

MEMOIR

**ZANDRA FLEMISTER**  
**A Life in Foreign Service**

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## **PREFACE**

History will remember Zandra as the first African American woman hired as a Secret Service Special Agent. That came via a chance encounter with a recruiter at a Hartford jobs fair. She was sworn in one week before President Nixon resigned.

Zandra found her true calling in the State Department fulfilling a life ambition for service and travel. She transferred from the Secret Service in 1978 and retired as a Senior Foreign Service Officer in 2011 as dementia began to take its toll. She served in Argentina, Spain, Pakistan (twice), the United Kingdom, South Korea and many Washington assignments including two years in the Office of Inspector General and two years as the senior State Department representative at the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center before completing her career in the Board of Examiners. All the while she juggled raising our autistic son Sam for whom she was a fierce and persistent advocate.

Zandra came into my life June 27, 1978 when we entered the State Department's 136th A-100 orientation class. We married in September 1981 while she was serving in Madrid and I in Khartoum. In trying to capture her life and what foreign service meant to Zandra I have drawn on our letters and emails as well as her irregularly kept diary and documents where available. Recollections of her friends and colleagues have greatly enriched my efforts to do Zandra justice.

### **Early Years Europe and Connecticut**

## 1951-1969

Zandra was born November 21, 1951 at the 97th General Hospital in Frankfurt, Germany in the then U.S. Zone of Occupation. This was an Army Hospital built in 1941 by the German Luftwaffe and the birthplace of many military and civilian dependents in post war Germany. Her parents Joseph Flemister and Pearl Jenkins met in Alaska where they married June 28, 1948. Zandra was an only child in a family that soon broke up. Her Aunt Gloria Jenkins was the only other relative with whom she was in regular contact.

Zandra long ago lost contact with her paternal relatives. Other than that they were a very racially mixed family some identifying as Black, some White and some who chose to immigrate to Liberia, I know little. Family oral history has it that a white Flemister ancestor came to the United States from Germany. He fought for the Confederacy then fell in love with a freedwoman in post Civil War Griffin, Georgia and lived with her in common law in defiance of Georgia law until his death around 1900. Family lore continues that he was buried in secret because the white establishment would not tolerate burying a Confederate veteran in an African American church cemetery while the family would not consent to burying him with the rebels. On her maternal side family oral history recalls an ancestor, Lexus, who as a teenager organized a plantation escape to Union lines in Florida then rallied to the Union as a teamster for the rest of the war.

In July 1977 as she was applying to the State Department, Zandra wrote in an autobiographic sketch that her father “was at his permanent duty station in Germany with the Allied Occupation Forces” when she was born. From Zandra’s birth certificate we learn that Joseph Benjamin Flemister was a Sergeant First Class serving in the 547th Engineering Combat Battalion born in 1921 in Griffin Georgia. He either enlisted or was drafted in 1943. Her mother Pearl Jenkins Flemister was “on a temporary duty assignment as a member of the United States Foreign Service.” My understanding is that she was detailed to the U.S. High Commission as a microfilm technician. Unfortunately Zandra’s birth certificate documents only that her mother was born in Hartford, Connecticut. By her death certificate we know that her date of birth was March 21, 1924.

Zandra continued her narrative: “Before I had uttered my first word, we relocated from Germany to France: briefly in Reims, and then more permanently in Laon [a small city a few miles south of the French-Belgian border]. I attended a french speaking public school for toddlers in Laon. This was consistent with my parents’ philosophy that we avail ourselves of the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge of the language, economics and customs of the indigenous peoples of the countries we might visit. As a family, we also involved ourselves in the community activities and, at a discreet distance, the politics of the town.”

Zandra’s parents separated when she was 5. Although they never divorced, Zandra had very limited contact with her father who died in 1989. In 1991 after the death of her mother we met with a financial advisor to discuss using part of her inheritance to create a stock portfolio. One of the stocks he proposed was Kodak. Zandra refused. Only then

did I learn that her mother had journeyed to Rochester, New York to accept a job offer at Kodak only to be turned away when it was realized that she was African American.

Zandra and her mother relocated to Connecticut initially living in East Hartford with her maternal grandparents Samuel M. Jenkins and Lela Barnett Jenkins. They were part of the great migration having resettled from Florida after the First World War. The 1940 Census lists Samuel's age as 47 and Lela's 36. The latter is probably a transcription error. The order of service for her funeral states that she was born December 19, 1898 in Live Oak, Florida and her parents were Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Barnett. She died April 20, 1990 age 91. This is consistent with my memories of her in the 1980s.

I never met Samuel Jenkins whom I understand died in the early 1960s of diabetes. Zandra's grandfather, a WWI vet, was very active in the Hartford African American community with good ties to the white community including Katherine Hepburn's father with whom he collaborated on community health issues. In December 1930 he is noted on Gloria Jenkins' birth certificate as the Secretary of the North End Branch of the Hartford YMCA. Zandra said that In the 1930s he purchased land in South Glastonbury and established Camp Bennett aimed at serving the needs of urban Black youth. He is listed in the 1940 Census as the Executive Director of a social center, presumably Camp Bennett.

Zandra wrote of her Connecticut childhood. "The trek home and to a new way of life was quite exciting and, at times, somewhat traumatic. Whatever the difficulty, the soothing presence and compassion of my grandparents made the transition easier. Besides quickly structuring the time by enrolling me in ballet and piano classes, they always managed to convince [my] parents that time could be taken from academic pursuits for such things as ice skating, horseback riding and swimming. The educational adjustment was not quite the complement of my social adaptation. (Here and elsewhere she refers to her parents. I don't know if this is because they were still collaborating in her rearing or if she didn't want to acknowledge their estrangement.)

C.A. Barbour Elementary was hardly the counterpart of the European school that I had attended. In addition to the very early intake age, the primary level French system was more rigorous and demanding than the comparable Hartford system. My family quickly detected the difference and embarked upon a systematic program of supplementation in the several areas of academic deficiency. While this was a wise and farsighted approach by my parents, to the eyes of that five year-old it was a colossal devastation — Where had all the 'flowers' (free time) gone?"

Zandra did some traveling as a child noting domestic trips to Florida, Texas, and New York. The Florida and New York trips would have been to visit family as some on her maternal side had remained in Florida while others had resettled in Harlem. Zandra recalled knowing great aunts there. In that context she said that she had Seminole ancestry as well as African and European and noted that several of her great aunts had "very Indian features." She went with a classmate to Jamaica staying with her friend's

grandmother. In her high school years she spent summers working as a camp counselor at Camp Bennett.

Zandra's narrative continues: "After Barbour Elementary came Willowbrook Park Junior High and, paradoxically but quite understandably, a welcomed increase in the pace and challenge of the curriculum. It was heaven, I was faring particularly well academically and my flowers were back (and in full bloom). Those intermediate school years were rather carefree and uneventful years; but, the vicissitudinal nature of life dictates that bliss not continue unabated. At the end of that period, things took a rather sudden and harsh turn."

Zandra was beginning to experience racism. Sometimes overt, sometimes subtle it would be a constant in her professional life. She wrote: "Just prior to entering High School, the family moved to South Glastonbury, a predominately white suburb of Hartford. We were the Blacks that made South Glastonbury predominately white."

Zandra told me that the community in the 1960s was mainly Italian-American and the economy was dominated by shed tobacco farms (this was the practice of drying and aging tobacco in open air barns). Describing the reaction she continued: "The local people were not very appreciative of the name change [to predominantly white]. They expressed their discontent in diverse subtle (airs of disdain) and overt (threatening late night telephone calls) ways. Their agitation at the advent of the 1960's style busing-for-integration (one-way, black to white, student exchange programs), only served to worsen our plight. It was particularly difficult for me. But we are a family with a wealth of perseverance."

Zandra elaborated on how she began to develop strategies to cope and then thrive. "With the moral support of my family, I overcame the initial hostility to my presence and managed to break into the periphery of the Glastonbury High School social world. I was active in school politics, became a member (majorette) of the marching band, and joined the international club. Those extra curricular involvements proved to be valuable social, as well as academic, experiences. Indeed, taken together, all of the events of that era of my youth were invaluable. Even the racial strife played an important part in my development. It taught me the necessity of preparedness: vigilance in the identification, isolation, analysis and resolution of difficult situations. I acquired the rare ability to integrate diplomacy and aggressiveness into a workable whole; i.e., the fine art of mixing finesse and tact with considerable aggression." By the time I met Zandra there was not a trace of aggression in how she presented herself to the world, especially as a professional Black woman. Rather, there was an ability to assess how she was perceived and how to successfully navigate professional cultures.

During this time Zandra also learned to be comfortable with guns. Her mother mostly worked teaching when she could get jobs. As a sideline she raised hunting beagles. One of Zandra's jobs was to run the beagles in the woods and fields. She'd shoot a pistol to get them used to gunshots while hunting. Zandra was always comfortable around dogs.

She grew to love cats which she had most of her adult life and all of our married life until she had to go into long term care.

Pearl Flemister was active in the Civil Rights movement and through her example so was Zandra. The then 11 year old daughter joined her mother as part of a large bus caravan from Hartford for the March on Washington. Zandra liked to say that her memories were of a footsore girl with thousands of other children soaking their feet in the reflecting pool. By 1968, now 16, she was part of the Poor People's Campaign March on Washington. A little later she joined the Poor People's Campaign contingent protesting outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago. She recalled running from the police but fortunately was never assaulted or arrested. Zandra also remembered raiding buffets in some of the major hotels.

### **Boston and Northeastern University 1969-1973**

Zandra moved to Boston in the summer of 1969 to begin college at Northeastern University in their work-study program. As a poor young woman with effectively a single parent finding a program that she could afford and trying to avoid beginning professional life not overwhelmingly debt burdened was vital. Zandra wrote that she was accepted to Northeastern and its' Black Studies Summer Institute. She continued: "I was awarded academic scholarships in each instance. The Summer Institute was extremely challenging and, as a microcosm of undergraduate school, was a tremendous preparatory program. It also dovetailed nicely with my primary interest and undergraduate major, Political Science."

She was on an accelerated program that put her on a track to graduate in January 1973. Zandra had a variety of jobs including working in the alumni office and as a receptionist. She was a dormitory counselor which included stints on desk by the front door. In 2004 she took me around the campus including to her old dorm. By now it was co-ed and she startled the man on the desk with a cheery "I used to have your job." Zandra told me she also earned money writing and editing papers for other students.

Zandra also was vice president of what she described as "a 400 student internal organization." She continued as a majorette and, she told me, did a bit of fashion modeling. Zandra explored Boston's rich culture and with her Northeastern girl friends the social and dating life of the many Boston campuses. She told me that they made a pact to cover each others' backs to ensure that at least one of them was always sober and none of them vulnerable to sexual predators.

Zandra was enrolled in the international student exchange study system. For her "it was the student exchange program and the resumed travel that was the most exciting, and perhaps the most educational aspect" of her undergraduate years.

In her Sophomore year Zandra traveled to the Soviet Union. Of this experience she wrote that it “was the culmination of my participation in an educational research project undertaken by the Board of Education of the City of New York. I was the sole student representative among a panel of visiting American educators. As such, I was of particular interest to the Russian and visiting foreign students. They asked many searching questions about our educational system and offered stimulating and unexpected insights into their own.” The group toured schools and attended seminars in Moscow and Leningrad. She was also able to attend Russian opera and ballet and experience a bit of nightlife in Soviet night clubs.

While Zandra enjoyed her time in the Soviet Union her Junior year studies at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico truly fired her. She arrived there by bus traveling across the U.S. and Mexico marveling at all she discovered of the United States outside her New England, New York and Florida frame of reference. This she wrote expanded her horizons and “engendered appreciation of the States and our southern neighbor.”

Guadalajara was her first exposure to the Spanish language and a culture influenced by its Spanish heritage. Unknowable to her she was gaining preparation for her first two assignments as a Foreign Service Officer. She studied Spanish, Latin Government and Art. Zandra wrote: “The school was exciting both substantively and methodologically; however, the country and its people emanated a charm and dignity that overshadowed all else. It was especially interesting to observe a Spanish society in its attempt to integrate yet limit the almost overwhelming influence of its dominant neighbor to the North. The phenomenon was one of a culture attempting to strain out...the superimposition of another culture on its lifestyle. Amazingly, it worked!”

Zandra sought to capture how Mexico moved her as she traveled by bus. “It was enough to make one a poet. Its rich red fields lush with vegetation reached out so immediately from the distance and, just as suddenly, gave way to barren, lifeless plains. Nature had apparently seen fit to provide a topographical depiction of Mexican life as a backdrop to our scenic voyage. Everywhere its art, culture and history was evident. The bus trip was a long and tumultuous undertaking but...it was a fitting end to a fruitful college career.”

**Hartford Interlude**  
**Joining the Secret Service**  
**1973-1974**

Zandra returned from Boston in January 1973. Having just turned 21 she was about to start her first full time job as an assistant buyer in the May Company system, at its G. Fox & Company subsidiary. Zandra wrote that she “was assigned to manage a department of approximately fourteen salespersons. It was also my task to purchase various goods for the main store and its several branches.” Zandra didn’t mention in her narrative that she considered this a step backwards. She did not find much challenge in the job. She was

assigned the infants and toddlers account and her purchasing duties revolved around baby clothes. Zandra felt trapped in Hartford and yearned for broader horizons.

A chance meeting at a Hartford jobs fair led Zandra to the Secret Service. “It was government service for which I had prepared, and to government service I was destined to go.” Zandra encountered a recruiter for the Uniformed Secret Service. He told her she was overqualified and encouraged her to apply to be a Special Agent. This she did and “after satisfying the rigorous examination and security clearance prerequisites” was accepted. In August 1974 Zandra was sworn in as a Special Agent and assigned to the Washington Field Office. She loaded everything she could pack into her 1974 AMC Hornet and drove to Washington. There she moved into an efficiency apartment in the Tilden Hall Apartments on the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Tilden. She was 22.

### **Secret Service Special Agent 1974-1978**

In her 1977 narrative Zandra gave a short thumbnail of her first three years as a Special Agent. She began by noting that she was a pioneer, the first Black woman so hired. “It was a busy first year. In addition to my routine duties, I attended and completed the Treasury Criminal Investigator and U.S. Secret Service Special Agent Training programs. I also began case work on criminal matters running the gamut from forgery and counterfeiting, to pendent jurisdiction offenses involving assault.” (Pendent jurisdiction is the authority of a United States federal court to hear a closely related state law claim against a party already facing a federal charge.) “My responsibilities... ranged from...arrests to case workups and in-court testimony.”

As Zandra was learning her job she was also learning Washington. She memorized the street grid block by block driving street by street. For undercover work she was issued a purple Plymouth Fury with a police package engine and drivetrain. Zandra said the car, which was from a drug asset forfeiture, fooled no one. When she was stopped at a light, little children would yell out “hi police lady.!”

Within her neighborhood Zandra found three favorite restaurants all a short bus ride or an easy walk, all now sadly gone. They were the storied Yenching Palace where Henry Kissinger often conducted informal negotiations, the Roma—an old style Italian restaurant complete with the many stuffed big game trophies of the late proprietor—and the Thai Room. When we began dating she introduced me to each. With her first earnings she bought a window air-conditioner. Later she moved up to the one-bedroom apartment where she was living when we met. At an estate sale she bought a desk which is still in our bedroom as is the bedroom set with a canopy bed that was her joy.

Zandra noted with pride that she had been on Presidential and Vice Presidential protection details. She also occasionally was on detail for Speaker of the House Carl Albert who was next in line of succession until December 1974 when Nelson Rockefeller



was confirmed as Vice President. During the Ford Administration Presidential details sometimes entailed trips to Colorado. Zandra learned to ski, a skill she needed in the line of duty. Zandra loved skiing and skied during her first two tours as a Foreign Service Officer in Argentina and Spain before giving up skiing. There could be other small perks. To her mother's great joy she wrangled her a ticket to one of President Carter's inaugural balls.

Zandra was discrete in keeping confidences she learned. She spoke in our conversations of her great respect for President Ford whom she considered under-appreciated for his intelligence and ability. She also respected Betty Ford. I have her autographed photos with each taken at a 1976 White House staff party. I suspect that both were taken by a White House photographer whom she was dating. In other photos he took he skillfully caught her young beauty.

Zandra took pride in her work providing protection for the First Daughter Susan Ford, especially her skill at safeguarding her during dates without being obtrusive. Later she would help protect First Daughter Amy Carter when Amy attended the Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School. She'd wedge herself uncomfortably in one of the classroom desks in the back and laugh about calls on the playground to other agents "she's moving from the swings to the jungle gym." I caught a quick glimpse of her in that role in a PBS documentary on the Carter Presidency.

The spouses of former Presidents are entitled to lifetime protection. During Zandra's tenure Bess Truman, who died at the age of 97 in 1982, was the oldest living spouse. Zandra never drew that duty but agents who did told her it was very much like being high paid caretakers.

By contrast Lady Bird Johnson, also a widow, was in active good health. She traveled regularly to Washington and Virginia to visit her children and grandchildren and attend meetings of the Smithsonian Board of Directors. Lady Bird quickly took a liking to Zandra and often asked for her. Sometimes there was time to meticulously plan a protection detail itinerary—good practice for when Zandra served as a Control Officer in State. Other times she was called on very short notice as when Lady Bird would decide to visit the National Zoo to "see the new critter" talked about at a Board meeting. Then Zandra would roar up to the Zoo minutes ahead of Lady Bird and do a quick visual reconnaissance. She'd grab the nearest Park Rangers telling them they'd just been deputized.

Describing her duties during the 1976 Presidential primaries she wrote: "I traveled throughout the United States preparing the security advance for...presidential aspirants. The advance work entailed planning of motorcade routes and speech sites, and coordinating security with local law enforcement personnel." Zandra was initially on the protection detail assigned to Oklahoma Senator Fred Harris during his brief Presidential campaign. She then shifted to Arizona Representative Mo Udall's campaign. Udall battled Jimmy Carter throughout the Democratic primaries repeatedly coming in second. Zandra said that Udall had two standard speeches which his detail dubbed the A Speech

and the B Speech. She could identify which one he would deliver in seconds. In the 1976 Presidential campaign she provided protection for Elizabeth Dole as part of the team guarding Senator Bob Dole, President Ford's running mate.

During Zandra's time in Secret Service, Secretary of State Kissinger requested Secret Service protection which he preferred to that of Diplomatic Security. He had 2 dedicated details but had such an active travel schedule that he would sometimes outrun his details on returning to Washington. Then his protection fell to the Washington Field Office. Zandra sometimes got the graveyard shift walking with Kissinger and his dog in the early morning hours. Kissinger would mildly flirt with her which she found amusing and curse his dog for dragging him out at 4:00 AM.

Then in the Department of Treasury, the Secret Service guarded the Secretary of the Treasury. Zandra wrote: "In 1976, I traveled throughout South America with former Secretary of the Treasury William Simon. During much of that politico-economic journey, I was specifically detailed to personally protect Mrs. Simon. As a result of my handling of an extremely traumatic and potentially dangerous crisis...I received an official commendation."

Zandra elaborated to me. This was during a rash of kidnappings of high profile Americans for ransom. Zandra observed the driver of the car in which Mrs. Simon and Zandra were riding was acting in a suspicious manner. She assessed he was part of a kidnapping effort and was preparing to abduct Mrs. Simon. Zandra drew her gun on him. She never learned if her suspicions were well founded. That was the closest she came in the Secret Service to firing on a person.

She did tell me a much more amusing weapons story. Zandra and other Agents liked to go to lunch at a small cafe near Treasury. One day as they were relaxing and chatting a clueless crook robbed the cashier. He had about a half dozen guns leveled on him before he got to the door. During this time protective armor consisted of bulletproof vests. When she wore the only one designed for a woman she said she felt like Mae West, quite the image for a slim lady of 5'9" who weighed 130 pounds.

Zandra concluded her narrative declaring that she was "proud of my Secret Service status, enjoy the work and take the responsibilities of the job very seriously" but that her "real interests, and more importantly my heart, is in foreign affairs." Striking an idealistic note she averred. "There must be a coalescence of might and humanitarianism into a strong and lasting peace. America, with its democratic ideals, resources and demonstrated compassion will no doubt lead the way. I feel a compulsion to lend my talents, skills and energies to the achievement of that goal."

Zandra's explanation why she wanted to become a Foreign Service Officer captured her passion for the work of an FSO that she never lost. Her Secret Service narrative left much unsaid. She indeed took pride in many of her accomplishments but the Secret Service was a poor fit. She wanted out. The prestigious public image masked the reality of long hours, mandated overtime and difficult working conditions. As Zandra put it

there was little romance strapped into a jump seat in a C-141 smelling gas fumes from the presidential limos as she watched them swaying back and forth chained to the deck of the plane. Nor did she take much joy from an icy night on a rooftop observation post.

Moreover, as Zandra told me early in our dating, she quickly concluded that her advancement prospects were poor. After completing her investigative training Zandra was assigned to the Washington Field Office Check Squad which handled Treasury check thefts and related crimes. There she stayed until she resigned. She knew her career would center on unglamorous soul killing investigative work. These frustrations come out in 1977 diary entries. Zandra told me she feared after 20 years of this work she would wake up one day shriveled and bitter. She didn't want that.

The Check Squad years did yield an amusing 2010 reunion story. As an Office of the Historian contractor I was researching at the Carter Presidential Library. Zandra came down with me. We had lunch on our first day with several archivists including Jim Yancey who did a double take when he recognized Zandra. Jim was a guard at the Washington Islamic Center in 1977 when the Hanafi Muslims took it over. He told us how impressed he was when he was called in for a Secret Service interview the next day. Zandra was the interviewer. She quickly deflated Jim's excitement when she told him the interview was for a stolen Treasury check case. Jim had been the victim of a mailbox theft. His was one of the routine cases she'd been assigned to try to close. Shortly before we left Atlanta Jim gave Zandra a nice Jimmy Carter Presidential coffee mug in belated thanks.

The core of her unhappiness however was pervasive racism. Zandra was sworn in August 7, 1974 as one of 4 women in a class of 33 new Special Agents. Only then did she learn she was a pioneer as the first Black woman. The culture was sink or swim dominated by a hostile white "old boys network" that didn't trust her and didn't want her. Zandra's frustration and that of her Black colleagues is a thread in her 1977 diary entries as is her sense that change was beyond their control.

In 2000 Zandra learned of the Black Secret Service Agent's class action suit (settled in January 2017). She was so appalled that the racism she suffered persisted 20 years beyond her resignation that she agreed to give a declaration to trace discrimination back to 1974 and support a class action certification. This she did on leave from Seoul in March 2001. In her declaration Zandra characterized her Check Office assignment as a dead end noting that her "repeated requests to be assigned to other, more career-enhancing squads were all denied" and that "no other Special Agents stayed on the Check Squad as long as I did." She added that another African American woman hired after her was pigeonholed there and soon quit.

Zandra believed she was used as a token. "While on the Check Squad I was asked to do certain protective work when the Secret Service needed to show the world that it had an African-American female Special Agent. I was the 'show' African-American female agent that the Secret Service rotated around to different details to make it appear racially diverse....Although I was seen periodically in public on these details, I was never given

any supervisory responsibilities. I felt I was there solely for exhibition.” As for her details to protect Lady Bird Johnson, Zandra asserted: “I believe that I was requested because Mrs. Johnson wanted an African-American Special Agent by her side to protect her when largely African-American crowds approached her to talk to her. Being assigned to protect her was not career enhancing because it was not challenging work and it prevented me from working on cases that would advance my career.”

Elaborating on protecting Mrs Simon from a potential kidnapping Zandra stated: “We arrived at the airport in a location near the Amazon River and got in our car to leave. I was seated in the front seat next to the driver....As the motorcade pulled out of the airport, our driver steered our car out of the motorcade and began to drive us into the jungle. The driver did not speak English and did not understand my instructions to him to return to the motorcade. I began yelling ‘hotel’ to him, indicating that he should return us to the hotel, but the driver continued to take us into an increasingly forested area. Left with no other option, I pulled out my Secret Service-issued revolver and pointed it at the driver, and forced him to drive us to the hotel. When we arrived, I arrested him, and he was taken in for questioning. A dangerous incident like this, in which a protectee’s life is in immediate danger, is very important in the Secret Service. A Special Agent who handles a crisis situation such as this is usually recognized with an award or commendation. Two week after this crisis incident, I received a hand-delivered note from Secretary Simon, thanking me for my work protecting his wife, however I received no formal recognition in my personnel file from my supervisors.” (Here Zandra is being more candid than in her 1977 biographic sketch. She now felt free to attest to the double standard under which she worked in the Secret Service.)

Zandra also suffered from sexual harassment. She was casually denigrated by white male agents enjoying a cheap laugh at her as a prostitute. In her declaration Zandra stated: “while I was on traveling assignments, male Special Agents would knock on the door of my hotel room late at night and say things like, ‘open up...you know you want us.’ I reported this to my supervisor, but to my knowledge no action was taken, and these incidents continued to happen.”

While conjectural, Zandra’s Secret Service years may have factored in her developing dementia. I speculated on this in a January 2016 Foreign Service Journal article published a few months after Zandra went into long term care, <http://afsa.org/foreign-service-officers-alzheimers-journey>. The possible triggers are the constant emotional stress of her work environment and physical trauma.

There is a growing understanding of linkages between severe concussion, especially when experienced by persons in early to mid 20s, and dementia. In March 1976 Zandra, then 24, was knocked out when the car she was transporting had a blowout on an Indiana Interstate and rolled. She was in a second minor accident as a passenger. I do not know if she suffered whiplash.

Additionally Zandra had to qualify monthly on the shooting range. She is a tall and slim woman. Zandra said because of her build, qualifying on long guns always left her

shooting shoulder badly bruised (by contrast she handled an uzi with ease). Fellow agents told her they saw her shoulder blade displacing from the recoil. In Argentina Zandra told her colleague Debbie Bolton that she cried during shotgun drills because she was in such pain. For a person so guarded in her emotions that was a remarkable statement.

Zandra took a salary cut to transfer into the State Department. As Zandra was settling in as a Vice Consul in Argentina she was subpoenaed to testify in a minor check fraud case. Zandra was pitched to return to Secret Service. She declined.

### **Joining the Foreign Service A-100**

Zandra was sworn in to the Foreign Service June 27, 1978 as a member of the 136th A-100 class. I first saw her that day standing with the 3 other Black women in our class of 35 new FSOs. They were quite obviously sizing up the class. Our class did very well. Three of us made Ambassador, Frank Ricciardone, Dennise Mathieu, and Lauren Moriarty (Lauren Peters in 1978). About a third including Zandra made it into the Senior Foreign Service. One of our class members became a Tehran hostage on his first tour, another died young of cancer, one was denied tenure. A handful, including me, left the Foreign Service fairly quickly. Zandra served 33 years.

In A-100 Zandra was recognized for her maturity, steadiness, and good interpersonal skills, all attributes that would be strengths during her foreign service career. This could play amusingly. Part way through A-100 we went to Harper's Ferry for team building exercises. One was a negotiating game to peacefully resolve a nuclear standoff. Each team chose two negotiators whose job was to build trust. Zandra's team picked her and another. The first round they were nuked. Zandra's team was shocked. All agreed that Zandra conveyed trust and had been a fine choice. Unfortunately no one choosing her co-negotiator noted he'd cleaned out several of the opposing team at cards.

Neither Zandra nor I scored high on our Measure of Language Aptitude Test (MLAT). This proved a fair measure of our challenges learning a new language. Language aptitude probably played into Zandra's selection to serve in the Consular Section in Buenos Aires. There was irony in this. I too was assigned as a Consular Officer to Buenos Aires, the only tandem tour handed out in our class. This was about 5 weeks into our careers and we hadn't started dating. I badly wanted to go to Turkey or South Asia. I wrangled out of Argentina and into Pakistan. John Schultz, whom I bumped to Buenos Aires, was reprogrammed in Spanish language training to Lima. Zandra visited him and his wife a few times in Peru. Zandra and I didn't see each other from her February 1979 departure until I returned from Karachi in September 1980.

Having completed the 5 week ConGen (Consulate General) Rosslyn course simulating work in a Consular Section, Zandra headed to Buenos Aires and reported to work

February 16, 1979. I saw her off at Dulles. She and a classmate J. M. Miller, who was headed to Quito, spent a couple of days in Miami. They observed Immigration and Naturalization Service officers determining whom to admit and attended immigration administrative judicial hearings. At this point in her young career Zandra was having typical first tour jitters about her ability to succeed in Foreign Service. Neither Spanish nor ConGen had come easy. Zandra confided these fears only to her diary. When feeling overwhelmed by all she had to understand in the Foreign Affairs Manual she reassured herself that she had mastered the U.S. Criminal Code in Secret Service.

### **Learning the Consular Ropes Argentina 1979-1980**

Buenos Aires was a very challenging first assignment. It tested Zandra's resolve to make the Foreign Service her career. While later tours posed their own professional and personal challenges Argentina combined both. It was Zandra's toughest posting and a poor introduction to the Foreign Service. The Consular Section was poorly managed. The hours were brutal as Argentines tried desperately to get out of a country under harsh military rule and in economic chaos. The section went through 3 Consul Generals in Zandra's 18 months. Zandra had a high opinion of the second but he transferred after 11 months because his wife hated Argentina. Morale was terrible and not helped by the high cost of living and rampant inflation. And, Zandra was a rare African American woman in a racist and xenophobic cultural environment.

