The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROBERT JACKSON

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is May 21 and we are concluding our interview with Robert Jackson by reviewing his early life. Robert, where and when were you born?

JACKSON: I was born in Paris, Tennessee, one of the thirty-seven Parises in the United States, on October 17, 1956.

Q: Was that where you also grew up?

JACKSON: Yes and no. I spent the first few years of my life there and then my family moved to Auburn, Maine, where my mother's family was living and where she was born. I attended elementary school, middle school, and my first semester of high school in Auburn; then I transferred to Phillips Exeter Academy, a boarding school in Exeter, New Hampshire.

Q: Now before we go further, a number of people these days are tracing their roots. Have you done any ancestry investigation?

JACKSON: In fact, I have been very engaged in genealogy since I retired and have had a great time. I've identified all of my great; great, great; and great, great, great grandparents—some with the help of DNA analyzed by ancestry.com. I knew about most of those ancestors, and the DNA test showed what I had always been told—i.e., that most of the family hailed from the British Isles. In fact, five of my ancestors arrived on the Mayflower. However, there are branches of my father's family who emigrated from northern France and northern Germany to the United States in the early 1700s. There are also some Cherokee ancestors. I was surprised to discover that the Jacksons were Quakers who came to the colonies from England and settled first in Pennsylvania and then North Carolina before ultimately establishing themselves in Tennessee prior to Tennessee becoming a state; so in the space of three generations, there was migration from England to Ireland to Pennsylvania and finally to Tennessee.

Q: How did your parents meet?

JACKSON: My father, Francis Jackson, worked for a chain of independent hotels owned by the Lambkin family. One of his jobs was to take a hotel that was having financial challenges and get it back on its feet. That took him from the Southeast to New York and New England. Initially, he moved from Tennessee to Maine in the 1930s, when he was in his twenties. He met my mother in Rumford, Maine, on a blind date that had been arranged by one of her friends. By the 1960s, these hotels, which were primarily in city centers were losing popularity, and during the Johnson administration, urban renewal saw the destruction of many of those old hotels; so my father began to work in motels and resorts.

Q: You mentioned that you had most of your education in Maine, but then went to a private boarding school. How would you compare the public and private schools?

JACKSON: The schools in Maine where we're quite good. However, they were not diverse. I remember there was one African American student in my class and I think at that time his was the only African American family in Auburn; so they stood out. There were many people of French Canadian descent in the Lewiston-Auburn area, but I grew up in a very white setting.

Q: What about curriculum and extracurricular activities?

JACKSON: My mother, Barbara Jackson, was always very interested in the world and she shared that interest with me. When I was in elementary school, we used to go to Greene, Maine, a neighboring town, each week to see a film or slides about some foreign country. I remember presentations on European countries, India, Thailand, and South American countries. Those films certainly nurtured my interest in international travel.

As for school, in Auburn, I was always at the top of my class—often with straight As, with the occasional B in biology or geometry. The important thing at public school was that I read *The Ugly American* in my eighth grade history class, and I decided then that I wanted to serve in our Foreign Service—convinced that I could do a better job than the American diplomats portrayed in the book.

My parents wanted me to go to Exeter because they thought I would be more academically challenged. Nevertheless, I was very resistant to the idea because I was happy in public school. I had lots of friends. I was on the debating team, and I was very content. Anyway, I applied to Exeter and was accepted, and my parents and I agreed that if after a semester I didn't like it, I could return to Edward Little High School, from which my mother, sister, and brother had graduated. Of course, after a semester at Exeter I had made friends and settled into a routine. Exeter was far more challenging academically. I pursued my interest in English, French, and history. Outside the classroom, I represented my dormitory on the student council. I played chess and learned to play bridge and became very good at it. I was on the junior varsity track team, and I played soccer, squash, and tennis; so it was a stimulating environment with a lot of good friends.

Exeter was diverse too. In my dorm there were students from Canada, Nepal, and Switzerland, and my classes included students from France, Norway, and the Philippines. The foreign language departments were very strong, with junior year abroad programs in France and Spain. I started to study Spanish, which came easily after French. The grammar is very similar, and there is some overlap in the vocabulary. In fact, my teachers used to get mad at me for trying to use French words in my Spanish. I joined the Spanish Club to practice regularly.

Q: You had mentioned that there were people who had studied abroad. Were there any opportunities, or were you chomping at the bit for your own opportunity to go abroad? Even in high school?

JACKSON: I was interested in traveling overseas. While I had traveled in the eastern United States, the only foreign country I had visited was Canada. I did not travel abroad at all while I was in high school. I was comfortable conversing in French by the time I graduated from high school though and my Spanish was okay.

Q: As you're going through high school with these interests, you were developing your interest in international affairs. What were you thinking of in terms of college?

JACKSON: I visited and applied to a number of Ivy League schools. I really found Princeton, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, Wesleyan, and the University of Virginia very appealing and was accepted at the last three. I wanted to move out of northern New England. However, my brother had gone to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, and when Bowdoin offered me a year of credit for my advanced placement courses, that was impossible to refuse.

Like Exeter, Bowdoin was in the early years of coeducation. One of the most difficult adjustments for me at boarding school had been the imbalance between boys and girls. It was awkward socially, and coming from a public school that was fifty-fifty, I had hoped to attend a college that was truly co-ed.

Q: Is it true that boys learn by being competitive and girls learn by being cooperative?

JACKSON: I don't know if that is true, and I know some very competitive women; so there are always exceptions. I did find that there was a lot of competition at Exeter but I experienced less at Bowdoin.

Q: Having very bright people to compete with kept you on your toes. Now, you already have a year basically; so did you have to declare a major?

JACKSON: I had to declare a major within my first year, but I had pretty much decided on government and legal studies from the outset. My brother was in law school at the University of Maine at that point; my brother-in-law was also a lawyer. Some of my fraternity brothers and sisters were pre-law and I thought law school might be a route to a career in government. However, in addition to taking political science and constitutional law classes, I also experimented. I started taking sociology classes, which absolutely fascinated me. Had I been at Bowdoin longer, I might have majored in government and sociology.

Q: What was it about sociology that captured your attention?

JACKSON: The study of how people and societies interact enthralled me and complemented my interest in history and foreign cultures; so it was a natural attraction. I also took anthropology, economics, and environmental studies to experiment and continued to study history, French, and political science. Bowdoin had a strong faculty with interesting backgrounds. For example, the chairman of the French department had received one of France's highest literary honors. Matilda Riley, the chairperson of the sociology department, was a very respected sociologist. The government and legal studies department had several stars, but Professor Donovan, who was my favorite political science teacher had worked for the Department of Labor in addition to authoring a book about the evolution of American democracy. Thus, these were people who had not only succeeded academically but had also pursued professions outside of academia.

Q: You mentioned your own fraternity. Did that turn out to be a useful network for you

later on?

JACKSON: It was certainly a useful network for me during college, and I have kept in touch with many of my fraternity brothers and sisters. I should note that fraternities at Bowdoin were co-ed, with one exception. Moreover, the two campus dining halls were way too small to accommodate all of the students; so the only way to make this work was to have the fraternity houses provide housing and board. Three different fraternities rushed me, and I finally settled on Alpha Rho Upsilon. Interestingly, most of my friends ended up belonging to one of those same three fraternities. My junior year, 1976–77, I lived in my fraternity house, and my senior year a fraternity brother and shared an off-campus college apartment.

In November of my senior year, I took the Foreign Service exam and passed: so I was invited to go to Boston for the orals in February 1975. The exams have not changed that much over the years, and if you watch *State Department File 649*, a wonderful Hollywood film about a marine who joins the Foreign Service in the late 1940s, the oral exam looks remarkably similar. Certainly, the ninety-minute interview has hardly changed, with three examiners—one who was agreeable, one who said nothing, and one who was disagreeable. I think I performed reasonably well, but I did not pass. However, one of the examiners gave me some excellent advice. Noting that I had never lived outside the United States nor ever traveled outside North America, he urged me to acquire more international experience and reapply. I followed his advice and began to look at options for after graduation that spring.

Since I had worked as a bank teller for Depositors Trust Company during the summer of 1976, I interviewed for banking jobs. I also took the PACE exam, a Civil Service qualifying exam, getting on the register for federal jobs. However, Bowdoin has an educational exchange with the University of Clermont in the very center of France, whereby one graduate who speaks French goes to teach English and American civilization at the university, and two Clermont graduates travel to Bowdoin to serve as teaching assistants in the French department. Carol Beaumont, my fraternity sister and roommate's fiancée, occupied that position my senior year, and she urged me to apply, especially since none of the three French majors, who would normally have had the inside track for the job, was interested. One was joining the Peace Corps—something that did not appeal to me since I love my creature comforts; another had decided to pursue her master's degree in sociology; and the third major had also decided to pursue an advanced degree. Thus, the French department was looking for somebody, and since I had taken French every semester, I was a logical candidate. I applied and much to my delight was selected. So before graduating in May 1978, I had my next year planned and was very excited.

Q: You mentioned working as a bank teller, did you have other work experience prior to graduating from college?

JACKSON: In fact, I had rather diverse experiences. In summer 1974, I worked at Bates

Mill, a textile mill in Lewiston, Maine. My job was moving large bobbins of yarn for bedspreads between two sets of machines. It was hot and dusty, and I left knowing that I did not want to do that for the rest of my life. After completing my studies at Exeter in December 1974, I worked at Camden Yarns, another textile mill in Lewiston, as the shipping clerk. That involved packing yarn, labeling it, and preparing it for shipping to different mills. That paid a bit better and allowed me to save some money before starting college. It also nudged me toward white-collar work—hence the job as a bank teller. And the summer before my senior year, when I served as Rush Chairman for my fraternity, I worked for Bowdoin's sociology department, typing crime statistics onto punch cards for computer processing and analysis. I elected to do that rather than return to the bank because that job entailed commuting to different branches when colleagues were taking vacation. As for the punch cards, remember this was when computers were relatively rare and occupied entire rooms although they possessed less capacity than today's mobile telephones. The computers spit out the data on rolls of yellow or green and white paper, and you tore off the sheets with your results. I also had my first exposure to word processing that summer, and I was the first student at Bowdoin to type my thesis on a computer. This was such an improvement over typing because you could review your text and make corrections, additions, and deletions.

After graduation, I worked as a researcher for Maine's Department of Energy for three months before going to France. That was my first experience working for the government. However, none of the summer jobs were the ideal preparation for teaching.

Nonetheless, in September 1978, I set off for Europe with two suitcases. I spent a few days in London exploring; then I took the train and the ferry and another train to Paris. Finally, I embarked on the four-hour train ride from Paris to Clermont-Ferrand. Although I had heard a lot from Carol about her experience living and working in France, I really did not know what to expect. I did know that Clermont-Ferrand is in the very center of France—thirty miles south of Vichy. It was and is the home of Michelin Tire, and just outside Clermont are the plains of Gergovia, where Julius Caesar defeated Vercingetorix, the leader of the Gauls, two millennia ago. Clermont-Ferrand is also surrounded by extinct volcanoes, which are called *puys* in French, and the volcanic stone is black and was used among other things to construct Clermont's Gothic cathedral.

While I was interested in exploring the region, my immediate tasks were to obtain my work and residence permits and find an apartment. I felt fortunate to be able to link up with the three other English lecturers, as we were called. One was a woman from Thornaby-on-Tees, England; another was a woman from Glasgow, Scotland; and the third was a man from just outside London. They had all lived in France as college students and were among the few English speakers in this conservative and rather insular region famous for its pot roast and cheese.

I very quickly discovered that my French was fine for academic discussions, but not very fluent for day-to-day life. I actually had to look up the words to inquire if central heating was included in the price of the rent. It all worked out because I found a modest

one-bedroom apartment in Chamalières, a spa town where President Giscard d'Estaing was also the mayor. In fact, I had the privilege of meeting him in November 1978 when all civil servants living in Chamalières were invited to the Town Hall, and as a lecturer, I was a French civil servant. I thought that was pretty exciting.

I am getting a bit ahead though. I was negotiating my way around Clermont-Ferrand on foot, on a moped, or on a bus. Like most French people, I had a very small, apartment-size refrigerator; so I had to go to the market or the supermarket almost every other day because there was little space to store meat or produce. It was all a great immersion into France.

And I was blessed with an incredible schedule. My first class of the week began at five pm on Tuesdays, and my last class of the week concluded at one pm on Thursdays; so—apart from the time I spent preparing and grading—I had five-day weekends every week. They afforded me the opportunity to travel around France and around Western Europe, using a series of two-month Eurail passes.

My conversational English classes were often in the language laboratory; then I had my American civilization class. The first one of those was spent dispelling the notion that all Americans drive huge, gas-guzzling automobiles while throwing trash out the windows going from one McDonald's to another. Without a lot of guidance from the faculty, I made the American civilization class into a current events course. The guidance that I did receive took some digesting for French universities that were used to park people. While they educate, they also keep students out of the labor force. Anyone who graduated from the *lycée* (high school) was guaranteed admission to a university if they wished. Therefore, the universities had far more students than comparable American universities. The universities dealt with this glut by failing significant numbers of students. Thus, the guidance that I received was that I should fail basically half of my first-year students, a third of my second-year students, and a quarter of my third-year students. American students would never have accepted such a system.

Moreover, between holidays, student strikes, and faculty strikes, I actually only worked twenty-two weeks, which was considered a normal academic year; so I utilized those five-day weekends to explore France. I went to Spain. I went to Germany and Switzerland. I spent part of the winter holiday in the United Kingdom with my colleagues. The dean of the English faculty invited me to Dijon for New Year's Eve, and I tried escargots for the first time. In the spring, I visited Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Denmark, and after classes ended I explored Italy and made my way to Greece and back.

As the year progressed, I made more and more friends and became more and more fluent in French. I also came to better understand the French educational system and French students. They considered it normal to repeat a year or to give up on university. My parents visited me in the spring. Nonetheless, by July, I was homesick and was ready to move back to the United States. So I moved back to the U.S., specifically back to Paris,

Tennessee, where my parents had retired. There were not a lot of professional opportunities in Paris, and nothing materialized quickly in Nashville and Memphis in summer 1979. Therefore, in October 1979 I moved to Minneapolis, where my sister and her family were residing, and where there seemed to be more opportunities. I packed up my new Toyota Corolla and moved to southeast Minneapolis. Anxious to find employment, I found a short-term job with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union Local. I registered with Kelly Services and occupied a series of short-term office jobs as a clerk and switchboard operator. I also found a part-time job clerking at l'Hotel de France. In November 1979, I took the Foreign Service written exam for a second time and passed.

Unfortunately, while I was waiting to take the orals, one particularly cold winter night my car was stolen and never found. That complicated my commuting tremendously; so I started clerking at a hotel downtown until the Census Bureau asked me to work on the 1980 census. That kept me busy until the Internal Revenue Service [IRS] asked me to work in the Work Processing and Control Unit in St. Paul, reviewing returns that had been audited. I quickly decided that I did not want to work for the IRS for an extended period because I found work processing boring.

In July 1980, I took the oral exam for the Foreign Service in Saint Paul, very close to my IRS office. The exam had moved to the current longer format with group exercises as well as the ninety-minute interview. I thought I did well, but I also thought that I did not want to take the exams for a third time. However, one had to wait a few weeks for the results. During the wait, I lined up a job teaching English as a foreign language at a boys' boarding school in the Canton of Zug, Switzerland.

In August, I learned that I had passed the Foreign Service orals and was delighted. I quickly rushed to wrap up at the IRS and get my medical exam completed and my security clearance started before leaving for Switzerland. At the end of August 1980, I headed for Switzerland. Zug is in the heart of the country between Zurich and Lucerne, and Institut Montana [Institute Montana Zugerberg], the boys' boarding school, is in the foothills of the Alps. The wife of the dean of the American School picked me up at the Zurich Airport and drove me to the school. From it, you can see the Lake of Zug and the town, with its medieval wall and tower.

Zug is a tax haven; so a lot of international corporations are headquartered there. Consequently, a lot of the Institute Montana students hail from families who are from other countries. The school is in fact four schools—an Italian school, a Dutch school, a German school, and an American school. Most of the Italian students are day students. The others are primarily boarders, and the faculty is a mixture of German, Italian, Dutch, French, and English speakers, with Swiss nationals making up the majority. It was a very cosmopolitan environment, and some of the faculty, like myself, lived at the school.

The dozen people composing the faculty of the American school hailed from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and we taught about seventy

students from the United States, Australia, Nigeria, Turkey, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and a host of other countries studying in grades five through twelve.

Barely a week after my arrival, the French teacher had a heart attack, and the dean approached me about substituting for our colleague. Thus, my teaching was modified to include first, second, and third-year French as well as English as a foreign language. Speaking French and teaching it are, of course, quite different; so I had to work hard to explain the grammar, and it made me a better French speaker. French is a very precise language, and I struggled to stay ahead of my students. Even after the French teacher returned months later, my courses remained the same. I used breaks to travel to Austria and France.

