to you this way. I'm prepared to guarantee you, that within?" He gave me some figure, I don't remember what it was, three months or something, "That all but one or two of the teams will have volunteered. I can't promise them all, but all but one or two of them will have volunteered." I said, "Well, if you can give me a guarantee like that, you're on." He was right, they all volunteered, they all volunteered, and it was announced that it was voluntary and you need not come, and of course what happened initially was just a couple of teams started. He backed it so good from them, this guy knew his stuff, man and a woman, they were co-leaders, they knew their stuff well enough, that the feedback was good enough that the people started going in. Zenger-Miller had laid out for us a five-step process of how long it would take to go from one phase to another, and we tried to move from, through these five phases as rapidly as we could, with Zenger-Miller saying, "Don't go too fast or it won't work." Going from phase one to phase two is easy, and going from phase two to phase three is not hard, you can probably do that. Most organizations fail right there because when things start looking comfortable, you say, "Ah, it's working." That's the point where you're liable to fall back into a conventional bureaucracy, and that's the point where you have to be very tempted to go from phase three to phase four where you have begun to give up real authority, and where you have begun to trust all of the teams on your staff, and more importantly when they have begun to trust you. When we went two years later, from phase three into phase four, with a few exceptions. We all of a sudden had a different organization, and I think it was a delight to watch and a pleasure to leave.

Q: Did this serve as an example for all this later on? Was USIA doing this in other areas, or was it unique?

FULTON: We were advised by our consultants that there would come a point where not only people within the bureau would be suspicious, but people outside the bureau would declare it a failure. That was around the twelve-fifteen month point. They said, "You have to weather that, you're going to hear it." And goodness did I begin to hear it, I began to hear it. We started in October of '94, and as you know the government closed down in December of '95 through January of '96, and for us that was about the fifteen, sixteen month point. It was at that point in our own projections where we sort of saw ourselves bottoming out and beginning to come back up to the point at which people knew there were new jobs, the point at which we hoped teams would be working, the point at which we re-began all of our old products, including all the old magazines, and we had jumped into electronic communications, we had one of the first websites in the government, before every teenager had one. I feared, during the government shutdown, when we had gone down and we'd done it by the numbers, essential staff only, and we said, "Well what is essential that we do?" Well, most of what we did was not essential, and we thought that a minimal wireless file that kept embassies informed of what was going on in Washington was essential, and instead of producing five regional files, we turned it into one small file. We reduced our staff of several hundred in Washington down to six or eight people because we were in a way doing a lot of things by extremes, and we called essential essential, to give voice to the idea that this was a team-based culture, we declared all of the leadership non-essential. Myself included. We all stayed home. That was a good signal, it turned out. That I stayed home worrying that the momentum we had was going to evaporate during those several shutdowns, somehow just the opposite happened. People came back, and people had thought about it, and they'd seen a glimmer of change, they'd seen after they came back raring to go. It might have helped us in a way, because I saw a light of enthusiasm, and we said, we have to have an event to mark the upward change, and we scheduled it before we knew what it was going to be. We scheduled what we called a rollout of the new I-Bureau to take place in April. Companies do these rollouts when they introduce new products, and we thought we'd have all of our new products ready by then. In fact setting the date caused some of the new products to be ready. We put together a panel of outside experts, people who were involved in the new technologies. A person who had been the deputy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Bill Owen who had left the Pentagon to join the high tech industry. He is now co-CEO of Teletysic. We put him with Frank Fukiyama, who was conducting a project on new technologies and diplomacy in international relations, a person who had informed the internet side. We put this panel together and invited a group of representatives, staffers from the Hill, to come up, followed by a thirty-minute rollout of the new I-Bureau. When that rollout ended we were back on the map, because we rolled out new products and services. As we began planning it right after the government shutdown, right after we returned in January, as we began planning it, sat around the room, somebody in the group said, you know the best way to illustrate the change in team culture is that the rollout will not be a top-down presentation. It ought to involve the team. I said, "I will not attend any of the further planned meetings. On the day of the rollout, I will be in the audience seeing it for the first time." I held my breath. But it turned out that it was a lot better than it would have been if I had been at those meetings, because the staff then had responsibility and they had something to show, and they wanted to be proud of what they showed. As we had these congressional staffers and others from in and out of the agency at this three-person panel. Then we walked into this room where the rollout was going to take place, and we had arranged to have a filmed introduction by the Vice President. As we had then received recognition as an at least pending successful re-invention laboratory, we were so designated as the re-invention laboratory. The Vice President did this film introduction of what re-invention meant, and he had understood that we had moved a long way and he sure hoped it would work, and he in the introduction introduced Joe Duffy, and Joe Duffy said that he was seeing the rollout for the first time, and he understood the I-Bureau management was seeing it for the first time as well, and for the next thirty minutes we in the leadership would all hold our breath while the rest of us enjoyed it. It was wonderful.