All of that notwithstanding, Zandra wrote me in November that she loved the scope of consular work and the opportunities it provided her to make an impact on the lives of others. This proved decisive in her decision to make a life in the foreign service. During her career Zandra had tours that focused on human resources, narcotics and natural disasters in addition to consular assignments in Washington and abroad. As she advanced Zandra remained proud of what she could accomplish as a Consular Officer. Her ambition was to become a Consul General which she attained in 2005.

Her first day on the job Zandra learned that 6 of the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) in her section had been fired for visa fraud. She wrote me a few days later that "they were not only issuing fraudulent visas, but also falsifying local Argentine documents i.e. certificates of property to make an applicant look better when a consul reviewed the case. As a result of the firings we now have temporary nationals and U.S. dependents helping in the NIV [Non Immigrant Visa] section, and the section is inefficient to say the least. Myself and Buddy Williams (the other NIV vice consul) have worked from 8 am to 7 pm almost every day." (Debbie Bolton, whom Zandra succeeded in the NIV section, provides additional background on fraud and Consular management issues in her oral history.)

Zandra was immediately plunged into running the NIV section supervising this ad hoc team. She wrote me "I was made chief of the NIV section by the Consul because I am a FSR-7 and Buddy is a FSR-8." While this made sense from a rank standpoint it was hardly an efficient approach to utilizing her colleague's superior experience. In early March Zandra wrote that she and Williams together had split 120 morning interview appointments (Zandra doing about 50) and spent the afternoons processing applications delivered by travel agents. By late March they were issuing 400 visas a day and rejecting about 140 applicants.

Six weeks into her tour Zandra wrote me lamenting that even as the NIV section got sporadic help from other parts of the Embassy "the Consul never helps." She continued: "Starting this week our nationals will be working in two shifts, so the consulate will be open from 8 am to 8 pm. I will work the full day and get overtime." Then she added: "Two nights last week Buddy and I had to be taken home by the Marines in their van for our own safety. One time because about two hundred people were turned away. Some of them told a national they would get the Vice Consul. The other time we had people in our waiting room past 9 pm and our nationals had to leave. We had to have a Marine get them out. What a scene."

There were moments of humor. In early April several of the FSNs noticed that Zandra was shaking on the visa line. They feared she was having a nervous breakdown. But, as Zandra later told me, she was having a cultural confusion moment. She was chugging Argentine coffee as she did American. Not realizing the high octane of the caffeine she was wired and sick to her stomach. Debbie Bolton elaborated: "The Argentine espresso coffee hit her hard. She had to lie down after her first one from the Embassy cafeteria." Zandra continued her now managed love of Argentine coffee.

Other moments boarded on the surreal. Wealthy South Africans often traveled to Argentina, some by yacht. They would look at the Consular list, see the name Zandra Flemister listed, assume that she was a German-American and request her. In a sense they were right, just not the German-American they were expecting. This quietly amused her. When Zandra moved to Immigrant Visas she often issued to elderly ethnic Italians who were immigrating to help with the grandchildren. Putting them under oath she would often have to gently tell them that the fascist salute they'd learn under Mussolini was not appropriate for the U.S.

In late June Zandra wrote that in addition to her 12 hour days the section had added Saturdays to try to clear the backlog. Five days later she wrote they were now working Sundays. Ambassador Raul Castro, bothered by the line in front of the Embassy directed a shift to an appointment system which did not solve the line problem but did prompt "a riot outside the gate. People tried to push into the Consulate. The marines and the police were able to control it." The next day they issued a record 1217 visas. By this point "my staff is crumbling around me." While they had gained a WAE (When Actually Employed) retired consular officer they were still badly behind.

Zandra was frustrated that neither Consul General nor the Consul—who had the IV duties—provided any help. She wrote: “The rest of the embassy feels the Consul General...and the Consul...have failed in their jobs; to let the situation get this bad in NIVs....The Acting DCM sent a cable to the Dept. stating in no uncertain terms we have a visa crisis and help is needed now. We could easily issue 1500 visas a day with another officer and two more locals.” On the 4th of July Zandra wrote that the section issued 1,448 visas breaking the post record. Ambassador Castro came to the section with two bottles of champagne to toast.

Ambassador Castro pushed Washington for more Consular Officers. Work conditions started to improve with the addition of a third NIV officer. A new Consul General also helped as he instituted some beneficial procedural changes. In July a mid level officer Jimmy Carter joined the Consular Section and was assigned to head the NIV unit. In diary entries Zandra noted mixed feelings no longer being her boss but hoping to benefit from Carter’s experience and relieved that her colleague Williams no longer resented reporting to her.

Zandra had an apartment allowance in Argentina and used an apartment broker. She got into an apartment in April for which she paid \$980 a month. The Embassy provided furniture which she wrote me was good quality. To her shock she learned that apartments typically didn’t come with light fixtures and she had to buy them herself.

When she could, Zandra was starting to get out in Buenos Aires. She quickly developed a friendship network with Debbie Bolton and other women in the embassy. They would go out for shopping, movies, meals and to unwind over drinks. To relieve work stress she was jogging in a park across from her apartment and taking jazz dance classes two days a week. Zandra watched Argentine TV and went to plays to improve her Spanish.

Zandra became particularly close friends with Barbara Johnson, a USIS (United States Information Service) Secretary and the only other Black woman in the embassy. Barbara had arrived at post shortly after Zandra. She sometimes stayed over with Zandra while she was apartment hunting. In Late May they took a boat trip to Montevideo, Uruguay, Zandra’s first break from work and her first trip out of Argentina. Within Argentina she traveled for skiing when she could, including a week of skiing classes in September. In March Zandra went to Mendoza with a group of Embassy women to the annual wine festival.

She was finding the Argentine economy expensive even with a 10 per cent cost of living allowance. In early October Zandra shared a cable in which Ambassador Castro detailed the impact of rampant inflation and pleaded with the Department to raise the cost of living allowance before he lost more FSOs to despair and resignation. Zandra wrote of the impact on her: “quart of ice cream \$15, fill up of gas (22 gals) \$14, visit to eye doctor \$75...The commissary helps but things are expensive too...I go to movies and to exhibitions almost every week. The only time I eat out is for pizza. Movies are subsidized and cost only \$3.50. At the exhibitions like the car show or flower show I get in for free (one of my few diplomatic privileges). My money just goes here. I am able to



save almost nothing.” She bartered cigarettes and scotch for maintenance services at her apartment. Because of Argentina’s hyperinflation these were valuable commodities.

In a May letter Zandra broke her silence on the racism and sexual harassment she was experiencing on a regular basis. “No problems so far in the embassy. When I walk down the street however I get all kinds of comments from men, some of them very nasty. When I am jogging they follow me in cars. I try my best to ignore them. Even though I don’t think they will bother me (there is no street crime here) I am not at ease in public. How can I be, everyone stares at me, especially children. A girl from the embassy and I went out. She introduced me to one of her Argentine friends and without asking he put his hands in my hair to feel it. I was so surprised I didn’t know how to react. So there you have it, what it is like to be Black in B.A.”

Zandra told me that she later realized because of her light and racially mixed complexion that some Argentines mistook her for Brazilian. When household shopping she was sometimes given chits on the assumption that she was a maid. All this added an element of nationalism and xenophobia to the toxic brew.

Argentina was in the grip of a harsh military dictatorship that had instilled a climate of fear. Although Zandra had discussed human rights issues during her pre-departure consultations this was her first experience living and working in an authoritarian environment. Her status and actions as an American diplomat had consequences. She learned to navigate it on the fly. One of the first lessons was never to talk politics in public with an Argentine. It was too dangerous. A second was to carefully watch her surroundings when out for a walk or a jog. If she saw a “man in the box” sign this meant that an important official lived nearby and she had just entered a shoot on sight zone.

President Carter’s determination to make human rights an element of U.S.-Argentine relations was an additional element of tension that directly impacted Zandra. The government was pushing back hard at Embassy efforts to promote human rights and report abuses.

On October 30, 1979 Zandra, Barbara, and their Argentine friend Jose were attacked by three men working for Air Force intelligence. Ambassador Castro hand delivered a diplomatic protest the next day. I had no idea what had happened until late November when I got a letter Zandra wrote November 12. Zandra prefaced her account saying she had refrained from writing until her mood had settled. Since we were talking about marriage she wanted me to know what she had gone through and her state of mind.

### **The Attack**

“On Tuesday Oct. 30 I was invited by Barbara Johnson...[whom I would meet 15 years later in Berlin] to see a private screening of the movie ‘The Main Event’...Afterward Barbara asked me to go jogging with...Jose, an embassy national. They jog at night at an outdoor lighted track. I said yes just to try it. I normally jog in the morning in the park across from my apartment.

We got to the track about 10:30 pm in our jogging clothes. There were about 30 other people jogging...and the track is next to one of the busiest streets in BA. I went around once...but my legs hurt. (I was not used to the paved track), so I stopped and did some exercise to cool down...I sat down near Barb's car on a low fence that goes around the track.

While I was sitting there a car came up and parked next to Barb's. Three men got out. One of them came over to me and started shouting and waving his arms at me in a very aggressive manner. I could not understand his Spanish. I got up and went over to another girl sitting on the fence to sit closer to her and get away from this guy.

As soon as I sat down I saw Jose and Barbara jogging toward me. I got up and walked over to them. Just as I was going to tell Barbara what happened I saw the guy walk up to Jose and start talking to him in a friendly manner. I thought I had made a mistake and he was one of Jose's friends. All of a sudden he hits Jose. Jose goes down; Barbara and I start toward him to help but he hollered 'run run he has a gun.' The two other guys he is with start toward Barbara and me.

We ran to the gate of the police school next to the track. We tell the guard in Spanish to call the police, our friend is being beaten in the park. We hear Jose scream and run back to the park. When we get back the three guys are standing by their car. Guards from the police school have machine guns pointed at them through the fence. Jose is lying motionless in the dark about twenty yards from where he was before. I first thought they had shot him. I went over to him; he was unconscious. I shook him, he came to a bit but was still saying for us to run.

The police arrived and these guys walked over to the police very cocky and sure of themselves and showed military intelligence IDs from the Air Force. I however run with my diplomatic ID issued by the Foreign Ministry. We all went to the police station except Jose who went to the hospital. The girl who had been sitting on the low fence came as a witness. I call the embassy and the Regional Security Officer was at the station in 15 minutes. The police took two guns and knife off the three guys. We were at police station until 5 AM giving long narrative statements....Barbara spent the night with me."

### **The Aftermath**

"Wednesday and Thursday I didn't work. I was too shaken up. Plus I had to break the news to Jose's mother. I spent time at the hospital making arrangements with her for Jose. A cable was sent to Washington outlining the incident. I was told the Ambassador was furious about what happened. He gave a note of protest to the Foreign Ministry demanding a full investigation. [Zandra wrote in her diary that Ambassador Castro delivered his protest note in person.] Jose was in the hospital for two days. He, Barb and I went to Montevideo, Uruguay for the weekend just to get away."

Zandra returned to work November 6 and met with the Consul General about curtailing her tour. “He browbeat me saying I had to stay or the case might be dropped and that I had nothing to fear. I was in no mood to hear this. I broke down in tears.” [That sentence tells me how deeply Zandra was shaken. In all our years of married life I can count on one hand the number of times I saw her cry and never in public.] “Next I saw the personnel officer who said I could leave if I wanted to. That it would not affect my career and in so many words that the ConGen was crazy.

“The next day I saw the DCM and Ambassador. I was impressed by their concern and the official actions they had taken. They both seemed to feel no retaliatory action would be taken by the Air Force against myself or Barb and Jose. That the government was in a bad enough position already to risk it. [Zandra wrote in her diary that Jose’s mother had been threatened.]

On Thursday Nov. 8, 1979 Barb, Jose and I went to court and gave testimony before a judge. This is the trial here. He reads all the testimony and makes his decision. The three guys are still in prison. They are not military but civilian employees of the military. I found out two are brothers and the other a cousin. They had just been paid and were drinking. They were not young guys, one was two years from retirement and stands to lose everything if convicted.”

### **My Thoughts**

“I feel this was not an orchestrated attempt by the government to harass us. As I told the Ambassador it is bad when they go after Third Secretaries of the Embassy without tenure. I think these guys had been drinking, had just gotten paid and are used to pushing people around and getting away with it. They did say to Jose during the fight we want those two black girls you are with. So race did come into play. This is what I wrote before on the street I get all kinds of comments but now I am shaken because I never thought it would turn to violence. I think they wanted to rape Barb and I.”

Zandra closed saying that she had decided to stick it out because she only had 8 more months at post and didn’t want to “harm our chances for a joint assignment.” But she also said that if her next post was as bad as BA she would leave the Foreign Service.

Tex Harris who covered human rights in this period provides perspective in his oral history: “People were arrested and then disappeared, or people were just abducted from the street, where just a car pulled up, generally a Ford Falcon, several people got out of the car, grabbed the person, put him in the back seat of the car, and they drove away, and the individual was never seen again.”

Zandra wrote a week later: “I have trouble sleeping, the slightest noise wakes me up, also I move through the streets much more cautiously than I did before.”

I had no idea of any of this until I got her letters while I was beginning my own post crisis decompression. (The Embassy in Islamabad was mobbed and burned November 21

with 2 Americans and 2 Pakistani FSNs killed. The Lahore American Center was also burned. In Karachi we were attacked but had better police and military protection. As the sole functioning U.S. diplomatic mission in Pakistan we handled the evacuation of staff and dependents from Karachi and other posts. I was declared essential and remained.)

In the same letter detailing the attacks in Pakistan I wrote Zandra how pained and enraged I felt for what she had gone through and my gratitude that she could share her pain and rage at the attack and the shabby treatment by the head of her section. I also told her how moved I was that she had forgone curtailing to preserve a possible joint tour. I wrote that I had tried twice to call her but the Pakistani phone system was too primitive. I didn't cable because there was no privacy.

When we finally talked it over Zandra had changed her mind (or maybe learned more about the circumstances of the attack). She judged it retaliation for Carter Administration criticism of Argentine human rights abuses. I think this is a valid assessment. Harris and others in the Embassy were harassed although never physically attacked. Zandra believed the case against the attackers was opened only due to her diplomatic status. It was closed when she transferred.

In December Zandra was finally able to split her work day between NIV interviews in the morning and the Passports and Citizenship section in the afternoon. With the arrival of Donna Blair, a young Consular Officer beginning a distinguished career, Zandra found a friend and another Black woman with whom she could confide. That helped.

Sometime later she adopted a kitten who hung out by the Consular Section. She named him Ivan and he was with her through Argentina, Spain, and our first year or so in Bethesda. He was nicknamed "Ivan the Terrible." Debbie, who often cat sat in Spain, said it was well merited. I remember Ivan as very possessive of Zandra and not at all fond of me when we met in Madrid.

She also went to a management conference in Bogota. While she had trouble adjusting to the thin air in her diary entries Zandra had nothing but praise for the quality of the conference. I think that Zandra's evacuation to Montevideo and the Bogota conference gave her the necessary time to reflect and resolve to finish out her Argentina tour.

Zandra spent a few days in Lima with our classmate John Schultz and his wife Laurel. John was on his way out of State. Laurel couldn't find meaningful work. She hadn't passed the Foreign Service exam and was deeply frustrated. They talked about giving it one more tour but had pretty much decided that a tandem career in Foreign Service was not possible. He was our first classmate to resign.

The Embassy did not have Junior Rotational Assignment Positions but tried to create opportunities for details to other sections via special projects. (JORPs were a short lived program to rotate junior officers through each of the Embassy sections.) In January 1980 Zandra began splitting her day between Consular duties and Customs and Shipping in the

Administrative Section. There she worked to speed clearing incoming shipments through Argentine customs. She wrote: "I have spent many afternoons at the docks in dirty hot warehouses with shirtless sweating stevedores looking for Embassy shipments. No fun at all." In March she finished her special project and was reassigned full time to the Immigrant Visa section.

As Zandra's tour headed toward the end, so did Ambassador Castro's. He resigned to work on President Carter's reelection campaign. In July Zandra wrote that Mrs. Castro had scandalized Argentine society by holding a yard sale at the residence. In August she wrote that after Assistant Secretary of State William Bowdler canceled an official visit to Argentina Castro resigned and departed the next day but not without a bit of drama. "He decided to take back to the U.S. two parrots he got here...He sold the two dogs he had brought down...to get the parrots on the plane with him the President of Braniff and the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] were called...the parrots made the plane"

Zandra looked forward eagerly to her assignment to Madrid. On August 10, 1980 she wrote me: "I have no misgivings about leaving B.A. my mood is improving with each passing day." In 1980 travel by an American flagged ship was still possible. Zandra sailed August 19 on a Delta Line passenger cargo ship by way of the Strait of Magellan to Lima where she spent a few days with the Schultzes.

Zandra had a blast. At 28 she was by far the youngest passenger. She was made something of an honorary member of the crew, especially for skits for which she got free bar chits. From Lima she flew to New York via Miami thereby avoiding a hijacking of another Braniff flight but having her luggage misrouted to Miami.

### **Courtship and Juggling Careers 1979-1980**

It is something of a miracle that Zandra and I married. They say that a marriage comes out of every A-100 class. We were the marriage that came out of the 136th A-100. We had a whirlwind romance before Zandra left for Argentina and I for Pakistan. We really did not know each other that well. We thought we had chemistry and wanted to see where it would take us, starting with the challenging prospect of 18 months apart. As added complications we were both in the Consular Cone although I had aspirations to convert to the Political Cone. And, we were an inter-racial couple which was still unusual as well as a new experience for each of us.

Our first tours came close to breaking us up. Geography, technology and immaturity on my part were the main factors. We hadn't spent enough time together before we had to part. While we wrote each other constantly—Zandra wrote me at the end of 1979 that I had sent her 47 letters—it wasn't enough. Zandra liked to joke in letters that I would find a Pakistani wife. I never did nor did she an Argentine husband.

Work demands and finances torpedoed a reunion in Greece as did Zandra's fears that she was so unhappy in BA that it would be a struggle to return. Technology made international phone calls between Argentina and Pakistan impossible. Except for one phone call from New Delhi in March 1980 we couldn't talk. Telegrams and short messages using the Automated Visa Lookout System (AVLOS) weren't private. Zandra wondered not unreasonably if my intense courtship was fueled by loneliness.

When they didn't infuriate her my efforts to arrange a joint second assignment exasperated Zandra. From a 2022 perspective I can see that I was trying to micromanage our careers in a manner that could only appear naive if not self-serving. Zandra's approach of accepting the reality that since we were not married we were owed nothing by the State Department and had no right to badger was far more mature.

We had a very supportive Career Management Officer in Pat Langford. Pat was more patient than I, if not Zandra, deserved. Zandra met with Pat in August 1979 when the Secret Service subpoena gave her an unexpected Washington trip. We were offered two joint tours. The first was in the Manila Consular Section which I vetoed because I thought it would trap me professionally. Then Khartoum which I accepted to position myself to re-cone as a Political Officer. Zandra gave the Khartoum Consular slot serious thought but declined. She wrote me "the place has nothing to offer but heat and sand" and expressed her fears that "we would be at each other's throat in no time." A wise decision for her and for us as it turned out. The officer who got it quit before the one year mark and paid for his family's return to California. By contrast Zandra had one of the best assignments of her career in Madrid.

Zandra was back in Washington when I arrived in late September 1980. She was taking a refresher course in Spanish at the Foreign Service Institute to get off language probation. That gave us more time together than we might otherwise have had with my arriving about a month behind Zandra.

Fun times at the Karachi airport caused me to stand Zandra up at Dulles after 18 months of courtship by mail. Along with my father and step-mother, whom Zandra hadn't met, she awaited me but I didn't show up. Thanks to PanAm not passing my messages they didn't know the Karachi flight was delayed 12 hours. I had missed my Frankfurt connection. I got in a day late by way of an overnight in New York. Zandra thought she'd been stiffed. Once I managed to track her down I sorted that out. She'd gotten a little place within walking distance of the Department. We spent as much time together there and at her Aunt Gloria's in NYC as we could. We decided to get engaged. Being in Khartoum and Madrid wasn't great but at least we knew we could get together occasionally as we courted.

## **Madrid 1980-1982**

Madrid was a stroke of luck. It was the only time that I am aware of in Zandra's career that she directly benefited from being an African American. Zandra was in process for assignment to Freetown, Sierra Leone to follow Buenos Aires. She wrote me that this had appeal because of college friendships with students from Sierra Leone and her interest in West African history and culture. However, in Madrid Ambassador Terrence Todman was a demanding boss who tore through staff aides. He also wanted at least one Black FSO in every section. When he tapped the sole Black Consular Officer to become his new staff aide this created an opening. Zandra was offered the position and immediately accepted.

Zandra's Madrid assignment as a Vice Consul in the Consular Section was one of the happiest of her career. Management and working conditions were in sharp contrast to those she experienced in Buenos Aires. Spain had political instability during her tour including an attempted coup and Basque terrorist attacks against the government but Zandra faced none of the racial harassment she experienced in Argentina. She found the openness and lack of fear 5 years after the end of the Franco regime refreshing.

Health nearly aborted Madrid. In November visiting her Aunt Gloria Zandra started hemorrhaging. She was taken to a hospital where a severe fibroid build up was detected. She had an emergency myomectomy requiring blood transfusions. This left her anemic and facing 6 to 8 weeks for full recovery. The assignment could have been broken on medical grounds. Fortunately Zandra was able to go out arriving December 9, 1980 with her Argentine cat Ivan. She was still weak and did not fully recover her stamina until the end of February.

As she recovered Zandra settled in to Madrid. In a December 12 letter she wrote me her first impressions: "I'm working NIV's again but I have been promised it will only be for 6 months. The section is very organized and appears well run. We have a lot of Iranians as they can enter Spain without a visa. All their appointments are scheduled for the afternoon." A few weeks later she elaborated: "EUR is better. Things are set up better. I have a better quality of bosses. The national employees not only know their jobs, they are self starters and need almost no supervision. I am happy to be working with the people I work with. It is a relief after BA."

Zandra was surprised at how many third country nationals were visa shopping in Spain and wondered why they weren't simply referred back to their home country. Debbie Bolton, with whom Zandra was reunited, made similar comments in her oral history.

There were few problems with Spanish applicants. Libyans and Iranians were her greatest challenge. The Libyans were very persistent. They tried Zandra's patience, often showing up the next day after being refused. The Iranians were more challenging. A few weeks into her NIV stint Zandra wrote me: "the Iranians go on and on to plead their case. They all have some kind of medical condition that must be treated in the States or they claim to be high placed officials of the Shah's government. And so it goes every afternoon."

Visas could be issued to Iranian religious or political refugees once their status was verified. Many were Iranian Jews who had reached Spain via Turkey. These issuances sometimes caused bureaucratic problems as INS inspectors at US ports of entry were not always familiar with policy. As for refusals Zandra wrote of applicants accusing her of putting their lives in danger and in some instances fainting. Zandra quickly became known in the Iranian expat community and as a Black woman was highly visible. She was sometimes chased out of stores by refused applicants who wanted to reargue their cases.

Zandra rejoiced at the ending of the hostage crisis and the freeing of our A-100 classmate Steve Lauterbach. She wrote that Ambassador Todman presided over a yellow ribbon cutting ceremony. In her January 26 letter she continued: "Iranians keep coming in to see if the travel ban has been lifted, telling me how unfair the U.S. gov't is to do this to them and on and on."

Unlike Argentina she was enjoying Spain, liked the Spanish and was making friends within and without the Embassy. She mentioned being mistaken for a Moroccan but found it amusing in a way that being mistaken for a Brazilian in Argentina never was. Ironically when she traveled to Morocco she looked so Moroccan that she angered cab drivers who thought she was putting on airs when she would not speak to them in Arabic or French, neither of which she knew. Zandra told me that she felt for the first time in a foreign country that she could step right into a family and not stand out.

Zandra found amusing the efforts of her Spanish colleagues who were horrified by her Argentine Spanish accent to teach her a proper Madrid one. Spain in the early 1980s was still a conservative society. In May Issac Hayes performed and Zandra remarked in her diary "funny going to a concert and not smelling grass."

As in Argentina Zandra was given a housing allowance and worked with a broker to find an apartment. The end of January she settled on one in what she described as "a nice middle class neighborhood" and wrote me: "It has two bedrooms, a kitchen with appliances and a balcony. The furniture is nice, some of it is new and there is a double bed. The building is on a quiet one way street...I will most likely take the bus to work and only drive on the weekends." Her landlord was a retired Spanish naval officer. The apartment was distant from the Embassy but not so far away that Zandra couldn't walk home when the weather was nice or she wanted the exercise.

Zandra moved in early February and quickly discovered that she was in a working class Falange neighborhood filled with Spaniards pining for the late General Franco. Some mornings she'd stop by the Political Section to report on the latest rally. Other times there would be a knock on the door followed by an appeal for the widows and veterans of the Blue Legion (Franco's forces who fought with the Germans on the Eastern Front). But, in contrast to Argentina, she felt no hostility.

While she was in her apartment she was without her car. Not able to afford the Mustang she wanted, Zandra bought a Ford dealer's demo Pinto. It was shipped in November.



February 9 Zandra wrote me: “The word on my car is that it went to Greece. That’s right Greece and will be returning by boat. Wonderful, my car is doing a tour of the Mediterranean without me.” The car finally arrived a few days later minus windshield wipers and gas cap stolen along the way.

As Zandra awaited her car she relied on Debbie for trips to the US Air Force base at Torrejon which had a large commissary and post exchange. Over the course of Zandra’s Madrid tour she would deal with many American citizenship issues arising out of the large U.S. military presence in Spain. Zandra found highly amusing the earnest daily radio spots on such topics as the right hose to wear to match skin color delivered awkwardly in language aimed at not referring to race.

Debbie and Zandra traveled to Toledo which Zandra loved as much as I did after Zandra introduced me to it. This was the first of many trips with friends, with me and solo throughout Spain as well as to Portugal and Morocco. Zandra also joined a ski club and took her first weekend skiing trip to the Pyrenees in late February. She wrote me “I feel about the mountains the way you do about the desert. I can go there for a week-end and come back so refreshed it is like I have been away a week. The air and sky are so different from the city. I love it.”

On February 23 Lt. Col. Antonio Tejero of the Guardia Civil tried to overthrow the government, seizing Parliament and holding its members hostage. His coup collapsed without bloodshed when King Juan Carlos refused to cooperate. Zandra wrote 2 days later: “You owe me a dinner, an armed insurrection is as good as a coup. Shades of South America. Things like this are not supposed to happen in civilized Europe.” Nor are they supposed to happen in the United States. I can only imagine what Zandra would have thought of January 6.

A few days after the coup Zandra attended her first dinner at the Ambassador’s residence. She wrote me: “There were about twenty-five persons; the Ambassadors of Thailand and Egypt and their wives, several titled Spanish royalty, some government people and four of us Embassy types. Formal dress, lots of forks, knives, spoons and glasses. I made light chit chat and managed to get through the evening without a mishap. Now we shall see if I am ever invited back again.” In June she wrote: “I have become a regular for receptions at the residence.” In the same letter she added she had “worked my 1st control room for a CODEL.” [Congressional Delegation]

## **Marriage 1981**

Zandra and I were engaged but it was not until April 1981 that we truly committed to marry. Zandra’s diary and a remarkable letter that she wrote me in early 1981 reflect how hard she grappled with whether to marry. Her career and her independence were her life. They were vital to her sense of herself. After what I believe was a lot of hard thought and

long conversations with Debbie Bolton she decided that in me she had found a partner who understood her sense of self worth and would respect her independence. I think that we succeeded in having a marriage of equals.

We met in Rome and spent two glorious weeks taking in as much Italian culture, good food and new sensations as we could. Zandra arrived first. When I asked her what she did to kill time waiting in the Rome airport she replied “I was picking out pickpockets.” She never lost that situational awareness even in dementia.

One night Zandra sat me down and asked if I wanted to go through with marriage. She shared, as she had in Washington, her fears that marrying her would blight my career. I told her I didn’t believe that and it didn’t matter. So far as I know I never suffered racism for my decision. I don’t think Zandra suffered professionally either by our marriage. But she did suffer from being under appreciated and slighted. I believe that was because of race. Certainly Zandra believed it and I never saw reason to question her judgment and her feelings.

After our week in Rome we took the train to Florence, a city we both loved. Zandra had gotten us a terrific little hotel, a real jewel. We explored the city, seeing the art and architecture of Renaissance Italy. We found a little jewelry shop and a jeweler who talked to us about his time in colonial Eritrea in the 1930s. He made our wedding bands. These will always link us as they linked us to our memories of Florence.

Returning to Madrid was hard for Zandra as was the uncertainty of whether we could marry in September or if leave scheduling and venue might force us to wait until December. Zandra was also coping with her extension in the NIV Section until the arrival of a new Consul General in August and an added workload as the section was shorthanded. To relieve stress she took up karate. She wrote me: “I find I can work off a lot of tension that builds up at work. My instructor is Korean but speaks Spanish so my Spanish gets a work-out also.” She finally transferred in Passports and American Citizens in October.