I went to Tennessee for part of the summer in 1981, but I also traveled in Europe. I was still waiting to hear from the State Department about future openings when I was asked to travel to Geneva to meet with the regional security officer for a second security interview. On a cold January morning in 1982, I was asked to come to the office to take a call from the American embassy, and my first thought was that a relative had died. To my great joy, the embassy was calling to invite me to join the next Foreign Service class, which was scheduled to start at the beginning of March.

I was thrilled, but I had to investigate breaking my contract. The principal and the dean felt that they could find a replacement; so they assented, and I began preparations to move to Washington. I was sad to leave my students two-thirds of the way through the year, but I taught through the end of February, flying the day after a farewell dinner from Zurich to Washington. Unaware that I was eligible for per diem until after I showed up at the State Department on March 1, 1982, I stayed with a fraternity sister for two nights before moving into the Key Bridge Marriott in Rosslyn, Virginia, where the Foreign Service Institute [FSI] was located at the time.

After getting settled in my hotel room with a view of the Potomac River and Georgetown, I went to a reception that the eighth A-100 Class was holding for my class, the nineth. I did not know it at the time, but some of the people for whom I would subsequently work were in that class, including Ambassadors Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Dan Mozena, and George Staples. I was one of the youngest in my class, and I was excited to embark on the career about which I had dreamed since the eighth grade.

Q: It is February 25, 2019, and we are resuming our interview with Robert Jackson as he begins his State Department career.

JACKSON: Thank you, Mark. On March 3, 1982, I made my way to a State Department Annex on North Kent Street in Rosslyn, Virginia, and met all of my A-100 classmates. One of the youngest, I was not the only one coming from overseas. In fact, it was a diverse class with colleagues from Ford Motor, IBM, parts of the State Department, other teaching positions in the United States and overseas, and graduate school. My classmates hailed from everywhere from Hawaii to New York, and we had three Foreign Service

Reserve mid-career entrants. Jim Morton, Gene Schmiel, Yvonne Gurney, and Anita McGillian guided us through those six and a half weeks, including a formal swearing in ceremony in the department's Benjamin Franklin Room on March 5. I would note that the room was gray marble in those days prior to the renovations inspired by Nancy Reagan. We received our bid list that first week, and it included several postings in Mexico, Central America, China, and Canada. I still clearly recall that Conakry, Guinea, was on the initial bid list, and the post report showed pictures of houses with thatched roofs and stated that long-distance telephone calls had occasionally been made. I focused on Mexico City and Montreal since I was one of the few people in the class who was already fluent in French. During the fifth week of class, after the embassy simulation offsite at Airlie House, I learned that I had been assigned to a rotational consular/economic position in Montreal, and I was delighted.

After completing A-100, I had several months before my position was to open; so I was assigned first to consular training and then to the Office of Performance Evaluation to support the boards that were reviewing candidates for promotion. That made for a very interesting summer because I was reading evaluations to ensure that there were no inadmissible comments.

Q: Now, take a moment and describe what a typical inadmissible comment would be.

JACKSON: An inadmissible comment would be reference to a person's age, race, national origin, religion, previous work experience, et cetera. There were a whole set of criteria, and I was surprised how often these inappropriate comments appeared in evaluations. We were three relatively new employees working together to go through files, and another one of our tasks was locating files that were missing. Not having a clear idea of the range of Foreign Service work, I found it fascinating to read about others' careers and the wide range of activities. I also learned about different bureaus of the State Department, seeing some common corporate cultural aspects as well as some that seemed unique to certain bureaus. The assignment really gave me a lot of insight into the work that the State Department does on a daily basis.

Q: And I imagine for the future, it gave you insight into what makes a good or bad evaluation.

JACKSON: Indeed, although I'm not sure I knew enough at the time to acquire a deep appreciation, but it certainly allowed me to see what constituted really good evaluations. On the other hand, poor evaluations were full of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes; they were sloppy. Keep in mind that in those days they were typed, and you could see where they had been corrected. It was very instructive.

Q: Now if you found any inadmissible comments, what happened to the evaluation?

JACKSON: The final decision did not rest with us. The problematic passage or evaluation would be referred to an officer in the Office of Performance Evaluation; if

they agreed that it was inappropriate, then we whited it out. Then, and only then, would it go to the panel that was reviewing those officers.

Q: Interesting. Only once in my career did one of my evaluations have an inadmissible comment; it included the word "young." The evaluator said this young officer blah, blah blah, and the Office of Performance Evaluation returned it, asking him to change it. He brought it to me and said he was sorry because he had not intended anything bad about it necessarily. We had to fix this sentence; so we changed it to something indicating that I was relatively new to the State Department. Even that was not a particularly positive thing to say, but it satisfied the Office of Performance Evaluation and the evaluation was accepted.

JACKSON: The review and correction process has evolved as technology has made it easier to communicate, but that was a great way to spend the summer before going to Montreal for my first assignment.

Q: Was there any other training or preparation before you went?

JACKSON: As I mentioned, I underwent four weeks of consular training in preparation for pretty standard first-tour work on nonimmigrant visas, immigrant visas, and citizenship, which was a major issue in Canada. We saw a lot of cases involving citizenship that had been acquired generally because of an American parent; therefore, perhaps I spent a little more time on that than other colleagues to bolster my own understanding. I also paid attention to visiting the mock jail because a significant number of Americans are imprisoned in Canada, and I visited several real prisons during the subsequent two years.

Q: Of course, everyone who's going to become a vice consul gets that brief part of the training, and I was fortunate that my consular training officer played the role of the incarcerated American and she pulled out all the stops. Wow. That was rough. She alleged human rights violations and things that would be frightening. You know, sometimes it wasn't far from the truth. Anyway, now you are arriving in Montreal. What sort of housing do they provide—furnished or unfurnished?

JACKSON: Not only was housing unfurnished, but one had to find one's own. I also needed to acquire furniture and purchased a dining set to complement the two sofas and bedroom set that I owned. I flew to Montreal, and a colleague from the eighth A-100 class met me and took me to an apartment hotel very close to the consulate general, which was located in a high-rise office building in *Complexe Desjardins* (Gardens Complex) [a shopping mall in Quebec] in those days. Although the U.S. government still owned the old historic building that is once again the consulate general, the building had been closed for a number of years because it needed serious renovation. I rather liked the downtown high rise because it was mixed use—commercial and residential, with shopping and restaurants, as well as a metro stop and a major theater across the street that was connected by a bright underground walkway.

I loved the location, and as I was getting my bearings and starting to look for housing, I decided to find an apartment downtown and near the metro. In fact, I quickly located a twelfth-story, two-bedroom apartment in a high-rise at the corner of Guy and De maisonneuve from which I could literally take the elevator, walk across the street into the Metro, and enjoy easy access to grocery and department stores on the metro system. It was perfect for urban living; so I chose not to buy an auto. I didn't need one, and if I wanted to go somewhere, I could readily rent a car and go.

On the work front, initially I was interviewing nonimmigrant visa applicants, but the context was unique because Canadians only require visas in very limited situations such as for performing or journalism. Therefore, the people who were coming to the consulate general for nonimmigrant visas were generally people who were what were called "landed immigrants" in Canada or people who had been denied visas in their home countries and making one last attempt to obtain a visa before potentially trying to sneak across the border. Generally, the visitors were pretty straightforward, and occasionally there were legitimate business people who hadn't anticipated a trip to the United States but decided to apply for a visa for a business trip or for pleasure. A significant percentage of that group were French nationals and other Europeans. This was before the visa waiver program; so Europeans had to apply for visas.

Then the bulk of the landed immigrants who applied were primarily from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, other Caribbean countries. Because these people were generally not well established in Canada, we refused a very high percentage, which made for tense days. That proved very valuable though because I learned to be comfortable with saying "no" to people, which is difficult in American society and even more so in many other cultures. Saying "no" is a skill that's undervalued, but it's very important. So many people that we encounter in daily life, especially in Africa, don't want to say no because they do not want to cause offense. As a result, if they cannot provide a positive response, their default is an ambiguous answer. However, the visa process allows for very little ambiguity; it's yes or no. You are forced to make a decision, and you must be able to defend your decision and put up with the wailing and gnashing of teeth when you tell people no. If you make a mistake in saying no to qualified applicants, hopefully they will reapply.

My supervisor, a mid-level officer, and I worked together for about eight months. After letting me watch him interview for a day or two, he basically left me on my own for a few days to figure it out. However, the Canadian nationals at the consulate general were a huge resource. I could never have managed without them.

Q: Roughly, what number of people applied each day?

JACKSON: Typically, my supervisor and I interviewed anywhere from a hundred to two hundred people a day. It was not onerous. One hundred interviews per officer per day was busy but manageable. Our challenge was when people did not speak English or French;

then we needed interpreters.

Q: A very quick question: Your French was quite strong, but of course the French in Quebec is somewhat different. Did you have any trouble acclimating to Quebec?

JACKSON: Not really. The people I was interviewing tended to speak Parisian French or Haitian Creole. That was different, but I adapted. Having studied Parisian French, outside the office, I encountered some very amusing terms. In Quebec, if you go into a fast food restaurant to order a hot dog, the menu has *chiens chauds*—translated literally as hot four-legged dogs—which is hilarious to French speakers. Similarly, the word for beverage is *breuvage*, which is an old word that's generally used to describe a witch's brew. These words from sixteenth and seventeenth century French have been incorporated into the French Canadian vocabulary along with a lot of words from English. Another great example that always amused me was *crasher.* In Parisian French, *cracher* means to spit, but the French Canadians would say, *J'ai crashe la voiture* (I crashed the car). I had to stop and digest the idea because it was unsettling, but generally it was easy to adapt. More difficult than the vocabulary was the accent. That required more time to adjust to.

As the fall turned into winter, it got colder and the number of visa applicants diminished because there were not as many tourists or visiting business people in Montreal. As a result, I started helping with immigrant visas when I finished my non-immigrant visa interviews for the day. Immigrant visas were far more challenging for a number of reasons. First of all, the people who are applying for immigrant visas in Canada, with the exception of a few Canadians and a few landed immigrants who wanted to immigrate to the United States, were people who were living illegally in New York City and came to Canada under a special program with a letter guaranteeing their readmission to the United States. For the most part, the applicants hailed from Haiti or the Dominican Republic, and I interviewed a lot of the Haitians.

To assist with the interviews in Spanish, I resumed Spanish lessons. However, even with some background in the language from high school, it took me a while to reach the point that I could conduct interviews in Spanish. In the spring, I transitioned to doing immigrant visa interviews full time, and in the autumn, I transitioned to the economic section. Much of the work was political in nature, and it was actually then that I developed an interest in human rights that continued throughout my career. Quebec separatism was the issue of the day, and Quebec's English-speaking minority perceived their human rights as threatened if not abused. That brought me into contact with some fascinating people, including a number of journalists and human rights activists. Rene Levesque was premier in the province and his party, the *Parti Quebecois*, was seeking Quebec's independence. In my role, I met the Canadians whom I did not encounter on the visa line, and they gave me a very different picture of life in Montreal. In many respects, it was a more normal experience, affording insights into two cultures, politics, and economics.

Q: That said, in the economic section, did you find that those encounters were helpful in economic reporting? Did you feel like it gave you some grounding?

JACKSON: The immigrant visa section gave me an understanding of what was happening in Haiti and the Dominican Republic; the economic section gave me a picture of a city in decline. Moreover, when I had interviewed Canadian families for immigration, I would get some sense of how they were feeling about life in Canada. I would not say that the majority of Canadians applying for immigration were anglophone, but there were certainly anglophones who felt that they were no longer particularly welcome in the province of Quebec. Therefore, they were looking at moving to an English-speaking country. French Canadians applying for immigrant visas tended to want to move to Florida because they were tired of winter weather.

Q: You had mentioned that your training for American citizen services was useful. Did you end up having incarcerations or jail visits in Montreal?

JACKSON: Oh, yes. My last rotation was in the American citizen services section. It actually turned out to be the one that I enjoyed most, because I was assisting Americans who are incarcerated, visiting them in prison. I remember very distinctly meeting a number of Vietnam veterans who were incarcerated. Today, we would say they were suffering from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], but I don't think PTSD had been identified as such at that time. I remember one veteran in particular who had been deported from Canada several times and kept coming back. He was not able to explain why he wanted to be in Canada very clearly; so I struggled to understand what it was that he wanted. As I recall he was only detained for immigration charges. The Canadians were fed up; so they decided to detain him for a period in order to discourage another return to Canada. He subsequently wrote me a letter, which I received in my next assignment, saying how much he appreciated having someone from the consulate come to visit him. Other cases that really stood out were people who had mental health issues. They would come up to Canada on the bus. They were often disoriented and had no place to go; so we would put them back on the bus and have someone from social welfare in New York state or Vermont meet them and help them on their way to somewhere in the United States. The challenge was to determine who was best placed to help these people. For my part, I really felt that I was doing a great service to people who were not able to help themselves.

We also had a number of people in jail who had been arrested on narcotics charges. They were often sentenced to fairly long periods, but they appreciated having someone from the consulate visit, bring them U.S. magazines, and talk to them because they weren't getting a lot of visitors. It was a very meaningful experience, and it really made me appreciate our constitutional responsibility for assisting Americans overseas. It really stuck with me.

Q: What about fraud? Was there active fraud?

JACKSON: In the immigrant visa operation, we encountered a lot of fraud. Haitian birth certificates and "quickie" Dominican divorces required careful scrutiny because there was extensive fraud. We had to verify that the parties had personally appeared in the Dominican Republic in order for those divorces to be valid. As for Haitian birth certificates, they were interesting because it wasn't easy to obtain birth certificates in Haiti. We often ended up relying on baptismal certificates. When there were discrepancies or no baptismal certificates, DNA tests became the best means to establish relationships. During my time in Montreal, the Haitian government changed birth certificates. As a result, we rejected some people who had legitimate birth certificates, requiring them to make two trips to Canada.

You make mistakes and you learn from them, but visa interviews are not scientific. Immigrant visas have somewhat clearer criteria than nonimmigrant visas, but the fundamental issue remains whether you are convinced that a legitimate relationship exists. As for nonimmigrant visas, you are asking yourself if you believe that the applicant is going to return to his or her home country. Sometimes instincts become your aid. After all, we were hired to make judgments. Life experience is an excellent guide when you have to interview a hundred people per day and can only spend a few minutes with each one.

On the immigrant side, we were each interviewing about forty people a day, and that amounted to a very full day. When I was going back and forth between nonimmigrant and immigrant via interviews, I would interview whatever number needed to be done for us to finish. Generally, that meant that we were interviewing almost until five o'clock. It was a real team effort. Everybody pitched in, working hard, and helping to assemble the visa packages. There was real camaraderie.

Work in the economic section required or involved a lot more representational entertaining, going out at lunchtime or in the evening to meet people. Thus, the consular and economic work were very different in terms of the length and structure of the work days, as well as the stress levels.

Q: So two questions—one of them frivolous: do Canadians truly call their currency loonies?

JACKSON: Yes. One-dollar coins are loonies because they feature a loon, and two-dollar coins are toonies.

Q: Second, you had mentioned that you did not see that many Canadians in your day-to-day visa work, but you worked with local employees. Were there unique aspects of life in Canada that you learned from them that made Canadian life quite different from the U.S.?

JACKSON: It was not that different. Certainly functioning in French for the most part in

Montreal was different from life in the United States, but the same stores with the same products were available on both sides of the border. While there were some obvious differences, there was not a great cultural divide. In fact, it was the similarity between Canada and the United States that motivated me to look for someplace exotic for my next assignment.

Q: We'll get to that in one second. The only other question that I wanted to ask was about the average socializing you would do other than speaking French, were there any other things that struck you about your two years?

JACKSON: I was in Montreal for twenty-six months, and I discovered that there were very definite differences within and between Canadian provinces. For example, Montreal and Quebec City are in the same province, but they are worlds apart in terms of attitudes, culture, and cuisine. Going to Toronto took you into a totally different world with a totally different vibe. In those days, because of the separatist movement, a lot of anglophone Canadians were moving from Montreal to Toronto, which was booming. Montreal was perceived as on the decline, and it was remarkable to feel the difference between the different cities.

When you went to Quebec City, you learned how strongly and passionately people felt about separatism. They were far less concerned about the potential economic consequences compared to their countrymen in Montreal. Quebeckers were very pro-independence.

Q: Okay. So now you're thinking about very different kinds of posts and what happens?

JACKSON: I looked at the bid list—the list of potential assignments—and Bujumbura, Burundi, was on the list. It was 1984, and our management officer had served in Rwanda, which is next to Burundi, and he was very positive about his experience in Rwanda. I also, through the consular corps, had become very friendly with a Belgian diplomat who gave me books about Burundi, which had been a Belgian trust territory. If you make Bujumbura your top choice, you will go there. And once I was assigned to Burundi, I started learning as much as I could about its history and culture.