Q: Well what were you producing, what was the rollout essentially?

FULTON: The best known and most popular product of the bureau was the wireless file. The other product, probably the best known, is what started out as a speaker's bureau where we were sending overseas a number of experts. The bureau we had taken over had produced a number of magazines, some of which were very important in their day: America Illustrated, distributed in the Soviet Union; Topic magazine; and so on. There were large-scale exhibits that we had produced including being responsible for Worlds Fairs in the past. We decided that the wireless file had been constituted, and in fairness I'd say it wasn't a sharp change, it was just a reinforcement in a way of illusory change that the wireless file's earlier purpose being, a news service of sorts had been long outlived, and that we decided to give greater emphasis to the interpretive aspect of that file. We re-named it in part to signal a break from the past. We had a number of senior people work for the file who had been hired at a time when it was thought that the file was kind of a government equivalent of AP (Associated Press) and UPI (United Press International), some of whom still were out doing a beat and wanted to continue that role. We had to signal that that had changed, and so in that regard we changed both the name of the file and the way the file was put together each day, so that instead of conventional coverage of news beats we had contributions from both our regional and functional teams, hoping that we'd get more interpretive material on the questions of the environment and so on and so forth. We changed the management of the speaker's bureau almost totally. We still of course depended on experts' willingness to go out for us, but the way we engaged the posts was simplified. We streamlined it, and we changed its costume so that it was much clearer to the posts what they could get. If they didn't want to use the funds for the speakers, we allowed them to use it for other things. So we tried to create a market in services, rather than just saying you have an allocation of six speakers. If we give you an allocation of six speakers, and you don't use them all, we give you credits that you can use for different things. Some posts will use them for speakers and some were used in other ways. So we tried to create a market by creating something that we called I-bucks. It was known as the I-bureau and each post had a virtual file similar to a virtual allotment of so many I-bucks that they could use for various services. We created, and this transcript should reflect the fact that as we underscored, not I, because these products were team developed, team based, and some of them came totally from the teams themselves. Some of them were brought to me as complete innovations. Some I had a leadership role in. I saw my role throughout this to promote change, and to give people the climate of change, and to try to hold people to a quality standard that I saw in the inventive role as something that came from these various teams. So we created a website that in 1994 was unusual for government, not unusual to have a homepage, but unusual to have much behind it in those early days. We had a good bit behind our site, and we did the site in several languages, and in the early heady days of the bureau we were rated by a upstart organization called Yahoo as the best government site on the internet and that pleased people a lot. I brought a group of twelve people together about two or three weeks after the bureau began, and a few of the people on that group I knew. I selected the team leader of that group with care. I should say we had standing teams. There were the twenty-two or twenty-three I described. We also had occasional pickup teams that would be brought together for a particular purpose and then disbanded. We had this pickup team that we brought together, and it was sort of a Noah's ark of skills. We brought one designer and one writer and one speaker specialist and one librarian and one of each of the specialties that we had in our bureau. I told them that I had just been at the holocaust museum and had just seen some demonstrations of virtual technology that I thought would be good for us to use as a means of communications. Interactive CD-Roms were just then on the market primarily for gaming, and I thought that that was a medium that we ought to explore. I gave this team an assignment to produce within twelve months an interactive CD-Rom. I asked how many had any prior experience with computers, and there were one or two people in the room who did. I knew the team leader who had been the editor of one of the magazines. I knew he was very able and very inventive and I hoped that he would inspire the team to go out and learn what they had to do. Twelve months later they produced an interactive CD-Rom on educational counseling for use by counselors overseas. The CD-Rom won an industry-wide award for its innovation. I had zero to do with that CD-Rom except the initial meeting, and that was empowerment.

Q: Okay, this takes you up to about '96?

FULTON: I left the bureau. It turned out it wasn't the exact twenty-four months that we had agreed on, but I left the bureau thirty months after I began. I left in April of 1997.

Q: And then you retired, is that it?