Having decided to take the plunge we started planning the wedding. This to the great enthusiasm of friends at both posts. Kathy McCavitt suggested a wedding on a barge on the Nile followed by an orgy. September proved easy but the challenge was where. Zandra looked into Madrid but the waiting period was too long for me to get the leave. Also Spain was still very Catholic and required counseling by a Priest which interested neither of us. I checked Sudanese law and was misinformed of a similar lengthy in country waiting period. That interested Zandra not a whit. We looked to Paris where we had friends but that did not pan out. Then reluctantly to Gibraltar.

It was only as we were getting desperate that I discovered a Khartoum wedding just required filling out paperwork and designating a spot. That confusion sorted I had to designate a venue. Not so easy. We had decided we would be married by the local Anglican Minister. However, his church had been closed. The bell tower overlooked the Presidential Palace and was used by a sniper during a 1970s coup attempt. So we picked

my friend Stu Halpine's backyard. We were to be married under the Marriage of Non Mohammedans Act of 1926 which stipulated a daytime ceremony. That stemmed from another insurrection and curfew restriction. So we chose dusk hoping that we wouldn't all keel over from heat stroke.

Our impending wedding caused great excitement in the Khartoum Embassy community. I made many references to the "social event of the year" in my letters to Zandra. Being Khartoum, preparation was a challenge. Zandra knew only our A-100 classmate Lauren Hale who was on leave. My friend Stephanie Davis volunteered to be Matron of Honor which Zandra graciously accepted when she arrived. My friend Joyce Turk offered to take our wedding pictures. My friends found a florist who could make bouquets from photos and a Greek bakery that could make a wedding cake. Mary Mudge, the wife of the USAID Director, volunteered to play our wedding songs on a small electric piano about one step up from Linus' in Peanuts. We set the date for September 24.

None of our family attended the wedding. The logistics for most were just too daunting. My cousin Barbara Aycock (a future Senior Foreign Service Officer who died in 2017 shortly after her retirement) was serving in the Peace Corps in Mombasa. She apologized after the fact for not attending because she was too broke.

September arrived and on the 19th so did Zandra. She brought a beautiful dress of Spanish lace which her Spanish colleagues had great fun helping her choose. Zandra did not buy the train which she rejected as hopelessly impractical for Khartoum. Nor a veil. That was not her. Stephanie met her. Then Joyce who after introducing herself announced "ants are marching in and out of my refrigerator" and asked to borrow mine. A fitting introduction to life in Khartoum.

Now it was September 24. But it also was Khartoum! I think it was about 95 when we began the ceremony. Hundreds of birds flew overhead getting ready to roost for the evening. The Minister hadn't done many weddings. He got flustered and seemed lost as he preached a homily built around the Red Sea, storms and cleaving together as best I can remember. The cake was up to the Khartoum heat but inedible with a frosting the consistency of Plaster of Paris. We laughed when we popped the bride and groom off the cake and found twin babies nested below. Joyce had trouble with her light meter. We dressed up again on the 25th, went to her backyard and were reshot. All came out.

Khartoum made a very poor impression on Zandra, solidifying her judgment that she'd made the right choice declining an assignment there. On arrival she noted in her diary "the whole place looked pretty grim but I was too tired to care." A couple days later she wrote that the heat "has given me an education." As I learned then and later taking Zandra to Arizona she would never be a desert person.

Zandra was disgusted if not surprised by the squalor of the Embassy we were finally vacating. She had long been poaching us basic office supplies from Madrid. Zandra was appalled when Lynette Winstanley asked her to watch the boxed classified stacked on the street in front of the Embassy so that Lynette could take a bathroom break. The truck to

move it to the new Embassy was overdue. Later we learned it had been diverted to deliver an air conditioner to the Ambassador's residence.

Out of politeness she accepted Admin Counselor Mary Ryan's invitation to meet and discuss a transfer. Any hope ended when she checked in with Mary's Sudanese secretary, "real winner, said I should apply for my American passport," Zandra wrote in her diary. I recall her telling me that she replied to the secretary "I have one of these," as she put her Diplomatic Passport on her desk.

On a happier note Zandra enjoyed the camaraderie of the embassy community which reminded her of Buenos Aires. She visited Khartoum University where my Fulbright friend Alice Swenson taught literature and chatted with Sudanese students. Zandra wrote in her diary "the University reminded me of Virginia Union or any other Southern Black college."

### **Back to Madrid**

Zandra returned to Madrid the first week of October. On her first work day she started in Passports and Citizenship. She also met the new Consul Julian Bartley, his wife and young son. Zandra almost immediately started recording in her diary career guidance she was getting from Julian. He quickly became her first true mentor. After Madrid they never served together again. Julian Bartley always was an officer whom she deeply respected. We mourned his death when Julian and his son were murdered in Nairobi in the 1998 Embassy bombing.

We had our real honeymoon in Spain over Christmas and New Years. This was my first trip to Spain and I loved it as much as Zandra did. By this point Zandra had a thorough familiarity with Spain. She booked us into Paradors, the state run system of hotels sited in former castles, all over southern Spain. They were magical, each with a unique history and atmosphere and all with excellent food. I was particularly taken with the beauty and architecture of Seville and its historic mix of Christian, Moorish and Jewish culture. Especially in Granada I saw climate, geographic and cultural parallels to the Southwest. I enjoyed every trip I took to Spain to visit Zandra. We talked of returning as tourists but to our regret never did.

In February 1982 Secretary Haig accompanied by his wife Patricia traveled to Madrid for a meeting of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Zandra was assigned to plan Mrs. Haig's itinerary and be her escort. She was well suited for this duty given her experience with VIPs in Secret Service and her extensive travels in Spain by this point in her tour.

Zandra wrote me shortly before the SecState's party arrived: "I am the control officer for Mrs Haig's three day visit. I had no one helping me. I have been doing all the sites, all the schedules, all the scenarios, and liaison with the Foreign Ministry, Protocol Office.

Plus everything I do must get the approval of Mrs. Todman....What a zoo. Glad to be heading off to Morocco when this is over. I had to do bio's on the people she would meet and included myself, mentioned you of course....Anyway I feel like a frog turned into a princess. I have written more on immediates than in my entire career...I have seen and talked to the Ambassador and DCM more than in my entire tour and I finally got over to the Foreign Ministry." Zandra escorted Mrs. Haig within Madrid and to Toledo and Seville to everyone's satisfaction.

Zandra was tenured and passed language probation in Spring 1982. By this point she was working in American Citizen Services which she loved but found emotionally draining. In July she wrote me a snapshot: "Last Monday it was one thing after another. People came with no money, lost Eurailpasses, stolen airline tickets, lost luggages, and a U.S. citizen who just got out of the Foreign Legion and wanted to get to the States. We got him on the Saturday Spantax flight and into a hotel. He had his discharge money. In the middle of all this I went to a hospital to comfort a girl who had been hurt in a car accident. She had been driving and her mother had been killed. Tuesday her father came and took her and the mother's ashes back to the U.S....Saturday the wife of one of my U.S.C. prisoners called from the U.S. to say the daughter there had cut her wrists. So, I cleared it with prison authorities for the wife to talk by phone to her husband..."

In September Zandra was sent to the Consulate in Bilbao for two weeks to cover a staffing gap. The new Consul Eileen Heaphy had just arrived and was consumed with preparing for a visit by Ambassador Todman. Zandra did both Consular work and some political reporting.

That month a Spantax DC-10 crashed on take off killing 50 including Americans. This tragedy called on Zandra to exercise tact in assisting and comforting the families. Many were Jewish and outraged that their loved ones had been placed by the Spanish in coffins with crosses. Spantax gave the Embassy 2 Madrid-NYC round trip tickets in appreciation. Zandra secured one which enabled us to have a short visit in October.

In early December Zandra completed her Madrid tour and flew to Washington. After 15 months of married life we were finally united.

### **The Challenges of Marriage and Career 1982-1985**

Marriage complicated Zandra's career and our lives in ways that we never anticipated. We expected our challenges to revolve around securing tandem assignments, navigating an interracial marriage and eventually having children. In reality Zandra's career was impacted, especially in the 1980s, by my professional struggles and the unexpected medical needs of our son. She had worried that marrying me would hurt my career. The reality was marrying me hurt her career.

Within six months our premarital expectations began to unravel. By early 1982 it was clear I would be in Washington when Zandra's Madrid tour ended. Because she was out of cycle her onward assignment was a struggle. There was nothing available in the Bureau of Consular Affairs which would have been the logical career development move. For some time it seemed that she would go into the new Mid-Level course for want of an alternative. Ultimately she got a job in Personnel/Performance Evaluation (PER/PE). She worked there for 2 years staffing promotion panels. I believe that tour set her career back. It certainly did nothing to advance it.

When we married I thought that my career while off to a slow start was on the rise. It had suffered from poor management and my inexperience. The head of the small Consular Section in Karachi had no interest in career development guidance. She barely survived a visa fraud investigation after I left. Moreover, the Department threw out her departure evaluation. From Khartoum I had no input into the rewrite. I was passed over for tenure on my first review with only the Karachi evaluations in my file.

I was trying to build a case to shift from the Consular to Political Cone. That would align with Zandra's continuation in the Consular Cone where she wanted to pursue her career. My first boss in the Khartoum Political Section was retired in place. I learned by trial and error to the irritation of Ambassador Kontos, none of which was conveyed to me until it came time for my first evaluation. While not damaging it did nothing to justify a cone shift. Now I was being supervised by Allan Keiswetter who had arrived a few months earlier. He was my first manager who took an interest in my career development, saw potential and advocated. What neither Zandra nor I grasped was that I had gotten competent management too late to save my career.

I never connected with the new DCM Jack Davison. I wrote Zandra in late February 1982 that he assessed me unsuitable to be a political officer and would recommend non-tenure. My letters reflect his tension with Keiswetter and pressure to tone down a positive rating. Allen, my Career Development Officer Max Robinson, and I agreed my best option was to curtail. Because I needed to be at post 18 months we settled on mid-June.

In March en route to Washington I told Zandra that while I hoped to salvage my career at State I had a back up plan. My talents as a drafter and ability to analyze had impressed friends in the USG who were actively encouraging me to jump elsewhere in the USG. It was a shock but Zandra felt I had been wronged. She read the evaluation and knew my career was on the rocks. That said, she was anguished that I might leave State. Zandra was very clear in our conversations and her letters that if there was any hope that I could persevere she wanted me to take it.

In June I reported on over complement to the Office of East African Affairs in the African Bureau. There I did ad hoc assignments while I tried to network through a new CDO and pursued job leads. For a while it looked like I would land an Intelligence and Research (INR ) Watch Team job. I won a grievance that expunged language on a visa referral dispute from my 1980 Karachi evaluation. Jack Davison's 1982 review was

thrown out as well. I got an extra year of tenuring eligibility. It was a barren victory. If I had a future it was as a damaged goods Consular Officer. This was underscored when I did not get the INR job. By this point it was pretty clear that my CDO had little interest in trying to place me and I was on my own.

All the while I pursued leaving State for greener pastures. The AF/E Deputy Office Director to whom I reported and whose judgment I respected strongly encouraged the move. A career counselor I trusted said the same. I passed a psychological profile exam, my polygraph interview and a physical. I was offered two analytic jobs. January 3, 1983 I was sworn in as a Pakistan Political analyst. As with Zandra's shift from Secret Service we had landed in careers that we would pursue the rest of our professional lives. Our careers were uneven and a challenging balancing act but they were rewarding. We were happier and did better than if we had stayed where we started.

We were house hunting. Zandra asked me to look at Northwest Washington and Montgomery County, preferably inside the Beltway. She gave me a firm veto on Virginia as racist. Washington had the advantage that as a tenured FSO Zandra was exempt from DC taxes because she held a Presidential commission. Many of our friends took advantage of this provision. However, to their dismay Senator Jesse Helms in a spat with Secretary Shultz over extending polygraphing to State wrote legislation removing the exemption. Montgomery County had the advantage that our money went further. While we did not focus on education at that time it would prove far more important.

The house we bought involves an unanswered mystery. I saw a lot of houses in Montgomery County. I really liked one near the Bethesda Chevy Chase High School in walking distance of the Bethesda Metro stop which was under construction. I told the agent I wanted to buy it but couldn't commit without Zandra's agreement. I thought she would approve. The house sold but he pegged a house on Sleaford Road a block from the high school. Zandra liked it and we bought it. Zandra lived in it when not abroad until she had to go into long term care.

It was only over the next few years that we came to realize that the neighborhood was "red-lined" which was illegal but all too common. We broke it as the first interracial couple. Even then red-lining persisted well into the 1990s. I make that judgment from conversations with ethnic East Asians who talked about how hard it was to be shown the neighborhood. I have always wondered if the agent would have shown us the neighborhood had Zandra and I started looking together.

We planned to wait to start a family until we'd had some time living together but Zandra became pregnant in February 1983. We quickly settled on Samuel Robert Collinge in honor of Zandra's grandfather Samuel Jenkins and my father Robert Collinge. We never agreed on a name for a daughter and did not know our baby's sex until Sam was born November 10. Zandra's pregnancy was uneventful. She worked up until the day before a planned cesarean necessitated by her 1980 fibroids surgery.

Delivery was another story. Zandra requested a local to be awake for Sam's birth and take him into her arms. It didn't work. She had a general and was out until the next day. Consequently I was the first to hold Sam. Zandra was furious with frustration when we got the pictures "You! You look like you delivered him!" was her reaction.

Zandra was advised in an examination in Spain that she was likely to have more fibroids, several were removed during her cesarian. Fibroids were a persistent and debilitating problem over the next decade. Throughout the 1980s Zandra suffered from anemia. This contributed to our decision not to attempt to conceive more children. It also factored into our weighing but eventually rejecting adoption.

Zandra took 3 months off using paid sick leave. Because she knew she would have to go back to work she made the decision not to nurse. We were lucky to easily arrange child care for Sam. Our next door neighbors Laura and Ned had hired Mary to look after their daughter Katie who was only a few months older than Sam. Mary was fine with picking up a second child. She alternated between our house and theirs.

We began about mid 1985 to see the first indicators of Sam's autism. We knew nothing of autism, of which there is no known family history, and did not recognize the symptoms as he seemed attuned to us. We did not realize that his delayed speech was anything more than that. There were a few factors from which we developed a false developmental narrative. First, my understanding of family history was that my Aunt Rose—my mother's sister—delayed developing speech well beyond age two. I also knew from my mother that I started speaking then stopped for more than six months. Finally Sam would say "lee, lee, lee." We thought that he was saying his Aunt Lee's name since she was part of his universe. We would later learn that this was simply a sound he was making.

At about 20 months at a well baby check up Sam's pediatrician Dr. Davis told us he thought there was a significant developmental problem. Dr. Davis referred us to Children's Hospital in Washington where Sam was diagnosed around his second birthday. Sam was assessed as suffering from severe speech delay for unknown reasons. By this point we were in training to go to Islamabad in January 1986. We were given two recommendations: get him speech therapy which we were able to do thru an arrangement with spouses in the diplomatic community; and, bring Sam back for a full evaluation in Spring 1987.

Zandra was assigned as the deputy in the Narcotics Advisory Unit (NAU), a crop substitution program aimed at curtailing opium production. While she was well suited for the work this was another excursion from her core skills as a Consular Officer, one that necessitated curtailing her assignment to the Visa Office in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. This was an alignment to my career needs prompted by my detail to the Islamabad Political Section to enhance my analytic expertise. Islamabad was a fine assignment for me but it did nothing to advance Zandra's career.



## Islamabad 1986-1987

We left for Islamabad January 28, 1986 for what we assumed would be a two year assignment. That morning happened to be the day the Challenger Space Shuttle exploded on takeoff. We watched that tragedy live in our room at the Dulles Airport Marriott. Consequently, when we arrived in Islamabad we were the first to describe what we had seen.

Islamabad hadn't changed much from 1980 when I had last visited from Karachi. It still felt like an artificial city finding an identity. It still was mostly government buildings, embassies and high end residences catering to the international community. The city pretty much emptied at the end of the work day except for the diplomats. One day Zandra and I counted all the cars between the Embassy and our house which as I recall was about 4 miles away. We counted less than 50. We used to laugh that if the Russians dropped a neutron bomb on Islamabad no one would notice the difference.

Our house normally would have gone to the NAU chief Lee Brilliant but he chose to live on the Embassy compound. It won an architectural award in 1965 but had little distinction, essentially it was a large concrete box. It was owned by a retired Pakistani Admiral whom we never met. He'd built it as commercial real estate. The little strip of land between the front wall and the street was largely a wild marijuana plot. Zandra judged it inconsistent with her job and had it burned to the dirt.

The nearest landmark was a wooded area surrounding the shell of a half completed mosque complex. We came to know that this was the site of what would have been the main Ahmadi mosque in Islamabad. The Ahmadis were a persecuted sect. They were considered heretics. Their legal rights and status were steadily being constricted and they were prohibited from building mosques and proselytizing. Their surreptitious worship was barely tolerated. Also within a short distance were our new found friends Jon and Nilu Dorschner, their young daughter Chrystal and baby son Kristen. Jon was the Labor Officer. Kristen and his wife Melissa followed Jon into foreign service. As of 2022 they are in China.

We were back in the Embassy compound that had been destroyed in 1979. It was rebuilt as part of a deal with the Pakistani government using the shell. The Front Office, Political Section where I worked, and the Economics Section across from us were on the third floor in a secure part of the Chancery. It was all quite cozy. Zandra's office was on the first floor fairly close to the Embassy cafeteria. Once I repelled from the roof as part of a drill, a legacy of November 1979.

This was an outstanding Embassy under two superb Ambassadors. For most of our time we worked for Deane R. Hinton who did not suffer fools. In our final months Arnie Raphael was settling into his first ambassadorship. There would have been more but for his untimely death in 1988. John McCarthy, the Deputy Chief of Mission, five FSOs in

the Political Section and two in the Economics Section later attained ambassadorial rank. One, Nancy Powell, returned to Pakistan in 2002 as Ambassador. She rose to be Director General of the Foreign Service and ended her career as Ambassador to India.

A post like Islamabad at the height of the 1980s got plenty of VIP visitors. I was control officer for Attorney General Ed Meese which was far less exciting than it sounds. I never met him. The official low light was his trip to the Afghan border at Torkham. Meese was in the DCM's ancient armored Olds 98. It blew a head gasket and everyone was bumped down a car. Afterwards McCarthy asked why wasn't the damn thing just abandoned. He had been trying to get it replaced for most of his tour. The personal low light was Zandra's irritation that I didn't get her into the trip.

One morning in November 1986 Zandra and I were reading the local English language rag "The Daily Muslim." We came upon a strange story about a cake, key, bible and secret Administration contacts with the Iranians. I can't remember which of us said "what nonsense will the Muslim come up with next?" We were stunned when this proved the exposure of Iran-Contra.

Our Islamabad tour coincided with Benazir Bhutto's return from exile in 1986 and her efforts to mount a Cory Aquino "people power revolution" style movement against President Zia. Benazir was courting the U.S. but we were not authorized contact. Ambassador Hinton's directions were clear. No official or informal interaction. One day Zandra went to Islamabad's one hair salon where she quickly noticed Benazir in an adjoining chair. Benazir had no idea who Zandra was and may have thought she was Pakistani. Zandra politely ignored Benazir all the while observing her becoming incensed at what she assumed was a snub by one who owed her deference. Then, her hair done, Zandra went home.

Zandra never lost her eye for security. We varied our drive to and from the Embassy as much as possible but it often took us by the DCM's house. Zandra soon noticed that it was being cased by the Iranians. The Regional Security Officer was not aware of this. Zandra met with him and after some initial skepticism walked him through her observations.

Pakistan was a tough tour for Zandra. It did nothing to advance her career and because it was an out of cone assignment probably set it back somewhat. Zandra's boss in NAU Lee Brilliant had started as a California law enforcement officer. He joined USAID in the 1960s under a program to provide training to South American police forces and later shifted into State. Lee Brilliant has been described elsewhere as a poker playing buddy of Ambassador Hinton, probably a reason that he was happy to live on the Embassy compound. He was not a particularly engaged manager and was comfortable giving Zandra considerable leeway.

The NAU mission was to persuade Pakistani farmers to quit growing opium poppy. This was a carrot and stick program. The carrots were subsidies as replacement crops, especially orchards, matured. There also were U.S. funded irrigation, roads and schools.

The stick was Pakistani Army enforced destruction of poppy fields. Because poppy was so lucrative there was violent opposition. Shortly before our arrival about a dozen farmers were killed resisting Pakistani troops. Renewed violence was a constant threat during Zandra's time in NAU.

NAU worked in conjunction with the Pakistani Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Development Program as well European Union funded crop substitution efforts. Zandra's field work centered on the Swat District, a former Princely State, merged into what was then the Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province). School construction negotiations were particularly delicate. Zandra had to justify to unconvinced local leaders why the U.S. could not fund Islamic schools and single sex schools.

She noted in a 2002 paper for an Industrial College of the Armed Forces class: "I worked with traditional tribal jirga leaders setting assistance projects to help farmers convert from growing opium poppy. I found successfully persuading these officials to work with a professional woman a particularly stimulating challenge. I also worked with the Pakistani government to design public information programs on the dangers of heroin abuse. The law enforcement component involved supplying the Pakistani narcotics police with training and equipment to assist them in interdicting drugs being transited from Afghanistan and the northwest frontier to seaports in the south..."

Zandra took frequent trips to the District capital of Saidu Sharif. We have a painting of Saidu Sharif over our fireplace. It is a gift from the painter Marija McCarthy, the wife of DCM McCarthy. We brought Marija art supplies in our air freight. She asked us to her home one day and invited us to choose a painting.

Zandra's work also got us a trip to Gilgit and Hunza reached via the Karakoram Highway built in the 1970s to link Pakistan and China. It was a fascinating trip. The scenery is spectacular. This is mountain country, the Karakoram Range and the foothills of the Himalayas. We were driven to within less than 50 kilometers of the Pakistani-Chinese border and walked along the tips of glaciers.

In the 1980s the geology underlying the Highway was stabilizing with the complication that this is an earthquake zone. We were stranded one full day en route by a landslide that took out a portion of the road. We doubled back to a Pakistani government rest house for the night. The next day we encountered Pakistani Army engineers rebuilding that portion of the road and drove through using a temporary dirt berm.

Although Zandra enjoyed aspects of her job she found living in Pakistan as a woman stifling. When conducting business in Swat she often had to navigate cultural opposition to her as a professional woman. She handled this with grace but there was an underlying tension. She tried as best she could to use Pakistani dress when she was in the field. It may have helped.

We relieved stress by periodic short trips to New Delhi where we stayed with our friend Pat Butenis who was serving in the Consular Section. We also traveled from New Delhi within India although not as much as we might have because of time constraints. We had a standing invitation from our friends John and Helen O'Leary to go with them to Goa where Helen had family but were never able to take them up on that.

Embassy Islamabad was full of young families. Our A-100 classmate Lauren Moriarty was the deputy in Econ and her husband Jim, my colleague, was assigned to domestic political reporting. We were reunited with our dear friends Tom and Lena Miller and their growing family. At this point in his career Tom was a USIS specialist in charge of English language teaching programs in Pakistan. We became good friends with the O'Leary's and the Dorschners. Zandra would later mentor Lena and Nilu when they worked as Consular Associates in subsequent posts. All of us had young families each with a child close in age to Sam. At this point in his life, ages 2 and 3, his autism and speech delay was no barrier to becoming friends with other children.

When we ventured out of town as we often did for family trips to explore other parts of the country we usually rented a 4 wheel drive van from the Embassy. Always, except once, a right hand drive Toyota Landcruiser. I drove us on the Grand Trunk from Islamabad to Peshawar in a left hand drive Jeep Wagoneer. Once was enough. You never knew what you would encounter. It could be a tractor pulling a cart with a tail light and "stop" painted on it. But it just as easily could be a broken down vehicle left in the road with a few rocks inches from the rear as a marker. It might be an animal wandering the road.

The Grand Trunk was far too dangerous to drive at night as was any Pakistani highway. The head of the Soviet Section of the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs was killed that way when he hit a water buffalo driving back to Rawalpindi at night. Afghan drivers were an added threat because Pakistan was a right hand drive country and Afghanistan a left hand drive country. An Afghan bus driver killed the Lahore Political Officer and his father-in-law in a head on collision. I filled in there for most of the first half of 1987 shuttling back and forth by Pakistan International Airways (PIA) to spend weekends with Zandra and Sam.

Exploring could bring some interesting wrinkles into the trip. Jim bought a little Suzuki 4 wheel drive. He got stuck fording a river and managed to flag down a Pakistani Army patrol. A tank retrieval truck pulled the Suzuki out but broke the rear axle. As we got ready to ford that same river to visit an impressive ruined Mughal fort our friend Lena saw water buffalo in up to their heads. To Zandra's amusement she went into a panic that we'd get swept away. Then the buffalo stood up. I managed to run the battery down on a Toyota which we left overnight in a field until we could get a jump or a new battery. Nilu told me later that nearby villagers debated whether to strip it. They didn't because that was at the site of a Hindu village massacred during Partition. They feared angry ghosts.

Traveling with Sam had its own challenges. On one trip we stayed at a Pakistani government rest house. At dinner Zandra noticed that Sam was chewing and chewing

and chewing on a piece of what was probably water buffalo meat. He lacked the jaw strength and teeth to break it down. She had to pull it out and get something he could eat. At another rest house Zandra went back to check up on a can of spaghetti she'd handed off to be heated up and discovered that it was sitting unopened in a boiling pot. Fortunately not yet hot enough to explode. Visiting Al and Carol Eastham in Peshawar, Zandra and I were saying our hellos when we turned to see Sam peeing away in the roses at the direction of his nanny.

We learned some things too about Sam's resilience and ours. As Sam's physiology developed he had a pop out elbow. The first time that happened we took him to an emergency room in Reston where a doctor popped it back and showed us how. The second time we were too scared to try for fear of hurting him and took him to his pediatrician in Bethesda who popped it in and showed us how. The third time was in Islamabad. I did it, his relief was instantaneous and it never happened again.

In 1987 shortly before the end of our tour we traveled to India. After a few days in New Delhi with Pat we went to Jaipur and from there took an Indian train to Udaipur. I made the mistake of buying Sam and me a cooked meal. Zandra had better sense. Sam and I got violent dysentery shortly after we checked into the Lake Palace Hotel. I was over mine once I cleaned out my system. Sam, a sturdy 3 year old, very quickly lost about 5 pounds and dehydrated. I think if the hotel doctor hadn't stabilized him he would have died. It was a terrifying and graphic education in how fast dysentery can kill a child. Stabilized Sam was back to close to normal in a day—well enough for us to do some touring with him. His robustness amazed the doctor. The only after effect was that back in Islamabad we learned the antibiotic the doctor used killed Sam's stomach bacteria. Several weeks of live culture yogurt solved that.

The Lake Palace stay was notable too for Zandra's lobby encounter with a snake that crawled out of the lake. We were headed to dinner when she froze and started saying "sna, sna, sna." Finally she got out snake. One of the staff started beating the snake with a light plastic piece of hose that seemed to have no effect until the snake got bored and slithered back into the water. Zandra was not amused by any of this. When we returned to our room we found a huge basket of fruit and flowers.

Human rights reporting was how Zandra met Joyce Barr who became her closest friend. Joyce was a great Foreign Service Officer who as a Black woman had to fight her way up narrowly surviving being run out of the service as a junior officer. As Assistant Secretary for Administration she was one of the first senior officers fired after Trump was inaugurated. In 1987 Joyce was a Desk Officer responsible for overseeing human rights field reporting. She was on a swing around the circuit.

Joyce and Zandra quickly bonded. They never lost that bond. She was the last person Zandra lost her link to before going into long term care. I will always remember their last phone conversation and Zandra's look of joy when I told her Joyce was on the phone. Joyce joins me occasionally to visit Zandra. She is the only person in Zandra's pre-long term care life to whom Zandra has ever shown a flash of recognition. That happened

shortly before the pandemic lockdown in March 2020. It was powerfully moving for Joyce. For me too to see it and know that it had happened.

Zandra had a freak injury in Islamabad which may have contributed to her developing dementia. We were at home watching a video with Sam. He climbed up on the couch behind Zandra and toppled head first into the base of her neck, whiplashing her. Although she went to the Embassy health unit she was prescribed no treatment beyond painkillers. After our return to the U.S. her doctor advised that she had suffered vertebrae damage and should have been put in a neck collar.

Sam's needs caused us to curtail. We had succeeded in getting him private speech therapy successively by two speech therapists who were spouses in the diplomatic community. When the second left we found a Montessori school that an American spouse was running out of her house. She realized quickly that Sam needed less stimulus, not more, and developed a one on one program. In some ways it was a good precursor to the Montgomery County Special Ed program he entered that Fall. We also realized that Sam was starting to avoid face contact with us. We used what would now be considered part of a standard positive behavioral modification program by tying food rewards to eye contact.

In April 1987 we returned to Washington for a full battery of tests at Children's Hospital. We got an autism diagnosis and a very pessimistic prognosis. We were told that Sam would be unable to work, to live independently or to develop a sexual identity. None of that proved true but it was in line with how autism was understood in the 1980s.