Burundi and Rwanda share a very sad history. There was genocide in Burundi in 1972; there had been genocides in Rwanda prior to that and subsequently. As a result, there had been mass movements of people between the two countries as well as into what are now the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Uganda. However, in 1985 and 1986, Rwanda and Burundi were very peaceful. In late 1984, the United States had a spat with the government of Burundi because it was blocking our diplomatic pouches, demanding that we make them available for inspection to ensure that they did not contain arms. Of course, inspection of the pouches is totally unacceptable. As a result, for a number of months prior to my arrival in Burundi no pouches were entering or leaving the country. There was actually a question of whether we were going to close the embassy, but the then under secretary for political affairs decided we would not close. Eventually an

agreement was reached and the unimpeded movement of our diplomatic pouches resumed. That was the context when I arrived in Bujumbura in January 1985.

I left Montreal in October 1984, took home leave, took the two-week African area studies course, and arrived in Bujumbura in January 1985. Unlike you, I had never studied African history and had never set foot on the African continent. It was all new to me—totally new, very foreign, and very exciting. Off I went, but it was everything I expected it to be. It was both professionally and personally satisfying.

Q: You went out in what capacity?

JACKSON: I went as the political and economic officer—the only one at the embassy. Remember too that I was on my second assignment in those pre-Internet, pre-email times. I could make telephone calls, but they were very expensive. Still the best way to communicate with family and friends was to write letters or send postcards. I had lots to write about because I had impressions to share. My parents, who were living in Tennessee, were convinced that I was going to be living in a grass hut, but it was not like that at all. In fact, even the Peace Corps volunteers were not living in huts. When I sent my parents pictures of a perfectly modern cement house, they wrote back and said, What is that? So, I explained again that it was my house—my very western house—apart from the guard with a spear! The least western part was that I had two guards who did not have guns or clubs, but very long spears. I had a great view of Lake Tanganyika and the mountains across the lake in what was then Mobutu's Zaire. One of my biggest adjustments, oddly enough, was to life near the equator; somehow because it was warm in the evening, I expected it to stay light. Of course, the reality was twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness. That took me some time to grasp. At the time, Bujumbura was a city of about a quarter million people and for relaxation, one would go to the lake, including to some very nice beaches near the airport or about an hour south of the city. Unfortunately, you couldn't swim in the lake because of bilharzia, crocodiles, and hippos.

In fact, I had a choice of two routes home—the main road south to Nyanza Lac and Tanzania or a road along the lake. If I chose to drive home after dark along the lake, I had to be careful because large numbers of hippos would cross the road to graze, and I did not want to run into a hippo. They were huge but fast, and hitting one would be far worse than running into a deer. If we were going boating on the lake, and the embassy actually had a boat—ostensibly so that we could evacuate by water to Tanzania. Because the political situation was calm, the boat was used mainly for recreation, with embassy staff renting the boat through the embassy recreation association. Thus, friends would go fishing, swimming, or water skiing in the middle of the lake, which is roughly eight miles wide, safe from bilharzia, crocodiles, and hippos. The lake actually allowed one to appreciate Burundi's beauty, underscoring why it is often referred to as the Switzerland of Africa. Bujumbura itself rises rapidly from the lake to verdant mountains, kept green by two rainy seasons and, therefore, two growing seasons. The main cash crops were wonderful coffee and tea, and through my work I became very friendly with a Belgian

who was the lead coffee taster for the biggest coffee processor. He taught me a lot about tasting, grading, and appreciating coffee.

He was one of the many expatriates who became friends. In fact, most of them were Belgians or French. I also befriended several Burundi, particularly officials from the Ministries of Finance, Defense, and Foreign Affairs. Several of my neighbors were French nationals doing their military service as national service volunteers [VSNs]. They had a variety of jobs ranging from commercial attaché at the French embassy, to advisor at the Central Bank, to veterinarians working for the Ministry of Agriculture. They were an interesting and fun group who were my age.

In addition to doing political and economic reporting, I managed the embassy's special self-help program, which gave small grants of up to ten thousand dollars to build and equip classrooms and clinics, assist cooperatives that were making textiles or other goods for sale, or dig boreholes to provide communities with clean water. The program led me to drive all over the country in my Peugeot sedan, which was specially designed for African roads—some of which were excellent and some of which were dirt paths. My drives took me to Gitega, the former German capital, to the source of the Nile, and to the Tanzanian border. They brought me into contact with a number of dynamic Burundi missionaries and Peace Corps volunteers. In the process I learned a lot about the quality of life, quality of education, and quality of healthcare. In fact, I learned much more than I did reading the single government-owned and -controlled newspaper and listening to the government-controlled radio. While Voice of America, the BBC, Radio France Internationale, and Deutsche Welle all reached Burundi, there were no private radio or TV stations at the time.

We received international news via the United States Information Agency [USIA], four to ten pages of Armed Forces Network news that was transmitted by cable every weekday, and the International Herald Tribune, which arrived with Sabena [Belgium's former national airline] or Air France flights every two or three days. Thus, I would receive two or three newspapers on the days that the international flights arrived, and after reading them, I would share them with friends and colleagues.

USIA maintained a cultural center right downtown on the main street, with a sizable library as well as an area for performances and lectures. When Libyan head of state Muammar Gaddafi came to Burundi, some of his bodyguards entered the library, threw books on the floor, and defaced the exterior. Fortunately, they did not do significant damage. That and a visit by Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni right after he seized power in 1986 were some of the more exciting things that happened in otherwise tranquil Bujumbura.

Q: Now, as political/economic officer, were you concerned that there might be violence again, especially large-scale violence?

JACKSON: It was always in the back of your mind. Burundi have a reputation for being

rather insular and only associating with one another. That was not my experience, partly because I'm gregarious but also because I made an effort to cultivate people. I found them interesting, engaging. The Tutsis, who are generally taller than Hutus and have more Neolithic features, ran the government, and dominated the military and the private sector. When you got to know them, some were willing to talk a bit about the genocide and relations with the other ethnic groups. However, it was not a subject of regular discussion. President Bagaza, who deposed his uncle to become a president, was a lieutenant colonel in the military when he came to power and he didn't promote himself to general or field marshal as some other African leaders have done. Occasionally, he would wear his military uniform for events. He brought some Hutus into his government, but the majority saw them as sellouts.

Among other duties, I was responsible for our military cooperation, particularly the administration of the International Military Education and Training [IMET] Program. That included English testing for the ten soldiers from Burundi that went to the United States on these programs each year. In fact, I went to Stuttgart, Germany, for training to be more effective. One of the great things about IMET was being in contact with some of the more senior military leaders. During my tenure, Major Pierre Buyoya was the chief of training for the Burundian armed forces. I immediately recognized him as a rising star, and actually wrote a cable predicting that he would become president, which he did within just a few years.

Q: Did the need to respect human rights pose a challenge for you, or were there other major issues that came up with time?

JACKSON: We suspected that some senior officers had certainly participated in the 1972 genocide. However, the people we were sending to the United States for training were all people who had not been in the military in 1972. Given the role of the military in the society, one could imagine potential involvement in human rights abuses but certainly not in the form of genocide. Moreover, because there was no Internet and because the newspaper did not report on most human rights abuses, we had little to go on. I should note that the government-controlled paper did some outstanding reporting on prison conditions. Because of that dearth of information, we worried more about soldiers' English language ability than potential human rights abuses. Every single one of the Burundi that we sent to the United States for training was automatically enrolled in a six-month English language program in Lackland, Texas. Almost without exception, the Burundi soldiers were excellent students who did very well not only in English but also distinguished themselves in their subsequent military training. In those days, all of them returned to Burundi and we received no requests for asylum.

Q: Just out of curiosity, when they returned, did you debrief them, and were there any surprises in talking with them after they got back?

JACKSON: I would attempt to debrief them, and sometimes the military allowed it. I would seek their impressions of the training, and we would also attempt to arrange for

people who had been to the United States for training to meet with others who were going. They often seemed suspicious about why I was asking them about their experience; it was only with another soldier who was going to the United States, that they tended to be more relaxed and more open.

Q: How would you describe relations in general between the rich and poor in Burundi at that time? Were there major frictions you had to deal with?

JACKSON: Having gotten through the crisis with the diplomatic pouches, a key issue during my tenure was the government's insistence that Seventh Day Adventists work on Saturdays, their day of worship. The government arrested Seventh Day Adventists who refused to work, and this became a particularly difficult issue because the ambassador's cook was a Seventh Day Adventist who was arrested and was in jail for over a month shortly before the ambassador left the country.

Ambassador Jim Bullington was a classic political officer. Although he began his diplomatic career in Vietnam, and was behind enemy lines during the Tet Offensive, he had lots of experience in Africa. Burundi was his second ambassadorship, having been ambassador to Benin. An excellent writer, he had risen through the ranks with remarkable speed. He was in his forties. When he left Burundi, he went to the Foreign Service Institute to lead the Senior Seminar, the State Department's nine-month program mirroring National Defense University's offerings. He made the seminar a far more experiential program while maintaining the academic and the thesis writing parts.

In Ambassador Bullington's farewell call on President Bagaza, the ambassador requested that his cook be released and they work out some face-saving formula. The request did result in release, but it was a tense period in which he would not make certain farewell calls or go to farewell dinners hosted by the government unless his cook was freed. The release made Bullington's departure a little smoother and allowed DCM [deputy chief of mission] Joe Wilson, who went on to be chargé in Baghdad when Iraq invaded Kuwait and subsequently ambassador to Gabon, to have smoother sailing for his final weeks.

Dennis Hays, who had been president of the American Foreign Service Association [AFSA], succeeded Wilson and was there a few months before the new ambassador, Dan Phillips, another old Africa hand, arrived. Ambassador Phillips had a very different style. He was far more interested in economic issues; so I helped him to understand Burundi's economy, which was, as I said, based on coffee and other agricultural products, especially cotton. He had served in neighboring Zaire, so he knew the region well. Frankly, he was very surprised that I had been so successful in making many Burundi friends. At my farewell party to myself, I introduced Phillips and Hays to contacts from government, the military, civil society, and the business community. It was a really interesting, eclectic mix of people, and exposed the embassy leadership to a lot of younger middle-class Burundi who they probably would not have otherwise met as early in their tenures. It gave me great satisfaction to show that I had found it easy to make friends in that relatively closed society with limited media freedom and limited opportunities for

international travel.

To my knowledge, I was not watched, trailed, or restricted. I did not have to notify the government that I was going to travel around the country. I drafted the human rights reports, country commercial guides, and other required political and economic reports on Burundi. I had the opportunity to serve as chargé for the first time in my career, and I still have the telegram that was sent announcing my being in charge. I collaborated with the French and Belgian embassies since they were key players in Burundi, and worked well with Chinese and Russian colleagues. Johan Verbeke, the Belgian DCM at the time went on to become the Belgian DCM in Washington, spokesperson for Belgium's Foreign Ministry, and ambassador to the United States when I was principal deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs; so we reconnected a few times over the course of our careers. Looking back, it was a great introduction to Africa.

Q: My last question before we begin looking at where you go next: to the extent that the United States had development goals for Burundi at the time, do you know what they were?

JACKSON: We were particularly interested in health and agriculture. We worked on developing additional high value crops. We helped to develop peat as a fuel source to reduce deforestation. As I recall about ten American direct-hires worked at USAID [United States Agency for International Development] at the time, but our assistance was modest. Our Peace Corps volunteers taught English, math, and science. Others were involved in forest management and wildlife programs. Two worked with Burundi's chimp population to better understand the behavior of chimpanzees and how to preserve their limited habitat in a country where the demand for more agricultural land was ever growing.

Q: Now, as your tour in Burundi is winding down, you get your bid list and what are you thinking about?

JACKSON: I was thinking about a Washington assignment. While I looked at a variety of jobs, I focused on desk officer jobs in the Bureaus of African [AF] and European Affairs [EUR] because those were the parts of the world that I knew. I don't think I even had a telephone interview for any of these jobs, but I ended up as the number two of two officers on the Nigeria Desk.

Thus in January 1987, I left Burundi and headed for Nigeria for an orientation visit. First, I went to the embassy, which was then in Lagos, and then the consulate in Kaduna. In addition to meeting a lot of the people who were working in both, I learned about the political issues, the economic issues, and the consular issues. When I arrived in Washington, my portfolio was primarily economic and commercial issues while the senior desk officer, Rob Proctor, managed political issues. Nigeria was under military government in those days; President Babangida was in power, having overthrown President Buhari about two years earlier. He was Nigeria's second consecutive military

leader in the ’80s, and many of the ministers in his government were also senior military officers.

U.S. objectives at the time were to promote a return to democracy and free markets. We were also actively assisting U.S. companies. The oil industry was very well developed, and several American companies were active in it. However, that provided a platform for other American companies to build upon as well. I quickly became involved in organizing a trade mission with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation [OPIC]. I got to know people at Nigeria’s central bank and the U.S. and Nigerian embassy officers who focused on economic and commercial issues. Between 1987 and 1989 two Nigerian ambassadors served in Washington, and many senior officials visited. I became something of an expert on the Nigerian economy and represented the department at some Nigerian cultural organization activities, which were fascinating because they were so unusual.

One still sticks in my mind. I went to Baltimore to represent us at an Igbo event. Barely twenty years had passed since the Biafran War when the Igbos attempted to secede from Nigeria. We did not want to be perceived as doing anything to promote another secession effort; so sending a junior officer was part of the thinking. The event, however, was absolutely fascinating, with lots of drumming, dancing, and colorful costumes. The one thing that really stands out though was this Igbo dancer who took a very long knife and proceeded to cut out part of his inner lip in front of all of us while dancing around the room. It was absolutely revolting and riveting. Apparently, this is something that the Igbo do, and they have determined how to staunch any bleeding.

Q: Let me just go back because you were talking about organizing a trade mission. That’s typically a Foreign Commercial Service activity; so did you have a lot of interaction with the Commerce Department?

JACKSON: I did. I got to know the commerce officers who were working on Nigeria quite well. In fact, one of them, Jane Buchmiller Zimmerman, subsequently became a State Department foreign service officer. While I worked with Commerce, I worked more with OPIC and U.S. ExImBank. A lot of our focus was on opening Nigerian markets, which were often closed to U.S. goods because of Nigerian efforts to protect and promote local industries.

In late 1988, the U.S. began looking at closing the USAID mission in Nigeria because Nigeria was an oil producer. I participated in some very difficult conversations between State and USAID about our assistance program. On Christmas Eve 1988, I think I was one of the last people to leave the department because I was working on the decision memo on the future of the aid mission in Nigeria. The executive secretary decided that he wasn’t going to wait for the memo and went home; so then I could go home. Ultimately, Secretary Baker decided to pare down the program to focus it primarily on health, which is how it remained for many years.

Q: Having worked in the Operations Center and on the secretary's staff, to know that the executive secretary is letting you off the hook for a memo is a big deal.

JACKSON: Yes.

Q: Back to the trade missions and opening markets, what sectors were we trying to open or products were we trying to get in there?

JACKSON: We were very focused on agricultural products, such as corn and wheat, but a range of machinery exports was supported by ExIm Bank loans. I remember M.W. Kellogg and Cummins engines were very important at the time. A lot of equipment was for agriculture. We were also encouraging the Nigerians to abolish their marketing boards and to allow the naira to float. In fact, during my tenure on the desk, the role of the agricultural marketing boards diminished if not ended, and the naira was allowed to float, with the exchange rate moving from one naira to one dollar to several naira to the dollar in fairly short order. That limited black market activity and brought more foreign currency into the banking system. We hoped that the opening up of the economy would also open up the political space, but that came later.

Q: As I recall, in the late eighties, the thinking was, as we were moving towards the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, you could quickly integrate the development of free markets with democracy. There was a great deal of optimism.

JACKSON: Of course, this was before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Q: Even so, the thought was to the extent that we could get countries to become more truly free and free-market oriented, that would have beneficial effects. It's interesting how over time, that premise has been revisited. Anyway, in the time you were on the desk, you did see some positive movement.

JACKSON: Very definitely, and the interest in American business and in the American business community was very real. I ended up making several trips to New York, working with the Business Council for International Understanding [BCIU]. At that time, Peter Tichansky was a new member of the BCIU team; he is now president of BCIU. Dick Moose, who had been assistant secretary of state for African affairs, was working at American Express in New York at the time. He was interested in promoting business with Nigeria. Our Federal Reserve and the U.S. Treasury were advising the Nigerian government and the Nigerian Central Bank. In sum, there was a lot of focus on Nigerian economic, commercial, and financial issues. That gave me an opportunity to gain an understanding of how the U.S. government interacted with a more mature economy—not as mature as Canada's but clearly more mature than Burundi's; so it was a good learning experience.

Q: In Washington, one of the other stakeholders or clients you have to deal with is Congress. Were there issues that you got involved in with members of Congress or

congressional staffers?

JACKSON: Not really. Apart from contributing to testimony, especially for Ambassador Lannon Walker, who was nominated to succeed Princeton Lyman, I do not recall much congressional interest. That has since changed.

Q: The interesting thing about this experience on the desk is that it gave you windows into all the ways the U.S. government interacts economically with other countries. Looking back on this experience, was it helpful for you later?