FULTON: I had, I retired. Fifteen months later, in honoring the deal with the White House, I left the bureau, and there wasn't an obvious place for me to go, having been a Presidential appointee in the bureau, and I wasn't quite ready to retire yet. So the Agency seconded me to CSIS, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where I was seconded for fifteen months until my retirement in July 1996.

Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop. Great, that's fascinating. For our next and last session, we want to talk about how the organization worked after your departure, and also, what happened to personnel that had to be let go?

Today is March 6, 2000.

FULTON: Your question was, how did the organization work after my departure? I took no greater pleasure in coming to understand that the organization not only survived, as a team-based culture, but the staff took ownership of the organization. There was a time that we used to judge where the word was passed through the organization that Barry wants this or Barry wants that and I thought that the day that would mark its maturity was the day that that phrase would disappear. People would begin to say, "Here's a way to solve this communications problem, let's go ahead and do it. Let's ask, if we don't have, then let's ask for the resources to do it and the means to do it," but let the invention of problem-solving come from the staff, not through the top. It's my understanding that that had happened. I think in a word the organization is working better now than at the time I left.

Q: There were times when junior officers, for example, see the senior officers are not performing properly, and there may be a certain amount of malfeasance, or getting things done which probably aren't allowed to be done and all that. Did you see much of this, and would you say the organization tended to protect those higher up or not?

FULTON: At one point or another, a curious thing happens as we progress through our careers and become more senior. We discover that the senior officers make fewer mistakes than they did when we were junior. But no, seriously, we have all seen it, and we find that the people in the middle and junior grades are often helpless to do anything about that except grumble. We borrowed from industry, certainly didn't invent, but borrowed from industry a rating process called a 360 degree evaluation. We did this alongside of the standard Foreign Service OER system. We weren't able to replace it. Although if one looked at the experience we had, I think most organizations would be eager to replace the kind of top-down only evaluation system with this 360 degree system. What that meant in a nutshell was we asked each of the supervisors, Team Leaders, Division Chiefs, Office Directors, and me, to be rated by our peers, by our subordinates, and by the people we reported to. The rating was done on a fairly complex scale which gave a numerical evaluation for certain attributes that we believed were useful for the progress of this bureau. Candor, leadership, etc. The rating also allowed and invited and encouraged elaborative comments. The junior people were protected from retribution by having these ratings done anonymously. So we used a computer system to guarantee that the senior people wouldn't know who had done the ratings, although they would know that the division or the office that they came from. I never learned as much about my own weaknesses and strengths in my career in the Foreign Service as I did during that period. We all know the OERs are inflated, and when you ask a group of people to anonymously rate you, they take the chance to reduce the inflation level, and you get a level of candor that I found very useful. We started the process with me, and I briefed the staff and told them what the rating was, and some parts of it were a shock to me, as I will tell you, and then we moved it to Office Directors and to our team leaders. By the time we got through one step of it, practically all of the Team Leaders found this a very valuable process.

Q: Well now, one of the problems of the efficiency report is it is used for promotions. Since most efficiency reports are inflated, any adverse comment gets really undue emphasis by the rating board. I mean all of us that served on these boards, you can't help by looking through some clay feet and all, and I would think that these anonymous reports would sort of screw up the promotion system, because they would be coming in without accountability.

FULTON: Well, if they went to a promotion board, and if promotion boards rank-ordered people the way we do in the Foreign Service, I think you're right. On the other hand, industry widely uses this process, not to rank order people, but to assist them in the kind of training they need to look at their potential. It's very clear that if you had the kind of inflated system that we operate with, and I'm tempted at times to go beyond inflation and suggest that the system has reached a point of being institutionally corrupt, I think it should be fixed. I think one ought to look at a system like the 360 degree system. With the necessary protection, some organizations that used it for example throw out the lowest and the highest ratings that people get to discourage that one person in the system that's going to try to blackball somebody. I think it can be managed. I think we should examine how we train officers, how we promote officers, and in fact I mentioned earlier the CSIS study. In that study we suggested, and it was endorsed by sixty-three distinguished people, that the whole promotion system needed review, and we suggested that promotion up through a certain level would be nearly, not totally, but nearly automatic to try to reduce the level of inflation, and that after a certain level toward the senior levels we give even more attention to it than we do now.

Q: Yeah, I think it makes sense, too many reports put a heavy burden on people, and make it easier to write inflated reports.