While staying in Maryland for Sam's evaluation we were exceedingly lucky to learn of a pilot early intervention program that the Montgomery School System had created in partnership with Johns Hopkins. It was in its first year. There were six slots. One child dropped out. We got the sixth slot for the second year which assured that Sam would benefit from our early departure from Islamabad. We left in August.

### **Washington 1987-1991**

Our home fared badly during our time in Islamabad. This is a common risk of foreign service. Our experiences, while not great, were never the horror stories we heard from some of our colleagues. We had never worked with property management and made a bad pick using the realtor firm through which we'd bought the house. We didn't realize that realtor firms put their second and third string staff into property management. We learned from that to use a company specializing in property management when we were in London and Seoul.

The house was vacant for the first six months of our tour so we didn't earn much rental income in Pakistan. Neighbors told us the agents seemed lax in showing it. When we

were back in April of '87 we discovered that the property management firm had dismantled a wooden picket fence that enclosed the front yard. They did it for their convenience mowing the lawn while the house was on the rental market. We found the dismantled fence stacked against the side of the house and rotted.

While in Islamabad we got an after the fact notice that our property manager had approved the tenants request to paint our bedroom gray, much to Zandra's dismay. We would have refused. They destroyed the lovely Marc Chagall wallpaper we'd inherited from the previous owners. We figured they'd repainted it the light designer gray that was something of a fad in the 80s. When we returned we found a dark and ugly primer gray. I repainted the room.

After Islamabad Zandra spent two years as an International Relations Officer in the Latin American Bureau assigned the lead on narcotics issues. Joyce Barr, who really got to know Zandra as an FSO during this period, has told me how awed she was by Zandra's feel for personalities and her ability to manage difficult supervisors. Joyce also says that Zandra taught her courage although I doubt Joyce ever lacked for that. For her part Zandra treasured that she could go into Joyce's office and unbutton when she needed a safe place to decompress.

Her's was not an easy job. Zandra worked for mercurial managers in a politically charged environment. She reported to the brilliant but impulsive Luigi Einaudi, the longtime Director of the Bureau's Office of Policy Planning and Coordination. She frequently supported Assistant Secretary Elliot Abrams as he testified on the Hill. She liked to say to her mother and her Aunt Gloria "if you see a brown hand reaching out with a piece of paper that's me." In Congressional testimony Abrams tended to force Latin American narcotics into a prism of Soviet and Cuban machinations sometimes at the expense of the facts. This required all Zandra's tact to persuade him to "correct the record" when afforded the opportunity to review his testimony in draft before it was finalized in the Congressional Record.

From late December 1988 thru early 1989 Zandra was on the Lockerbie Task Force. This was stood up after the bombing of PanAm 103 in which our new friend Matt Gannon died. His autistic daughter Magee and our son Sam were in the same therapeutic horseback riding program. That added to the pain of his murder. We knew from our own perspective as Sam's parents how hard it would be for Sue as a single parent to raise a preschool autistic daughter and a baby.

Whatever grief Zandra felt she never conveyed to her colleagues or the public. Joyce Barr recounted that Zandra went well beyond her assigned responsibilities on the Task Force. She was unflappable under the pressure of calling and taking calls from distraught and often angry family members. She was admired for her poise, her tact and especially for her willingness to take on calls assigned to other task force members when these became emotionally unbearable.

During this period Zandra had one of the more bizarre experiences of her career. In late 1986 President Reagan appointed Ed Perkins as the first Black Ambassador to South Africa. After some time at post Ambassador Perkins decided that he wanted at least one African American FSO in each section. All of the Black officers then in Washington were convened in the Department auditorium and pitched to take an assignment to South Africa with the offer of a guaranteed choice of onward assignment in the African Bureau. Zandra remarked to me that it was amusing to see who among those who showed up were passing as white, not always anonymously to their fellow Black officers.

Zandra finally got back to her home Bureau in 1989. She worked in CA's Office of Citizen Services coordinating Consular Citizen Services in Latin America. During much of her time there Ann Swift headed OCS and Zandra reported to Carmen DiPlacido. She handled a range of issues. These included briefing outgoing Ambassadors on consular issues, responding to emergencies such as the crash of a charter flight in Chile, citizenship acquisition and loss, facilitating official travel within the region and, explaining to Latin American diplomats American judicial procedures and the treatment of their incarcerated nationals—in some instances using her continued Spanish fluency.

Zandra noted in her June 1991 departure evaluation: “I have taken special pleasure from my judicial assistance portfolio because tedious as the paper shuffling might be, the work links me to other offices in this bureau, country desks, the Office of the Legal Advisor, foreign embassies, the Department of Justice and other government agencies.” Her reviewer commended her “excellent working relationship with State desk officers” and “her ability to maneuver sensibly within the bureaucracy among competing aims and agendas.”

During her tour she did considerable task force work as one was convened whenever there was a crisis involving Americans abroad. The most challenging was the Panama invasion task force that ran from just before Christmas 1989 thru January 1990. Zandra put in some long nights including Christmas Eve. These were complicated by a directive from the eccentric Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Elizabeth Tamposi, a defeated New Hampshire Republican Congressional candidate with no consular experience. For reasons never really understood, Tamposi directed the task force not to wish callers Merry Christmas. She randomly listened in on calls to enforce this edict. Zandra managed to find ways to be polite when a caller would wish her Merry Christmas fully expecting to hear the same back.

Tamposi was also noteworthy for canning her Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Mary Ryan whom she thought was upstaging her. Zandra told me the outpouring of love and respect for Mary was amazing. Officers ripped up commendations they'd received from Tamposi. By the end of the day Mary Ryan's desk was covered in roses. Mary's career did not suffer and Zandra later benefited from her as a mentor. As for Tamposi she was implicated in the 1992 scandal directing a search of Department and London consular records on Bill Clinton in an effort to turn up political dirt and a similar politically motivated search of Ross Perot's passport records. These actions quickly came to light.



Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger fired her. Much to our glee Mary Ryan replaced her and held the position for the next 10 years.

Zandra spent much time rotating on and off the long term task force convened after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. She also served on task forces arising out of the Liberian Civil War of 1989-97. Her June 1991 evaluation covering her last year in OCS noted: "She served on several occasions as the CA task force coordinator supervising other officers as they responded to public inquiries, gathered information from post Consular Officers to update talking points and prepared replies on individual AmCit cases. Zandra managed in both capacities with great efficiency and skill."

In September 1987 Sam started special ed in the Meadow Hall Elementary School. After school he was bused first to the Kennedy Krieger program near Meadow Hall then to the Bethesda Community School about a mile from our house where we picked him up by 6:00. That was a godsend that permitted us to continue to work although it made for some very challenging logistics.

We would come to learn how fortunate we were to have our home in Bethesda. Montgomery County had by far the best special ed programs for autistic children in the greater Washington area and one of the strongest programs in the country. Sam was at Meadow Hall for 4 years until we moved to London in 1991. He had a dedicated and caring teaching staff who developed a program very well suited to his needs and his strengths. One of his teaching aides Chris Bichy unexpectedly would prove critical in his educational development while we were in London. Susan Mason, who was working on her Doctorate, worked with Sam both at Meadow Hall and tutoring in our home and developed a strong bond.

Zandra's father died in 1989. She had not seen him since she was a child. His funeral was in Griffin, Georgia to which he had retired from the Army. Zandra's Flemister relatives invited her to the funeral and she went. She told me that she was warmly received. She probably could have reconnected with that side of the family but on return chose not to. She didn't discuss it and I didn't probe. I assume that the pain of her abandonment was a wound that she did not wish to reopen.

This was the beginning of a season of loss. Pearl had been in poor health for some time but she was very guarded, even with Zandra. We did not know the extent of her illness. On February 1, 1990 Pearl, who had been staying with her mother, died in her sleep. She probably died of a hemorrhage although we never learned a clear cause of death. Her death certificate noted that she was diabetic with hypertension, atherosclerosis and a recent history of gastrointestinal hemorrhage. This was a hard loss for Zandra. She struggled with whether she could have done more and with anger at her mother in her frustration that Pearl wouldn't reach out.

Her grandmother Lela was now 91 and frail. Aunt Gloria, her surviving daughter, decided that she could no longer live alone. Aunt Gloria made the difficult decision to admit her to a nursing home. Two months later, April 20, 1990, she was dead.

For the better part of 1990 Zandra struggled to sort out her mother's tangled estate. We spent days going through the Hartford and Glastonbury houses and Pearl's New York apartment sorting and pitching. Many years before Pearl had deeded the semi finished Glastonbury house to Zandra who also inherited about 14 acres of undeveloped land, all that was left of the old Camp Bennett her grandfather had founded.

Zandra soon discovered that her mother's property taxes were years in arrears and the property was in danger of being seized and sold. Ultimately she agreed to sell all of the property including the house to a developer with the taxes being paid out of the proceeds. Whether Zandra got anything close to value I don't know.

By 1991 Zandra needed a field assignment if her career was to advance. During these years she was an FSO-3. Zandra was limited where she could bid given Sam's need for special ed and our efforts to secure me a job. In the end she was assigned to London as head of the small anti-fraud unit in the Embassy's large consular section.

Zandra taking the lead we worked to line up a good special ed school for Sam. We were aided by Frank and Linda Trippett whom I had gotten to know in Karachi. They were now serving in London. Their older autistic daughter was flourishing at the Parayhouse School, a private special needs school. In April we flew to London where we had meetings in the Embassy with the Human Resources and Family Liaison Office and Paray House staff. We gave them a complete set of Individual Education Plans developed for Sam at Meadow Hall as well as VCRs shot there of him in the class setting. We also interviewed for child care. We were confident as we prepared for our August move that we had laid a good foundation.

We made the decision to take our cats Samantha and Ben Ali notwithstanding the considerable costs of 6 months mandatory quarantine. They were an important emotional anchor to us all. Once in London we visited them weekly until we could bring them to our new home where they adapted well.

### **London 1991-1994**

Zandra had a successful tour although I do not believe she got the full recognition she deserved for what she accomplished managing the Anti-Fraud Unit. She served under two Consul Generals, Bert Krieg for her first 2 years then Ann Swift for Zandra's final year. I don't recall Zandra having much interaction with either. The tone of Ann Swift's performance review statement suggests Zandra earned her professional respect or perhaps built on a foundation she had already laid in the Department.

Her immediate supervisor was IV Chief Jim Helmo to whom she was deputy. In the Anti-Fraud Unit Zandra had an excellent British FSN. He had terrific contacts that were

invaluable to Zandra's success. She also periodically supervised junior officers on short rotations to the Unit. One was Karen Sasahara, then on her second tour, who became a lifelong friend. Another was Seneca Johnson.

Zandra interacted principally with British immigration and police as well as the major airlines. She was responsible for tracking, documenting and reporting illegal immigration cases. Early on she found understanding Scots, especially over the phone, a challenge but that eased as she got used to their accents. Her major accomplishment was creating a working group comprised of other embassies and British law enforcement agencies to exchange information. Zandra also demonstrated how easy it was to buy a fake identity laying out less than \$100 to secure herself a Somali diplomatic passport.

In her March 1994 review Consul General Swift wrote that Zandra "developed outstanding cooperation with INS and the other interested US law enforcement agencies represented in London." As the Mission's "main contact with UK Immigration...[she] developed the kind of invaluable access to all levels of the UK Immigration service that is hard to match."

Zandra also dealt with the full range of Consular responsibilities in her frequent stints as a Consular Duty Officer. Ann Swift commended Zandra for "outstanding interpersonal skills when dealing with distraught Americans. The very difficult relatives of the Canterbury bus crash victims had nothing but the highest praise for Zandra who met them on their arrival in London. Zandra's skillful and compassionate handling set a spirit of cooperation in a highly charged situation." At the end of her tour Zandra received a Meritorious Honor Award.

Shortly after our arrival Zandra was promoted to FS-02. Her promotion had some surreal aspects. Ambassador Seitz' Protocol Secretary called Zandra, asked her if she was the Zandra I. Flemister who had been promoted. On Zandra saying yes she continued "I wish to convey Ambassador Raymond G. Seitz' congratulations." Ambassador Seitz focused on the higher aspects of US-UK diplomacy and left most internal interaction to his capable DCM Tim Deal. I don't think he ever spoke to Zandra in her 3 years at post. We were invited to the Ambassadorial residence once but strictly to mingle with the guests.

As a mid-level Consular Officer Zandra was not expected to take on personal representational duties. I don't recall her having had a representational allowance. She would occasionally be invited to receptions hosted by the Consul General or by Consul Helmo. She would also have the occasional working lunch with her counterparts in embassies that were a part of the anti-fraud working group she established.

To the best of my recollection Zandra never suffered professionally in London due to racism. Outside the embassy she remarked that she would sometimes be mistaken for a West Indian. This ended as soon as she opened her mouth. Zandra would tell me that she could see the mental gears working as she was shifted from the West Indian category to the American.

Our time in London coincided with the ongoing debate over admitting Hong Kong Chinese as the 1997 deadline for reversion to the PRC approached. This exposed a xenophobic streak driven in part by fears of economic competition that we both found troubling and a betrayal of British pledges. By contrast we were greatly impressed at British stoicism in the face of the ongoing IRA bombing campaign which while largely directed at economic targets was sometimes deadly.

Zandra struggled with her health. Her fibroids recurred and left her anemic. She underwent two medical procedures. The first in 1992 was a cauterizing which failed as the fibroids recurred. In April 1994 Zandra had a hysterectomy and was hospitalized for a week. While this finally ended the fibroids the cost may have been Hepatitis C due to a contaminated blood transfusion. This is impossible to know. Zandra was not diagnosed until 1999 but her surgery seems the most logical explanation.

Domestically, London was a difficult tour. Sam and I struggled, which was a burden that Zandra handled with grace. As Zandra prepared for her assignment I failed to find a job. Moreover, due to post-Cold War downsizing my home career service was shedding slots. I had to sign an agreement that terminated my career service status and, on return from London, gave me 180 days to be picked up by another career service or lose my job. Zandra submitted a protest to Director General Perkins decrying a failure of inter-agency reciprocity but to no avail.

This did not make me the easiest of spouses. I did not want to go to London. I feared it would be my professional death. I did it because it was essential for Zandra's career, essential for our marriage, and the wellbeing of our son that we go out as a family regardless of the consequences to me. When I got there my attitude was not helped by the fact that I liked neither the climate nor the house to which we were assigned. Fortunately I loved London's cultural richness and walkability. Even more fortunate I was able to find rewarding work which enabled me to build a resume for my continued career when I returned to the U.S. in 1994.

We moved into a circa 1910 Chelsea Row house, 10 Drayton Gardens, on September 3. Normally we would have lived in the Hampstead Heath part of London where the Embassy housed most junior and mid level officers. We got an exception because the Parayhouse school was in Chelsea and a short bus ride from the house. It was a great location but not a great house. Each of the four floors had a couple rooms. The bathrooms off the stairway halls probably were added after the house was built. We also inherited the beat up furniture issued to our friends the Trippetts.

Pre-move maintenance must have been slapdash probably because it was left to the landlord. September 7 we heard a crash and found Sam lying on the floor with his left arm broken just above the wrist. He was in the wreckage of the skylight he had fallen through which thankfully had pebbled and he had no other injuries. Since Sam had no speech we could only try to reconstruct what happened. We think he pressed on a broken bathroom window latch, flipped out the unscreened window, fell through the skylight and

coming down hit a hall dresser with his arm. As I recall he had fallen about 10 or 12 feet. The carpeting may have broken his fall a bit but he easily could have been killed or badly injured. We took him to the local National Health System hospital. He was there overnight after his arm was set. He made a full recovery.

That was Sam's first experience with the National Health System. About a year later I came home from work to find a note on the door that he'd been taken to the hospital and to join Zandra and his nanny there. Sam had been badly cut just above an armpit when he fell on a spiked fence. When I got there he was being prepped to stitch up a horseshoe flap of loose flesh. It looked terrible, much worse than it actually was as no ligaments were cut. I caught myself starting to faint, tried to fight it and failed. When I came to the doctor promptly threw me out into a waiting room. Sam got his stitches and made a full recovery.

In September dressed in his dark blue uniform Sam took the bus to Parayhouse and began school. He was excited and we had high hopes based on our advance work and the Trippetts positive experience. Sam lasted to early February before he was kicked out. We never got an adequate explanation of what was going wrong or any interest from Parayhouse staff as to what we might do to help Sam succeed. We also learned that for the first time in his schooling he was being bullied.

I was working part time at this point. I tutored Sam using workbooks and we worked to rebuild his confidence. Zandra marked each Monday in her pocket diary that Sam was out of school. In mid March we were able to get him tutoring. Finally on April 30 Sam started in the fine Queensmill School in nearby Fulham. Queensmill defined its mission as a: "day primary school for children with Complex Needs. This means that the children referred to us have significant language, communication and associated behavioural problems." It provided an excellent program for Sam that aligned well with the strategies used in Montgomery County.

We supplemented Queensmill in summer by bringing Sam's former teaching aide Chris Bichy out. Since this gave Sam the equivalent of the Extended School Year (ESY) program he had in Maryland the Department paid part of the cost while we paid the rest and housed Chris. She did a wonderful job with Sam. She told me many years later that it was a formative career experience.

Once we put the Paray House fiasco behind London became a great experience for Sam. Sam is very aware of his environment. London stimulated him. Sam was surrounded with new and exciting experiences. He had his first speech break through. He kept talking about "lassie cars" to our bafflement since not all he pointed to had dogs. Eventually we realized that he was fascinated by the black London cabs and was trying to say "taxi car." Sam quickly developed a passion for the London Underground and double decker buses, especially the wonderful old Routemasters. We spent hours traveling on both, always on the upper deck when by bus. London mass transit in the 1990s was efficient and semi-subsidized with great weekly passes.

At Queensmill Sam developed an appreciation for nature which stimulated his vocabulary. One day he brought home a flower he had grown from a seedling and carefully and proudly pronounced “da-ffo-dil” for us. I remember him sounding out “tur-tle.” Sam continued therapeutic horseback riding. He rode at Wormwood Scrubs with me holding the lead and walking his horse. This being Britain we were out in all kinds of weather including sleet.

Our friend Tom Miller and his family had returned to Rabat after the end of the Gulf War. They invited us to spend our 1991 Christmas with them. Why we did not I don’t recall. I do recall that London totally shut down over Christmas and Boxing Day. We and other foreigners went to Hyde Park to walk about. We vowed not to spend another Christmas in London.

While we never spent another London Christmas we did discover the joys of British Christmas pantomime. The British staff in the Embassy always threw a pantomime and we loved them. The British also have a fine tradition of fake news stories, features and ads on April Fools Day. While we were in London one of the best was a Times front page article and leader (editorial) reporting the abolition of Belgium on account of irrelevance. Reportedly this prompted a protest by the Belgian Embassy. The Independent ran a Virgin Atlantic ad touting its contribution to protecting the ozone layer, the world’s first still champagne to be served on all flights.

Zandra and I became great fans of the weekly comic new quiz show “Have I Got News for You.” It consisted of a moderator and two regulars who were joined by two celebrities to form teams competing to answer straight and fanciful news based questions, possibly the inspiration for NPR’s “Wait, Wait, Don’t Tell Me” but with more edge. By far the best episode we watched was when the very heavy Labour Party Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley again stood up the show to attend a Parliamentary vote. This was one time too many. His place was taken by “The Right Honourable Tub of Lard” and of course the Right Honourable Tub and partner won. Hattersley made his next appearance.

Culturally Zandra’s 3 years in London were a wonderful experience. We lived within an easy walk of Chelsea’s King’s Road with its’ great atmosphere. We could soak in history at Sloane Square and the Royal Hospital. Kings Road was full of great antique stores and lots of interesting shops. We would often enjoy Cheyne Walk for its’ architecture, history and the sheer pleasure of walking along the Thames. Our neighborhood was loaded with great and varied ethnic restaurants, particularly South and East Asian.

Culture and history are London’s great glories. We reveled in them. London has some of the world’s finest museums. We loved the nearby Victoria and Albert which has a great South Asian collection and some very fine Renaissance and later European church altars. Working to an American schedule also meant that we could go to the British Museum while the Brits were at work. That let us get up close and personal with the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta Stone. Likewise we could leisurely tour the National Art Gallery and the Tate.

We took in as much theater as possible. We particularly enjoyed seeing the Alvin Ailey Theater and the Harlem Dance Troupes when they visited from the United States. We sat so close to the Harlem Dance Troupe performers that we could smell the sweat and occasionally feel it. We saw most of the major shows of the era including Cats, Les Miserables and Sunset Boulevard. We walked out of Kiss of the Spider Woman at the intermission. We were offended by the trivialized and insensitive treatment of the brutality of the Argentine dictatorship Zandra had experienced first hand.

Zandra and I traveled as often as we could in the UK and the Continent. We took our first of many trips in November 1991. This one to Amsterdam with a small tour group that catered to the Embassy and U.S. military community. We crossed the channel by overnight ferry and came up to Amsterdam by way of Delft. Zandra and I had planned this as a little getaway but took Sam. I can't recall if this was as a result of his struggles at Paray House or some other crisis. I do recall that he went with us on the night walking tour of the red light district looking curious at the women in the windows but innocent of their purpose.

By our Volvo 460 or by rail we traveled all over the UK. By far our favorite cities were York and Edinburgh. In Edinburgh we marveled at how French the city felt and how much the architecture reminded us of Quebec City. Perhaps the similar geography had something to do with that too.

In York we stayed in a little B&B as we often did on our travels. We walked what was left of the walls that once ringed the city and toured the York Minster Cathedral. One day as we were walking we came upon a closed Turkish restaurant which we decided to try that evening. It turned out to be owner operated by a husband and wife who had met in Cyprus. They were a lovely couple who built their menu around seafood. It was one of the best meals we had during our UK years. Near the restaurant we happened upon a bookstore where I found the book my 1863 map of the United States that I bought in a Kings Road shop had come from. It was part of a multivolume history of the United States. Although Zandra offered to give it to me we didn't buy it.

Our UK travels gave Zandra and me plenty of opportunities to indulge my love of history, especially maritime. At Portsmouth we visited the museum dedicated to the preservation of the remains of Henry VIII's flagship the Mary Rose, one of the great archeological recoveries of the 20th and 21st centuries. We also saw the HMS Victory and the beautifully restored HMS Warrior, one of the first iron hulled warships. In Bristol we walked on the RMS Great Britain, the first iron hulled Atlantic passenger ship. This was an early stage of her restoration as was the case with the Mary Rose. Any time we chose to, we could go to the incomparable National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.

When Tom Miller and his family were transferred to Paris we stayed with them. We also visited my Cousin Barbara Aycock who was finishing her first Paris tour. We explored the Musee Marmottan Monet, Musee d'Orsay, the Pompidou Center and the Louvre. Taking advantage of the excellent Paris subway system we crammed as much sightseeing

as we could. Zandra and Sam took a third visit to Paris to go to Euro Disney which held no appeal for me but which they thoroughly enjoyed.

While I enjoyed my Paris visits I have stronger memories of our trip over the 1993 Labor Day weekend to Berlin where we stayed with Zandra's old Buenos Aires friend Barbara Johnson who was now a USIS Admin Officer serving as a tandem. When they were assigned to Berlin it was to the former East Germany. They were among the last Americans still living in an apartment in what had been East Berlin. Barbara told us of being under constant Stasi surveillance. One time the elevator broke down. When her Stasi tail didn't pick her up coming out of the apartment a voice came over the elevator speaker asking if she was there. "Yes" she replied. "Don't move!" was the answer. After about an hour trapped she was rescued.

This was such an interesting time to be in newly unified Berlin. As part of the post WWII regime the U-Bahn and S-Bahn, the Berlin subway system, was still free to anyone carrying a U.S. military ID. We'd been issued these in London for access to base privileges so we rode free. All along what had been the Berlin wall, now all gone except a small strip preserved for history, people were hawking an impressive array of Soviet and East German memorabilia.

The old East Berlin still bore the scars of WWII and the Communist era. But, it had been the cultural heart of pre-WWII Berlin including the magnificent Pergamon Museum. There I went full circle from my childhood 1963 trip to Pergamon and saw the great altar that German archeologists had removed just before WWI. The Ishtar Gate from ancient Babylonia was a bonus.

The next year I closed another long dreamed loop. Just before the end of our London tour over the 4th of July weekend we flew to Sweden to pick up a new 1994 Volvo 850. After delivery we traveled to Stockholm. There we went to the Vasa Museum to see the restored 17th century warship more than 30 years after reading the National Geographic account that had so thrilled me and instilled a lifelong interest in marine archeology. The museum and the ship were even more impressive than I had imagined.

Stockholm is one of the most beautiful cities Zandra and I had the good fortune to visit. It and Vancouver have the finest natural settings of those cities either of us have seen although Seattle comes close. We were just past the summer solstice so had daylight until around 11:00 PM then a few hours of twilight. We watched the rather casual changing of the guard at the Swedish royal palace and walked and walked and walked taking in the beauty of the city. We even stumbled across the Stockholm Hard Rock Cafe which proved to be a shrine to ABBA.

As our tour approached the end we shared two British diplomatic traditions. In June Admiral William Crowe presented his credentials as the new Ambassador. This included proceeding to Buckingham Palace by carriage. On his return the Embassy staff lined up to watch the new Ambassador feed the carriage horses carrots in appreciation for conveying him.



At about the same time Zandra was given the choice of tickets to the Ascot horse races, always attended by that passionate racing enthusiast the Queen Mum, or the Queen's Garden Party. Zandra chose the Garden Party. A proper hat is de rigor and she had great fun shopping for one and looked smashing in it. I think the sales lady who assisted her had as much fun. Properly fitted out, a good dark suit was appropriate wear for me, we headed to Buckingham Palace with 7,000 other invitees. We quickly marched straight through the Palace gazing at what we could and into the gardens. There we mingled with the Royal flamingos and a largely British list of invitees including Boy Scout headmasters and Parish Priests being honored for their services. As for the Queen we saw her and some of the other Royals at a distance as she had a few carefully staged "pull aside" conversations with selected invitees.

The movers packed us out on a sweltering July day, one of those very rare days when London hit the 90s. We flew back to the U.S. beginning our home leave in Tucson. Tucson was in the middle of about 3 straight weeks of 100 degree plus days hitting at least 110 most days. I was happy as a clam. Zandra, however, on trying to enjoy the hotel pool one day came straight back into our room and said "My lungs are on fire." Thus ended any prospect that we would retire to Tucson.

With the perspective of time I believe London benefited us all. The London assignment was essential for Zandra's career, one in which she thrived and a job that advanced her career. After his rough start Sam flowered in London. It stimulated him; he achieved his first language breakthrough and became adjusted to moves and changes. He also developed a lifelong facility in mastering and enjoying public transportation. As for me I was often frustrated by the weather and uncertainties about my career but I loved London for what it had to offer culturally and for the opportunities to explore the UK and Western Europe. While London proved a professional dead end my work was interesting and at times quite intellectually stimulating.

### **Washington 1994-1999**

We were back in our home in Bethesda. Although our experience with tenants during our time in London was very uneven, the house fared pretty well, much better than during our Islamabad tour. The new Volvo 850 arrived in fine shape. The cats seemed happy to be home too.

However, when you serve abroad you are reliant on the quality control of the moving and storage companies that contract with the Department. I have long since forgotten the name of the one we were assigned. I understand it no longer has a contract with the Department. First the movers managed to break a mirror. Then the dining room chairs came out. Lined up along the moving van it was obvious that something was in the fabric and eating it as there was a clear progression from chair to chair. Zandra did not allow

them into the house. Nor did she our hide-a-bed couch when the rats nest, but thankfully no rats, fell out. There was no quibbling over cleaning and repairs.

Following London another Consular tour would have been Zandra's most logical career move. She returned to the Department to accommodate my professional and Sam's educational needs. Zandra landed a job in Personnel Career Development responsible for Latin American post assignments where she served for the next 2 years. This was one of those unglamorous jobs that did nothing to advance her career but in which she performed a necessary bureaucratic role in the functioning of the Department. For most of her time in Personnel she worked for the easy going Mike Senko who later became Ambassador to the Marshall Islands.

In a 2002 Goals and Values paper for the Strategic Leadership course at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces Zandra reflected candidly on her 1980s and 90s non-consular tours in Pakistan and the Department. After first noting that her career pattern was atypical, "especially [of] Consular Officers" Zandra wrote: "I have also held several non-consular positions, and while I didn't enjoy the work as much, these positions did not lack for interest and most certainly broadened my professional expertise."

Summarizing her Washington assignments she continued: "I have worked in the performance evaluation and assignment office of the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) and in the policy and planning office of the Western Hemisphere Bureau. In HR I learned how the promotion and assignments process worked and the importance of being actively involved in your own performance evaluations. In my work in the Western Hemisphere Bureau I followed the policy issues of narcotics and terrorism, coordinating the bureau's reporting and policy formulations on these issues. I gathered input from bureau country officers for the annual Congressional mandated narcotics and Terrorism Report. I also prepared briefing books and accompanied the Assistant Secretary [Abrams]...when he testified to Congress and Narcotics and/or Terrorism issues. I sometimes noted that the Assistant Secretary was less than forthcoming in his testimony but was quite surprised when he was later indicted and convicted for lying to Congress. This certainly brought home the importance of trust we Americans place in government officials and the penalty for betraying that trust. One of my abiding goals is to never betray the trust that I have earned as a government employee and to instill that responsibility in the officers I work with and manage."