JACKSON: Very much so. Understanding how the Export Import Bank and OPIC operated, getting a feeling for what issues Commerce follows, and how Treasury and the Federal Reserve are active overseas, those were all very useful in subsequent assignments. And they were not things that I had not been exposed to in my previous life.

Q: Now, all of these are promotional, building better bilateral commercial relations, but were you also involved in any issues related to financial crime or money laundering?

JACKSON: Nigerian narcotics trafficking was getting attention, and we were certainly aware of corruption in the Nigerian government, but it was hard to acquire solid information about it. Of course, President Buhari had used corruption as an excuse to take power, and President Babangida also used corruption as an excuse when he seized power, but international financial crimes had not developed as the issue that they are in the U.S.-Nigerian relationship today.

Q: For a lot of officers, coming back after two foreign tours and being in the department is a little bit of a culture shock. It's a big place. There's a great deal of hierarchy and very small divisions of labor. What were the most important things you learned about process?

JACKSON: I feel very fortunate to have been on the Nigeria Desk because I had the opportunity to work with far more agencies and to be far more involved in the interagency process than many of my colleagues on other desks in the Bureau of African Affairs. In fact, many of them used to ask me about my contacts at Commerce and Treasury, and how to approach certain issues. I in turn learned from them more about working with USAID and Peace Corps. Overall, I found that the transition to Washington was a relatively easy one. It was good to be at home, and this was also an important period in my personal life. I was single for my first two assignments although I dated people in both Burundi and Canada.

Dori Painter, the commercial officer at the embassy in Burundi, was the most positive person that I've ever met. She was enthusiastic about everything. If it was raining, it was good for the crops. If it was cloudy, then you were benefiting from cooler temperatures. If the sky were falling, she found a reason to appreciate the good things about the sky falling. She was a great colleague, and I appreciated both her attitude and her energy. She

moved back to Washington a year before me. That same year, the general services officer at the embassy, a mid-level officer who loved the Foreign Service, moved back. The next thing I knew, Dori had introduced him to LifeSpring, a California-based foundation that promoted personal growth through training across the U.S. He resigned from the State Department to go to work for the LifeSpring Foundation. For my part, I was extremely surprised and more than a little curious.

When I returned to the U.S., Dori invited me to a LifeSpring guest event and I met people who, like her, were positive, enthusiastic, and interesting. I immediately enrolled in the basic training, which emphasizes looking at what's important to you. It was three evenings and weekends; so I didn't have to take any time off work. I could see why my other friend had decided to work for this foundation. I signed up for the advanced course, which was five full days looking at interpersonal relations. I found it very insightful; so I enrolled in the two-month leadership program, which entailed three weekend meetings, one evening meeting each week, and a daily telephone conversation with a coach about setting and meeting goals in your life. I was so taken with LifeSpring that I introduced my family and a number of colleagues to the courses. My brother, my mother, and a number of friends enrolled. For my part, I was not thinking of leaving the State Department, but I was grateful to have made a number of new friends who were not people I was working with. I'm still friendly with many of them to this day. I started doing some volunteer work for the foundation and took some additional LifeSpring seminars. While volunteering in 1988, I met a speech and language pathologist, and she ended up being one of the people I was coaching in the Leadership Program. That allowed us to become better acquainted, but I was dating a Canadian woman at the time; so I was not looking for romance.

In fact, LifeSpring requested that you commit that if you were not in a relationship when you started a training, you not begin a romantic relationship for at least thirty days after the conclusion of the training. During that Leadership Program, my Canadian girlfriend broke up with me. More than a month after the program ended, I started dating the speech pathologist. Our first date was on New Year's Eve 1988. After asking how she would feel about going to the Central African Republic, which she thought would be "exciting," I asked her to marry me on Valentine's Day 1989. We got married Memorial Day weekend. Instead of going to CAR, we went to Zimbabwe—a country that I had visited twice while I was in Burundi—once for a regional economic officers conference and a second time for a safari with a fraternity brother. Although Harare was the most heavily bid FS-03 political chief job in 1989, I was fortunate enough to be selected for it. And at the beginning of August 1989, my wife, Babs; our orange tabby cat, Mo, and I flew to Harare via Paris and London.

Q: Okay. This sounds like a great place to pause and pick up again as you go back to Africa.

Q: Today is March 6, 2019. We are resuming our interview with Robert Jackson as he goes into his tour in Zimbabwe. When did you arrive?

JACKSON: My wife and I arrived in August 1989. The Lancaster House Constitution was no longer technically in effect, but Parliament still had white members occupying reserved seats from the 1985 election. Robert Mugabe had transitioned from being prime minister to president. Mugabe had ruthlessly deployed North Korean-trained troops to suppress unrest in Matabeleland as he pursued his dream of a one-party state. In fact, Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front [ZANU-PF] and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union [ZAPU] were just five months from their historic merger. Ideologically there were no major differences between them; the divisions were ethnic. ZANU-PF was dominated by Mugabe's Shona ethnic group, which actually has several subgroups, and Nkomo's ZAPU was dominated by the Ndebele and Kalanga who inhabited the southwestern part of the country along the border with South Africa and Botswana. The Ndebele are related to the Zulu. It is also important to remember that white settlers only arrived late in the nineteenth century—approximately a hundred years earlier. At its peak, the white population numbered about 250,000, but that number had declined to about a hundred thousand by 1989 due to emigration to South Africa, Great Britain, Australia, and the United States.

Zimbabweans were optimistic about their future in 1989. Infrastructure was expanding rapidly; the country was largely at peace, although South African special forces occasionally acted against the African National Congress [ANC], and members of the Mozambican National Resistance [RENAMO] staged raids from Mozambique. Hopeful about political and ethnic reconciliation, Zimbabweans wanted to focus on economic issues.

Q: You mentioned that a fair amount of the economy up to independence had been principally agricultural.

JACKSON: Although there was industry based largely upon import substitution, it was still principally agricultural in 1989. Four thousand mostly white commercial farmers still produced the bulk of Zimbabwe's gross domestic product. The industry was largely in and around the cities of Harare and Bulawayo, but a lot of that was agricultural processing because of the sanctions during the fifteen years following Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of independence [UDI] in 1965. Import substitution developed during the UDI period up until 1980, and people were looking at whether those industries were viable or not. Zimbabwe was the bread basket of Southern Africa in 1989, also producing tobacco, gold, and exquisite emeralds. This was before any effort to drive white farmers out of the country, but Mugabe was very intent on having his one-party state with himself as president.

Q: Now that desire was known; he was already predisposed to it. Was he looking to other models of one-party states?

JACKSON: To my knowledge, he never explicitly cited a particular model. However, he was very friendly with the Cubans, who provided doctors, and the North Koreans, who

built what's called Heroes Acre, the Arlington National Cemetery of Zimbabwe. Mugabe believed in socialism, socialist countries, and their leaders. It is important to remember that we arrived just as East European countries are allowing East Germans to flee and just before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Zimbabwe is physically gorgeous and has a wonderful climate. The streets of Harare are lined with jacaranda trees. In the east, you have pine-covered mountains that rise more than ten thousand feet along the border with Mozambique. In the west, you have a huge game park, Hwange National Park, and the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls.

Within a month of our arrival, Harare was ablaze with purple jacaranda flowers that fall onto the major avenues and cover them like snow. It was breathtakingly beautiful. We quickly transitioned from the coldest month, August, to the hottest month, October. The coldest month is about seventy degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime, but it does get down into the forties at night in Harare because of the elevation. The hottest month was in the mid-eighties in the daytime and it got down to the sixties in the evening; so it was a very pleasant climate. In fact, our house—like most houses in Zimbabwe—did not have heating or air conditioning because one needed them so rarely. We had space heaters that you could roll into the bedrooms, and we had a fireplace—as most people did. We also had ceiling fans for the October heat. The embassy was air conditioned, but there were many months when we did not use it. So, we had a wonderful climate and physical beauty. There were game parks and game ranches to visit, and there were natural and man-made wonders to visit, such as Victoria Falls, Great Zimbabwe, and the Eastern Highlands.

Q: Now, when you arrive, how and where do you fit in?

JACKSON: I arrive and actually have a one-week overlap with my predecessor, Gerry Galucci. I'm heading a small political section, with two other officers, an office management specialist, one Zimbabwean political assistant, and a special self-help coordinator. My deputy, Harry Thomas, who goes on to be a three-time ambassador, director general of the Foreign Service, and executive secretary of the department, had hosted me when I made my orientation visit to Kaduna, Nigeria, in January 1987. We had a great relationship. Raphael Hamadziripi, our Zimbabwean assistant, was the son of one of the founders of Mugabe's political party. Raphael was very well politically connected, and we learned later that he harbored his own political ambitions when he helped to launch the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM], the only real opposition party in the early 1990s. Our special self-help program manager was administering perhaps ten projects, helping cooperatives, schools, and clinics around the country. We do have a large USAID mission focused on health and agriculture. Unfortunately, this is the time when HIV was exploding in Southern Africa; Zimbabweans call it the slimming disease and believed that if they ate more, they could protect themselves from HIV. In fact, there were various inane ideas about preventing or curing AIDS that were prevalent at the time in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Q: You can find this magical thinking about cures not only in Africa. When I was in Vienna with the OSCE delegation, the Ukrainians used to tell me that they treated red wine to avoid the effects of Chernobyl. They insisted it was a very good cure for the radiation that you would otherwise be feeling. They were half serious.

JACKSON: Back to Zimbabwe, there were four of us working on political issues. In addition, there were two economic officers with whom we shared the suite, and we all worked together very well. The economic issues are primarily about the implementation of the Lancaster House constitution and especially its provisions for land purchases. The constitution required a willing seller and a willing buyer for any land transfer. Because of Mugabe's promises to return land to black Zimbabweans, there was extensive debate about changing that provision. That debate raged throughout my time working in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Q: Willingness can be imposed.

JACKSON: Indeed, eventually it was imposed because Zimbabweans valued land and cattle more than money. Speaking of cattle, they were all grass fed and produced the tastiest, tenderest beef that I have ever eaten. Zimbabweans also raised ostriches for meat and other products because practically every part of the ostrich can be used for something. Zimbabwe was still a major tobacco producer at that point, but the population lived on white maize. That was the staple; they made it into a porridge that looked like wet cornbread.

Q: Never having been to Zimbabwe, I can only say that every image that came across in the media was always very beautiful. You never saw anything that struck you as, "Oh dear, that's terrible."

JACKSON: No, and the embassy, a converted school building, was located at 172 Rhodes Avenue—right across the street from the Harare Gardens, a big public park. During our first few weeks in Zimbabwe, we resided in the Monomotapa Hotel on the other side of the park. Monomotapa was the most famous king of Great Zimbabwe, the state that built the stone monuments from which the country derives its modern name. I used to walk through the park to the embassy and back each day for three or four weeks while our house was being repaired and repainted.

When I arrived, Sally Gober, the consul, was on leave. Because I had done consular work, I was pressed into service, quickly giving me a perspective on the country, the limited demand for visas, and the types of citizen services cases that were common. My second weekend, even though one should never be the duty officer when you've only been someplace a couple of weeks, I was asked to manage a very challenging consular case. Just prior to my arrival, John Morris, an American medical student, had fallen off of Victoria Falls and disappeared in the swirling waters. A headless, armless body that had been partially eaten by crocodiles surfaced a short time thereafter. Morris had been traveling with another medical student who reported that the height was about right; so

the body was repatriated to the United States and buried. Well, Morris' actual body surfaced with identification and in much better condition. I worked with the Bureau of Consular Affairs to contact the family to let them know that the son whom they thought they had just buried was dead but his body was still in Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe would not release his body until "John Doe" was repatriated because they would not issue two death certificates to the same person, which was logical. Moreover, some family [members] might want John Doe's body.

Thus, my third weekend I went to the airport on a Saturday morning to meet the British Airways flight that was bringing back John Doe's body. We had arranged for an exchange of coffins and death certificates. Bear in mind that I did not yet have my diplomatic ID [identification] card, and there were no cell phones. All I had was an embassy radio that allowed me to communicate with the marine at Post One, the entrance to the embassy. I asked to go plane-side. However, because I did not have a diplomatic ID, the customs officials would not allow it. They assured me that they would ensure that John Doe's coffin was offloaded. I went up to the observation deck to watch but did not see anything that resembled a coffin being unloaded. Customs reassured me that I should not worry, and I told myself that I must have missed it. The flight took off for Malawi, and I went looking for a coffin in the oversize baggage area. There was nothing that resembled a coffin; indeed the customs officers eventually confirmed that there was no coffin there; so I radioed the embassy to contact Ed Fugit, the chargé d'affaires, to let him know that the body had not arrived and that I needed help from Embassy Lilongwe to get the coffin back to Harare. Fugit successfully contacted our embassy in Lilongwe, and they arranged for the coffin to be placed on an Air Malawi flight that would be in Harare in a few hours.

All of this was complicated by our mediocre relationship with the Zimbabwean government. Former President Jimmy Carter had walked out of our Fourth of July reception a couple years earlier after he was insulted by the Zimbabwean foreign minister. The subsequent relationship could be characterized as "correct" but not warm or cooperative by any means. Therefore, the two officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs suspected that we had not repatriated John Doe's body and were just expecting John Morris' body to be released. They were not about to hand me the death certificate or release Morris' coffin without Doe's body; so we all had lunch and waited for Air Malawi to arrive.

I had expected to be back at the Monomotapa by 10 or 10:30 in the morning, but the coffin only came off the Air Malawi flight around 2:30 pm. Still suspicious, the Home Affairs officers decided to open the coffin to ensure that Doe's headless, armless body, which had been in the ground for a few weeks, really was inside this coffin. I did not care to see the body; so I indicated I would wait while they conducted their inspection. They looked and were sorry that they did because they turned very green and nauseous. However, they turned over the death certificate and authorized John Morris' body's departure on the British Airways flight that night. All ended well, and I returned to my new bride with a great story that I still vividly remember thirty years later. We never learned John Doe's true identity, but he was buried in a nice coffin in a pauper's grave.

We surmised that he may have been a South African mercenary who had been fighting in Namibia and was thrown into the Zambezi River after being shot, floating down the river and over the Falls.

Q: Did people fall over the Falls with any frequency?

JACKSON: It did not happen frequently; however, there was no physical barrier at the edge of the Falls during my years in Zimbabwe, and when people did fall over, they rarely survived.

I took two lessons away from this experience: First, never ask someone who is brand new to serve as the duty officer, and, second, never allow both of your consular officers to be on leave at the same time.

Q: At that time you would not have been able to do a DNA test or any other identifying tests to have any more certainty.

JACKSON: You might have been able to do a DNA test, although the testing would have taken some time and probably could not have been done in Zimbabwe—perhaps in South Africa.

Q: In any case, neither the family nor the embassy asked for that.

JACKSON: Well, once the body with the person's clothing and wallet surfaced, there was no question about the identity of the second body.

Q: No, however, it would have been useful for the first body.

JACKSON: This event also gave me insight into our true relationship with the government of Zimbabwe; so it proved to be a useful learning experience in many respects.

Q: Wow. What an unusual way to begin your tour.

JACKSON: The next big event was the ZANU-PF-ZAPU party congress, which took place just before Christmas 1989. Of course, I had been trying to learn as much as I could about the party congress, especially from members of the ZANU-PF and ZAPU Politburos and Central Committees who were embassy contacts. The Berlin Wall was torn down six weeks before the party congress, and President Ceaușescu of Romania, was overthrown during the congress. This was very significant because Mugabe was a big admirer of Ceausescu. When Mugabe learned that Ceausescu and his wife had been killed, he was quite upset, and the party congress ended with this somber news for President Mugabe who was so wedded to his dream of having a one-party state. He was clearly unsettled by events in Central and Eastern Europe, where one-party states were tearing themselves apart; yet his own belief in one never faltered.

With the merger of the two main political parties, Joshua Nkomo became co-vice president of ZANU-PF and a short time later co-vice president of Zimbabwe. In fact, ZANU-PF has maintained that structure of two party vice presidents and two national vice presidents, with one from the Shona from the old ZANU-PF and one Ndebele from the old ZAPU. That was the main political event of 1989, and I spent a lot of time learning about the implications of the restructuring. The next year witnessed the emergence of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM] under Edgar Tekere, who had cofounded ZANU-PF but bitterly opposed a one-party state. Mugabe was very dismissive of this effort to resurrect a multi-party state, predicting, "ZUM would zoom to its doom." However, Zimbabweans had other ideas. Tekere garnered some support in the 1990 presidential election, and others also won a few seats in Parliament, which was now virtually all black. Mugabe appointed some whites to Parliament and as ministers, and a few vestiges of the Westminster system, such as question time, continued. The political transition from the Lancaster House constitution was now well on its way, but the economic transition would take a few more years.

Q: In the beginning, was the ZANU-ZAPU split ideological or ethnic?