FULTON: Well right now, you and I know all people who have been in the Senior Foreign Service and all, that if they pull out all the stops, and write a report with total candor on somebody who's an outstanding officer, that that officer is liable to be low-ranked, if it's written in total candor. We also know that a person who is just not cutting it in any way, if we describe that, we are open to an administrative and perhaps judicial process that we'd rather not face. So we can with subtle language ensure that the person does not get promoted, and the person might not even understand what has been written about him.

Q: I've served on a promotion panel of senior officers, and was amazed, and I think there were nine of us, and how often with these reports it struck me as extremely bland and inflated, and yet when we had to rank order them, we ended up very close to rank ordering them, all just had about the same rank order.

FULTON: I chaired a panel and served on another panel at two different points in my career, and had the very same experience, that we came very close in our rank ordering. That suggests that there's a high reliability in the way the readers pick up the clues that are written in the reports. It does not necessarily suggest, however, that we're choosing the best officers. We're perhaps choosing the best writers. But it is consistent. One other comment that I would make that you asked last time and I didn't get a chance to respond to, you asked what happened in the other bureaus in USIA, at the point this experiment was perceived as a success. There were a couple of stages. The perception was as I mentioned including the early stages it was a very clear and practically uniform perception that it had been a failure. At some time after the eighteen to twenty-four month period, perceptions did begin to change, and people described it as a success. I don't think anybody ever described it as a roaring success, but certainly people, some of whom had been hostile in the early periods described it as a success. There was an intention in the early days to look at that experience and then ask other bureaus to undergo the same kind of effort. The curious thing that happened was among those who said it was a success, they said yes, but, there were particular circumstances in that bureau and it wouldn't apply in our bureau or in our division or in our office, on the one hand. Or, there were a number of places where they said it was a success, and it will apply in our office and we'll do the same thing. However we found in those cases, whereas it had taken us eighteen to twenty-four months to turn it around, we found in those cases that it could be turned around in a few days by re-labeling things and changing nothing. So if you look at these labels, it's very easy to take a division or a branch and re-label it a team and change nothing. It's very hard to change everything.

Q: Tell me about CSIS.

FULTON: The Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Q: What was your impression of the culture there? And what were they producing at the time? Could you explain what it was? Because it's one of these think-tanks that is part of the Washington establishment.

FULTON: I can't draw any lessons about the way the others operate from my experience there, although I would guess there are certain similarities. CSIS began, what, twenty-five years ago I guess, at Georgetown University, and in the meantime, halfway through its history it became independent. It has an interesting structure that one would not have understood from the outside only, it has a very prestigious Board of Directors and Advisers, including people like Jim Schlesinger and Henry Kissinger. It tends to have divisions not unlike that of the Department of State as regional divisions. There's an African Division and a Near-Eastern Division and so on. It has several functional divisions, the largest of which is Political-Military. The Political-Military Division in many ways reflects both its name and its history. That is in the early days there was more concentration on those issues than on other issues. CSIS, therefore, developed somewhat of a conservative reputation, although it has taken great pains to walk down the middle of the political spectrum and bring into its studies both Republicans and Democrats. At the end of the Cold War, some of CSIS's support began to fall off, and so it decided to expand into other areas, and it has since that time for example done a major study on Social Security, it's done a major study on cyber-crime and it is in the process of doing a very large study on the new economy. Each of the offices, each of the divisions, is headed by an able professional, full-time staffer, and then largely staffed by people who have been seconded from some part of the government, or people who have come there as unpaid interns from universities in Washington and around the country. There is also a cadre of young graduates who are just out of a Bachelor's or Master's program who want to have an experience at a prestigious institution and prop up their resume a little bit. So you have people working for very low salary who come there right out of college to basically stay a year or so and move on. So internally it's a fairly top-heavy and thin organization. It's known as an organization that's able to convene meetings and it has enough prestige that it does that, and it has a high standard because of the membership, the Board of Directors and standards that have been set on what conferences are held and the publications that are released. It, like the other think-tanks in the city, attracts to it a number of people who have been in government or who know government, and it specifically advertises itself as a policy institute, not an academic institute. It does not do a starter study, which it does not believe will lead to policy recommendations and action. That's its end. If a study is completed and there are not policy recommendations or there are policy recommendations but no action is taken, CSIS believes that it's done something wrong. It wants action.

Q: Well now, what was your impression about CSIS? I've done interviews over there and I've seen the publications they put out. Do you feel, at the time you were connected with it, or even before, that the organization's publications, for example studies and all, had an effect, or was it just doing the study?