In the summer of 1996 Zandra returned to CA in EX as the Post Management Officer for European consular posts. She reported to Executive Director George Lannon. This job let her engage in the nuts and bolts of the operational needs of consular sections and proved excellent training when Zandra advanced to senior consular assignments.

State Magazine in a November/December 1997 CA profile offered a little vignette of Zandra's duties "In the afternoon, Zandra Flemister, management analyst in the executive director's office, receives a call from a small Eastern European post whose only consular officer has been medically evacuated. The post needs to know what are the chances for a

TDY replacement?” In all likelihood Zandra would have responded either by arranging a detailee from a larger European consular post or dispatching a retired Consular Officer working for the Department on a When Actually Employed (WAE) contract with full authority to perform consular duties.

As the profile suggests Zandra’s job was unpredictable day to day and could involve crisis management. One morning she arrived to find that the Consular Section in Lisbon was dealing with a major flood and destroyed equipment. By that afternoon Zandra had arrived at solutions to enable Lisbon to get through the immediate emergency and begin steps toward normal operations. This experience would prove invaluable when Zandra faced a similar crisis a few years later as NIV Chief in Seoul.

By this point Zandra had also developed an informal mentoring network of spouses doing consular work under the Eligible Family Member program. Pre-9/11 they had the scope of authority of a junior FSO including the power to make visa determinations and to issue visas. IT advances made it possible for Zandra to link in real time with her mentees including Lena Miller in Turkey and Nilu Dorschner in several South Asian posts. Zandra thought both had excellent judgment for the work and would have made fine Consular Officers.

In early May 1997 Zandra started feeling severe abdominal pain. We went to the emergency room at the nearby Suburban Hospital where she was misdiagnosed as passing a kidney stone and discharged. By Monday May 5 she was in acute pain. We called our GP Dr. George Graves who examined her that day and immediately admitted her to Sibley Hospital for emergency surgery for an intestinal blockage. After surgery Dr. Graves told us had he not operated that day Zandra probably would have lost part of her intestines. Zandra was discharged May 9 and made a full recovery. I don’t know if we could have sued Suburban but we never explored this.

In May 1998 toward the end of her CA/EX assignment Zandra finally got the chance to exercise the duties of a Consul General when she filled in for a month as the Acting Consul General in Embassy Bridgetown, Barbados. Zandra stayed in the Consul General Phil Ford’s apartment. This was the top floor of an old mansion; Zandra called it a plantation house. It was on a small hill and had fresh air constantly refreshed by ocean breezes. The views were terrific and the apartment was beautifully furnished with African art from Ford’s earlier tours and very comfortable.

The Embassy Bridgetown Consular Section was the same one in which her stepmother-in-law Jo Collinge had served as a Vice Consul 20 years earlier. Zandra supervised a small American staff, all but one of whom I recall were first tour officers. One officer was in a second career and already a multimillionaire as a result of being one of the first investors in Amazon. She had a great month in Bridgetown. The duties were not too difficult once she had cleaned up a backlog. Zandra traveled around the island, liked the people she met and enjoyed herself.

I joined her for her final week. The biggest change I noticed from my June 1978 trip was the presence of solar energy. It was everywhere and in many houses used for heating hot water. Barbados had benefited from the discovery of modest oil deposits and was largely self-sufficient in refined oil. Zandra noted in a letter that Bridgetown now had “lots of off-shore banks and financial institutions.”

Barbados also had continued to develop its’ tourist industry. Zandra put a lot of planning into my visit. She put me on a tour of the island including horseback riding in a former sugar cane plantation and a trip to a rum distillery. The high point was a seat on a submersible that dived in the Bridgetown harbor. The fish life over a sunken barge was fantastic. I remember schools of silver fish. I tried taking pictures but the reflection on the viewing port defeated me.

Sam went to the Richey Park elementary school for the 1994-1995 year, his final elementary school year. He was again very well served by Montgomery County Special Ed with a good teaching staff and a nearly trouble free transition from British special ed. He also resumed the fine therapeutic horseback riding program we took him to on Saturdays and transitioned to Scott, a gentle clydesdale.

Sam spent the 1997-1999 summers at Shadybrook, a special needs summer camp in Connecticut. I don’t recall how we located it but it was a godsend. Zandra and I took Sam up to Shadybrook in June 1997 before I left for a two month detail to Vicenza, Italy.

Zandra drove up to Shadybrook for visiting day. She wrote me “Again I have to mention how calm and relaxed he was the whole time. Somehow the camp has taken the stress out of Sam’s life for a few weeks.” This was a reference to his emotional struggles in Middle School. That was the only time Montgomery County Special Ed failed him. He had an uneven first two years. The first went well due to a fine teacher and supportive principal and vice principal. The program deteriorated when his teacher resigned mid second year. Sam’s first summer at Shadybrook helped compensate but the emotional stability he’d gained there did not last.

Special Education is only as good as the weakest link in the school. The Westland program failed Sam in the 1997-98 school year. I believe the new principal and vice principal were disinterested. The new special ed teacher and her aides were overwhelmed by a very challenging mix of students with cognitive, behavioral and physical special needs. Sam grew increasingly frustrated. We attributed this to lack of direction and attention in his program. We raised this with his teaching team but to little visible result.

We did not know that Sam was being bullied at lunch by a small gang made up of girls. Because he lacked the verbal skills to explain what was happening his teacher and aides may have been unaware of the situation. In October Sam lashed out at his speech teacher breaking her collarbone. He was acknowledged as not intending to harm her but was immediately suspended. Sam got an interim placement in the Walt Whitman High School Special Ed program pending determining his status.

We faced a critical battle for Sam's rights as a disabled student to be educated in a setting that was appropriate to his ability. Failure while dire for our son also had the potential to derail Zandra's ability to serve abroad. It could have ended her career.

While Sam marked time at Walt Whitman we lined up evidence for the administrative hearing. Our strategy was to argue that under the Americans with Disabilities Act Montgomery County had failed to provide Sam an appropriate learning environment as a developmentally disabled student. We requested placing him in Ivy Mount, a special needs school in Potomac. Although Ivy Mount served many children from the District of Columbia and adjoining counties, placing a Montgomery County student there was unheard. It was fiercely resisted by the County because of the expense.

In December flanked by Sam's behavioral psychologist Dr. C.T. Gordon and our special needs lawyer Julie Starbuck, we won our administrative hearing. Sam finished the school year at Ivy Mount. He remained there the 1998-1999 year and probably would have stayed longer had our Korean assignment not intervened. The Ivy Mount program proved outstanding in meeting Sam's behavioral and academic needs. He loved his time there and flourished.

Zandra needed to get back into the field. She had developed a strong CA track record. She also had a mentor in Assistant Secretary Mary Ryan. Zandra found the number two position in the Consular Section in Seoul, Chief of Non-Immigrant Visas (NIV). Seoul was the perfect stepping stone to an assignment as Consul General. Zandra applied and Mary Ryan made it happen.

NIV Chief was a language designated position. The job did not justify the designation. Nor would Zandra's language skills have been sufficient if it had. Zandra joked only half in jest that she spoke Korean up to the level of the amusement of a 5 year old. She took 10 months of Korean language training. This was a slog. Now in her late 40s learning a new language, especially one as hard as Korean, did not come easily. Zandra described it as "like breaking rocks." It is possible that her struggles were an early unrecognized indicator of dementia related short term memory loss.

The poorly structured approach to training also impeded her learning. The FSI language school had developed a 2 year advanced Korean language program with the second year language immersion in Seoul. That made great sense for training Korean linguists. We served with some excellent ones. Unfortunately the 10 month course and the 24 week course for Junior Officers were the first half and quarter of the 2 year course, not stand-alone practical skills courses. This was particularly frustrating for the JOs who needed enough Korean to function in visa interviews and didn't get it.

Balancing health against career is one of the challenges of foreign service life. Zandra's pre-departure physical detected that she had Hepatitis C. We don't know how she contracted it. The most likely explanation is that she received a contaminated blood transfusion. I think this happened during her 1994 London surgery due to poor or no

blood screening. Zandra was advised she needed the one year interferon treatment. This was the only cure at that time and quite draining. Treatment meant forfeiting the Seoul assignment. For Zandra this was a risk vs career balancing decision as liver damage was possible. Her doctors advised that because her case was mild so was the risk, She could reasonably defer treatment until she returned from Korea in 2002. We went to Seoul.

## **Seoul 1999-2002**

Right before Zandra's departure we managed Shadybrook's abrupt closure. We never learned why Connecticut authorities acted. We were not informed if Sam was a risk and do not believe he was. Sam was bused to Aunt Gloria's Harlem apartment where we picked him up. He moved in with us at the Bethesda Residence Inn as we prepared for our move. It was a scramble but we pulled it off. I don't think it was too traumatic for Sam who is very resilient. We got him into Camp Atlantic, a special needs summer camp in Fenwick Island, Delaware. He spent 3 summers there funded by State as an Extended School Year program.

Zandra and the cats left for Seoul in early August 1999. They arrived in the aftermath of a very damaging typhoon. She described the ensuing clean up as "the chain-saw massacre." Sam and I arrived in Seoul mid-August.

We lived in a small and tired duplex. The Embassy housing dated back to the 1950s and looked it. It was not as well maintained as adjoining compound housing assigned to military officers and their families. While adequate for our needs it was cramped and spartanly furnished. The yard was barren. It was a place to stay. Since it was on the Yongsan Garrison Zandra liked to refer to it as part of Seoul's largest gated community.

The Chancery also was old and tired. Like our housing it was built in the 1950s and had the feel of utilitarian post Korean War construction. By 1999 it was one of the oldest buildings in downtown Seoul. It looked and felt shabby, especially in comparison to the surrounding South Korean government buildings. Inside it was cramped with the wiring and plumbing barely hanging together. A new Chancery was planned for which there were preliminary designs but it was hung up by a dispute with the Mayor of Seoul over location and height. As of 2022 that remains unresolved and the old building soldiers on.

Seoul was attractive for Sam's special education needs. Zandra, working with Med, thoroughly researched the special ed program and the DOD school on the Yongsan Garrison, the U.S. Eighth Army headquarters. We could not take a pre-assignment trip to Seoul but Zandra had extensive correspondence with the Seoul American School including thoroughly documenting Sam's educational history. The program looked quite compatible with special ed in Maryland.

As we found out in London, addressing special education needs is a constant challenge in foreign service life. Preparation does not guarantee a smooth transition for an autistic child. Unfortunately, our confidence that Sam's teachers were ready to meet his needs was misplaced. A complete special ed staff turnover negated Zandra's careful groundwork. The new and inexperienced teacher had never taught an autistic student. Zandra's documentation on Sam's educational background and behaviors never reached him. He had no idea how to approach Sam as a student.

Sam was frustrated. We were subjected to constant complaints and suspensions. We faced incomprehension as we tried to reach out to Sam's teacher and the school administration. This situation was threatening Zandra's ability to perform her job and, potentially, to remain at post. Zandra was at the point of seeking Embassy leadership intervention when, after a meeting with DOD Schools official from the Washington office, she finally succeeded in conveying that State would pay the full cost of a teaching assistant.

Royce Cannon was in place by early October. He quickly established an excellent rapport with Sam and we were over the crisis. Royce was the key to what became a very successful educational experience. Working with Royce Sam split his time between classroom and vocational placements. We supplemented Sam's academic study through after school tutoring by Embassy and military spouses.

Sam worked for a few months in the laundry room at the Dragon Hill Hotel on base—a preview of work that he does today at Walter Reed. For most of our time in Seoul Sam worked at the base APO slotting mail and in the motor pool cleaning buses. In our last year he bagged groceries for tips at the commissary. These experiences greatly benefitted Sam. They prepared him for the transition from special ed to work on our return to Maryland. They also got him comfortable as a civilian in a military environment.

As Zandra's tour was approaching the end she wrote of Sam's years in Seoul. "I am so happy Sam has made it this far. I think of all the rough times we all had. John and I never gave up hope Sam would be able to have a life of his own. He still needs a lot of help but he understands so much more now and is confident in his own abilities."

Professionally Seoul was an excellent assignment. In my judgment it was the pivot that reset Zandra's career on a path to the Senior Foreign Service. It validated her belief she could manage on a large scale and established her reputation in CA as a competent field and crisis manager. In a 2002 Goals and Values paper for an Industrial College of the Armed Forces class Zandra looked back on this assignment:

"I have a strong commitment to public service and take great pride in representing the United States. I find it most rewarding to assist Americans in distress overseas and help foreigners understand the U.S. immigration process. In Seoul I managed forty-three Korean employees, fifteen American officers—most on their first Foreign Service assignment and four American local hires. I spent considerable time mentoring and

training the section's many junior officers...I not only managed this section but also dealt with the public on cases and in outreach to schools and universities whose faculty and students travel to the U.S. and businesses whose Korean staff often needed to go to the U.S. I enjoyed the contact with the public even when I had to justify why a visa was denied."

Zandra was deputy to Consul General Dick Herman and Acting Consul General in his absence. She rated or reviewed all other Consular Section officers. Zandra kept an intermittent diary noting immediately on arrival she had two senior visitors, first Mary Ryan then CA/EX Deputy Director Robin Bishop. Seoul was a very high volume visa post. On June 1, 2000 her section processed over 4,000 applications. By February 2001 when State Magazine profiled the section applications some days reached 5,000. Zandra was quoted: "We start with the premise that if we tried to interview every applicant, we would do a disservice to them, burn out our own staff and, most important, fail in the end to make significantly better visa decisions."

Managing the NIV Section was by far Zandra's most challenging job. Describing the section she wrote on November 26, 1999: "On the American side the section is staffed by myself, two deputies and twelve junior officers. There are also three American PITs." (The term for local hire spouses such as I had been early in our London years.) "On the FSN side there are thirty-eight persons. The section is spread over two floors of the Embassy and an annex behind the main building that fronts on the street." Zandra overcame initial concerns that her consular skills were stale. She quickly sized up her job as management. She was relieved that her deputies, First Peter Van Buren, then Jennifer Underwood, were able officers.

Zandra's job entailed much interaction with Korean officials in the relevant ministries as well as with the Korean and American business communities. It did not require official travel. A few months after our arrival Zandra was included in a USIS sponsored overnight media offsite at what she described as "a nice but rundown hotel by a hot springs." She was there to answer questions on visa procedures but got only a few. That was her only business trip in Korea.

Zandra and I did considerable private travel with and without Sam utilizing South Korea's excellent railway system. Road travel was more difficult because highway construction had not kept up with the explosive growth of Seoul. We particularly enjoyed exploring Pusan and did not neglect the opportunity to go to the DMZ.

Being Black in Korea added to Zandra "traveling while brown" stories. Even with a U.S. military presence of 50 years Zandra encountered Koreans, usually older women, who were completely baffled by her appearance. Some would touch her or feel her hair. I recalled in an email exchange with Pat Butenis: "Your [Baghdad] beauty parlor adventures remind me of Zandra's efforts in Korea to find someone who could do black hair. She eventually struck up an arrangement with the wife of a GI who worked out of her house with products that Zandra supplied. It worked ok but Zandra always looked forward to checking in with her regular lady whenever in Washington."



For Zandra, Korea was less culturally rewarding than her earlier tours. She had great respect for the Korean work ethic and the remarkable post Korean War recovery. But, Zandra judged Korea less stimulating than her previous assignments. She lamented in diary entries the ravaging Korea suffered as a Japanese colony and in the war. She was struck that almost every historically significant site we visited was a re-creation and so many artifacts of significant cultural heritage were in Japanese or other foreign museums.

Externally we took Embassy/USO sponsored trips to Hong Kong and Beijing both of which Zandra thoroughly enjoyed. Post 9/11 my work took me to Bangkok accompanied by Zandra. Although she met there with Consul General Leslie Rowe this was tourism and a pleasant change from Seoul. Over the 2002 New Years break we went to Singapore followed by Kuala Lumpur. There Zandra had a great reunion with Joyce Barr who had recently arrived as the Admin Counselor. In addition to her joy at catching up with Joyce, Zandra loved the diversity of Malaysia which reminded her of South Asia. This was by far her favorite trip during her time in Korea.

Pat was our only non-official visitor and sole house guest. She flew from Warsaw where she was Consul General for Phil Min's wedding. He was a friend from her first Bogota tour where they had served together in the Consular Section. In Seoul Phil was a Political Officer.

Some Consular work aspects never change. Zandra wrote on December 27, 1999: "David Brizzee, the Consular Investigative Unit chief and I had dinner with the Director of Korean Immigration. Excellent Chinese food at the Lotte Hotel. Later he sent David and the CG Dick Hermann ties. I got a lovely gold bracelet that I turned in." (This is a requirement. There is a fairly low dollar limit on gifts that can be retained and those that must go to the USG.) "The referral for Mr. Oh came about 2 days later - Cat 1 ineligibility fraud case. Gave it to David to handle. Oh well."

At the end of 1999 Zandra wrote a short reflection on her life:

"Here I am in Korea. I would have never dreamed being where I am now and doing what I am doing now back as a child in the 1950s and 60s. The changes I have seen and been a part of - civil rights movement, women's rights movement and the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war. Much of this is now in history books but to me it is my life. I was there - King's March on Washington, Poor People's Campaign on the Mall, first black female Secret Service Agent, joining the Foreign Service.

I look forward to the new millennium and the changes it will bring. I want to continue to be a player and not a bystander for as long as I can."

Dick Hermann gave Zandra a strong first year evaluation and recommended her immediate promotion. He praised her leadership skills: "the section under Zandra's management has earned the reputation of being one of the most innovative and creative large visa operations." He commended her "calm demeanor, no matter how many

problems face her,” fairness as a manager, skill in handling the career development of her many junior officers, “strong written and oral communications skills,” substantive Consular knowledge and excellence as an editor. He added: “Colleagues who have served previously in Seoul tell me that they consider morale among Koreans and Americans in the Consular Section to be the best in recent memory. I credit Zandra’s outstanding leadership and managerial skills with playing a large role in this.” In October 2000 Zandra was promoted to FSO-1.

Two years into her assignment she noted that she was “earning her management stripes” as she had a challenging crop of junior officers, one of whom taped his keys to the door and simply left. She wondered if Seoul’s reputation during her tenure for developing first tour officers was perceived as a good place to send hard cases.

In late August or early September 2001 Zandra wrote a diary entry in anticipation of President Bush’s planned October Presidential visit. She wondered how she could juggle with Consular Investigative Unit Chief David Brizzee and her Deputy Jennifer Underwood on Home Leave and if she should recall Jennifer. It was not to be.

We went to bed as the 9/11 attacks began. We slept in blissful ignorance that, as Zandra put it in her diary, “the world has changed.” She may have had a premonition. Zandra wrote in her first post attack diary entry: “I had trouble sleeping and got up and prayed for a while then went back to bed. After a few minutes the phone by the bed rang. John picked it up. It was Royce...calling to say there would not be any school due to the attack on the World Trade Center.” As I recall this was about 6:00 AM. Royce quickly realized we had no idea what was going on and told us to turn on the TV. The first image was WTC-7 collapsing followed by clips of the earlier attacks. Zandra’s entry continued: “We turned on the TV to see the horror of both the twin towers in flames having been hit by commercial wide body jets.” I turned to Zandra and said “it’s Al-Qaeda.” We both were well familiar after Nairobi with that threat even if neither of us imagined the 9/11 attacks.

That morning I drove Zandra and our colleagues Craig and Debbie Bradley to work. We reached the Embassy which, as Zandra noted in her diary, was ringed by South Korean soldiers, military dogs, and APCs. We parked and went in to be greeted by a huge and rapidly growing mound of flowers being brought by Koreans who were grieving for us and expressing their sympathy. I will never forget how powerfully we all were moved.

The 9/11 attacks and their immediate aftermath showed Zandra at her best as a crisis manager. In the same entry Zandra captured some of this. “I sent both FSNs and officers down to ACS to help them answer phone calls from AmCits and Koreans with relatives in the U.S....The stress in the section is high two JOs started crying on Friday 9/14 sent one to her husband’s office and the other to the health unit.” This was a reference to a near meltdown amongst her JO’s as one had a boyfriend in one of the towers. Zandra saw the building dynamic and defused it without humiliating the officer who learned some days later that her boyfriend had survived.

Zandra continued her entry: “With Dick in meetings a lot of the time I took the lead organizing staffing...the...Consular section. I also worked...on special handling of TCN’s [Third Country Nationals]. We will start interviewing them at the annex.” This began a rapid ramp up of screening using the Visas Viper Channel to support an ad hoc interagency working group that Zandra headed through the end of her tour.

The new security climate complicated Zandra’s job in other ways. In a December entry she wrote: “Dick is off in Cebu so of course there is a big crisis at work. Cable in from Department to immediately stop using the old visa application form and start using the new. This was the second cable the first had not given any deadline on implementation and told posts to use up old stocks. We had exactly zero of the new forms. Did have a mock-up with Korean translation at GSO for printing. Quickly downloaded the new form onto our website. Got an interim print run of 4 thousand forms. Notified travel agencies, businesses and universities participating in non-interview programs of the change. Missed Country Team, apologized to Charge [Evans] Revere. We shall see what next week (tomorrow) brings.”

In early November Zandra faced a crisis similar to the one in Lisbon in 1998 that she had responded to in CA/EX. In a diary entry she summarized: “a pipe burst in a utility closet flooding the [NIV] section. I got the section through the work day by setting up interviewing at the upstairs intake windows and at the annex. We won’t know until everything dries out how much damage was done to systems.” Fortunately quick action to get those that could be lifted above water by her staff minimized the damage and disruption to services. Thankfully no one was electrocuted.

I made the decision to take a Washington job. Zandra wrote in her diary “His career has been pretty much on hold out here and either of these jobs should line him up for promotion....We have discussed the situation and agreed he should apply. We think Sam has matured to the point he can handle the separation 7 to 9 months. I am not happy about this but he made a real sacrifice coming out here and I was promoted. Now we wait and see what happens.” I left Seoul in early January 2002.

In mid-February President Bush accompanied by Secretary Powell came to Seoul as part of a Presidential visit to Japan, South Korea, and the PRC. In the run-up Zandra wrote me: “I have not been given a direct role in the visit. Right now I just try to keep the section running as more and more NIV officers are drawn off to go to meetings or handle tasks related to the visit. Another JO is resigning, another JO had a dependent arrested and the JO having problems is still having them. The rest are still upset about having their holiday leave canceled.” In a diary entry she added: “All consular officers except CG and branch chiefs are working on the visit. NIV’s is shut down for 3 days.”

Shortly afterwards she summed up in an email to me: “It has been pretty hectic here. I had no role in the visit but held down the section here with a small staff. No big demonstrations at the Embassy but there were some at other locations. Didn’t...drive in...this week security was so tight around the Embassy. MOFAT, Amb, DCM, Sec State all happy with how the visit went. We are digging out of a three day backlog in cases.”

Zandra reflected near the end of her Seoul years on our separation and her longest stint of single parenting. “Sam and I made it through! The hardest part was not having anyone to talk to after work each day....my confidence in my abilities...to handle situations at work, and with Sam, is stronger.” I was able to return in mid June to accompany Sam to the U.S. We attended a hearing on his placement in the Montgomery County special ed program to prepare him for his transition to what Zandra called “the world of work.” Then I took Sam to his special needs summer camp in Delaware while Zandra finished out her tour.

The day before her departure on June 28, 2002 Zandra wrote: “My work here is done! The end of my 3 year Seoul odyssey. I have proved I can effectively run a huge section and supervise lots of people. Only 4 JO resignations, one flood, one POTUS visit, 3 SecState visits and EER MADNESS!...However, biggest boost was my promotion to 1...and landed good onward assignment....Korea will never be my favorite posting...but I will remember it fondly.”

### **Breaking a Korean Visa Fraud Ring 2001-2004**

Zandra’s most sensitive success was her key role in detecting and breaking a visa fraud ring. Her actions led to the dismissal and prosecution of a corrupt FSO. In a May 3, 2001 sworn statement to the RSO Robert Kimbrough Zandra recounted the beginning of the investigation. “Feb. 2, 2001, Alden Stallings PA DPAO submitted U.S. visa requests for...Korean nationals via the Embassy Visa Referral Program. I noted that all the men work for...a Pusan company, and were traveling to the U.S. for business. All the employees’ passports showed little or no travel. Several of the applicants had Korean passports only valid for one year.” For Zandra’s these details were an immediate red flag.

Zandra continued: “In my capacity as NIV Chief since August of 1999 I have observed that this type of limited validity passport is not the usual travel document for a businessperson.” Zandra remarked to me that for a Korean businessman, especially one engaged in the highly competitive area of international business travel, status is key. A mark of status then, and probably still, is the more expensive multiyear passport. Zandra asked Stallings to elaborate on the applicant's bonafides which he could not do.

Three days later Zandra raised her concerns with Consular Investigative Unit Chief David Brizzee whom she directed to launch an investigation conducted by his senior FSN investigator. The investigator quickly verified that none of the applicants worked for their avowed company. Zandra then “advised the Consul General, Richard Hermann, of the problems with Mr. Stallings referrals and shared with him the investigative summary.” With the applications on hold Stallings repeatedly prodded Zandra. Two months into the investigation after his latest call Zandra told him “we had found some

misrepresentations in their cases, that we would not be returning the passports, and that the applicants could apply for new ones.” That ended the prodding.

Stallings did not know that he was under investigation. He certainly didn't know in Zandra he was up against an FSO with law enforcement investigative experience and a passion for the integrity of the consular service. He never suspected that Zandra and her colleague were carefully building a case establishing his corruption.

Zandra regularly updated DCM Revere who assumed coordinating responsibility for the investigation. Zandra had great respect for Revere whom she credited with ensuring that the investigation never faltered. Ongoing it could not be cited in her final evaluation. Ultimately Stalling's wife, a naturalized Korean with a network in Pusan, was found the conduit for the fraudulent referrals. Stallings pled guilty in January 2004 to a charge of “false statements on a visa referral.” (State 013750 January 21, 2004) He resigned and in March 2004 was fined, sentenced to 100 hours community service and placed on probation for a year.

After Stallings plea Revere, now heading the East Asia Pacific Bureau Japan Desk, documented and lauded Zandra's role. In his February 3, 2004 memorandum to HR Revere wrote:

“The Foreign Service stands on the integrity of its officers and the credibility of consular visa adjudication rests on the expectation that all will receive equal consideration under the law. By detecting and aggressively attacking the corruption of the visa referral program by a senior colleague in Seoul, Korea, Zandra Flemister demonstrated professionalism of the highest order. Her important contributions to this sensitive matter were not and could not be cited previously....That investigation has now been successfully completed and Ms. Flemister is to be commended for the valuable role she played in bringing about this result.”

After summarizing Zandra's actions in launching the investigation Revere continued: “During the course of the investigation, Zandra facilitated the search for previous referrals from this officer. She ensured that the consular visa file room was available on a weekend, allowing the consular investigative unit officer and RSO to make a comprehensive search for possibly fraudulent referrals without raising suspicion. She also carefully continued to screen visa referrals from the officer in question and passed them on for investigation without disrupting either the Embassy visa referral program operation or the NIV section's overall visa adjudication processing. Zandra tactfully parried and documented the officer's increasingly strident requests to return the visa applications and travel documents, and informed him of the problem with the cases. She scrupulously documented these conversations and reported them to the consular section head and RSO. After finishing her tour in Seoul, Zandra continued (while on a training detail to the National Defense University) to respond to inquiries from Diplomatic Security generated by the U.S. attorney prosecuting the case.”

**Washington  
2002-2005**

Zandra flew from Seoul to Tucson by way of Los Angeles. We split Arizona home leave between Tucson and Flagstaff. On our way from Flagstaff to Tucson we learned that Mary Ryan was made the scapegoat for the failures leading up to 9/11 and pushed into retirement. Zandra and I had known Mary for 20 years, we each worked with her and she had helped Zandra advance her career. We considered her one of the finest officers in the Foreign Service. We saw the end of her career as an act of political expediency. It was, in our judgment, a rare blemish on Colin Powell's record in his role as the head of the Foreign Service.

Our reentry into Bethesda was smooth. Our house was in good shape and the cats were delighted to be back in their neighborhood. I had moved back into it in March and, except for our furniture in storage, had it ready for Zandra. When we did get the furniture thankfully there was no repeat of the 1994 long term storage surprises. I had a new Volvo S-80 on hand for her. Our trusty 1994 Volvo 850 was on the way back from Seoul as a second car. Sam was squared away for his continued education and my work was going well.

Money saved in Seoul and our increasing earning power enabled us to finance a new kitchen. Zandra had long wanted a more spacious kitchen over the little one original to the house. Most of the old kitchen space became a pantry. About a third was turned into the ground level bathroom which Zandra wanted for 20 years but we couldn't afford. Zandra designed the kitchen, large but simple and functional with lots of cabinets, space for a kitchen table and very airy from plenty of windows.

**National Defense University  
Industrial College of the Armed Forces  
2002-2003**

Following Home Leave and Department consultations Zandra entered the one year Master's program at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) at Fort McNair. Shortly after Zandra began her studies she had the pleasure of attending the swearing in of our classmate Denise Mathieu as Ambassador to Niger. Denise would subsequently succeed Zandra's dear friend Joyce Barr as Ambassador to Namibia.