JACKSON: It was both. It was ideological to the extent that the division was over a one-party state. However, Tekere also hailed from the Manyika sub-group in Manicaland—eastern Zimbabwe, whereas Mugabe was a Zezuru from Mashonaland. In reality, the parties were very personality based. Most of Tekere's followers were people from around the city of Mutare, which was called Umtali during colonial times. To the south is the home of Ndabaningi Sithole, another founding member of ZANU who had a falling out with Mugabe. In March 1990, ZUM won about 17 percent of the vote and two seats in the 120-member Parliament; Sithole's party, ZANU-Ndonga retained its single seat.

Unlike the Ndebele, who had been crushed by North Korean-trained troops, Manyikas were facing regular incursions from across the border from Mozambique, as RENAMO acquired provisions and kidnaped people. You might recall that RENAMO was the anti-communist political movement encouraged by then-Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and the United States to counter ZANU and punish FRELIMO, Mozambique's socialist-leaning ruling party under Samora Machel. For its part, RENAMO was led by Afonso Dhlakama from 1979 until 2018.

The 1990 Zimbabwean elections were actually framed by two major events in Southern Africa: the release of Nelson Mandela from Robben Island in February 1990 and the beginning of peace talks between RENAMO and FRELIMO in neighboring Malawi. My colleague, Economic Chief Paul Larsen, who speaks Portuguese, went to Malawi for meetings with Dhlakama and his representatives in July or August 1990.

Much closer to home, my wife, Babs, actually traveled to Manicaland and to most of Zimbabwe's other nine provinces in early 1990, visiting self-help projects to see what had

worked. To avoid nepotism issues, Harry Thomas supervised her. She went to remote places that most Americans had never visited and met some really dynamic people. She concluded that we should fund more income-generating projects, like piggeries and boreholes. In Matabeleland, she met a German nun nicknamed "Sister Bulldozer" who was building small dams in the driest part of the country. Babs then transitioned to be the community liaison office coordinator [CLO]. Whereas her first job introduced her to Zimbabwe, her second job gave her a great introduction to embassy life.

After two years as the CLO, she took a job with USAID, tracking rains, grains, and trains as Southern Africa suffered through a devastating drought caused by El Nino. USAID was shipping significant quantities of grain through South Africa and Mozambique, not only to Zimbabwe, but also to Zambia and Malawi, all of which subsisted on white maize, which became virtually impossible to find anywhere in the world. In fact, USAID mounted a major marketing campaign to help people understand that yellow maize, which in Southern Africa is only fed to cattle, is perfectly good for human consumption. We even distributed recipes that used yellow maize or corn meal.

I am getting ahead of myself though. Shortly after his release, Nelson Mandela came to Harare. Babs and I were at the airport when he arrived, and we saw him a day later at a lecture at the University of Zimbabwe. We found him surprisingly peaceful—even gentle—considering all he had endured.

Our new ambassador, J. Steven Rhodes, arrived just after the March election. He presented his credentials to President Mugabe in early April. While I did not attend that ceremony, I did accompany Rhodes for a one-on-one meeting with Mugabe a short time later. Rhodes and Mugabe hit it off and it was unfortunate that he was recalled and resigned a few months later. The rumor was that he had shipped narcotics through the pouch, but that was never acknowledged. Rhodes had already left the country when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Therefore, I accompanied Chargé Allison Herrick to call on the Zimbabwe foreign minister to seek condemnation of Saddam's move. That was the first of many démarches about Iraq and Kuwait, including one on the Security Council Resolution ending the war on Good Friday 1991.

Because the department wanted to build upon the opening Rhodes had created with Mugabe and because Zimbabwe was on the UN Security Council, former Ambassador to Somalia and Sudan Don Peterson was dispatched to inform Mugabe of Rhodes' departure and to serve as chargé d'affaires, a.i., for over a year.

On the political front, peace came to Mozambique and Zimbabwe with an agreement between RENAMO and FRELIMO. In Zimbabwe, attention turned to the impact of the drought and HIV on the social fabric. Those were very much the focus of my fourth and final year in Zimbabwe. It's the only place we ever extended, reflecting how much we loved the country and the work.

During those four years, we also explored the region. We drove to South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, and Namibia. Although not always paved, the road network was quite good.

Q: When you went from Zimbabwe to Namibia, did you go through the Caprivi Strip?

JACKSON: No, we drove all the way through Botswana, down to Cape Town, and then up the west coast of South Africa. We then went back through Johannesburg and Beitbridge, South Africa. It was wonderful to see those countries and to acquire a better understanding of Southern Africa. We did not go into Mozambique then because the security situation and the landmines made travel there too dangerous.

Q: That's a pretty good amount of travel and acquaintance with pretty much all of Southern Africa. During those four years from the political section were you beginning to see the beginnings of what would become the disaster in Zimbabwe?

JACKSON: Not really. The disaster only started to unfold a few years after we left. In fact, as we were leaving, some of our colleagues who were retiring from USAID were buying farms and houses in Zimbabwe because they thought it was an ideal retirement destination. Unfortunately, that did not last long.

Q: During your tour, did you acquire skills or talents that ended up being valuable to you later?

JACKSON: That was the first time that I had managed other American Foreign Service personnel. I certainly acquired more management experience during that time. However, I had a very collegial relationship with all of my colleagues, and the interagency relationship, specifically with USAID, was very important. I learned a lot more about USAID's work and activities, and with my wife working there, I gained additional insights.

More importantly, we did a lot of representational entertaining to build contacts—as I had in Burundi. I particularly remember one dinner that we hosted for Dan Mozena, the then deputy director of Southern African affairs. We invited Dumiso Dabengwa, the minister of home affairs; Patrick Chinamasa, the attorney general; Davison Gomo from ZUM; Welshman Ncube, the chairman of the Law Faculty who went on to become a founding member of the Movement from Democratic Change [MDC]; Reginald Matchaba Hove from the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, and white journalist and businessman Eddie Cross, who also became a MDC leader. What was significant about this dinner is that we provided a neutral venue where people from different political parties could meet and break bread together. I have often thought back to that dinner as a model of how the United States can bring people together to promote dialogue.

Q: One quick question: did anybody ever start raising pigs?

JACKSON: Oh, yes. People did raise pigs, and the report that my spouse drafted was actually distributed to self-help coordinators across sub-Saharan Africa as a guide to what self-help projects worked well and what lessons embassies might apply in their host countries. Another thing that we did before I left was to negotiate the entry of the Peace Corps. Volunteers started to arrive in Zimbabwe to teach math and science as I started working on the desk. The British had built a strong educational system and, under Mugabe, school construction exploded. Therefore, the demand for teachers exploded as well. Zimbabweans appreciated that partnership, and it was one of the few areas in which President Mugabe enthusiastically embraced the relationship with the United States.

We considered staying overseas but in the end, I went back to Washington to the Zimbabwe and Botswana Desk; so I continued my relationship with Zimbabwe for two more years.

Q: So your tour in Zimbabwe ended in July 1993. You packed up, you went back to Washington, and have you and your wife had children?

JACKSON: No. We still have our orange cat whom she had when we got married. We all moved into a townhouse in Dunn Loring, Virginia, which had a much smaller yard than we had in Zimbabwe. Mo, the cat, still wanted to go outside but we kept him indoors because we were concerned about the traffic.

Q: When you got back to Washington, you were on a single-person desk—unlike the Nigeria Desk. What were the main issues that you had to take up from that position?

JACKSON: For Zimbabwe, I primarily followed the evolution of Mugabe's party and human rights issues in Zimbabwe. I also looked at trade and investment, as we wanted to promote more investment. At that time, at the beginning of my tenure on the desk, the climate was propitious. As for Botswana, I did not know a great deal about the country. I assisted Ambassador Howard Jeter with his swearing in and consultations as he prepared to depart for Gaborone to succeed Ambassador David Passage. I sought to learn a lot more about Botswana and its diamond industry. I got to know Maurice Tempelsman, who was a major investor in Botswana, and we looked at how to promote more trade and investment in Southern Africa broadly. With peace coming to Mozambique, we even started to think about investment there.

In April 1994, South Africa held its first non-racial election. I returned to Zimbabwe and Botswana a few months later, making an orientation trip to Mozambique in the run-up to its successful elections in which RENAMO came in second but accepted the results. I found that the economies were springing back from the drought, and things were looking positive.

One of the sadder experiences of my career also occurred during this period. Having served in Burundi and having been to Rwanda, I volunteered to serve on the Rwanda Task Force during the genocide. While we successfully evacuated our embassy in Kigali,

we quickly became aware of the slaughter. I remember unsuccessfully fighting to secure a seat on Tipper Gore's flight to Goma, Zaire, for Deputy Assistant Secretary Pru Bushnell. That—along with failed efforts to get the National Security Council [NSC] to evacuate the Botswana contingent from Somalia after we pulled out were low points. The limits of State's power and influence became very apparent, and Susan Rice, who was a director at the NSC, first emerged on my radar screen.

During my final month on the desk, President Mugabe came to the United States for an official working visit with President Clinton. I served as one of the main organizers for that visit. I had the opportunity to practice when then Vice President Festus Mogae came for an official visit to promote commercial activities in Botswana. There were even negotiations with the Export Import Bank about funding a pipeline to bring water from the Zambezi River all the way to arid southern Botswana, and I became involved in those discussions.

By 1995, Zimbabwe was getting more attention in the United States, and President Mugabe met with Secretary Warren Christopher, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of Defense William Perry, and other Cabinet members. It was quite a successful visit and a wonderful end to my time on the desk.

Q: You had mentioned the monoliths and the famous places that attract archaeologists to Zimbabwe. Did the Rift Valley civilization get all the way down there?

JACKSON: There are cave paintings, and in Mashonaland and Matabeleland, you find smaller versions of the Great Zimbabwe ruins constructed from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries. Zimbabwe's tourism industry is nonetheless dominated by people going on safaris and hunting for big game. The elephant population was quite substantial in the 1990s with about seventy thousand elephants. In fact, USAID was working with indigenous communities to encourage coexistence with the elephants and profit from their presence.

As my tour ended, Botswana, Mozambique, and South Africa were doing well. President Kaunda of Zambia had been ousted in a democratic election. Long-time Malawian President Hastings Banda had suffered a stroke, with the Zimbabwean newspapers reporting that he had been evacuated to South Africa "for routine brain surgery."

Q: And all these political changes came off without great violence.

JACKSON: Yes. This was a very positive period for the Southern African Development Community [SADC], with great optimism about the future.

Q: Were you promoted during this period?

JACKSON: In 1986, I was promoted to FS-03, and in 1993, I became a FS-02.

Q: Did you have any feeling that you were passed over for promotion during the years in Zimbabwe, or what was your sense of that?

JACKSON: Well, I came very close to promotion in 1991 and 1992, but four security infractions in 1989 and 1990 for having left my safe unlocked or not having secured my typewriter ribbon delayed my promotion by two years even though there had been no possibility of classified information being compromised. I learned from that. I would also note that the State Department began to use classified email while we were in Zimbabwe; and this was a major technological advance. We moved from Wangs to more sophisticated and secure word processing equipment. Instead of just locking up typewriter ribbons, we also had to lock up hard drives.

Q: That's interesting. Once you went over to the PC, did you also begin sending cables or reports through classified email, or were you still using the old system?

JACKSON: In Zimbabwe, we were still using the old system for cables. We typed our reports on multi-page telegram forms with carbon copies; then one of the communicators would retype them on ticker tape and feed them through the coding/decoding machine. Because of the time difference, when you came in in the morning, there were already cables coming in from other embassies to read. I still recall that during my earlier time on the Nigeria Desk, we had to plan our day around the time difference. If you wanted to have a telephone call with anyone at post, you had to do it during the time when those people were at work; so one had to plan ahead.

Q: Otherwise on the Zimbabwe Desk, were there other aspects of being in the department that helped you or that gave you greater insights into how the department worked?

JACKSON: Having already been a desk officer, I had a leg up on many of my colleagues in the Office of Southern African Affairs. Moreover, the Nigeria Desk gave me far more context in the interagency community than the Zimbabwe/Botswana Desk. I was able to share that knowledge even though some of the context was different, and I knew what agencies to reach out to about different issues. Thus, while I was not the most senior desk officer, I certainly had plenty of experience to share with my colleagues. And we worked very well together, pitching in on different issues, such as the historic 1994 election in South Africa. Likewise, we all worked together on President Mugabe's June 1995 visit to the United States and other major events. Under Ambassador April Glaspie's leadership, it was a very collegial office. That said, I did not learn as much during my second tour as a desk officer.

Q: Nevertheless, at this point, you were becoming a geographic specialist. You now had three major areas of Africa as focus. Were you thinking at this point in your career of becoming an area specialist and of going back and forth?

JACKSON: I was actually thinking that for my next overseas assignment, I wanted to go to a different region precisely because I had done three consecutive assignments working

on Africa. In the short term, I decided to go in a totally different direction. While I bid on studying at the *École Nationale d'Administration* (National School of Administration) [an institution that democratized access to the senior Civil Service] in Paris, I ended up starting graduate school at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, where I focused on Europe, economics, and finance. From State, I literally walked a few blocks to evening classes, sometimes returning to the department afterward.

From the Zimbabwe and Botswana Desk, I became the A-100 coordinator and deputy director of the Orientation Division at the Foreign Service Institute [FSI]. One of the reasons that I sought that job was to have more predictable hours while I was completing my master's degree. Moreover, having taught prior to joining Foreign Service, I thought working FSI would be a good fit. I was very enthusiastic about the career, and I felt that I could impart that enthusiasm to the new officers.

A lot of my colleagues and A-100 classmates discouraged me because they felt that it would not be a career enhancing assignment, especially with hiring way down in the mid-1990s. I, on the other hand, thought that it would be very satisfying; so I ignored people's advice.

In June 1995, I went to the first day of the seventy-sixth class so that I could be introduced. My colleague, Greg Sanford, was transitioning out of the job, preparing to go to Munich to serve as consul general.

About three weeks later, after the Mugabe visit, I became A-100 coordinator. Judith Kaufmann was the division director, and I learned a lot from her. Classes were small in these days, roughly thirty people on average. Three other foreign service officers and three civil servants—an education specialist, a budget and planning specialist, and an office management specialist rounded out our team. Everybody assisted with A-100, the longest and most complex course that we were running. The seventy-sixth class finished up in early August 1995.

Q: I assume that there was a curriculum to follow. As you were teaching, you were certainly hearing questions and getting different reactions. To what extent did you modify the curriculum and to what extent did you teach other classes? How did you divide your time there?

JACKSON: Initially, I simply took over the segments of the course that my predecessor had taught. The first such segment was called "realities of Foreign Service life." We discussed people's comportment, departmental traditions, addressing officials, standing up for ambassadors and senior officials when they entered the room and other practical stuff. Typically, I would go into the classroom to get each day started, and while I would have loved to have stayed listening to the speakers, a good part of my time was consumed by finding speakers and putting the schedule together. There were always last-minute changes because speakers became unavailable, and I had to rearrange things. For the 76th

class, the schedule was largely in place, but I had to begin to plan the schedule for the next class.

The seventy-seventh class was scheduled to begin in early November. I wrote letters to welcome the new officers and their families. I was also working to get a better handle on how you put the schedule together with lots of support from my colleagues. As the day approached, it became clear that the class would begin on the same day as the first government furlough in 1995. That meant that we needed to bring everyone in, swear them in, take people who were eligible for per diem to get that per diem, and send them home to wait. Fortunately, that furlough only lasted a couple days; so everybody breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, we were only back at work for two weeks, squeezing in the team-building offsite. That second furlough went on for over a month. To keep the class connected and reassure new employees about their chosen career, we organized coffees and no-host meals in restaurants. We maintained contact with them and with one another. We worked with Career Development and Assignments to hand out flags on Flag Day at a holiday party at the home of Ambassador Hume Horan, the class mentor. Nevertheless, maintaining morale became more and more of a challenge as the furlough dragged on because people grew more and more anxious about their decision to join the Foreign Service. They worried about whether they were going to get paid, and that was a particular worry for the people who were not on per diem and were growing concerned about how to pay their bills. Finally, that furlough ended. However, the weekend before work was to resume, we had a huge blizzard closing the entire government for three more days [January 8 through 10, 1996].

On Thursday, January 11, we finally regrouped, and I presented a revised schedule, keeping the long-planned official swearing in for the next day. I had periodically sketched out a new program and figured out what could be eliminated, but it was quite a juggling act. When we did meet, I began the day by asking everyone to pair up and tell a colleague why they had decided to join the Foreign Service, with the hope of putting people in the right mindset. It was a successful exercise; it energized and refocused people. Sadly, the next day we had another blizzard; so we actually had to cancel the swearing-in ceremony, and some people were understandably perturbed because they had relatives come to DC in the snow. The truth was that we simply could not safely hold the ceremony. I called everyone that I could, but in this pre-cell phone era, I was not able to reach everyone, and some colleagues showed up at the department with their families only to learn that the event had been cancelled. FSI Director Ambassador Tezi Schaffer and Dean of the School of Professional Studies Ambassador Barbara Bodine were, of course, correct about the safety issues, but I had a “Furloughs and Blizzards Class” disappointed once again. It was a real let down.