FULTON: Well, yes and no. There are some studies that die on publication, and there are some that live on. But doing the study as you say, as part of the process, CSIS usually tries to engage a group of outsiders. I was warned by Dave Abshire that if you get too many people on your panel it will eat up all your time as a researcher, and he suggested to me early on that we limit our panel to ten people. It would take an hour to explain why our panel expanded to sixty-three, but it did. There is in that great merit, because you have a much wider potential involvement of people around this city and around this country in the outcome of the report. There's also a downside to it because as the drafter of such a report you find yourself trying to accommodate a great number of views. Occasionally contradictory ones. A friend of mine who had worked there for several years, advised me well when I first started. He said, "Don't make the mistake of compromising everything away. You're far better off to have a majority and a minority report if necessary, because both have come out of here, and we have reports that end up saying nothing because it is impossible to reconcile the various views." I think the language of most of the reports reflects a consensus process, so there is often a little less sharpness in some of the language than many of the people would like. The report that we issued does represent a consensus of sixty-three people from the left and right, and from veteran diplomats and from people who have never been in the diplomatic service and from people across the country.

Q: Your report was what?

FULTON: Re-inventing Diplomacy in the Information Age, and we published it in December of 1998.

Q: What was the thrust of it?

FULTON: The thrust of the report was to, it was issued in three parts I should say, and the first part is a general review of how the world is changing in the information age. It is that kind of a review that I think most bodies sitting down in 1998 might have written. We took the decision that we're in the midst of a major transformation among relations among nations because of changes in telecommunications structure and the rise of computers and in the globalization of economies and change and the strategic environment, etc etc. That basically was our baseline in the report. The second part of the report was how the Department of State and the other Foreign Affairs agencies, how they are responding to these changes. That section we called "Performance Gaps." What are the gaps in performance as a consequence of the changes that are going on? And we tried in that, drawing on our combined experience and on interviews and discussions and public data that was available to outline what those gaps were, and we found them in some of the obvious places. We found them in personnel recruitment and training for example. We found them in just the use of information technology in the department, and we identified a whole range of issues. Then the third and major part of the study was a kind of "So What?" section. If the world's changing the way we've said and if these performance gaps exist as we've documented and chronicled them, what should be done? And in that we laid out six strategies for the Department of State to change itself, and each of those strategies had six or so specific recommendations, so we ended up with thirty-five or forty recommendations. Those strategies had, going from the most difficult to the easiest, they had to do with opening the culture of the Department to greater input and greater communication with others interested in Foreign Affairs, and inviting more people in, sharing more information, that is the relations between the Department and the public. Secondly, it had to do with how things worked internally, what closing, leveling, a very steep hierarchical culture into one that approached some of the developments in industry today. Then third we talked about a renaissance of professionalism. We had strong evidence that the people within the Department didn't have the esprit or feel that they were given the opportunity to be as professional as people had at a time when you and I came in the Service, for example. Then the other recommendations were easier than those first three. Those first three were all really cultural issues, and it was awfully tough, and the other three strategies had to do with bringing public diplomacy to the core of diplomacy, bringing it in from the periphery where it has been giving commercial diplomacy more attention that it's been given. It, too, has been on the periphery. Upgrading information technology so that officers are spending less of their time administering and more of their time doing the work of diplomacy.

Q: Well, in the last six months, USIA has been absorbed into the Department of State. Obviously you're out, but nobody's completely out in this business. What is your reading about how it is being done and either concerns or hopes for the way, looking at the future of this?