Zandra initially was assigned to the Navy War College in Newport, Rhode Island. For family considerations she requested and received a shift to ICAF. For similar reasons she turned down an offer from our old A-100 classmate Frank Ricciardone, now Ambassador to the Philippines, to join his Embassy. As I recall she would have headed the Manila

NIV Section. This would have been a 2 or 3 year separation from Sam and me which Zandra judged not in the best interests of our family.

Zandra enjoyed ICAF. She liked her classmates, professors and the stimulus of a very different professional culture. Although she found her Masters studies less demanding than she had expected she took pride in earning her degree. She was surprised that after many years in the State Department environment she was much more comfortable organizing her thoughts and presenting them in writing than many of her classmates. It rather bemused her at times that she was judged one of the stronger drafters.

Zandra's year at ICAF was unusual and instructive in military culture because it overlapped with the 2003 Iraq invasion. Up to the beginning of the war there was robust debate on invasion merits and, if so, how to conduct the war. Immediately on the start of war NDU President Vice Admiral Paul Gaffney issued an order to cease debate. This reflected the military culture that when the President acts the services salute and carry out orders. The absoluteness of Gaffney's directive surprised Zandra. It was so different from the State Department culture to continue if not accelerate debate while attempting to execute the mission.

ICAF priorities also reoriented. Instruction became subordinated to ad hoc tasking to "support the war fighter." While Zandra did not believe that the program suffered she observed that her professors frequently were engaged in real time problem solving. For the most part they were addressing logistical challenges as they arose in the field.

As part of her coursework for Col. Robert Roland's Strategic Leadership course Zandra was assigned a Goals and Values paper. She wrote in part: "I want to expand my professional knowledge of the Defense Department and military because increasingly they work with State and other agencies in humanitarian, peacekeeping, and nation building missions overseas. I believe the ICAF academic and cultural experience will enhance my ability to participate in such missions both at the planning and operational level. Hopefully my insights also will enrich and stimulate my DOD colleagues as they face these challenges."

Zandra's aspirations became concrete in 2005. As part of Ambassador Ryan Crocker's Country Team she engaged in the aftermath of the South Asian Earthquake with the large military humanitarian aid deployment to Islamabad. This was led by then Rear Admiral Mike Lefever. Zandra and Mike started as respected colleagues and became lasting friends.

In her Strategic Mobilization for National Security course Zandra wrote a paper "The Post 9/11 Transformation of State Department's Consular Visa Function." Her description of the early process changes are long since past history. Her judgments remain pertinent. The underlying policy imperative was to quickly transform the NIV process from an orientation to provide prompt foreign customer service to shielding the American public from terrorism. The underlying problem in achieving this goal was not so much one of process as lack of inter-Departmental and Intelligence Community

sharing. That could only be effectively addressed by building a culture of trust. Her professor Dr. Alan Gropman commended Zandra for an eye opening paper.

The ICAF program included the opportunity to join a student team tasked to intensively research and write on a topic of interest to the military. Zandra chose educational models. Her team conducted field trips in and around Washington and traveled in early 2003 to Detroit and Boston then to the UK and Germany. Zandra wrote a series of papers. Her “The Teacher Deficit in Large Urban School Districts: A Resource Allocation Problem” coupled her field work and Aunt Gloria’s experiences in the New York Public School System. Course Instructor Irene Kyriakopoulos commended her for “outstanding analysis and presentation of problem” and “excellent understanding of economic principles reflected in policy proposals.” For Dr. Francis A’Hearn she wrote a very well received findings and recommendations study. “Teacher Recruitment for Urban School Districts” For Zandra her “deep dive” into the challenges of the American educational structure was the high point of her ICAF year.

### **PER/Performance Evaluation 2003-2005**

Once again Zandra took a domestic assignment out of her home Bureau. I exchanged emails in October 2002 with Pat Butenis who was then Consul General in Bogota, Columbia. Pat was encouraging Zandra to bid for NIV Chief which like Seoul was the deputy consul general spot. In the end Zandra chose to focus on Washington assignments. While my memory is hazy I assume that this reflected her judgment not to go through another extended separation.

It appears from my emails to Pat that there was nothing in the Consular Bureau. Zandra was a serious candidate for a job in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs which she wanted. In February 2003 I wrote Pat “There are two others in the running. In addition to running the liaison office on the Hill she would be a focal point and rater for the Pearsons [officers assigned to the domestic Pearson Fellowship Program to do extensive research within the U. S. on a topic relevant to foreign policy]. She felt the interview went well and is very interested in the job.” She did not get it. Zandra was offered and rejected a job in the Office of the Under Secretary for Global Affairs as the Afghan Women’s Issues Coordinator. I wrote Pat April 18 that “she found [it] intriguing from a substantive angle but worrisome from the politicalization perspective.”

In the same email I wrote: “Zandra today gave up her job search and took a one year detail to PER/PE beginning in June....She has the option to extend in PER but hopes to be able to scout out something decent in CA.” Zandra’s job entailed reviewing and revising regulations on the EER process which was in flux, coordinating award nominations, riding herd on posts to get evaluations in and providing administrative support to promotion panels. She reported to Cheryl Hodges.



At some point in her first year Zandra volunteered to detail to Baghdad to head the Consular Section. She was initially considered as the scope of duties were at the 0-1 level. However, for policy reasons it was decided that all sections should be headed by senior FSOs rendering her ineligible. Zandra's efforts to find a position in CA in the 2004 assignments cycle failed. Although she pushed for an Anti-Fraud position it went to another as did her other bids and she extended in PER for a second year.

The high point of Zandra's PER assignment was her appointment as the consular member for the Summer 2003 FSO 0-3 Promotion Panel for Consular, Econ and Public Diplomacy officers. This was a two month detail. She was named the second week of July and immediately put on leave until the Panel convened July 22 to avoid any inference of conflict of interest.

Zandra's panel was chaired by Cynthia Efird who was then Director of Public Affairs in the Africa Bureau and the following year was appointed Ambassador to Angola. I no longer remember the other panel members but recall that the outside member was a journalist, with Zandra one of 2 Black women on the Panel. Two weeks in I wrote Pat, who was keenly interested in Zandra's experiences, how much she was enjoying the assignment. In late August I wrote my stepmother Jo "Zandra has about a week to go...has very much enjoyed the experience...panel meshed well and the work was interesting." After the Panel ended I wrote Pat: "It helped that the panel generally had little difficulty reaching consensus and was able to succeed in matching promotion recommendations to numbers."

Joyce Barr was serving as the admin member on an FSO 0-2 promotion panel. Zandra often had lunch with her. One day Joyce told her she'd been asked if she would be willing to go to Namibia as Ambassador and sought Zandra's opinion. Zandra's response was "take it." In September 2004 we had the pleasure of attending Joyce's swearing in ceremony and a dinner reception she hosted for her friends. We had a standing invitation to visit her in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia but never could.

In addition to professional challenges 2004 was a very difficult personal year. Aunt Gloria's health was in decline and in early 2004 she began to fail. By early Spring she was in and out of the hospital and on kidney dialysis. Zandra, sometimes with me, took frequent trips to Harlem to do what we could. Aunt Gloria died May 1. She was Zandra's last link to her maternal family.

In late Summer or early Fall Zandra first noticed short term memory lapses. In her day calendar I found a medical appointment entry for October 25 and one the next day that she was starting medication, ritalin, which proved ineffective. As I recall she shortly discontinued it, most likely after follow up medical consultations in November and December. Zandra, her doctors and I all believed this was a stress issue. That was a reasonable judgment in my opinion given the challenges of work, home and her many surgeries. None of us suspected what I am now convinced was the truth; Zandra was experiencing the first visible manifestations of dementia.

Sam's continuing progress toward independence and a measure of self sufficiency was our bright note. He was doing far better than we had been told to expect when his autism was diagnosed in 1987. He had become a confident young man with a strong sense of self.

The excellent Montgomery County Special Ed program at Rock Terrace High School served Sam well. It had a strong vocational component. Through it Sam had trial work placements at a DOD records center off I-270 and in the Linens Department at what was then the Bethesda Naval Hospital. The later placement began in 2004. In early Spring 2005 Sam transitioned from Rock Terrace into a 20 hour a week job at Bethesda Naval where he continues to work. He also began part time work at Georgetown Plaza Giant as a bagger on an irregular hours schedule. He worked there until 2018.

### **Consul General Islamabad 2005-2006**

Even as Zandra unknowingly began her slow but remorseless descent into dementia she laid the groundwork for the high point of her career, her 13 month stint as Consul General in Islamabad. This would prove the most challenging and rewarding of her assignments. It was the culmination of her career goal as a dedicated Consular Officer. Limited by family needs, then medical disability, Zandra's never got another chance to truly show her management abilities.

After Zandra failed to land a 2004 CA job we had no illusions that she was competitive for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service. Zandra had to find a field assignment to prove her expertise or face mandatory retirement in 2007. We weighed options. Sam was transitioning into a supported work environment. We had the hope that he would move into semi-independent living. We agreed that Zandra's logical career move was an unaccompanied danger post assignment. We felt confident that I could balance being a single parent and work for the minimum commitment of a year of separation.

Islamabad was ideal, a grade stretch into a senior management position. It was a post with serious terrorism risks. Dependents were evacuated after a bloody 2002 attack on the church serving the Embassy community. This discouraged applicants, especially at senior grades. Pat Butenis said in her oral history: "In terms of security...I felt that the only reason al-Qaeda and the Taliban didn't get us in Pakistan was...they chose not to."

When Zandra began her bid process she was known to Ambassador Nancy Powell with whom she had overlapped in 1987 when Nancy was a Political Officer. Zandra had known Pat who was Nancy's DCM since the 1980s. They had a long association of mutual respect in CA. Zandra had a good CA corridor reputation and the confidence of Assistant Secretary Maura Harty with whom she had worked in the 1990s. Our 1980s Islamabad tour may have given her some competitive advantage.

At this point Islamabad projected to be a late Summer 2005 vacancy. Zandra volunteered for a Summer 2004 TDY to fill a staffing gap there between departing and incoming CGs. In a July letter Pat wrote me: "I'm so glad Zandra will be coming out to lend us a hand. I've been told that the Consular section was not routinely included in Country Team meetings and that the DCM referred to them as 'non substantive', which carried over to the JO's attitude toward Consular work." For reasons I do not recall the TDY fell through.

Zandra submitted a justification memo to Maura in late September which Pat endorsed. In early October Pat emailed me that she had "got back an encouraging response." I wrote my cousin Barbara Aycock who was serving in Rome: "Maura Harty called Zandra today [Oct. 9] to tell her that she will back her for CG Islamabad which is Zandra's first choice. Zandra expects to be paneled in November." I wrote family members: "Zandra's assignment to Islamabad as Consul General is looking more and more likely. She now has the formal backing of the key bureaus and I see no reason to believe that anything remains beyond the panel and formal assignment. When she'll go remains uncertain but she's hoping for late next summer."

Zandra's assignment came thru February 8. She began an Islamabad diary and reflected: "the past two years I have been working in the Office of Performance Evaluation in the HR Bureau. I missed overseas life and Consular work very much. I know this job in Islamabad will be a challenge but feel for two years I have been standing still. Even if I don't get promoted and retire at least I will have been a Consul General." A few days later she wrote: "A lot has changed; my learning curve will be steep when I get to post....I fluctuate between happy and panic but surprisingly not to doubt or regret. I feel this assignment was meant for me, a sort of last chance to show my stuff. I am at peace with my decision."

Zandra's predecessor was overdue by October when Pat wrote that his delay was a mystery. She was "very anxious to have a CG in place. I'm not particularly happy with the section's past performance and it's frustrating to have only an Acting CG." Mid December this came to a head. I wrote my stepmother Jo: "As we had feared the person she was supposed to replace never showed...tracked down he pled developing a medical condition that precluded South Asia. His assignment is...being broken. Maura Harty has personally asked Zandra to go out early. The only real questions are how long it will take Med to break the [predecessor's] assignment and how much refresher training Zandra will be able to get. She's particularly conscious of the need to get up to speed on new security procedures."

Pat made clear her expectations, writing me: "I think (no, I know) I am being hard on the Consular Section, but there were several issues they didn't handle well, outreach within the Mission being one of them. I've found that it makes a real difference if you explain your policies and procedures...people are less likely to complain, just because they've heard your side of things." This dovetailed Maura Harty's consultation instructions to Zandra's.

As Zandra departed I wrote Joyce Barr: “Hate like hell to see Zandra go but I know it's good for her career and we're big boys and girls. With a good DCM and Ambassador [by then Ryan Crocker] there she should be in good shape. Her consultations have gone well and I think she's feeling good about the assignment...Her section will be inspected in May which could be a good situation for her since nothing's her fault but the fixes are to her credit.”

Advances in communications eased our separation and I think helped Zandra have a successful tour. We emailed regularly and she could phone me from home and the office. We could network on issues where Zandra needed a feel for the Washington climate.

Pat had flowers waiting for Zandra at her house on arrival. Zandra became great friends with Claudia Coleman who was her welcome officer. Claudia, Zandra, and Patty Brandmaier were frequent shopping pals, often shopping just to decompress. Zandra bought some lovely carpets. My favorite is next to my desk in the den of our house where I composed this biography. There are two more that I love and they always help me to think of Zandra as I see them in our bedroom. One day in her diary Zandra noted buying the toy decorated Bedford truck—a mainstay of Pakistani roads—that is now in the upstairs study.

Zandra began her tour March 26, 2005. In her February 2006 EER Zandra termed her tour “the most challenging and satisfying of my career...an opportunity I sought to test my managerial skills in handling the expected demands of a high security post in a time of difficult bilateral relations, as well as such unexpected challenges as responding to a major natural disaster.” With pride she wrote: “I have overseen significant positive improvement in the working environment and quality of services...”

In her rating Pat agreed, writing: “It is a tribute to her performance that I, a career consular officer, never tried to micromanage consular operations. She knew exactly what issues mattered most to the Government of Pakistan...to the American expat community, and to Washington and successfully managed them. Zandra left her section stronger than she found it.” Pat strongly recommended promoting Zandra into the Senior Foreign Service. Ambassador Crocker commended Zandra’s “excellent working relationship” with Pat and concurred in the recommendation. Zandra was promoted in September 2006.

As Consul General she supervised 13 FSOs, a family hire, a dedicated Assistant Regional Security Officer (a post 9/11 reform) and 38 Locally Engaged Staff (the new term for FSNs). On arrival she had an excellent deputy in Jill Sykes with whom she got on very well. Jill had been Acting CG for almost all of her time in Islamabad. Her husband Ken Sykes was the RSO. They retired out of post and departed in July. Zandra also had a strong NIV chief in Alice Seddon who became her deputy on Sykes departure. There was constant personnel churn with 7 Consular positions turning over during the 2005 Summer Cycle.

She oversaw Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar consular services and guided them in Kabul. Beyond the substantive, managerial and mentoring responsibilities expected of a CG her duties emphasized the nature of Pakistan as a high threat country and the post 9/11 environment especially for vetting visa applicants and safeguarding American citizens in Pakistan and the US. She was assigned liaison with the Pakistani Ministry of the Interior to execute these objectives. Zandra also was the Ambassador's representative on the Board of Directors of the International School of Islamabad although by 2005 there were only a few American students—all non-embassy.

Zandra sought to capture what these responsibilities meant in practice. Noting that there had been a 7 month gap at Consul General when she arrived Zandra stressed her actions to rebuild staff morale and consular outreach within the mission and to the Pakistani public. She emphasized cross-training for all levels of staff “and by including them in the decision-making process on issues that impacted on operational efficiency.” Ambassador Crocker commended her excellence in introducing her JOs to Consular work and the Foreign Service noting that she “involved all of them in public outreach and interaction with the media, including briefings for business and students groups on visa policy.” Pat cited Zandra's “aggressive outreach program” as significantly improving Country Team members and Pakistani officials' perceptions and interactions.

Both the Ambassador and Pat lauded Zandra for sophisticated understanding of the demands for visa security. They had particular praise for how smoothly Zandra integrated the Department of Homeland Security's Visa Security Unit. Ambassador Crocker commended her proactive approach adding Zandra and “the DHS attache jointly drafted a cable to Washington describing our experience, which should be a guide to other embassies on integrating VSU's.” Pat elaborated that this was a major inherited management challenge but Zandra “was ready to welcome them, present them with her suggested integration plan, and [assist] her DHS colleagues in becoming members of the visa security team. The senior VSU attache had nothing but praise...which meant that the added value the VSU brought to guarding against terrorists and criminals obtaining visas was immediately brought into play.”

A couple weeks after her arrival Zandra wrote me: “Islamabad is the same but different. It is still a city of government bureaucrats and diplomats but unlike before there are sections with apartment buildings, not just big houses. Some of the Embassy FSNs live in these sections. The commercial areas...are full of shops and restaurants. Compared to the rest of the country Islamabad still has an artificial feel to it but, it has become a real city with a life of its own.”

She wrote in her diary that the Embassy was unrecognizable from the one we left in 1987. The Consular Section then had been a small ground floor office off the entrance. Now it was a separate annex on the compound. For Zandra this meant frequent trips to and from the Chancery for meetings and to read classified traffic. No fun in the Islamabad heat, especially during the Summer monsoon season.

At the same time Zandra was recovering from the inevitable intestinal bug. She wrote me: “The good news is Pat is hosting a reception for me tonight. The bad news is I have a stomach virus and had an oral rehydration drink for lunch. I won't be eating anything at the reception as everything I eat goes right through me...met with the Emb. Doctor today....She told me I could have gotten it from water, food, or just from contact with someone who has it.” Pat picked up the thread in an email the next day: “Had a welcome reception for Zandra last night and the poor thing was sick, and didn't even tell me until it was over and she was leaving. A stomach virus which Med said she will have to tough out. She didn't look sick, though.”

Shortly after Zandra took a day trip to Lahore to meet Consul General Brian Strong and the Consular staff and give a speech to the Lahore Chamber of Commerce. From her emails I wrote family members: “She had some free time and did a bit of sightseeing at Lahore Fort with two bodyguards (which tells you something about security concerns these days). On her way back she noted an unusual level of security at the airport. Once she got on the plane she quickly discovered that Benazir Bhutto's husband Asif Zadari was on board and glad handing all in sight. He's just returned from exile (Benazir is still out of the country) and is in an intricate political minuet with Musharraf that will determine if he returns to active politics, exile or jail.”

Zandra planned visits to Karachi and Peshawar. She never made it to either. Security concerns and work demands made that impossible. She was able to detail Alice Seddon to Lahore for a short time to help that under staffed post.

Zandra was less than thrilled by her housing, writing in her diary “what a barn, it is huge and ugly.” She thought it might have been the same one that Laurie and Lee Peters had lived in 20 years earlier during her earlier Islamabad tour. Her neighbors, a mix of Pakistanis and diplomats, were pleasant but Zandra wanted something smaller and more practical. Also, the security climate made it no longer feasible for conducting her representational responsibilities at home and risky even to go for walks. Zandra petitioned and failed to move on to the compound. There were simply too few units. I tried to weigh in with Pat, a bit of loyal husband foolishness. Zandra, who had better sense, never raised it with her. Pat was more polite than I deserved in fending me off but I got the message.

Zandra wrote a few months later: “the gardener is on the upstairs balcony planting flowering bushes in five large empty flower pots. The plants that were in them died while the house was vacant...the balcony looked so forlorn with the empty pots. He has done a good job on the yard. It now looks like someone lives here.”

Two months in to her tour, Zandra turned to how she was finding her job challenges:

“Surprisingly it is not the place, the position or the people, it is the nature of the work itself. As with all Consular sections it is the NIV workload that gets all the attention. I was not prepared for how much the very nature of the visa work had changed post 9/11. Here almost every male applicant falls into some required name check category. Clearing

name checks can take from a few days to over a year. It took me over two weeks to understand that it is the officer's back office work and not the line work that drives the NIV process. In checking the daily stats we may interview 150 people in the morning but issue 300 visas that day....”

“On the staffing side the one year two R&R tour creates continuous staffing gaps. As a result the time for FSN training, adjudicator meetings and special projects just isn’t there. We are able to do some outreach, sending JOs out to talk to groups about visas, thanks in part to the part timers that come in and help out in the mornings. The section morale is good but, it is clear officers just want to do the work and move on to their next posting. The FSN staff (42) is largely new thanks to major malfeasance and firings about 5 years ago. I can see it is hard for them to deal with the constant officer turnover.”

“...Ambassador Crocker is not Deane Hinton...in...temperament. He can be forceful when he wants, but it seems to take a great effort. He comes across as a person who has a lot on his plate and conserves his energy for the important stuff. Again I only see him at Country Team.” In her diary Zandra noted how impressed she was at his skill in conducting a Consular Section town hall and Embassy open house. She continued in her Memorial Day letter: “Pat is her no nonsense, to the point, self, active and focused in her management style. We have a one on one, once a week. I report, she tells me what she wants done....”

“On the country itself it feels like I am in a time warp - the President is a General, the political process is just a show with no substance, newspapers are full of articles about government and business corruption and incompetence, the transportation, water, education, health care, you name it systems are all shambles and there is a lower level of internal security than when we were here before.”

The Embassy was inspected in May. The Consular Inspector had served in Seoul. In their initial discussions Zandra found his recommendations more suited to conditions there than the realities of the Islamabad security environment. She judged them unrealistic because of the name check demands and was able to tactfully convey the context to him.

Zandra wrote me that the name check requirements, while justified from a security standpoint, were resource intensive. They were a constant source of irritation with Pakistani officials and VIPs because they were intrusive and unpredictable in timing and resolution. The inspection report noted “Upwards of 45 percent of Islamabad’s visa applicants [immigrant and non-immigrant alike] now fall under Condor, Mantis, or Donkey clearance criteria.” These categories were post 9/11 anti-terrorism reforms which encompassed respectively: a name check for certain nationalities; a security advisory opinion involving illegal technology transfer; or, a security advisory opinion triggered by an applicant’s name.

The Mantis process worked well in practice because technology transfer issues were well defined and arose in few applications. The problem lay in the Visas Donkey

requirements which fit very poorly with the realities of Pakistan. “Due to the popularity of certain names in Pakistan (such as Muhammed Khan, Syed Husain, or Mohammed Ahmed), the two visa units are tied up by a significant number of applicants who are riding an endless loop of security advisory opinion clearance requests....Applicants mired in this endless loop...will more than likely never be able to have their applications finally adjudicated. Consular staff told OIG that as much as 15 percent of the section’s...workload might be caught up in these loops.” This was a problem totally beyond Zandra’s control and was not resolved by the Department during her tour.

As the inspection wrapped up in early June Zandra wrote in her diary: “To my great relief [the Inspector] didn’t find anything the section was doing wrong. His recommendations are for things we can do to improve NIV processing and center on things I was already planning to do.” Recommendations including more systematic standard operating procedures and onsite training for the section’s FSNs.

That month Zandra and Pat engineered Mukhtar Mai’s departure. She was an “honor crime” victim who became a human rights activist when rather than kill herself she named the men who gang raped her. In her June 15 diary entry Zandra wrote of her visa issuance meeting with this brave woman. “The rape victim who was going to the US for a women’s conference but was being blocked by the Pak govt. came into the Embassy. She was picked up by the DCM’s car which was followed by two police. She spent a long time up at the Chancery then came down to my office. I explained how we could issue her a visa....The Minister for Women’s Affairs has been lecturing her on how she was embarrassing Pakistan by pursuing justice! She told me she had to take her passport back empty or she wouldn’t be allowed to return to her village. All of the men who raped her are free and she is now being beaten down by her own government. I told her how brave she was and how I respected her pursuing justice in her case.”

Mukhtar Mai’s passport was confiscated a few days after Zandra issued the visa. After considerable behind the scenes negotiating in which Zandra was not involved it was returned at the end of the month. Mukhtar Mai left later that summer. She ultimately established a school and a women’s support group which attracted the attention of New York Times reporter Nicholas Kristof and remains active.

As Consul General Zandra also was responsible for the protection of American spouses attempting to escape toxic marriages. This was diplomatically delicate in Pakistan. The American spouses in most if not all cases were daughters of Pakistani immigrants to the U.S. in arranged marriages. A Boston Globe article reported that in the first 6 months of her tenure the Embassy had repatriated at least 3 women without incident. Zandra was engaged with the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs in ongoing negotiations for a MOU on handling child abduction cases. These arose when a Pakistani parent, usually the father, took a child back to Pakistan—sometimes in violation of a court order or divorce decree—and denied the other parent access.

Zandra had her first R&R in late August and September. We had a lovely reunion including a trip to Deep Creek, Maryland, one of our favorite summer vacation spots.



The B&B we stayed in was once a Monastery. We found it gloomy but it worked as a place to sleep when we weren't out hiking and exploring. On her return Zandra learned that Pat was about to become Ambassador to Bangladesh. She wrote in her diary: "I am so happy for her. She is a good person and hard worker and deserves this."

She wrote me that the travel ban to Rawalpindi had been lifted but trips were permitted only in armored vehicles. Zandra was thrilled at this taste of normal Foreign Service life and continued: "I just went to see Pindi again. It is still a busy, crowded, bustling city with streets clogged with people, cars, buses, trucks, horse carts, push carts and small three wheeled taxis."

Saturday morning October 8 I was in Cooperstown for a wedding. I stepped out of the shower and turned on CNN to learn that a massive earthquake had struck northern Pakistan. I knew immediately that Zandra and the rest of the Embassy were safe as coverage focused on a large Islamabad apartment that had collapsed. This was soon confirmed by Pat's email to all and Patty Brandmaier's to me focused on Zandra and her. The death toll in Pakistan and India was estimated at 75,000.

A few days later Zandra summarized her experience in an email to our cousin Barbara in Rome:

"I am doing fine. When the earthquake hit Saturday morning I was already up. I stood in the bedroom doorway a minute then ran out the front door and waited in the driveway until it was over. No damage to the house. [She learned later that it was structurally damaged and unsafe. She stayed in it until the end of her tour.] Then went back in and started working the phone tree to call all the Consular section officers (there is a separate phone tree for the Consular FSNs). It took awhile but we contacted everyone and they were all OK. Then went into the Embassy where the AmCit Services officer and I worked into the evening calling the American wardens asking them to check on private AmCits registered with the Embassy. We also called hospitals. So far no reports of any AmCits hurt or killed. [Months later a family living in a remote town reported the death of an American relative. He had never registered with the Embassy and is the only known American death.] A high rise apartment collapsed in Islamabad but the worst damage is in the north. It will be months before the Pakistani government, with a lot of foreign aid, can properly repair the major earthquake damage and get the assistance help out to these remote areas."

Pat elaborated the next day on the U.S. humanitarian response. "Sorry I do not have the time to respond to everyone...individually...We are even busier than usual, working 7 days a week, 14 or more hours a day, to bring in US assistance for the earthquake relief effort: medicines, blankets, winterized tents (it's already snowing up north, the hardest hit area), helicopters, earth moving equipment, field hospitals, etc. It's amazing what we can do and the Pakistanis are very appreciative. We are the biggest donor by far."

Rear Admiral Mike Lefever led this massive effort. He gained the trust and respect of his Pakistani counterparts resulting in a later assignment heading the military assistance

mission to Pakistan. Mike quickly joined the Country Team and remained in Pakistan for months. He became a great friend to Zandra and me. I remember when Pat and Zandra introduced him over brunch. I remember too when Patty asked my thoughts and I said yes, she should marry him. That was 14 years ago. Mike, Patty, Pat and our friend Debbie Carroll would gather regularly with us for dinners well beyond the point that Zandra's dementia deepened and she no longer socialized.

The International School of Islamabad (ISI) survived the earthquake but two students died in the collapse of their apartment. Zandra was one of two Embassy members on the ISI Board which she joined in late August. A few months later I wrote Pat: "Talked to Zandra yesterday. She's really gotten into the work of the Islamabad School Board, much more time consuming than I think she expected but she's finding it a satisfying experience, plays well to her strong interest in education." From Zandra's diary entries much of the Board work was done on the weekends.

Shortly after Zandra joined the Board she was approved to attend an October regional conference of international schools in Cairo. On Zandra's return she and the other ISI board members continued vetting superintendent candidates. This stretched into December after the Board approved a candidate who withdrew as her husband could not get a job in Islamabad. Zandra in effect served as the Islamabad welcome officer for several prospective superintendents. Working with the Embassy RSO she also secured funding for a security upgrade at the school.

Zandra found the conference both useful and a welcome break from post earthquake Islamabad. Frank Ricciardone was now Ambassador to Egypt. He gave the keynote speech to the conference.

Frank invited Zandra to join him, family members, and a few others on a felucca sailboat for an evening on the Nile. After the conference Zandra emailed Frank a thank you to which she attached a copy of his A-100 class book photo that I had forwarded her. That prompted an exchange:

Zandra: "Attached is a photo of a bearded guy who was in our A-100 class.

Frank: "Alright, I'll pay anything for proof that you've destroyed that photo and the negative.

Zandra: "Thanks for the [Nile] photos, I forwarded them to John. He said they were great but wanted to know what happened to the beard?"

Frank: "When it stopped being salt and pepper, and turned all salt, off it came!"