Two weeks later, the seventy-seventh class joined a Civil Service orientation class for a joint swearing in in the Benjamin Franklin Room with then Executive Secretary Bill Burns as the guest speaker. The seventy-seventh A-100 class then went straight into language studies that should have started roughly at that time anyway. Thus, we salvaged some of the schedule in spite of the budgetary uncertainty. However, because Congress

and the administration had agreed to merge the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the U.S. Information Agency with the State Department, no decisions were made about when the next Foreign Service class would start. Instead, we prepared to examine the entire structure of A-100 and to plan a special orientation program for public diplomacy officers joining State in July 1996.

With no class planned for almost six months we had plenty of time to look at restructuring. FSI contracted Creative Associates to help us determine what the mission of A-100 should be. They assisted us to survey senior department officials, ambassadors, and deputy chiefs of mission around the world about the skills that officers need to acquire in A-100. Using all this survey data, we examined the curriculum and planned a nine-week A-100 class with a one- or two-week internship in the department. We made all the public speaking assignments policy focused. We planned for teams to research and present U.S. environmental policy, arms control, countering narcotics trafficking, and combatting terrorism, et cetera. We also considered combining generalist and specialist classes.

We used our time to revamp the program, ensure it is coherent, review the input from officials, ambassadors, and DCMs to ascertain if we had incorporated key findings, and determine when the internship would make the most sense. For budgetary reasons, we eliminated the second off-site, i.e., the embassy simulation exercise, opting to conduct it at FSI.

Finally, July arrived, and we conducted a three-day class for the former USIA officers, providing them with an overview of how State and USIA differ. These fifty or so officers had been given the choice of joining the State or being reduced in force [RIFed]. They become the seventy-eighth class, the shortest but not the smallest A-100 class in history.

In mid-July, we piloted the new A-100 program with the seventy-ninth class, the first class to include Pickering Fellows who had completed graduate school and had interned in both a State Department office and an embassy or consulate. Although the name "Pickering Fellow" came later, these were the first fellows and they were guaranteed non-tenured positions for four years without having taken the Foreign Service exam.

Q: All right, let's pause here. That was an excellent description of the process. What were the classes like in terms of demographic as you recall?

JACKSON: We prepared a class profile of each class. The male-female ratio was roughly fifty-fifty. The average age was under thirty; however, a few people were starting second careers or third careers. For the most part, people had some work experience, but we were still getting a few straight out of college or graduate school. We consistently had lawyers and warriors and returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Most had a history of extensive international travel. As far as specialist classes were concerned, they were much smaller and heavily male—mostly DS agents and information management specialists, doctors and nurse practitioners did not participate in specialist training in those days—something

that I advocated changing.

Q: How did the generalist and specialist training differ?

JACKSON: The big difference was that the specialist classes were three weeks instead of nine. We looked at whether we were incorporating what we thought were the key elements from A-100 in the specialist training. With the eightieth A-100 class, which started in September 1996, we actually conducted a pilot joint class. The specialists went to the team-building off-site for the first time, and the specialists, with very different Myers-Briggs type indicator [MBTI] profiles, made the off-sites more interesting.

As I assigned officers to groups that would work together at the offsite, I made sure that different MBTI profiles were all represented in each group. We had approximately thirteen specialists in that first joint class, and we brought all the specialists back to be part of Flag Day. While they might have known their assignments unofficially, their assignments were only announced when the generalist assignments were announced.

The feedback from the specialists in that first joint class was quite positive, but they wanted more of the training that the generalists benefited from; so we looked at that model. For the eighty-first class, which began in November, we introduced more intercultural training for the specialists, but we could not give them the opportunity to have internships. Moreover, since many of the specialists were going to Washington assignments initially, they were not missing out necessarily on the internships. The 82nd class was another joint class, and that model continued until class size became too large with increased hiring. For my part, I was preparing for my next transition.

Q: One last question about A-100. The Office of Career Development and Assignments [CDA] made the final decisions on where the new officers were going. Did they consult with you on that?

JACKSON: Sometimes the career development officers would ask us what we thought about assignments for some people, but generally they worked independently. We did try to be helpful when we knew that a tandem was coming into an A-100 class because CDA did not necessarily know that people were tandems. Sometimes that worked; sometimes it did not. In the eightieth class, for example, we ended up with a couple of tandems not able to go where their spouses were assigned. We never shared the MBTI information, and Flag Day, when assignments were announced, was the first time we knew where people were going.

As I look back on my assignment as A-100 coordinator, I am particularly proud of restructuring A-100, piloting the first joint classes, and keeping the “Furloughs and Blizzards Class” united and motivated. I felt strongly that A-100 was better preparation for our career when I ended my tenure than when I started.

Although I had been offered the DCM position in Libreville, I opted to go to Lisbon,

Portugal, as political-military officer and deputy political counselor via twelve weeks of Portuguese training.

Q: Today is March 1. We are resuming our interview with Robert Jackson. Robert, we left off with you preparing for the next tour. What year was that?

JACKSON: That was 1997. I had just completed my tour as the A-100 coordinator and took twelve weeks of Portuguese in preparation for going to Lisbon, Portugal. That was the first time I had studied a language at the Foreign Service Institute. It was intense and gave me good preparation for Lisbon even though it was only twelve weeks. French, Spanish, and Portuguese have enough in common that my knowledge of the other two languages aided me considerably.

Q: There used to be this notion of a conversion course from Spanish because FSI believed that the two languages were close enough so that if you had Spanish beforehand, you would have a much easier time learning Portuguese.

JACKSON: While I did not take the conversion course, it is true that if you can read Spanish, you can read Portuguese and vice versa. There are a tremendous number of words where one can substitute just one letter to find the Portuguese or Spanish translations. Substituting an "r" from a Spanish word with "l" provides quite a considerable vocabulary. Moreover, there are words from English and French in Portuguese. What makes Portuguese more like French are the many silent letters.

Portugal itself is beautiful. My spouse and I arrived there the Friday before Labor Day. It was the end of summer, and it was sunny and bright. Because Portugal was so wealthy in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries—up until the 1755 earthquake—the country is filled with magnificent castles, cathedrals, and monasteries. The Portuguese still talk about the earthquake as if it occurred yesterday because it changed their lives so dramatically. Portugal ceased to be the world power that it had become accustomed to being. That contributed to fado music, the soulful, melancholy music and attitude of the Portuguese toward life.

However, we found that Portuguese who had returned from Portugal's colonies had a different mindset. Salazar's fascist government had been overthrown in the nonviolent Carnation Revolution in 1975. By the time we got there, Portugal had entered the European Union, and there was tremendous building and modernization going on—much of it financed by the EU [European Union]. Yet, Portuguese history played a big role in daily life. The Portuguese remained fascinated with their royal family. Although no longer in power, they were very present and still influenced the social scene.

I met Dom Duarte, the pretender to the throne, who was quite charismatic. However, I also met people whose families had migrated to Portugal in the fifteenth century but who were not socially accepted because their family's coats of arms were not on the ceiling of the national palace in Sintra. In Portugal, one quickly learns the importance of family in

the society. Nuno Rogeiro, a journalist whose father had been a minister in Salazar's government, was politically powerful, but he aided me in understanding how conservative and traditional Portuguese society remained.

Babs and I met a lot of people who had come back from the colonies, primarily in Africa, and one could almost immediately identify if someone had been living in one of the colonies because their attitudes toward life and foreigners were so different. They were much more open. Some of them would tell us that other Portuguese did not know how to deal with them because they spoke the language exactly the same way but acted very differently.

Initially, my wife and I were in temporary housing in Estoril, one of the suburbs of Lisbon and right near the railroad. I'm convinced that the location of the house was chosen for access to public transportation but also to encourage people to find long-term housing promptly. Inside, it was comfortable, and it was convenient, near restaurants and shopping near the famous casino in Estoril. After some searching, we did find a fantastic penthouse apartment in Cascais, the next suburb going away from Lisbon, and a reasonable commute from the embassy. One of the bizarre things about living in Cascais or Estoril was that you could estimate your commuting time based on the number of deadly accidents on the highway that were being reported on the radio. Each deadly accident would add about ten minutes to your commute. And the Portuguese accepted this as normal for, at that time, Portugal had one of the highest per capita highway death rates in the world. I attribute that to the fact that most people did not have cars during the Salazar years; so driving was a new phenomenon, and people drove very fast.

Q: As you're talking about the cultural milieu that you entered when you arrived in Portugal, there was a very famous historic period when the royal court moved from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro.

JACKSON: Yes. That was during the Napoleonic Wars. The royal family and an armada of some forty ships departed from Mafra. When they came back, Brazil became independent and with one of the heirs to the throne becoming King of Brazil.

Q: It always amused me, but I also have to have a grudging admiration for a royal court that can literally just say, Okay, well, if it's not working here, we're going to Brazil.

JACKSON: In fact, if you look at what happened during World War II and to a lesser extent during World War I, royal families did decamp—maybe not with as much furniture as the Portuguese royal family—but they did decamp to London and Lisbon. A lot of royalty ended up in Lisbon because Portugal was neutral during World War II. It just shows how much one's history can impact one's culture and way of life. I think that was more obvious in Portugal than perhaps anywhere else that I have lived.

Q: Of course, the other thing about Portugal is that it supplied many immigrants to the U.S. in sea trades, but also, I understand, in sheep herding.

JACKSON: Immigration from the Iberian Peninsula was different from other European immigration. There's a Portuguese community around New Bedford, Massachusetts, that continued seafaring, as fishermen and whalers. There are also tremendous ties between the Azores and Massachusetts. There are also very large Portuguese-American communities in California and New Jersey. At the time that my wife and I were in Portugal, several members of Congress could trace their roots to Portugal and many of them came to Lisbon in 1998 for the World Exposition that took place that year. In fact, a good part of Lisbon was transformed for the exposition, and it was really well done. The theme was water, and the Portuguese built a magnificent aquarium, which was constructed by the same Americans who built the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They were subsequently involved in the construction of the aquarium in Atlanta.

Q: All right, so you arrive. What are your responsibilities as you get to the embassy?

JACKSON: I was the political/military officer and dual-hatted as deputy political counselor. It was a rather odd setup. The counselor supervised both the economic and political sections. The two deputies—one for political and one for economic—rotated as acting counselor if he was absent. The deputy economic counselor was Don Cooke, who had been one of the Iran hostages almost twenty years earlier. He had his own personal story to tell, but the experience clearly had a tremendous impact on his life.

In sum, in 1997, Embassy Lisbon comprised an interesting group of people together at an interesting time. My work involved base negotiations. We still had an air base at Lajes in the Azores, which I visited a few times to get a better understanding of the issues. We had a binational commission and were charged with compensating the Portuguese without paying rent for the base. The commission also had subcommittees, and I served on the labor subcommittee. In addition, I was the official American notetaker for binational commission meetings. My role gave me tremendous access to the Ministry of Defense—both its civilian and military components.

I was also the liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; so I made most démarches, unless it was so important that the ambassador, chargé, or deputy chief of mission needed to do it. There was no ambassador for a good part of my tenure. Elizabeth Frawley Bagley left about a month after we arrived, and the new ambassador, Jerry McGowan, did not arrive for several months. They were very different in character. In between, Greg Mattson served as chargé on his final tour with the department. The very day that we arrived was the day that Greg learned he was being forced into retirement because he had not been promoted from counselor to minister-counselor under our time-in-class system. He was saddened by his early retirement. In the ensuing months, he often peppered me with questions about the attitude of new officers since I had just been working with them.

Embassy Lisbon had experienced officers and experienced local staff—some of the most competent and efficient that I had worked with. Many had been with the embassy for

years. Embassy Lisbon was an Inman Embassy. It was reinforced concrete built into a hillside. Behind it stood an old manor house that served as both the Marine House and the cafeteria. It was the best embassy cafeteria I have ever seen. The staff used to cater after hours, and one of their specialties was a fabulous chocolate cake. I underscore that, recognizing that Portuguese cuisine in general is quite good.

Q: You had mentioned your role as the political/military officer responsible for the Lajes Base. Why did we not want to pay rent?

JACKSON: Congress forbade the payment of rent. I don't remember when the law was passed, but that occurred prior to 1997. Thus, in order to have some way to compensate countries for our military presence, we had to be creative. Indeed, we found ways to assist the Portuguese; one of those was assisting with Japanese beetle eradication or control. While it sounds odd, the Portuguese allege—probably correctly—that U.S. aircraft introduced the pests. Having Japanese beetles in Portuguese territory posed problems because agricultural exports from Portugal into the rest of the European Union could be restricted. The EU compromise was a system allowing mainland products to cross borders without further inspection, but products from the Azores had to be inspected several times in different ways.

Japanese beetles are extremely hard to eradicate. I learned a tremendous amount about them during my assignment although it was not something that I ever dreamed would be part of my Foreign Service career. You never know what you may be responsible for. To summarize the work, scientists found that blue plastic traps, which had to be emptied on a regular basis, were actually the most appropriate way to trap Japanese beetles at the time. I do not know if the science and technology have since improved, but the beetles remain a problem in the United States and the Azores.

Q: Actually, if I remember right, the Azores do produce a fair amount of agricultural products including brandies or sherry.

JACKSON: Most of the sherry is produced in Spain, but Portugal certainly produces a lot of port and madeira. I think there are some ports that are produced in the Azores, and the climate is definitely appropriate for wine. You find a lot of cattle there and fishing, of course.

One of the other novel things that we got involved in was earthquake prediction. This was relevant not only for the Azores but for the Portuguese mainland. The Great Lisbon earthquake in 1755 was one of the largest in recorded history. It was catastrophic, destroying downtown Lisbon along with a huge tidal wave and fires that burned for days.

Meknes, the capital of Morocco at the time, was greatly damaged by the same earthquake. Such a tremendous upheaval ensured definite interest in having geologists and seismologists work on earthquake prediction, especially since small earthquakes occur frequently in the Azores, which are volcanic. That activity made the Azores an

ideal site for scientific research.

Q: Was the relationship between Portugal and Brazil still strong, or what remained?

JACKSON: There was a lot of cultural exchange. Many tourists traveled from Portugal to Brazil and vice versa. However, the Portuguese language in Brazil has evolved. To a foreigner's ear, Brazilian Portuguese is much easier to understand. For lack of a better term, it is more "singsongy" than continental Portuguese, which is very clipped. The overall relationship was positive, and the Brazilian embassy in Lisbon was very active. Portugal maintains very strong ties with the former Portuguese colonies, not only Brazil, but the former African colonies, as well as Goa and Macau. The Portuguese Ministry of Defense was particularly interested in working with the militaries in the former African colonies. That was a basis for dialogue around U.S. military assistance to those countries and reinforcing what the other was doing.

During my time in Lisbon, civil war broke out in Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese colony. The United States turned to the Portuguese to evacuate our embassy in Bissau. Years later, when I served in Senegal, I traveled to Bissau on multiple occasions. I saw our empty embassy, the ransacked ambassador's residence, and the tanks that were destroyed during the civil war, sitting on the side of the streets a decade later. That gave me a better understanding of what had transpired in 1998.

Q: Wow. So you had the negotiations on payment for basing and the famous beetle issue, but in this period we saw the beginnings of the countries in Eastern Europe entering NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], and a lot of European countries sort of adopted one or another of aspirant countries. Did Portugal?

JACKSON: Portugal was certainly very active in NATO. There was a NATO naval base in Lisbon, and the Portuguese were proud to have a NATO facility there. They were very interested in the expansion issues. As a NATO member, Portugal hosted the secretary of defense once or twice a year for an official visit, and the secretary of state visited on a regular basis. There were a lot of high-level exchanges. Antonio Guterres, now UN secretary general, was prime minister of Portugal at the time, and Jose Durao Barroso, who was teaching at Georgetown came back to become prime minister right after we departed, going on to be the president of the European Commission. The Portuguese definitely punched above their weight given the size of their country. Moreover, their diplomatic corps was first class. They were outstanding diplomats, very well trained, very disciplined, and transparent. We agreed on most issues, except perhaps on the rent for Lajes. They also provided a lot of insights into the workings of the European Union. As an EU member, Portugal held the then rotating presidency of the EU during part of my tenure.

This tour ended up being only a little over a year since the Africa Bureau asked me to fill an urgent vacancy in Côte d'Ivoire. I had been promoted within a week of my arrival in Portugal, based on my work in the Orientation Division at the Foreign Service Institute;

so the political/economic counselor in Lisbon and I were both FS-01s. I found the political/military work somewhat interesting but not as interesting as the work that I had done in Africa; so it was an easy decision for my wife and myself to leave.

The hardest part was leaving our gorgeous penthouse apartment in Cascais. I can say without hesitation it was the most beautiful home that we ever lived in, and I include ambassadorial residences. The apartment had two stories. The main level floor was polished granite with a big marble fireplace. It was quite modern yet traditional in many respects. Portuguese tiles went halfway up the walls on the main floor. The floors of the second level were all Mozambican hardwoods. We had four balconies all of which looked out on the Atlantic. It was just a magnificent property that was hard to leave, but work-wise Côte d'Ivoire was just too good to pass up.

Q: You already had French. Did you need to go back for any refresher training before you went?