FULTON: I remain in touch with a lot of friends, both those who I had worked with in USIA and friends from the Department of State. I hear a consistent story. The State Department from the top down through the whole institution has been gracious in its welcoming of the people from USIA into the State Department. There has been little, if any, attempt to meld the two differing cultures. It is, while the Department of State institutionally has been gracious, there's been an unwritten understanding that USIA coming over to the Department of State would adopt the State Department culture. It after all is many times larger. It wasn't as though all of USIA actually came to the Department of State. The single largest part of USIA stayed independent, that is broadcasting. So the State Department absorbed fifty or sixty percent of USIA, and that part of USIA that it absorbed was one that, in the preceding several years, had shrunk in size. It absorbed three bureaus, the Information Bureau which was shrunk by thirty-eight percent. It absorbed the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was shrunk less than that, I would guess, but I don't have exact figures, it probably was shrunk by fifteen to twenty-percent over the same period of time. It absorbed USIA's Management Bureau into its own Management Bureau. So you are left then with two new bureaus in the Department of State, and neither of them with the resources they traditionally had operating within a culture that is more comfortable keeping information in the building than sharing information outside of the building. I've heard no, from anyone I've talked to, I've heard no hostility to USIA from either USIS or from State officers. I have heard inattention, and I have heard bureaucratic procedures that absorb an enormous amount of people's time. This comes down to often the very simple things, like getting a voucher paid, like contracting with a vendor whereas we used to have our own moments in trying to move those things swiftly. Apparently they have slowed down even more now, and slowing, slowing down with a smaller staff means that those administrative activities take somebody's time, and all of those administrative activities that were taking people's time was time that is not spent on programming. That is my fear, that by gradual and slow attrition, the function will shrink to a point where someone will say, "Why are we even doing this? We're spending half of a person-year on such and such, and that person's spending most of his time administering things." Finally, my greatest concern is the intake of new officers. Over the years USIA has gradually raised the age of the people that are coming into the Service, and some people defend that and say we get more experienced people, and I think we should have some more experienced people. But I think it's a serious mistake not to recruit and bring in a cadre of young people with fresh new ideas to infuse an organization. I think every organization needs that, and at the time I came in the Foreign Service, at the time you came in, I don't have good data on that, but just recalling experiences, the average age of new recruits must have been twenty-four or twenty-five or something. In USIA it was up to thirty-five before. I think if you looked back at the last four or five years, you would be shocked to look at the profile of the people who came into USIA. First of all, very few young people, very, very few. Secondly, not enough people to replace the retirees. That has continued since the last October within the Department of State, the first of the JOT classes there were just six people recruited for USIA, and in the class that has come in since then there are another six or seven people recruited, far below the replacement rate to keep the organization healthy.

Q: One of the problems of getting older people, too, is, you're taking people's second career, and there's a different attitude. Sometimes it's great, but a good part of the time it's jaded. I've already made my mark somewhere else anyway.

FULTON: Well, it's true. Not only was I never charged with age discrimination when I was in Foreign Service personnel, I don't think I have any discriminatory bones in my body in that regard. As USIA has had at some time in the past, I would have a very robust recruitment program for middle-grade and even senior officers. I would bring them in as middle-grade and senior officers, not as JOT's if they had the experience. Because we can find in our universities and institutions, we can find people with very rich cultural experiences that offer some things we don't have. We should bring them in at a grade commensurate with their experience and their education. I think it's a serious mistake to bring in people in their forties and fifties and call them junior officers and pay them the same as a twenty-two year old gets.

Q: One last question. One of the concerns I've heard sort of, it's amorphous, but I understand what they're talking about. They're concerned with the State Department, right now particularly with Madeleine Albright, but this would have been true under James Baker too, that it would use the USIA more as a tactical weapon to promote today's policy rather than a strategic weapon which would be to, 'Here's the United States, here's how we operate,' and foreign countries learn to appreciate us, and have a longer-lasting effect. Did you get any of this?

FULTON: Yes. It's not new, as you say. It was true under James Baker, but then again when wasn't it true? There was always a tendency to look for results, and it was very hard for all of us to spend time and effort on a program whose results would not be evident for ten or fifteen years. A good part of what USIA does is in fact, under the Fulbright-Hayes act is structured to do just that. It is structured to send young people abroad and to bring young people from abroad to study in the United States to have some professional experience in the United States in the hope and belief that that experience changes their life. The evidence is it very strongly does. There is very, very compelling evidence, better evidence in that regard than there is on the short-term stuff. But you don't see it for years and years.

Q: Well, the thing is, when one gets down to it, we are the most attractive country in the world. This has been proved over the centuries, and it's really our strongest card. But it's hard for a four-year administration to look at that and to keep fostering this kind of change.

FULTON: Well, having been the director of both the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Information Bureau, looking back on the two of them, I'm convinced we have to have both. But I think the effects of the exchanges in the long term were more profound than the effects of the information programming.

Q: I think so.

FULTON: And that goes contrary to the culture of the Department, where if it isn't happening today, it isn't happening.

Q: Okay, Barry, is there anything else we should talk about?

FULTON: No, I just appreciate the time you've taken to do the interview and the opportunity to share my experiences.

Q: Well, this has been fun. Thank you very much.

End of interview.