By November Zandra was working on her onward assignment. I suspect behind the scenes maneuvering went on. In early November Zandra noted in her diary that she had written CA/PDAS Janice Jacobs her interest in the Office of Inspector General (OIG) but preference for a CA tour. Somewhat later I wrote Tom and Lena in Cyprus: "Zandra is

having a tough time...on her bids. All of the Consular Bureau jobs...have gone to others...On an earlier recommendations she has added two vacancies on the OIG staff to her list...The travel does not excite us but we could live with it.” That did the trick. I wrote Tom and Lena: “Zandra did get the IG job. As soon as she expressed serious interest it came together very fast. I think that's probably what the [Consular] Bureau had in mind all along although they did feel her out on CG Damascus by way of a year of Arabic which I thought was pretty pointless. Why designate the CG position and why at only a 2-2 [proficiency in Arabic]. Talk about a waste. At any rate Zandra had no interest and wasn't pushed to reconsider.”

Zandra had her second R&R in January 2006. It was slightly shortened by airline complications that delayed her Islamabad departure and necessitated an overnight in London. Nonetheless she was able to get in much needed dental work and we were able to spend a few days at the ocean.

A few weeks later Zandra wrote Joyce in Windhoek. “It has very much been like two tours here pre-earthquake and post-earthquake. We have so many US military folk working on earthquake relief now it feels like Seoul - more people in uniform on the Embassy compound than civilians. Amb Crocker is still here but the DCM Pat Butenis is gone. She will be the new Ambassador to Bangladesh.”

“Our new DCM Peter Bodde (admin officer) arrived 3 weeks ago from Frankfurt where he was the Consul General. As soon as he arrived we started getting large demonstrations protesting those Danish cartoons of Mohamed and we have a POTUS visit next week. Already there has been one demonstration the police lost control of and demonstrators got onto the Diplomatic enclave but were turned back before they reached our Embassy. Hopefully, they will be able to control the ones during the visit.”

February found Zandra dealing with the kidnapping of an American child in the Lahore Consular District and the arrest of an American in the Karachi Consular District. The new DCM closely followed the kidnapping which was resolved when the father paid a ransom. The arrest became an issue with the Pakistani authorities due to lack of timely notice and access.

At the end of the month there was a major flap when the New York Times reported that Islamabad had issued a visa the previous year to Sayed Rahmatullah Hashemi, a one time Taliban spokesman, to attend classes at Yale. That resulted in an investigation and a tightening of background checks for all Afghan applicants except those on diplomatic or official Afghan government travel. I recall that I sent a lot of press play to Zandra and had some phone conversations on how this was playing politically in Washington.

All the while Zandra was juggling maintaining the regular work pace with preparation for two Presidential visits. Former President Clinton in mid-February and President Bush March 4. Almost her entire staff with the exception of her deputy and Zandra were diverted for various support duties. For her part, Zandra met repeatedly with advance teams for the Bush visit.

Then two days before President Bush was to arrive a car bomb attack against the Karachi Consulate murdered Admin Officer David Foy and his driver as they were entering the Consulate compound. Zandra prepared Foy's official Report of Death and arranged the transport of his body. She wrote me: "The Consulate was so badly damaged that they could not process the death certificate there."

I wrote family members drawing on my experience from my much earlier Karachi assignment:

"Obviously it's been pretty tough. She was heavily involved in the aftermath of David Foy's death. She said that an eyewitness from the Marriott next door who saw the bombing said it was a stolen Marriott laundry truck that apparently was shadowing Foy's car in an effort to crash into the ConGen motorpool area (know it well, that is how I used to come into work on the shuttle when serving in Karachi so many years ago). Poor Foy and his driver never had a chance. The motorpool was pretty much destroyed and it's probably fortunate that more people weren't killed."

In her diary Zandra wrote that she had participated in a DCM chaired security meeting during which they watched and discussed a film of the bombing. Three years later a Pakistani court sentenced an al-Qaeda linked terrorist to death for planning the attack.

I continued in my email: "As for the Presidential visit the sooner that is done the better. Even though the security preparations have been monumental Zandra is not that confident of our and the Pakistani's abilities to have prepared for all contingencies. Her role at this point is to attend the State dinner and to be a reserve senior officer for needs that come up."

Fortunately the Bush visit went smoothly. In a highlight for the Embassy President Bush presented a Group Superior Honor Award to all members of the U.S. Mission for their roles in the ongoing earthquake relief efforts. Zandra shared her impressions in a short letter to me. "We survived the POTUS visit. Security was as tight as I have ever seen. There were even Blackhawk helicopters brought in to cover the sky over Islamabad. I went to the State Dinner...my first time in the Presidential Palace (huge barn of a place). Got to go through the receiving line and shook hands [with] both Presidents and their wives....Afterwards there was entertainment—a fashion show, dances and musicians."

Through-out her tour Zandra and her deputy Alice worked hard to prepare for and then integrate DHS into the visa interview and approval process. In addition to earning high praise from Ambassador Crocker their work attracted rare Congressional interest. A few weeks before the end of her tour Zandra wrote in her diary: "A surprise! The DCM brought two Congressmen down who wanted to see how DHS worked with Consular on visa security. First time Congressmen visited a Consular Section where I was. The visit was short, 30 minutes but they seemed satisfied with what they saw."

Zandra's departure was just a few weeks too late for her to join Sam and me in Tucson for the wedding of our niece Rachel. Her presence would have meant a lot to Rachel who looked up to her as a mentor but she understood why Zandra could not be there. By this point Zandra was eager to reunite with us and declined a request from DCM Bodde to extend. She finished her Islamabad tour April 15 and due to workload wrote evaluations even after her return to the U.S. In November she was commended for the quality of her evaluation drafting.

There was a rather amusing coda to Islamabad I captured in a June email exchange with Joyce Barr: "Ibad admin follies persist. It took two months for her AF to arrive (finally showed up Monday) and it was only on Monday (and after several prods) that her SF was shipped out of Karachi. Then she walks into the office Wednesday and finds a note from the Admin section in Islamabad that (1) asks her to update her contacts list for the Ambassador's guest list for the 4th of July reception (2) asks her to confirm her attendance! Jesus!!" to which Joyce replied "I started laughing when I read the part about the 4th of July, we Admin types really know how to screw up!" Zandra noted laconically in her diary: "Anyway I have my clothes now and the weather is warming." The sea freight arrived in October.

Sam had done very well in Zandra's absence. He continued to live at home but was approaching the point where we felt confident that he could succeed in a group home. His two jobs were going well. He had supportive supervisors at both and excellent jobs coaching thru The Outcomes Service at The Training and Learning Center. It had taken us more than 20 years to get to this point. There was a lot of life and career juggling along the way for Zandra but great satisfaction in what she had accomplished.

### **Washington to Retirement 2006-2011**

Zandra had a month of home leave before starting her interim assignment to the Avian Flu Action Group (AFAG) on May 15th. Once again she narrowly missed working for Nancy Powell who had directed the Group before being named National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia. Zandra worked for Ambassador John Lange, formerly Deputy Inspector General. She was assigned the lead for Africa tracking outbreaks of Avian Flu. She also had the lead for AFAG budget issues and coordination to get a detailee from DOD. Zandra had a two week overlap with my old London boss Jeff Lutz who was now retired and on WAE status. He acted as Zandra's training officer since she had no substantive background in medical issues.

In July Zandra did a brief stint on the Beirut Evacuation Task Force which coordinated Consular support for some 15,000 American citizens evacuated from Lebanon between July and August. Many were evacuated to Cyprus where our friends Tom and Lena Miller were assigned. Zandra noted in her diary that "it felt good to do Consular work!"

**Office of the Inspector General  
2006-2008**

Zandra reported to the OIG the first week of August. This was a one year assignment with the option to extend which Zandra did for a second year. She spent about 40 percent of her time on inspections which usually lasted about 2 months. When not in the field she prepared for an inspection, worked on her portion of the final report or did the occasional ad hoc assignment. For Zandra in 2006 with 28 years as an FSO the OIG tour was a nearly perfect alignment of her experience and aspirations. It was one of the most satisfying of her career even when she was frustrated by the poor management of the Presidential appointee serving as Inspector General.

Zandra was always the Consular Inspector on an inspection team. In her Canada inspection she was the senior Consular Inspector, the only inspection she served on in which she was not the sole Consular Officer. She usually was given additional responsibilities, such as the team archivist or the inspection of schools, Health Units and Community Liaison Offices.

From my 2022 perspective I see no indication that Zandra's dementia, unknown to her and her colleagues but beginning to manifest, compromised her effectiveness. The OIG played to Zandra's strengths. The work emphasized her strong institutional knowledge which because it was grounded in solid long term memory was not impaired. Zandra's short term memory probably deteriorated between 2006 and 2008. The pace of a typical inspection very likely masked this with neither Zandra nor her management aware there was a problem. Nor, at this point, was I. Zandra's performance evaluations noted her quiet demeanor and recommended that she be more forceful in verbal advocacy. This was consistent with her Islamabad evaluation and not seen as a significant flaw. She got high marks for her interpersonal skills and ability to provide low keyed but effective correctional guidance when inspecting a Consular Section.

By her April 15, 2007 evaluation date Zandra had served as the Consular Inspector for Vienna, Havana, and Caracas. Marshall Adair in his review wrote how happy the OIG was to have her: "Consular sections are critical components of our diplomatic missions, but the OIG's Office of Inspections has been critically short of experienced consular officers. Zandra has brought to us a comprehensive knowledge of consular law and practices that she enriches by her ability to draw on direct experience in challenging overseas consular positions."

Zandra also became a Senior Foreign Service Officer on her promotion in October 2006 and Senate confirmation in December. In her evaluation her rating officer Robert Whitehead—who had served as the deputy chief in Zandra's Cuba and Venezuela inspections—judged her an outstanding officer. He recommended her next assignment

“as a director in the Consular Affairs Bureau as a prelude to managing a major consular operation overseas.”

We were beginning to weigh the possibility that following my retirement around 2010 Zandra would take a final foreign assignment and then retire. I would accompany as a trailing spouse. I think but for her dementia we would have done it provided we were comfortable with Sam’s arrangements to stay behind. It would not have been in his best interests to have taken him out of the network of services Montgomery County provided or his jobs.

Zandra flew to Vienna for her first inspection tour which lasted most of October. She wrote in her diary that it was a great introduction to her role as an Inspector. This was a 3 mission inspection: the Embassy, the US Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the US Mission to International Organizations (UNVIE). Initially her responsibility was confined to the Embassy’s Consular Section, the Embassy Medical Unit and the Community Liaison Office (CLO). However, shortly after her arrival Zandra was tasked to assess the quality of the international school that most of the Embassy and Mission children attended. She was delighted to find that her Spanish was still good enough to carry a Spanish conversation when she monitored interviews with Spanish speaking third country visa applicants.

Zandra assessed the Consular Section well managed by Consul General Charisse M. Phillips (currently Chargé in Bolivia). She identified a few problems in the Consular Section and none at the school. She made only a couple informal recommendations. Zandra found that the CLO’s outreach and advocacy for employment opportunities was perceived as inadequate by some respondents to the OIG questionnaire. She also identified as a weakness that the CLO was not part of the County Team. The OIG report included 3 informal recommendations to address these issues.

In his evaluation review Adair wrote: “Vienna’s Consular Section is a complex operation in a sophisticated European post. There Zandra concentrated on cost savings and efficiency recommendations including improved signage in the waiting rooms and elimination of ACS payment to mail US passports. The simple step of having applicants provide stamps or a postage paid envelope will save the section several thousand dollars a year.”

The inspection pace was relaxed and Zandra had plenty of opportunity to enjoy Vienna’s culture in her evenings and weekends. She was also able to take a day trip to Salzburg. On the 10th she wrote me:

“On Saturday a bunch of us from the inspection group did a Vienna bus tour just to learn the city and pick out places to visit. We also had a walking tour of the Schonbrunn Palace. It was the summer home for the Habsburg family and had many beautiful rooms. The palace gardens were very nice, so I may go back and walk through more of them. After lunch we walked through old parts of the city. There are many interesting shops and neat looking old buildings.

Sunday four of us took a two and half hour train ride out to see the Mauthausen Nazi concentration camp. It was both a work camp and death camp. Prisoners worked in a rock quarry until they wore out and then were killed in the gas chamber. Very depressing. However, it was a beautiful sunny day and it was nice to see the Austrian countryside from the train.

Monday Columbus Day went to one of the many art galleries in Vienna and viewed a large Picasso painting exhibit. Afterward did more walking in the older parts of the city.”

After briefing her findings Zandra returned home ahead of most of the Inspection team.

Zandra’s next inspection to the US Interest Section in Havana and the US Mission in Venezuela was much more demanding. Relations with Cuba were tense and Fidel Castro was in poor health. In addition to inspecting Consular services Zandra was assigned responsibility as the team archivist, a duty she also performed in Venezuela.

The Cuba inspection was scheduled for early January but repeatedly delayed to the great frustration of Ambassador Franklin Huddle. In a further complication the Inspector General Howard Krongard decided to accompany. I unloaded our frustration in a letter to Joyce. “Zandra finally flew out to Cuba Saturday night—two weeks late....She’s really looked forward to this inspection, is absolutely fascinated by the opportunity to see Havana even if her time there will be rushed--two weeks instead of three--and very tightly controlled. Unfortunately, the run up to the inspection was a mess, most inflicted by a self absorbed political IG who has just about driven her and her team crazy (one of her team, to be nameless, said at one point “he’s not a bad man”)...wanted go to Havana, really just for the photo-op. So, the Cubans held the visas so long that the inspection almost had to be canceled. The visas only came through on Thursday and the IT member of the team was not visa’d, almost certainly bumped in favor of the IG since the Cubans have imposed a hard cap on visas. This to an already skeleton crew. At any rate Zandra will do what she can.”

Zandra emailed me from Havana January 19: “Flight to Havana is one of the worst I’ve been on—small plane, Gulfstream turbo prop, carried 30 passengers. So small you can’t stand up straight in it. You don’t fly, you just bounce around a lot. The flight was 1 hour 10 minutes of torture.” When she got home Zandra told me that the plane was so overloaded with supplies for the Interest Section and other baggage that it flew barely above the ocean. Ambassador Huddle elaborated in a 2015 oral history: “We flew from Miami via a special flight that takes relatives going back and forth. The guy in front of me had an ungainly eight-foot tall package. I said, ‘What’s that?’ And he said, ‘A chrome bumper for a ’56 Cadillac.’”

In his oral history Huddle was blunt that Krongard was a liability. In her private comments Zandra shared his low opinion and agreed that Krongard did not belong on the inspection. “It was an oddball three weeks [sic] because the Inspector General, soon to retire under a cloud, met with the Principal Officer [Michael Parmly] in Washington



without us present...he wanted to see Cuba. Not only that, he insisted on going to Guantanamo Bay as well and we had a bracing discussion on this score. He said, 'yes, I want to fly from Havana...and I want you to make it happen.' I said, 'Well sir, you know they'll shoot you down if you try to fly an aircraft from Havana to Guantanamo Bay.'" Krongard stayed in Havana.

The inspection got off to a rocky start. Ambassador Huddle was unimpressed by Parmly and clashed with Krongard who wanted him to give Parmly a laudatory report. The DCM (with whom Zandra had served in Argentina) wrong footed himself with Huddle. He "flew off to the U.S. early in the inspection -- a no-no for an inspected post. As our visas came so late and it was difficult to get in and out of Cuba, we let it go. Once again, this inspection wasn't being played entirely by normal rules."

Ambassador Huddle continued: "we had about five inspectors, enough for an Interest Section with no programs to speak of and minimal diplomatic activity...Our overarching finding was that officer time was being wasted with hours and hours of windy meetings to discuss 'after Castro'. People would fidget in visible discomfort, listening day-after-day to notional plans. Everyone...was cock-sure that Castro was soon to check out." Fidel Castro, whose death had been considered imminent since at least 2004 handed power to brother Raul in February 2008. He died in November 2016.

Zandra, judged the Consular Section under Carl Cockburn very well run with no significant problems beyond those imposed by the restrictions of the Cuban government. In an email to me she wrote: "The inspection is going slowly. The IG has arrived and the team had a long formal lunch at the residences hosted by Amb. Parmly. The residence and grounds are beautiful but we lost most of the afternoon work time. I did get to tour the refugee/DHS annex. It is a real dump. I've only been able to interview four of the Consular officers. Tomorrow, I will try to spend all day in the Consular section and catch up on my work."

Ambassador Huddle was struck by how harassed the Interest Section was by the Cuban government. His interviewer asked: "How was the work life balance for the mission people?" To which Huddle answered: "Bad. All negative issues. Immense problems getting goods and services. Harassment from officialdom. The Principal Officer's goods sat in the port for 15 months. The embassy was saddled with a variety of rules that made life even more difficult. They had a non-fraternization policy more strict than that of Moscow or Beijing. It made no sense, if you looked at it rationally. What it basically amounted to was that if you slept with a local, you were summarily fired. In Moscow or Beijing, if you confessed the next day and told the security officer what had happened, you could survive. Of course, this meant that officers in Havana would be more likely to be blackmailed."

Zandra concurred. When she returned home she told me that in addition to the measures Ambassador Huddle described there was constant close surveillance. While this was to be expected it extended to vandalizing the homes of members of the mission including in some instances leaving excrement in beds. Zandra was not harassed but the word was out

that she was an American diplomat. She was never approached by Cuban citizens on the rare occasions that she had time to get out for walks. Zandra was impressed by Havana's beauty. She did manage to get into the Hotel Nacional in which she found an exhibit of the American Mafia presence in pre-Revolution Cuba featuring the late Meyer Lansky.

The Inspectors left Havana March 1, overnights in Miami then flew on to Caracas. Zandra said the flight out of Havana was much better than the one in.

The Caracas inspection went much more smoothly. Although relations with the Chavez government were poor this was a normal inspection with no interference from either Venezuelan authorities or the Inspector General. Zandra was struck by how severely the economy was suffering with widespread shortages. She attributed this to misguided economic policy.

Zandra had high praise for Consul General Peggy Gennatiempo and her staff. Report language reflected this. "The consul general is an energetic, experienced manager who has seized opportunities to cross train staff and to integrate the section fully into the embassy. The section's officers are engaged and understand the vital role they play within the mission. Accordingly, section morale is high despite concerns over poor housing, crime, and personal safety. The upbeat consul general gets full credit for buoying the staff." Gennatiempo was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service that Fall.

Zandra made three formal recommendations. The most significant reflected her careful concern for security and continuity of operations: "Embassy Caracas should designate a secondary location for the consular emergency task force center in case the embassy site can not be accessed or used in the event of an emergency."

Summarizing the two inspections I wrote Joyce Barr: "Zandra...was pretty tired as had virtually no time off but said it was a good TDY. She didn't get out much in Havana but was fascinated by what she was able to see. In Caracas she was impressed by the quality of the embassy leadership, the CG there has a strong reputation that matched up with what Zandra observed. She does a particularly good job of keeping up morale in what has become an increasingly difficult post, hostile government and growing crime; most of the consular officers have been robbed at least once, usually residential break-ins. She got up to Maracaibo which she described a gritty blue collar oil town but interesting. It's just a Consular Agent now but we are trying to get the government to allow it to be restaffed as one of Condi's American presence missions...."

Zandra's performance in her first 3 inspections earned her a strong evaluation in April 2007. Robert Whitehead, drawing on his observations as her superior during the inspections wrote: "Her strong substantive base was crucial to her success in the Havana and Caracas inspections, where she efficiently conducted inspections that normally demand three work-weeks [per country] in less than ten workdays" in each. He was particularly impressed by her interpersonal skills, which he deemed exceptional embodying "a low-key approach that immediately puts section management and staff at ease, a must for an inspection to succeed." He also commended her effectiveness as a

communicator terming Zandra “a very effective listener who carefully documented the concerns of entry-level officers in Havana, providing other members of the OIG team with a reach into housing and a number of other underlying quality of life issues.”

Zandra began preparing for her next round of inspections-Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria led by Ambassador Joseph Sullivan in late Spring and early Summer. While her principal focus was Consular she reviewed Embassy CLOs and Health Units and drafted thank you correspondence. This was a fast turn around inspection trip with barely a month to finish the Havana and Caracas reports. Despite the fast pace it was Zandra’s most enjoyable inspection although by the end of two months living out of her suitcase Zandra said she was “ready to burn her clothes.” We hoped I could join her during at least her time in Tunis but work and home demands did not allow.

Zandra wrote me May 2 from Rabat: “Arrived tired after a very long trip. The flight from Dulles was packed, had seat in the next to the last row. We did make the fast plane change in Paris. The flight into Rabat was also pretty full. Hotel is nice, slept well but am still very jet lagged. Right now it looks like I will be going up to Casablanca on Monday of next week, overnighing there two....I may get out of town this weekend maybe to Fez.” She wrote the next day: “Just finishing up my first work day at Embassy Rabat. I am still very jet-lagged but made it through the day with several cups of coffee. The weather here is great and people in the Embassy are nice.”

I updated Pat May 5, Zandra “spent this week conducting interviews of consular FSOs and senior FSNs in Rabat. These are all staff who have been pulled out of Casablanca. All visa activities except As and Gs are pretty much suspended as long as the Consulate is closed. She'll be going up there next Wednesday to interview the section head and do what she can in the absence of much activity to watch.”

On the 10th, I wrote family members how well the Morocco inspection was going and how much Zandra was enjoying her time there. “Today she is finishing up three days in Casablanca where she has been doing interviews in the Consul General's house (the Consulate remains closed since the April suicide bombings). The house turns out to have been Churchill's headquarters during his 1943 summit with FDR and she says it's just fascinating. Last Saturday she took the train to Fez and played tourist. Zandra was surprised by how green the countryside was and how many orange groves she passed (she also said she'd forgotten what a strong French flavor there still is in Morocco--she'd last been there in 1982). There were no security concerns at Fez and she had a great time wandering about and soaking in the culture. Tomorrow she will go with several other members of the inspection team to Marrakech where they will spend the night then return to Rabat for the last week of the Morocco portion of the inspection.”

Zandra updated that she: “Had a great time in Marrakech. Only bought one souvenir, a copper coffee pot. A friend at work asked me to pick one up for her....I may be going back to Casablanca one day this week or Monday of next week. Spoke to the consular section chief there and they may begin normal visa processing later this week. I would like to see the section in action. It would just be for the day up and back.” In her pocket

diary Zandra noted that she found Marrakech far more interesting than Casablanca and Rabat. Zandra added: “Looks like things are heating up in Algeria prior to their elections on Thursday. Hopefully it will have quieted down by the time we get there next month. It is not worth the danger pay if they actually are shooting at each other.”

Terrorism complicated the Morocco inspection. Language Zandra drafted summarized: “During the period of this inspection, Consulate General Casablanca was closed to the general public due to a suicide bombing attempt. The consular section, staffed by the section head and several LE staff, provided only emergency American citizens services...and very limited visa processing. The remainder of the section’s employees traveled to work in other sections at Embassy Rabat or were in training...when the consulate general reopened for business in early June, the OIG team returned [from Tunis] to complete the inspection and found the consular section working hard to address the backlog in consular, and particularly, visa services.”

Zandra wrote me: “The security inspector and I got back Tuesday night from Casablanca, had a few hours to rest and then it was off to a reception for the team at the Ambassador's residence. Needless to say I am really dragging today....The security for the Casablanca consulate is very tight now. The city has moved...large dumpster to block one lane of traffic in front of the building. They filled them with dirt and planted flowers in them. There are several kinds of guards outside the consulate in uniforms, jumpsuits etc. I got to see the consular section in action. It is so busy...now that even the consular section chief is interviewing on the line to help out with the backlog of cases created by the closure.”

Zandra’s assessment of the quality of consular management and services under these difficult conditions was positive. She commended Section Head Matthew McKeever as “experienced, knowledgeable, and involved.” She made one formal recommendation to: “cross-train another locally employed staff employee to do American citizens services work and assist the unit when required in Consulate General Casablanca.” She also made four informal recommendations, three were aimed at improving anti-fraud capabilities including formally assigning the Section Deputy Pamela Hack to manage the Fraud Prevention Unit.

Zandra stayed in touch via phone calls, short emails to me and postcards to Sam. Midway through the Tunis inspection she found time to write me the sole letter I have from those months on the road. Over the Memorial Day weekend she viewed the ruins of Roman Carthage. Zandra and other inspectors hired a van and driver for a trip to Dougga, a UN World Heritage Site which she described as a “Roman city state with temples, theater, forum and market...sited on a mountain side overlooking a valley of wheat fields and olive orchards.”

On Memorial Day “three of us roamed around Sidi Bou Said, a town set high on a cliff with houses that have whitewashed walls, blue doors and blue shutters. We walked up and down the cobbled streets and had great views of the Mediterranean.” Sidi Bou Said is also the site of the largest U.S. WWII North African Campaign cemetery. Zandra and

the other inspectors attended a Memorial Day ceremony conducted by the Embassy's Marines.

The Consular Sections in Tunis under Sean Cooper and Algiers under Joshua Fischel were small although Tunis also conducted visa activities for Libyans. Zandra found them well run although consular services in Algeria were hampered by the internal security situation and government resistance to Warden System alerts. Algiers needed to be better integrated into the mission for career development. Her recommendations reflected that need. The timing of the Algerian inspection was unfortunate from a facilities standpoint. It was a few months before a move into the new embassy. This limited Zandra's ability to make concrete recommendations to improve Consular space utilization but she did judge it an improvement over the soon to be vacated space.

In Algiers Zandra was surprised to discover that she was lodged in the hotel General Eisenhower occupied in 1943. While the Algerian security situation limited the inspectors ability to explore it did not disrupt the inspection. In a short mid-June email she commented: "Today, I am working in the consular section. The office...looks out over the Mediterranean. If it were not for the security situation this would be a very nice post to serve at. Spouses can come to post but no children and officers can't travel much around the country."

Rating Zandra in April 2008 Ambassador Eileen Malloy commended Zandra's mentoring skills during the North African inspection. "She is generous in sharing her comprehensive knowledge of consular regulations with consular entry-level officers and locally employed staff at the inspected posts. Zandra turned in an impressive performance in her inspection of three high threat North African posts. She surveyed all sides of the challenges facing the consular sections, making sure that she did not disrupt the workflow or add to the stress level, and left them sage advice on the most effective management of consular resources."

Zandra returned at the end of June. She worked on a review of Iraqi refugee processing and took the Senior Executive Training course at FSI. In mid-July I wrote Pat who had just become DCM in Baghdad "Zandra's...been finalizing the North African inspection reports, was impressed with all of the consular sections and heads...although she had a few recommendations for Algiers which has suffered the long term impact of too frequent staff turnover. On Monday she'll begin a one week consular systems training course--Automation for Consular Managers--as she finds that even barely a year out of I'bad she's already falling behind on the current systems. She thinks her next inspection...will be to Brazil and Uruguay although that has not been finalized."

To Zandra's surprise she was assigned one in Central Asia to Embassies Astana, Kazakhstan; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan as well as the Almaty Branch Office in the former Kazakh capital. The team, led by Ambassador David Zweifel, was out from the beginning of October to late November. I wrote in our 2007 Christmas letter of this round of Zandra's travels: "Beyond sampling monuments to various current and defunct Central Asian dictators she discovered the wonders of new

air carriers such as Tajik Air which her fellow inspectors have lovingly dubbed Air Tragic—possibly in honor of the fine collection of vintage Soviet turboprops.”

In her April 2008 rated officer’s statement Zandra summarized her impressions and accomplishments. “I found their consular sections, while small, could still offer the full range of consular services. I made many helpful recommendations on consular controls including limiting access to consular work areas, surveying local banks to determine their ability to do off-site visa fee collection and obtaining a secure area for deceased American citizens’ estates that were being casually stored in one of the consular sections. I was given...added responsibilities of inspecting...Health Units (HU) and...CLOs. While not a subject matter expert in the HU area, I built on information from MED consultations and used HU checklists to make...recommendation...well received by MED. At one post I found expired medications and advised the unit chief on executing a neglected State-DOD MOU to obtain medicines from the in-country U.S. military base. The CLOs I inspected...all had well supported and active programs...”

Shortly after arriving at Astana Zandra sent me her first impressions. “Astana is one big construction site with holes in the ground or half built buildings everywhere. The new Embassy...is spacious and very functional but really ugly on the outside.” The report reflected this theme characterizing Astana as “a true hardship post” adding “Embassy personnel take a certain pride in asserting that Astana is the coldest capital in the world.” Joyce Barr, who served there, says Bishkek veterans would beg to differ.

Most of the demand for consular services was in Almaty. The senior Consular Officer Jeffrey Lodinsky was assigned to the Branch Office located in the former Embassy. A Consular Associate supervised the small Consular Section in the Astana Embassy to which Lodinsky traveled monthly. Zandra’s recommendations focused on banking and courier services. She gave the Health Unit high marks. Zandra commended the CLO for doing what it could to improve poor morale in the Embassy community.

Then it was on to Dushanbe and Zandra’s less than enthusiastic airline review. “I haven’t emailed you as I have been recovering from Tuesday’s three and a half hour flight from Almaty to Dushanbe on a Tajik Airlines Antonov 24 prop plane that was at least 20 years old (they started building them in 1963- top speed is 280 miles per hour) and looked it (tires had no tread). There were about 25 passengers on the flight, eight of us, two women and the rest were Tajik businessmen. There are no words to describe the noise and shaking that we had during the flight even with good weather. The in-flight food service looked bad, bad, BAD - I didn’t eat anything but some crackers. I have such a terrible headache I couldn’t attend the dinner the Embassy Dushanbe had arranged for the team that evening.