JACKSON: No. We did make a quick trip back to the United States to see our families, have consultations, and attend a friend's wedding. We were not eligible for home leave because we had only been in Portugal for a year. I had never been reassigned so quickly in my career as when I volunteered for this. It took all of four days to bid and be paneled for my new assignment, and travel orders came very quickly.

We arrived in Abidjan in the evening. In those days you had to descend the stairs from the airplane to the tarmac and walk into the terminal. Today, there is a new airport terminal with jetways that was built during our tenure there. When we arrived in early November, it was very hot and very humid. The night we arrived, I went down the stairs first, and my wife grabbed my arm from behind and almost wheezing, she said, "We are not extending!" I think I still have the bruises to this day. Our sponsors, Pat and Dick Hawkins, were the public affairs officer and my deputy in the political section, respectively. They took us to the political counselor's residence, got us settled, and took us out for dinner.

We found quite a contrast between our new home and the one in Lisbon. For one thing, there was no front door. You walked through sliding glass doors directly into the living room. It was actually a nice house with a big master suite, but it was oddly decorated. The master bathroom was chartreuse. Another bathroom was very pink, including all of the fixtures. It was unique. It did have a pool which we had to use the first night because the hot water had not been turned on. We had privacy because there was a wall all around except in front where there was a very thick hedge. The house had three guest rooms, a den, a TV room, and staff quarters. In fact, we hired a cook who lived on the property, and that was very convenient. That became more important as the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorated.

Q: That was going to be my first question. Côte d'Ivoire, kind of like Brazil, was always the country of the future. It has so many resources and its location is geographically

great for basing companies there. But what was the political situation there? Was there political stability?

JACKSON: Everyone thought that the country was very stable. It had never seen a successful coup. This was 1998; so President Henri Konan Bédié had already been president for five years following the death of President Feliz Houphouët-Boigny. Alassane Ouattara, who had been Houphouët's last prime minister, wanted to be president and left his post as deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund to return to Côte d'Ivoire to seek the presidency. He had strong credentials, but his father had been a traditional leader in what's now Burkina Faso, and Ouattara had represented both Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire in the West African Economic and Monetary Union; so there were questions about whether he was an Ivoirian. President Bédié promoted the identity issue as a way of sidelining Ouattara. However, millions of immigrants primarily from Mali and Burkina Faso lived in Côte d'Ivoire, not only in the northern, more Muslim part of the country, but in Abidjan and other southern cities as well. There were also Liberian immigrants and refugees who had fled fighting there. There were also immigrants from Guinea, which was governed by Sékou Touré's successor, Lansana Conté at that time.

Thus, Côte d'Ivoire was seen as an island of stability, even though the debate about Ivoirité was bubbling. The day that Ouattara returned to Côte d'Ivoire was huge day for his political party, the Rally of Republicans [RDR], which had been part of Houphouët's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire [PDCI] and then split from the ruling party. The RDR put on a huge show to welcome Ouattara back, and that stoked political tensions.

As political and economic counselor, I was looking primarily at the political issues with my deputy, Andy Snow, focused on the economy. That meant he was actively pursuing a bilateral investment treaty and looking at Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa crop since Côte d'Ivoire is the Saudi Arabia of cocoa and still the world's largest producer. As an aside, every time you eat a chocolate bar you are likely eating some Ivoirian cocoa. The country also produces a host of other agricultural products, including cotton, rubber, and pineapples. Côte d'Ivoire also exported fish, and the port of Abidjan is quite an important port. There were rumors that there might be significant amounts of oil off the coast although when oil was subsequently discovered, only small quantities were found, and they were not even sufficient for domestic needs. Many people worked on plantations, and many of them hailed from neighboring countries because President Houphouët had welcomed foreigner labor to fuel the country's economy. The Ivoirité debate made those people uncomfortable, but they had no economic alternatives; so they continued to work there and watched as the political situation evolved.

Then, December 24, 1999, a group of disgruntled enlisted men who had been part of the UN peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, mutinied over unpaid allowances and living conditions. The mutiny evolved in an interesting way. Mutineers first robbed some of the major grocery stores. That action led friends to call my wife about ten o'clock in the morning, asking if she had any information about soldiers

ransacking and robbing Sococe, the major supermarket in Deux Plateaux, one of the neighborhoods where many embassy employees, American and Ivoirian, resided. Babs called me and I immediately started reaching out to contacts, often alerting them to the mutiny.

We later learned that President Bédié and some of his ministers had taken refuge at the French ambassador's residence, which was located next to Houphouët's official residence on the lagoon. The mutineers literally drove from the grocery store to the radio station, which was directly across the street from the then embassy in Abidjan. We saw them coming and saw them take over the radio station. It was a few hours later that former Chief of Defense Forces General Robert Guéï made a broadcast on the national television station surrounded by the enlisted men who stood behind him with their weapons as he announced a coup and the ouster of President Bédié. Many journalists and ordinary Ivorians speculated that this was "a good coup"; Alpha Blondy even wrote a song about the good coup in Côte d'Ivoire.

Many expected that General Guéï and his ruling military council would pave the way for genuine elections that would include Ouattara as a candidate; some thought Ouattara had organized the mutiny in order to run for president. In my meetings with him, it became clear that he had been caught by surprise and had no control over the mutiny or the military junta. The debate about Ivoirite did not end, and we very quickly learned that there are no good coups. A number of northern and Muslim generals became ministers in the new government, but things did not settle down. I was trying to figure out who was really in power. President Bédié and most of his ministers left the country after the French government ferried them across the lagoon to the French military base beside the airport, and General Guéï reportedly leaned on the enlisted men to allow the deposed leaders to depart.

On Christmas Day 1999, Ambassador George Mu, DCM Jackson McDonald, and I went to meet Guéï at one of the bases around Abidjan. We were shocked by the deplorable conditions on the base. Buildings were in very poor condition with roofs leaking. One could quickly see some of the sources of discontent that sparked the mutiny cum coup, and I didn't wonder about the monetary motivations and the many stolen vehicles, which were eventually returned to their rightful owners. It was a tense few days with a curfew, leading up to roughly New Year's Eve Y2K [the year 2000]. All of our Y2K preparations and stockpiling of supplies and cash actually came in handy although not for their original purpose. People enthusiastically welcomed 2000; there were fireworks everywhere. Ivoirians and foreigners alike were very excited and optimistic about the new political environment. That optimism extended to former Prime Minister Ouattara and the members of his political party.

Initially, General Guéï said that he would not run for president; in fact, he said basically all the right things. However, enlisted men mutinied in March or early April, again protesting their remuneration and living conditions. That ended with a little bloodshed but not much. Then on July Fourth, there was a major mutiny that was bloodier still.

Ambassador Nancy Powell, who was principal deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, came to meet with General Guéï and urged him to stick with his original plan to have free and fair elections. He gave us a preview of what was to come, ending the conversation by thanking her "for the lesson." Exiting the Presidential Palace, we all looked at each other and concluded that was not a good sign. Shortly thereafter, the Supreme Court announced that Alassane Ouattara would not be allowed to run for president. That left General Guéï as the PDCI candidate and Laurent Gbagbo, a longtime advocate of democracy and leader of the smaller Ivoirian Popular Front [FPI] as the only candidates. Most observers predicted an easy victory for Guéï, but Ivoirians had grown disenchanted with the military.

There was a thirty-day campaign roughly coinciding with the month of October. The election seemed unremarkable, but, as the votes were being counted by the election commission on national television, Laurent Gbagbo held a significant lead when about 30 percent of the vote had been counted; then the television cameras were cut off. A couple hours later, General Guéï went on television to thank the people of Côte d'Ivoire for having elected him president. Well, Ivoirians were having none of it. They knew that Guéï had not won. Thousands marched on the Presidential Palace, and Guéï was forced to flee by helicopter. The election commission confirmed Laurent Gbagbo's victory, and he was sworn in in a hastily arranged ceremony that night. Because of the security situation and U.S. concerns about the legitimacy of the election since a principal candidate had been excluded, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering decided that I would represent the United States at the inauguration.

I knew Gbagbo, his wife, and his closest aides better than any other official American; so I was a logical choice. The inauguration was very emotional—in part because neither Gbagbo nor his wife had expected him to be elected. Yet, there he was, newly inaugurated. People were again very optimistic since someone who had fought for democracy and human rights for years and who had been imprisoned for his politics was now head of state. He promised an inclusive government, but the next morning thousands of Ouattara's supporters took to the streets demanding a new election. Gbagbo took a very hard line and insisted that there would be no new election, and the human rights advocates who had been in opposition now became the oppressors.

Q: Throughout the coup, the mutinies, and the election, the basic problems for the military remained living conditions and poor pay, correct?

JACKSON: Yes, and that remains a source of instability in Côte d'Ivoire to this day. We continue to see the Ivoirian military staging mutinies abuse because their grievances have never been adequately addressed—not by Guéï, Gbagbo, or Ouattara. The country desperately needs real security sector reform but it has never happened for a whole variety of reasons. Neither Gbagbo nor Ouattara once he took office in 2011 were prepared to undertake security reforms because they were so dependent on the security establishment. Their answer to mutinies was to pay off or promise to pay off mutineers. That has continued to be the practice, and at some point the strategy will become

completely unsustainable. As Côte d'Ivoire prepares for another presidential election in 2020, the role of the military will be an unspoken issue because Guillaume Soro, the president of the National Assembly, who was prime minister under both Gbagbo and Ouattara, has the backing of a significant portion of the military, which he partially led in the rebellion between 2003 and 2010. He was largely responsible for the country being divided for seven years with a UN peacekeeping mission attempting to maintain order.

Q: I'm sorry. I took you a little further than your story. Let's go back. You were at the swearing in.

JACKSON: It was emotional; people were optimistic; the promise of the good coup had been renewed. However, several very violent days followed. Most embassy employees were told to stay at home; those of us who did go to work went in armored vehicles escorted by the regional security officers. It was tense; mobs blocked roads with burning tires and threw stones. Demonstrators were killed, and people were afraid to venture out. The department decided that we should draw down and insisted upon ordered evacuation. In the end, we went to voluntary departure, and a number of family members left once the airport reopened. However, this had become almost "normal." As things settled down, Gbagbo moved into the presidential residence, which had not been occupied since Houphouët died.

President Bedie had chosen not to live there, which proved ironic since he probably used the tunnel from the presidential residence to the French ambassador's residence when he fled the December 1999 mutiny. The human rights situation continued to be poor; in fact, it deteriorated. President Gbagbo agreed to hold parliamentary elections, and we were hopeful that those parliamentary elections would be smoother and more transparent than the presidential election. However, Gbagbo set what I would call a trap for Ouattara and his party, barring Ouattara from running for Parliament just before the elections. In response, the RDR boycotted the elections—in spite of pressure from us to participate—and the result was a landslide for Gbagbo and to a lesser extent for the former ruling party, the PDCI. Ouattara was a great economist, but Bedie, Guéï, and Gbagbo all outmaneuvered him as a politician—at least until 2010.

At the end of 2000, three of the four men who wanted to become president when President Houphouët-Boigny died in 1993—then Speaker of the National Assembly Henri Konan Bedie, then Commander of the Ivoirian Armed Forces General Robert Guéï, and FPI leader Laurent Gbagbo—had become president, and the fourth—then Prime Minister and later RDR leader Allasane Ouattara—had been shoved aside.

At the embassy, we grew more and more alarmed about deteriorating human rights. My team and I reported extensively on abuses by the security forces. On one particularly violent day after the presidential election, we saw the security forces taking women who had been protesting for the RDR presumably to be raped. We confronted the government and the military about what we had observed but never got satisfactory explanations. In any case, we documented that a number of Ouattara supporters disappeared and were

never seen again—although mass graves were subsequently discovered. It was a tense time.

My spouse had left on voluntary departure after the airport reopened, spending seven weeks in the United States. During that time, the United States held our election with Governor George W. Bush running against Vice President Al Gore. When Americans started murmuring about stolen elections, Babs would tell them if they wanted to see a stolen election, they had only to look at Côte d'Ivoire. As Christmas 2000 approached, life calmed. Ouattara and his party were largely excluded from the political process; Gbagbo and his FPI were feeling invincible. That set the stage for yet another military mutiny and continued upheaval. Gunfire awoke us so many nights, and that continued long after we departed in June 2001.

Q: Was the military divided between northern Muslims and southerners, or were there divisions among Christians and others? Was it more a question of class and money? What drove the conflict?

JACKSON: Interestingly enough, the military remained relatively cohesive in the short term. Enlisted men were more interested in their living conditions than they were in any political agenda. It was the officers who became very politicized and eventually broke with Guéï and then with Gbagbo. The rank and file continued to demand better living conditions and more money, and those demands persist to this day. Some of the officers eventually did join Guillaume Soro, who led the 2003 coup attempt that led to the division of the country and the UN peacekeeping force. However, it was almost ten years between elections—and in 2010, they were supervised by the United Nations, and it was Gbagbo who attempted to steal them. The United States believed that Ouattara won those elections, but Gbagbo refused to concede, and ultimately the UN peacekeepers with significant French support forced Gbagbo to accept defeat as they overran the presidential residence and Ouattara's shadow government finally took power. That bloody chapter could have been avoided if the people who staged the good coup had kept their commitments.

Q: Now, you're looking back on these developments.

JACKSON: Yes, I'm looking back. We left in June 2001 with President Gbagbo in power, and the military somewhat quiet, although there were occasional mutinies and Ouattara's supporters continued to call for new elections and stage demonstrations.

Q: Was Ivory Coast's economy affected?

JACKSON: The economy was not deeply impacted until years later when the country was divided between the north and south. During my time cocoa continued to be produced and exported in huge quantities, and other agricultural production continued. The economy did not take a big hit, but foreign investors took a pause while they digested events; there was a significant decline in foreign investment on an annualized

basis.

Q: And did we maintain a USAID mission?

JACKSON: Peace Corps remained. USAID only had a contractor to manage health programs, working primarily on HIV with the enormous Centers for Disease Control [CDC] team there. I mentioned our old building downtown. The United States had used Abidjan as a regional center for years. Because of the coup, we looked at whether that was sustainable but we decided that it was. We proceeded to plan a new embassy, which was desperately needed. The old embassy in an apartment building was barely functional. To give an example, to get from one side of the embassy to the other, you had to go down to the ground level, go outdoors, and go back inside. Such was the structure of the apartment house. The downtown streets in front of the embassy were closed off for security, and you can imagine that the public disliked that. It was awkward to say the least.

Ivoirians were anxious for us to move to a new location on the east side of the city near the Riviera Hotel, which is where President Ouattara subsequently located the headquarters for his government in waiting. However, after I left we built a new embassy for more than seven hundred employees, including the significant CDC staff conducting research on HIV and malaria. During the unrest, one of our concerns was whether that research could continue. Many of the regional offices, the marine regional headquarters, regional courier hub, agricultural attaché, commercial attaché, et cetera, moved into the new embassy but later had to relocate to other countries shortly after the new embassy was completed. By 2005, the number of people working in the embassy was about one third of what it had been when I left in 2001. So a new embassy was planned for Ghana; another was planned for Senegal, et cetera.

There's an important point that I want to make. Tibor Nagy, who is now assistant secretary of state for African affairs, was ambassador to Guinea when I was a political/economic counselor in Abidjan. He wrote a fascinating cable before the coup in 1999, predicting that Côte d'Ivoire could experience the same kinds of unrest as Liberia and Sierra Leone had experienced. Those of us in Abidjan were very dismissive; yet he was obviously prescient in predicting the upheaval that came. He saw the dynamics there and was absolutely on the money.

Q: Wow.

JACKSON: I think it is wise for us to remember two things: 1) there is no such thing as a good coup, and 2) just because a country has never experienced a successful coup does not mean that it won't.

Q: So you ended up being there for two years.

JACKSON: It was about two and three quarters. After we had been in Abidjan for about

seven months, we took home leave—in Alaska because my wife wanted to go somewhere cold, and June in the United States does not offer many options for cold weather.

Q: Was she employed during this time?

JACKSON: In Zimbabwe, she had worked as the community liaison officer and as a contractor for USAID; in Portugal, she again worked as the community liaison officer for a good part of our short tenure there. However, she also provided speech therapy to English speaking students in Portugal and in Côte d'Ivoire, where she did not seek employment at the embassy at all.

Q: Then, were you there through 9/11?

JACKSON: No, we left at the end of June for my onward assignment at National Defense University [NDU], specifically at what was then called the Industrial College of the Armed Forces [ICAF], which is now the Eisenhower School. In spite of the name change, I understand that the program has not changed much, and I was very excited about the leadership training. I was offered a slot either at the National War College or at ICAF. I know that the War College is considered more prestigious but having completed my master's degree at George Washington University just four years earlier, another degree in political science did not appeal to me in the least. The Industrial College's emphasis on leadership, economics, and American industry was much more appealing. Other students in my class remain close friends to this day. As for my spouse, Babs resumed work with Fairfax County Public Schools.