Anyway, weather here in Dushanbe is much warmer than Almaty, the Embassy building is new and very well laid out. Hopefully the flight to Bishkek will be much better!”

Dushanbe was another tough hardship post. The small Consular Section was ably headed by Gregory Pflieger a first tour officer on a 3 grade stretch who split his time between

consular and refugee responsibilities. The visa load was so low that the DCM Thomas Hushek reviewed all NIV decisions and engaged at a senior level on refugee issues. Zandra's sole recommendation was a modest facilities improvement for a bell or buzzer to alert the Section when someone was at the locked door.

The CLO was part time, effective and Zandra made no recommendations. She commented to me on an informal member she encountered: "I was met walking in the Embassy this morning by an Embassy Compound cat. It seems to be managing well and looked well fed." The Health Unit was well managed but poorly configured. She recommended creating a separate waiting room.

The team continued on to Bishkek. Mercifully there were no problems with the flight but again Zandra was less than laudatory: "This time we took a jet...it was a YAK 40. Our guess was the plane was at least twenty years old. There were about 35 to 40 people on the flight. The first two rows of seats were filled with the extra luggage that didn't fit in the back. Some of the food was barely edible. The seating was cramped but, at least the flight was shorter this time and only one the plane's tires was completely bald." Zandra's comments on the luggage stowage made me think of a flight I took from Khartoum to Port Sudan. The Boeing 737 had the 1st class section boarded off as a makeshift forward baggage hold.

Marie Yovanovitch was finishing up as Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, her first Ambassadorship. Zandra had minimal interaction beyond the team's out-brief and never commented on Ambassador Yovanovitch. It would have been fascinating during the first impeachment if I could have asked Zandra if she had any recollections.

This from the OIG report. "The American Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan seems indefatigable, maintaining a schedule that challenges the rest of the staff. As much as they try to keep pace, she is always at least one step ahead. She is more a strong, inspiring leader than a manager. In regard to the latter, the...DCM [Earle Litzenberger] complements the Ambassador's talents. He keeps close tabs on the work across the embassy, partly through weekly meetings with each section head and chief of non-Department agency represented at post. However, he also mirrors the Ambassador's natural affinity for political, economic, and public diplomacy matters."

Consul Valerie Chittendon while new to post was experienced and able. Zandra assessed: "He is experienced and well versed in consular regulations and best practices. The section is well managed and organized to provide a high standard of service." Zandra noted an absence of a secure storage area for the effects of deceased Americans and made a formal recommendation to provide one.

Inspecting the Health Unit, which was undergoing renovation, Zandra found expired medicine. She recommended: "Embassy Bishkek should establish a stock control system for medications that will include calculations of replenishment quantities and disposition of expired medications in stock." The CLO was operating smoothly.

Kyrgyzstan had the distinction of being one of the few countries still celebrating the Bolshevik revolution. This added a local holiday to the inspection schedule. Zandra's time to explore in her previous stops had been limited and she had more opportunities in Bishkek. A few days after arriving Zandra emailed: "The walking tour on Saturday was very good....Sunday four of us including the team leader went to a park in the mountains. Most of us walked the lower trails and a couple of the guys trekked up the mountain side. It was a nice change to get out the city into the clean air and beautiful scenery." A week later she wrote that the classical concert "last night was very good, glad we made it there despite the snow. The concert hall was not full - I am sure the snow prevented some folk who had tickets from getting there. The snow stopped sometime during the night." Zandra wrote earlier that she met the conductor at her hotel.

Zandra returned late November to considerable Department drama. First Maura Harty unexpectedly resigned as CA Assistant Secretary. I wrote Pat "Maura's announcement was a complete shock to Zandra and she's sorry to see her go. She has a lot of respect for her and happy memories of working with her in VO when they were both mid-grade."

At the same time Cookie Krongard was hauled before a Congressional committee investigating charges that he was retaliating against whistleblowers in the IG. It did not go well and he was forced to resign in early December. I wrote my stepmother Jo: "Zandra has been smiling, humming, and in general acting like a reprieved prisoner ever since Cookie broke the news, so of course she's off this morning to have her hair done. She says there was a palpable sense of joy through-out the office."

By this point Zandra knew that her next inspection would be to Canada in the dead of winter leaving late January and returning in March. I wrote Pat "Did I tell you that Amb. Malloy is Zandra's team leader on the Canada inspection although they only intersect directly on the Ottawa segments. This is the first inspection they've worked together. They had an excellent session last Friday with [Assistant Secretary Janice] Jacobs discussing Consular plus up needs in the run up to the Vancouver Winter Olympics." I wrote Pat a few days later that "Zandra was quite impressed with Malloy's preparation...and the care that she took to ensure that planning was a team exercise."

Zandra was the senior Consular Inspector. The team started in Ottawa then split into two parts. Zandra's, headed by Senior Inspector Jim Dandridge, went to Vancouver, Montreal, and back to Ottawa. Weather conditions prevented a planned inspection of the small consulate in Quebec City. Zandra conducted that portion of the inspection by phone. I joined her briefly in Vancouver while Sam visited Grandmother Jo in Bellingham, then in Montreal over the President's Day holiday.

Zandra was in Ottawa at the end of January a few days before her team flew to Vancouver. Even by Canadian standards 2008 was a harsh winter. Snowfall records were broken through-out Ontario. I recall Zandra in a phone call from Ottawa saying "the snow is horizontal!" When I joined her in Montreal I watched the snow pack along the train track running from NYC up the Hudson River and Lake Champlain getting higher and higher until by the time we reached Quebec it was above the height of the train.



Thankfully Montreal had a splendid underground train station that was about a block from Zandra's hotel.

Zandra impressed Ambassador Malloy who wrote Zandra a rating statement for her April 2008 evaluation. Malloy focused heavily on the Canadian inspection writing that Zandra: "was responsible for inspection of all aspects of consular work performed at each of the constituent posts and at the embassy...she had to manage the work of the second consular inspector who was, more often than not, physically separated from her by several time zone. Just to make her work even more complicated, I also held her responsible for a review of the intersection of consular work in Canada with the huge (500 plus positions) Department of Homeland Security mandates in Canada....She consulted with her fellow consular inspector, analyzed the greatest difficulties facing Mission Canada to get the resources and authorities it will need to cope with the post September 11 security requirements at the U.S.-Canadian border."

Ambassador Malloy continued: "Oral communication involves great skill when the listener is not predisposed to accept the fact that change is needed. At a post that was located in a zone of high seismic activity [Vancouver] Zandra was able to sway an initially skeptical Consul General that an alternative offsite task force location was needed. This will allow the post to perform essential activities even if an earthquake made access to the office building impossible." This guidance reflected Zandra's conversations in Seoul with her deputy Peter Van Buren about his experiences in the 1995 Osaka earthquake.

Turning to mentoring and building expertise Malloy wrote: "After inspecting several consular sections...[she] identified the need for an orientation program for all new consular officers, especially entry-level officers. Upon her return to the embassy...she discussed this need with the coordinating Consul General [Keith Powell], explaining how such a program would enhance mission-wide consistency in consular operations, and secured his support." This became one of 11 formal recommendations Zandra made or approved for Consular Services. Most were for facilities upgrades and procedural guidance.

Zandra discovered that at one post the Consular Section was not performing prison visits out of a misunderstanding they were unnecessary in Canada. Drawing on her prison visits in Spain and the UK Zandra conveyed that regardless of country this is a core consular duty. She wrote an Informal Recommendation (one of 11 for Consular services) that "Consulate General Montreal should determine the number and location of all American citizens incarcerated within its district and institute and maintain a tracking system for consular officer visits to American citizens in jail." Zandra also worked out with her security inspector a little drill in which they would trade ID badges and see if anyone noticed.

As the inspection was beginning to wrap up Zandra wrote me: "We continue to have snow off and on but, thankfully not much more accumulation. On Saturday I watched the St. Patrick's Day parade from my hotel room window....Sat. afternoon went to the art

museum with one of the other inspectors...a mix of Canadian and European art....The deputy team leader was busy editing all weekend and called me twice on Sat about changes I asked the other consular officer to go in and do the fixes. Sunday I went with two of the management inspectors to the history museum. It was excellent. A lot on the first nations and the various groups of Europeans that came to settle, then on the British and French parts fighting/unifying up to modern day. Question: For Mr. History person. One display mentioned the influx of Black Americans from Oklahoma into the wheat growing plains area of Canada. I can't remember the dates it was either (1907-1911 or 1807-1811) The influx was so great that the Canadians started turning them back. Was some kind of persecution going on in Oklahoma?" I wrote her back this reflected the drastic increase in Jim Crow restrictions on Black Oklahomans after Oklahoma became a state in 1907. Neither of us knew it prompted flight to Canada.

At the end of the inspection I wrote Pat: "It sure is good to have Zandra back. This inspection wore on her not so much because of the length but the constant snow and inability to get out and enjoy much Canadian culture. At every post but especially Montreal and Vancouver she could see the impact on the quality of consular services caused by losing personnel to Iraq. She had to deliver several 'facts of life/suck it up' lectures but then, that's what being a crusty old hand is for! She didn't have much interaction with Ambassador Malloy except for Ottawa but found her a thorough professional. She got on very well with Jim Dandridge, the deputy who ran the half of the team that she was on."

Zandra returned to renovated upstairs bathrooms that we collaborated on designing. The original bathroom got a new sink, retiling and new light fixtures as well as resealing the 1940s era bathtub Zandra loved. We replaced the tired modular shower-tub in our master bedroom with a tiled walk in shower. Twenty-five years into home ownership we finally had our house configured to our comfort and tastes.

Zandra had just over a month before her final inspection tour from late April to the end of June—Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. As she got ready to leave I wrote Pat: Zandra flies out to Montevideo tomorrow...and [goes] straight into work...in Bolivia will visit both of the Consular Agencies. She'll also do CLO and the Federal Women's Program at her posts. She's particularly looking forward to Montevideo which she thought was a neat city when she went there as a JO so long ago and is very interested in how the other cities are now."

This proved Zandra's longest inspection trip and the most physically grueling. The inspection got off to a fine start in Uruguay. As well as reconnecting with Montevideo, Zandra enjoyed an evening on the USS Farragut, a new guided missile destroyer. Her time in Montevideo was enlivened by demonstrations and a volcano in Chile. Fears that the ash could reach the city and interfere with the inspection proved groundless.

Zandra found the Consular Section well managed by Blossom Perry, a veteran Consular Officer who was on her retirement tour. They discussed the effective engagement of Ambassador Frank Baxter with the Section and steps Perry had taken with his support to

resolve visa referral problems prevalent when she arrived. Zandra noted that the Section's waiting and work areas were inadequate. While little could be done she recommended sound absorbent dividers for the visa interview windows.

After three weeks in Uruguay the team reached Paraguay by way of Buenos Aires due to ticketing complications. Asuncion was a high crime city. Zandra was eager to explore but limited to group outings. A few days into that stop she wrote me: "And they say nothing ever happens in Asuncion. 'You are invited to the "ribbon cutting ceremony" for the new Embassy ATM machine —"Brought to you by the management team...""

Section Chief Sharon Weber was ending her assignment and her stint as President of Asuncion's Consular Corps, a role that Zandra judged she filled well. Zandra found that because the ACS section was understaffed the Warden System network suffered. She formally recommended hiring "an eligible family member to update the American citizens registrant lists, create warden packet folders with updated warden responsibility guidelines, and fulfill other duties that support the warden system." Otherwise she evaluated the Consular Section efficient and well managed.

Zandra arrived in La Paz in early June and began taking oxygen pills for the high altitude (13,000 feet above sea level.) Two days into the inspection she emailed her flight was long and tiring but the altitude wasn't bothering her. She explored: "the whole team took a city double-decker bus tour on Saturday. On Sunday a small group of us went to one of the street markets, I bought an Alpaca sweater." (This was a gift I wore for many years before moths got it.) The next weekend she wrote: Sunday a group of us from the team went to Lake Titicaca and to see some pre-Columbian ruins. It was a long all day trip but well worth it."

US-Bolivian relations were strained. A team update in the OIG newsletter elaborated. "We...arrived...just as the embassy is facing a series of public demonstrations. Yesterday's demonstration of some 8,000 people was anticipated and became violent, although the embassy was not breached. With minimal embassy staffing, only one security inspector, Tony Jones, stayed inside the embassy. The embassy and the police handled the demo well, although explosives were thrown by the demonstrators and tear gas and water cannons were used on the demonstrators to disperse them.

Subsequently the Minister of Government expressed dissatisfaction over the police's actions and fired the La Paz commander and others. Another demonstration might occur today. We will stay where we can, but not add to the embassy's burden of minimizing its protection burden."

Ambassador Philip Goldberg was recalled for consultations and PNG'ed on his return. The Embassy was headed by Charge Krishna Urs for most of the next year. Notwithstanding this turmoil, in her interviews of Consular Section staff and local hires Zandra found morale high. She assessed Section Chief Cynthia Haley "professionally competent, a good leader and manager" and the relationship with the Embassy front

office good. Her only recommendations were physical renovations to improve access and raising the English language proficiency of the fraud section local employee.

In emails Zandra said she and others on the team were sick. The Embassy Health Unit was testing stool samples trying to figure out the cause. Two years later as Zandra underwent repeated gastric tests she speculated her system might have suffered long term impact from whatever she contracted in Bolivia. If there was a link is unknowable.

The end of June I wrote Pat. "She returned last night exhausted after missing her connection in Miami although American partly made up for it by putting Ambassador Sullivan and her in first class on a later flight. This was the first time she'd ever received an unsolicited upgrade to first." I suspect being with an Ambassador didn't hurt.

A lot had happened while Zandra was on her final inspections. Sam was well established in his jobs. After much effort working with a case manager we finally found a small group home. A few weeks after Zandra's return from La Paz I wrote Pat: "He's excited and we're excited but it sure will be strange to finally be in an empty house. We expect to be very involved with him initially and are glad that we'll be close by but hope that we can gradually pull back as he settles in."

There were two losses. One evening driving Sam home from work a disoriented driver cut in front of me to make a left turn. No one was hurt. Our much loved 14 year old Volvo, the veteran of one trans-Atlantic and two trans-Pacific voyages, was totaled. Shortly before Zandra returned I wrote Jo: "Ben Ali is dead after a good long life of more than 19 years, most in pretty good health for a cat....Our other cat Ginger [whom we adopted after Samantha's death] doesn't miss him a bit but we sure do. He was such an intelligent and interesting cat even if he often nicked us up, especially Zandra who really loved him." Samantha and Ben Ali were with us in London and Seoul. They were small anchors in the life of a foreign service family.

### **Deputy Director Terrorist Screening Center 2008-2010**

Zandra's OIG management highly valued her. They offered her a third year which she declined. This reflected that we wanted more time together as Sam made the transition into a group home. In retrospect Zandra would have done better to have remained an Inspector. That tour played to all of her strengths. By contrast the Terrorist Screening Center was a poor fit and probably the most frustrating assignment of Zandra's career.

Zandra reported to TSC the first week of August. She was one of two Deputy Directors and the senior State Department officer. The position had been vacant for 3 months and Zandra had no opportunity to talk to her predecessor. I no longer recall what were Zandra's options when she accepted this assignment. I presume that she would have preferred a senior CA position.

The TSC was a post-9/11 FBI run interagency office tasked to consolidate information on potential terrorists to prevent another 9/11. It had a mandate to negotiate information sharing agreements with foreign governments. Zandra's position organizationally was in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). This was logical from an intelligence sharing standpoint but not from an operational standpoint as everything the TSC did impacted CA. From a career standpoint it put Zandra in a Bureau where she had no network and isolated her from her natural consumers in CA.

In her first evaluation, rating officer INR DAS Catherine Brown wrote that one of Zandra's reasons for accepting assignment was to address problems she observed in the terrorism vetting process during her Islamabad tour. Engaging on the Washington side of the Visa Viper program with which Zandra was thoroughly familiar she sought opportunities to improve coordination with the field.

Zandra knew she was taking on a challenge. My early emails to Pat reflected this: "Zandra's first week...has gone well....TSC has a very FBI feel to it but she's used to the law enforcement mentality from her Secret Service days so is taking that all in stride." The end of August I wrote: "Her sense is that the FBI types have spent the first few weeks sniffing her out and are starting to get comfortable. They have shifted from being polite but distant to cautiously opening up with questions and information having realized that she's not some wild woman hosted off on them. She's still not connected with the State internet which has defeated all efforts by the FBI techs to relink her, a truly depressing thought when you think about the implications for her bit of the GWOT [Great War on Terrorism]. She may take her first negotiating trip in about a month..."

At this point the concept was that Zandra would be part of short focused trips, two countries at a time, to secure information exchanges or lay the groundwork for them. She also would interact with those countries' Washington missions. I wrote Pat in early September: "The goal is for her to make five trips by the end of the year, most to Europe. She's just completed an action plan for lead countries elsewhere that might be good candidates including Colombia for South America." Zandra envisioned a central role for State writing: "Under Homeland Security Presidential Directive-6 (HSPD-6) the Department of State leads U.S. government negotiation efforts to enhance cooperation with foreign governments to exchanging actionable terrorist screening information to enhance the safety of the citizens of the U.S. by facilitating the interdiction and apprehension of suspected terrorists."

In my judgment Zandra's vision was conceptually sound but unrealistic. Whether something similar was considered when the TSC was stood up 5 years earlier I do not know. In 2008 it ran against established DOJ policy to lead bilateral negotiations conducted via the Embassy LEGATT.

Zandra went first to Copenhagen and Brussels. As she prepared I wrote Pat: "Zandra's not been impressed with the junketing tendencies that she's seeing among her DOJ colleagues." On her return reflecting Zandra's comments I elaborated: "The

results...were mixed. IN my opinion the staff work was poor and the foundation not laid for the Copenhagen round which was unproductive. There had been considerable...groundwork with Brussels...the Belgians were receptive and those talks went very well. The next trip is...to Slovenia and Sweden, hopefully the staffing work will be better. I do not have the sense that the TSC really has a good handle on how diplomacy works...the Legats appear to be the mission drivers, not the Embassy.”

My next note to Pat reported Zandra’s Slovenia and Sweden rounds were more productive. So too her March trip to Switzerland, Croatia and a second round in Slovenia. My emails to friends in State reflected that Zandra was very upbeat. I wrote Pat: “Zagreb went particularly well and they have a draft agreement in hand. She really sounded upbeat when we talked yesterday, absolutely in her element in the bilaterals and really relishing being in the field where she always thrives.”

By early 2009 Zandra was concerned that she was experiencing memory gaps. These increasingly affected her short term memory. In April, Zandra took cognitive tests. She was referred for an EKG and an MRI, the protocol to determine brain function and dementia. After the MRI I recall we were shown brain images and told the signal from the brain stem to other brain areas was weakening. Zandra was referred to the Neurology Center in Friendship Heights, Maryland. There she came under the care of a neurologist who told us that Zandra was suffering from progressive and irreversible memory loss. Dr. Coerver said this was not Alzheimer’s. Nonetheless, her only recourse was to treat Zandra as she would an Alzheimer’s patient with some hope of slowing her decline. In 2009 Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), which Zandra may have, was little understood. Nor, in contrast to Alzheimer’s, that FTD can often manifest at an early age. All of that lay ahead.

Zandra feared she was being marginalized at work. She blamed institutional bias by the FBI leadership and was frustrated at her inability to overcome this. I suspect, although neither of us did at the time, that Zandra’s advancing dementia was now impacting her professionally. They probably impaired her ability to quickly process and integrate new information. She was beginning to resort to what she called “management by sticky” using post-it notes as memory jogs. Her weakening short term memory might have made it harder for her to manage discussions within the office and as a member of a negotiating team. These declining skills were at the core of Zandra’s ability to perform at the level expected of her rank and experience.

In early July I summarized her increasing frustration to my stepmother Jo: “This continues a very trying time....The FBI simply does not know what to do with her position...she was just bumped off of an expected negotiating trip to Luxembourg. Zandra is at least the third incumbent...who has been totally frustrated. She is thinking seriously of breaking the assignment if she can line up something tolerable, perhaps a return to the IG....With Sam doing so very well we have decided that we can manage another, and final, separation if there is a truly attractive posting for 2010. One of the drivers is that Zandra must go out not later than summer 2011 or retire...She’s weighing all of her options.”

Zandra approached Pat Butenis who was still DCM in Baghdad. Pat encouraged her to take a Baghdad assignment. Zandra's queries on two possibilities resulted in her being steered to head a Provincial Reconstruction Team. Pat was dubious, predicting they would soon be shut down. Zandra went ahead and applied for 5 PRT vacancies securing a strong recommendation from Joyce Barr who had recently returned from her Ambassadorship in Namibia. I wrote Joyce the end of July: "I'm impressed that you were contacted so fast, that encourages me that they are serious about Zandra who really wants this (after the initial I can't believe I'm doing this stage)." Pat's prediction proved sound. The PRT gambit failed in early September.

In October 2009 Zandra had a taste of what retirement life might have been. I had made friends with Tom Newcomb and his wife Dee Jackson through work. After Dee retired they moved to rural Ohio where Tom was teaching at Heidelberg College and both at Tiffin College. We accepted their invitation to stay with them at their lovely restored 1830s home on farm land where they were beginning to establish a vineyard.

We were volunteering to speak to students at the colleges on foreign service and intelligence service careers from our perspectives. Dee organized two seminars at their home so that Zandra could speak informally to students from the Black Students Union. This was something that she could still do with passion and force. By Dee's account and Zandra's narrative to me it was a wonderful moment. It was the type of engagement Zandra loved but all too soon would lose.

### **Board of Examiners and Retirement 2010-2011**

In mid-2009 Zandra did not know that she was cognitively ill. She thought that she had a manageable memory problem. She next pursued returning to the OIG for a year following her two years at the TSC then trying for a field assignment in the 2011 cycle. That approach also failed. In March 2010 she accepted a handshake for the Board of Examiners (BEX) to begin in Summer 2010.

By this point it was clear that BEX would be Zandra's retirement tour. In addition to her advancing memory loss Zandra was suffering serious physical illness. I do not know if these were reinforcing each other but together they were debilitating. She was having unexplained significant weight loss with gastric and bowel distress. In early 2010 I wrote a friend in Tucson: "I'm concerned about Zandra's health. Since we visited you she's lost about 15 pounds and is down to her college weight of just over 120 lbs. She's been in for several rounds of tests which eliminated the two most likely causes, thyroid and pancreas. Her gastroenterologist thinks the problem is scarring caused by several intestinal surgeries from the 80s and 90s. We think this is causing digestive problems now [but] no one seems to be able to explain."

Zandra knew that she was in no condition to take an assignment abroad. Months of examinations ruled out various ailments but never identified a cause. The final hypothesis of irritable bowel syndrome seems the most plausible. I suspect that her system may have been reacting to the Namenda she was prescribed to try to slow memory loss. After a few years when it proved ineffective and was discontinued Zandra gradually recovered her physical health. By that point she was retired.

As Zandra prepared for her BEX assignment I wrote a work colleague: “Her new (as of Summer) office is going to bat for her to get a waiver of the five years and out to the field rule which hopefully will sail through. This would allow her to work there until 2012 at which point I [expect] she'll retire. That bit of grace would be a load off her as she and I cope with the health issues.” In late June I updated Pat: “BEX has given her a great reception. She's been assigned a mentor who turns out to be someone she worked with in OIG and is comfortable with. She also appreciates going into a well thought through office structure.”

Zandra's BEX assignment started well. She shadowed candidate examination interviews and began to become familiar with the office. Then she moved on to mastering the detailed manual regulating the examination and recruitment procedures under the Foreign Service Act of 1980 governing testing and vetting new hire candidates. This did not go well. In late September I wrote my stepmother Jo: “Zandra went to BEX management last week and asked to break her assignment. She found that she could not agree with the interview methodology which she judges is weighted toward elites and persons who would function better in the corporate world than in an embassy. The head of BEX was surprisingly understanding, said Zandra is not unique in taking this position. Zandra meets today with her CDO on a couple job possibilities, one would be another round with the IG.”

Zandra's disagreement with the recruitment process while genuine masked the core problem. Her cognitive decline was at the point that she was struggling to understand and integrate the manual. This was a devastating realization that Zandra reluctantly accepted.

In early October Zandra summoned her courage and told the BEX Director that she was medically unfit. I wrote Joyce Barr: “Zandra has decided to retire. She has gotten the ok from BEX and has worked it through with her CDO. She'll go into the retirement seminar in March, the first available running. This is very much a health driven decision as she's concluded that she can't commit to a foreign assignment which would have been the only way to have avoided mandatory retirement next summer. Zandra's stamina is quite low and I think that this is the right decision. She very much wants to come back part time, probably with the IG or CA which I also support.”

Zandra's management at BEX treated her with great understanding and compassion. She was given light and undemanding work until she could enter the retirement seminar. Even in that environment I could see how Zandra struggled. She retired April 30, 2011 after nearly 37 years of Federal service.



## **Post Retirement 2011-2022**

Zandra's cognitive confusion steadily advanced. It was clear to her by retirement that she could not work in as a rehired annuitant under the WAE program. This ended a long time dream to do part time work as a Consular rover filling summer rotation and other gaps. Efforts to volunteer at Bethesda Naval Hospital and with the Montgomery Country Library went nowhere as her short term memory steadily failed. She never worked again.

Zandra's failing memory had major impacts on our family life. Before I understood the full extent of Zandra's illness and what it was doing to her cognitively I had retired in October 2009. I contracted with the Department's Office of the Historian expecting to work there for 5 years and compile the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volumes documenting US South Asian foreign policy in the Carter and Reagan Administrations. In 2011 I reluctantly accepted that full time work was incompatible with Zandra's needs and resigned. I took a job at the National Declassification Center at the National Archives' College Park facility where I could work a flexible part time schedule and care for Zandra.

Sam's group home arrangement failed. We brought him back home to live with us. This arrangement frustrated all. What none of us understood was as Zandra cognitively declined she was losing her ability to be patient and empathetic with Sam. After an unhappy year we rented an efficiency apartment near our house that Sam chose. That arrangement has worked very well for Sam but by 2012 he was estranged from his mother, I think he believed she had rejected him. By 2013 Zandra was so cognitively impaired that she no longer realized that she had a son. It was only with great difficulty that I was able to explain and Sam accepted that his mother had not rejected him but had forgotten him because she was ill.

Dementia robs a person step by step. As Zandra lost her connection to Sam she began to lose her connection to me and to her friends. She also steadily lost her money management skills, her navigational skills and her self confidence. In 2014 she lost the ability to navigate the Metro system. She also tried and failed to navigate the ballot and voting machine to cast her votes in the Maryland primary. I asked if I could assist and was turned down. Zandra, for whom the voting rights struggles of the 1960s had meant so much, never voted again.

That summer I had to take Zandra's car keys after she got lost and I made a 911 call. That ended her relationship with the Reid Temple AME congregation which had given her much comfort and joy. I offered to drive her but she declined, I think because driving to Reid Temple was an act of independence. It might, however, have been her steadily advancing short term memory loss. After one of her final services I called her dear friend

Val Webster to say I was sorry they hadn't made a planned meet up only to have Val's shocked reply that they had sat through the service together.

In 2013 as a result of the urgings of Pat Butenis I reached out to IONA Senior Services to join an Alzheimer's caregiver support group. This led me to a joint IONA support group for persons suffering from dementia and family members. It became the entry point for Zandra joining IONA's outstanding Wellness and Arts Center. She went to the Center first a few days a week then full time after I could no longer leave her alone.

On July 24, 2015 Zandra entered long term care at Arden Courts Kensington, a purpose designed dementia facility. Zandra is now in hospice at Arden Courts and will stay there until she dies. Zandra was formally diagnosed in 2014 with Early Onset Alzheimer's. This let her draw on the superb Mutual of Omaha long term care policy that she took out via the Foreign Service Benefit Plan in 2000. Zandra outlived her policy but before she did it saved us a half million dollars in medical care. Until dementia finally overwhelmed her, Zandra always had a flair for planning. This was her best financial decision.

In the Summer of 2015 I wrote the article "A Foreign Service Officer's Alzheimer's Journey." I did so both as a lessons learned narrative for the Foreign Service and to let Zandra's many friends in the Foreign Service know why she had disappeared. My article ran in the January 2016 Foreign Service Journal. I was deeply touched by the many tributes to Zandra it prompted from colleagues I never knew who treasured and respected her as an officer and a friend.

Coda: Perhaps Zandra was fortunate in developing dementia. She would have been appalled by President Trump. She would have been outraged when Secretary Tillerson fired her dear friend and colleague Joyce Barr for the crime of working for Undersecretary for Management Pat Kennedy. She would have been even more disgusted by Tillerson and Pompeo's abuse of their office and the institution of the Foreign Service. But, she would have taken solace in Joyce's integrity and the professionalism and courage of officers like Ambassadors Yovanovitch and Mike McKinley.

John Collinge  
August 15, 2022



Escorting Prime Minister Micheal Manley of Jamaica - 1977



On the Connecticut River - Summer 1997



With John and Sam on leave from Islamabad - Fall 2005





On Inspection in Havana - Winter 2007