We found a home in Vienna, Virginia, near where we had lived four years earlier. However, we had not moved in by 9/11. I was in class, and my wife was providing speech therapy in an elementary school when we learned about what had happened in New York. At ICAF, the commandant had the televisions turned on, and we watched the replays of the planes striking the World Trade Center. The Pentagon was hit while we were watching, and then the decision was made to close down the university. A group of people from ICAF who had medical experience organized themselves to go assist at the Pentagon. The rest of us were directed to go home.

Our temporary home was The Virginian in Rosslyn, and our windows looked directly out on the burning Pentagon. It was dramatic and surreal at the same time. Of course, telephone lines were totally jammed. I tried desperately to reach Babs and she me, but we did not connect until she reached The Virginian at the end of the school day.

Classes at ICAF did not resume for a few days, and we were unable to close on our house because the banks were closed. We did finally close and move, and ICAF reopened. As we settled into our new home for a new beginning, we began to comprehend the extent of the tragedy.

Q: It was certainly not at all what you expected when you came back to Washington. The

other thing about choosing to do the year at the Industrial College, were you thinking about where you were going to go afterwards because basically you arrive and within a month or two you have to bid again? Did you have something in mind for a follow on?

JACKSON: I was open to various options. You will recall that I had been in the Bureau of European Affairs and not been professionally challenged there. I had enjoyed three Africa-related assignments at this point; so I looked at other domestic assignments where I could use my leadership studies and perhaps my ICAF Middle East Studies. However, I focused on functional bureaus other than the Foreign Service Institute. Ultimately, I zoned in on being director of the Office for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor [DRL]. I had thought it was premature to open my window because although I had done an exemplary job in Côte d'Ivoire, I had only been an FS-01 for four years. Nonetheless, the boards recommended me for promotion in 2001. I was quite taken aback, but I used the information to my advantage to secure this office director position, which appealed to me for a number of reasons.

After 9/11, the State Department and the U.S. government were very focused on how we could promote democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere around the world. I thought that it would be fascinating to be involved in that process. By the time I had completed my first semester at ICAF, I knew that I would be going to DRL. For my second semester, I decided to study the education industry because, of course, I had been a teacher before I joined the Foreign Service. That took us to the United Kingdom and Germany to study education. Meanwhile, the ICAF leadership training was outstanding, and it convinced me that people can learn to be leaders. It's not something you are born with. In June 2002, I graduated, and Babs and I went to Brazil, Argentina, and Peru for a vacation before I started working in DRL.

Q: Before we go to DRL, I have another question about your experience at ICAF. You received the leadership training and the education sector training, but you were in a military environment. How did the leadership training help you later? In other words, what elements of leadership did you acquire there that were valuable to you?

One of the important aspects of the A-100 course is to encourage team building; so as a student of leadership, I was fascinated by building effective teams. How do you motivate people? How do you get them to work together when they may not have or see a common purpose? How do you build that sense of common purpose? Our military is very good at that. Objectives, campaign plans—they do them well. I took away some pretty good lessons that I have incorporated in subsequent assignments.

Q: Was there anything in particular in the education sector study that was also of benefit later on?

JACKSON: Not as much. I certainly learned a lot about the sector and the charter school movement. I was also very impressed with Germany's apprenticeships and felt that they

were a good model when people were questioning the value of a liberal arts degree in our country and looking at more vocational training in the United States. Therefore, it was helpful to me in making me think about some major policy issues, but it did not have direct application to my subsequent assignments. I would, however, say it left me with a strong interest in vocational education and higher education, which I have maintained.

Q: The only other question I want to ask you about ICAF is that it's located in the southernmost part of Washington, and you were located far away; so it was a long commute for you?

JACKSON: Many of my military colleagues commuted much farther, and I carpooled with a State Department colleague and fellow ICAF student, Daniel Moore, who was an economic officer. We followed either Interstate 66 or went down the George Washington Parkway; it wasn't bad. Typically, if it wasn't raining too hard or snowing, it would take about thirty minutes. That was very manageable.

Q: All right. You graduated and took a brief vacation. Now you are back in Washington in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

JACKSON: I began to put my academic experience to immediate use as the office director. Lorne Craner, my assistant secretary, who had attended Phillips Exeter Academy at the same time I had, asked me to smooth over the merger of two offices that were now my single office. I had twenty-seven people working for me who had been either in the Bilateral Affairs Office or the Grants Office in the bureau. Traditionally, people in the Bilateral Affairs Office had only focused on policy, and the Grants Office team had focused on innovation. Assistant Secretary Craner was very interested in using new funding from Congress, the Human Rights and Democracy Fund to finance far more innovative projects. Moreover, Liz Cheney, the vice president's daughter was deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs at the time, and she was launching the Middle East Partnership Initiative [MEPI] to promote democracy and human rights in the Middle East using project grants. Therefore, my team and I were deeply involved in working on MEPI's design and initial implementation. DRL grants focused on the Muslim world, but we also had some funding for Africa, Latin America, and the relatively new Community of Democracies. Therefore, there are a lot of initiatives, and my challenge was to get the people who had been focused on policy issues to look at what opportunities there were for grants to further those policies and to get the grants team to examine what policy changes could be realized with the support of grants.

We started with a budget of nine million dollars, which doesn't sound like a lot, but it doubled within just a couple of months to eighteen million dollars. Within my two-year tenure, the fund grew to over forty million dollars. We did some very innovative things like establishing an independent printing press in Central Asia. We looked at improving prison conditions in various countries and worked with the Near East Bureau [NEA] on activities to assist women in Saudi Arabia. There were some really good ideas, and my team did gel. I decided to keep the expertise of the grants team but to make sure that

everyone understood how the grants team worked. To identify the best projects, we had an extensive request and vetting process. We also started looking at the annual human rights reports for opportunities. Assistant Secretary Craner had the idea that maybe we could make our human rights reports more like the human rights reports that the British government publishes, with pictures and human-interest stories. He wanted to feature the grants that we were making to demonstrate how grants could promote democracy and human rights.

In the end, in addition to the so-called *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, my team and I edited the first and second *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy* reports. It was literally my job to edit those reports, and my policy team and grants team worked together to identify human interest stories to identify the best stories about grants and to fold all of this into a report on democracy promotion that that was to be published at the same time or within a few months after the annual human rights report in order to call more attention to issues. Secretary of State Colin Powell was very supportive of this initiative, but news of the abuses at Abu Ghraib became public just as we were getting ready to issue the second report on the Supporting Human Rights and Democracy, forcing us to delay issuance of the second report.

Meanwhile, my team continued to grow although some of them were sent to Baghdad to be members of the Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA]. Congress continued to appropriate more money. The Bureau of European Affairs was looking at democracy promotion in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and was very interested in what we were doing. This led to great collaboration with the regional bureaus, and it was unique for me to work in an office that was looking at issues around the world. Seeing our successes in one region encouraged us to seek opportunities in others. I recall that another very innovative program worked with teachers in Indonesian boarding schools to promote better governance in the schools and get students more involved in governance in the school setting. There was real creativity in these programs, and I bequeathed my successor a well-integrated team that was very focused on grants and on the new report on *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy* around the world. For my part, I was returning to the Africa Bureau as deputy chief of mission in Dakar, Senegal.

Q: Today is April 4. We are continuing our interview with Ambassador Jackson as he goes to Senegal. When did you arrive in Senegal?

JACKSON: In September 2004.

Q: And the whole family went?

JACKSON: My wife and I and our two cats.

Q: And in what position?

JACKSON: I was the deputy chief of mission.

Q: Had you had an opportunity to meet the ambassador before?

JACKSON: Yes, Richard Roth was the ambassador, and he and I had actually worked together indirectly previously.

Q: How did you divide responsibilities in the embassy?

JACKSON: We agreed on a pretty traditional division of labor. He focused on public diplomacy and outside activities, and I focused on managing the embassy. The one exception was his involvement in USAID's activities. USAID was a major player on the country team and had both a regional mission and a bilateral mission. Ambassador Roth wanted to be involved. Therefore, I befriended USAID Deputy Mission Director Erin Soto to keep abreast. In addition to what I heard in country team meetings, I had regular meetings with her and went to USAID for briefings.

Q: What were the basic policy goals when you arrived?

JACKSON: The United States was very focused on development issues, not only through USAID but also through the new Millennium Challenge Corporation [MCC]. Senegal was eligible for a compact and we worked to develop and refine a compact proposal for the entire time that I was there. Senegal came up with a very ambitious proposal to build an industrial platform outside the capital of Dakar on the ocean so that vessels docking nearby could have access to road and railway links to the capital and the interior. We had frequent visits from MCC staff, and the team leader for Senegal was Madeleine Phillips, the daughter of my second ambassador in Burundi.

About a month into my tenure, Ambassador Roth returned to Washington for an annual regional Chiefs of Mission Conference. My first full day as chargé d'affaires, a.i., proved unforgettable. While I had served as chargé for brief periods in Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire, this was going to be for several weeks. About ten o'clock that morning, the duck and cover alarm sounded, and since no drill had been planned, I wondered whether there had been a mistake or whether something was really unfolding. There had been speculation about Embassy Dakar being a target because it was at the intersection of two streets and close to both. Within minutes, I learned that a taxi filled with gasoline cans had rammed the barrier and that the driver had attempted to set the gasoline cans ablaze. Fortunately, our well-trained local guards sprang into action with fire extinguishers and prevented an explosion. It was a very dramatic beginning to my tenure, and Claud Young, my brand-new public affairs officer, who had literally arrived the night before, came over immediately to discuss what to say and do beyond gathering the Emergency Action Committee. The regional security officer reported that the driver had been taken into custody by the police who also guarded the embassy, and the only damage was to the Delta barrier.

The local guard force was fantastic. They got out there with fire extinguishers and

extinguished the fire even before the quick-arriving fire department and additional police reached the embassy. It turned out that the apprehended taxi driver had stolen the vehicle and was certifiably crazy. However, it took about twenty-four hours to establish those facts. Therefore, we did not know whether this had been a serious terrorist attack or not. Ultimately, the perpetrator ended up in a mental institution for an unspecified period of time; he was definitely still there when I left Senegal in 2007. The incident certainly marked my first month.

Q: What was USAID focusing on?

JACKSON: USAID focused on improving the investment climate, health, education, and donor coordination. There was a modest President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR] program although Senegal has a low seroprevalence rate partially because West Africans tend to have the HIV 2 virus, which is much less virulent, which is a blessing. AIDS was nonetheless an issue because of social stigma. Later in my tour, Senegal became one of the first countries in the President's Malaria Initiative [PMI]. Therefore, the U.S. mission was experimenting with the Millennium Challenge Account, PMI, and PEPFAR—President George W. Bush's three initiatives for Africa. That made Dakar a pilot post for a lot of activities. On the regional side, USAID was focused on drought relief and agriculture, including combatting locusts.

The entire mission was also responsible for managing our relationship with Guinea-Bissau. We had closed our embassy in Bissau during the 1998 civil war. Six years later, we had one political officer, Seiji Shiratori, who was assigned full time to travel to Bissau to monitor and report on events and engage local leaders. Seiji spoke both French and Portuguese; so he was quite able to engage. However, Guinea-Bissau was a very underdeveloped country with a host of political problems. Because of political instability, no elected president had ever completed a term in office since independence from Portugal in 1975. In fact, the current president, President Vaz, may become the first to do so—in 2020—which is quite sad.

We provided some assistance to the health and education systems, and we recruited candidates for International Visitor Leadership Programs [IVLPs]. However, the differences with Senegal were readily apparent when I traveled there. One contrast was the capital. In 2004, Bissau was one of just two African capitals that was not electrified; the other was Monrovia, Liberia. You had to arrive by plane before dusk because the airport could not operate at night. On our first visit, my wife and I and the Guinea-Bissau Watcher stayed at a downtown guest house, and only one room had hot water. All bathrooms had an enormous barrel of water for bathing in case the city water went out. One good thing was the temperature. It was never cold. In the seventies at night and warmer in the daytime; hot water was nice but not a necessity. Our first night we agreed to meet for dinner at about 7:30, and Seiji gave us a flashlight. We made our way down the street to a restaurant about three blocks away. It had a generator and lights, but we had to use the flashlight to navigate around holes in the sidewalk and streets. We enjoyed a very good Portuguese meal in this restaurant run by Portuguese expatriates who had

been in Bissau since before independence. Walking back to the guest house, we noticed a lot of people sitting outside our building. We were perplexed until we realized that they were watching television through the windows of the ground-floor appliance store that had three large televisions facing the street. People had brought their chairs and were sitting watching their favorite shows. That made Dakar look relatively developed and comfortable. While there were frequent blackouts, and Senegalese joked about having electricity before they had candles, we appreciated Dakar all the more.

Nonetheless, we enjoyed getting to know both countries and traveled extensively. Another time when we visited Bissau, our return flight was cancelled and we faced a three-day wait. So, we decided to take one of the two embassy vehicles and drive back. We crossed the Casamance region in southern Senegal, which had been seeking independence for decades. Fortunately, this was a quiet period, and we reached The Gambia River without incident. Until very recently, the only way to cross The Gambia was by barge, and a lot of people were waiting ahead of us. Since it was lunchtime, we looked around for something to eat and found eggs and canned halal spam. We figured the eggs would be safe since they were going to be fried or scrambled right in front of us, and the canned spam was not old; so we ate a healthy lunch and looked at local fabric as we waited for the ferry to return. On this particular day, only one of the ferry's motors was operating; so to cross The Gambia, the ferry actually made a series of circles. We made it though, reaching the outskirts of Dakar about sunset.

Q: You mentioned instability in southern Senegal. Were there places you could not go?

JACKSON: The RSO cautioned folks about travel in the Senegal River Valley along the northern border with Mauritania, the east toward Mali, and the Casamance. However, the Club Med at Cap Skirring and Ziguinchor, the capital of the Casamance, were accessible by plane and therefore never off limits. Tourism along the coast was a major industry for Senegal and The Gambia. Senegal also maintained a small but attractive game park not far from Dakar.

Babs and I decided to fly back to The Gambia at one point to see Banjul, the capital of The Gambia. It was underwhelming with just one building with more than four stories and only one building with an elevator. Unfortunately, The Gambia had a lot of sex tourism—a rather unique sex tourism with older European women looking for young African men. Our embassy in Banjul sometimes had to manage immigrant visa petitions from older American women who wanted to bring their new, young fiancées back to the United States.

Q: From a political point of view, what was going on internally, if anything, of significance?

JACKSON: In Senegal, there was a presidential election during my tenure. President Abdoulaye Wade, who had defeated Abdou Diouf, ran against his former prime minister, Idrissa Seck, and Diouf's successor as leader of the Socialist Party, Ousmane Tanor

Dieng. However, Wade and his prime minister, Macky Sall, crushed the opposition. I met Wade a few times, but I knew Sall better and was not surprised when he went on to establish his own political party, defeat Wade, and be elected twice in his own right.

Seck had a lot of friends in the United States because he was U.S. educated, and there was congressional interest in his well being. Wade had accused Seck of corruption and had imprisoned him. While I was chargé in 2005–06, he was released from prison and I went to meet with him. We had an interesting conversation that he gleefully reported to local media. Fortunately, I said nothing that I shouldn't have, but his decision to make our meeting public led me to respect him less. On the other hand, my respect for Sall, who was also U.S. educated and worked in the oil industry in Houston for a time, grew and grew. Both Seck and Sall spoke English better than I spoke French although my French is and was fluent. Therefore, we would speak English privately and speak French if other Senegalese were present.

I got along very well with Senegalese leaders, except President Wade, who annoyed me because he was always hours late. When I was DCM, I did not have to deal with him often; however, as chargé after Ambassador Roth departed in August 2005, I wasted countless hours waiting for Wade. Ambassador Roth left just after the African Growth and Opportunity Act [AGOA] Forum in Dakar that brought Secretary Condoleezza Rice to Dakar, following on the heels of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, who visited Dakar in February 2005 shortly before he stepped down.

We had several events around the forum, involving the American Chamber of Commerce in Senegal, our Foreign Commercial Service Office, and our Foreign Agricultural Service Office. At that time, USAID announced that it would open an AGOA Resource Center to assist West African entrepreneurs with exports and particularly with phytosanitary issues. That forum showcased Senegal's fashion industry.

Very shortly after that, we organized a nice farewell for Ambassador Roth and I became chargé for almost a year, continuing to work on Millennium Challenge Compact, development, AIDS, education, and Peace Corps projects. During my time as chargé, the mission underwent an inspection. My team really liked and respected me and gave me very high marks. In fact, the inspectors were so impressed that they went back to Washington and talked about my leadership. That resulted in then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer nominating me for DCM of the Year, and, in December 2006, I received the James A. Baker-C. Howard Wilkins Award for Outstanding Deputy Chief of Mission. We had a very large Peace Corps contingent, and when I traveled outside Dakar, I would look for opportunities to meet with Peace Corps volunteers.

Senegal is somewhat unique in having four very strong religious brotherhoods—each with its own capital. I visited the two largest brotherhoods' capitals, one of which is Touba in eastern Senegal. It is home to the Mouride brotherhood and is Senegal's second largest city. With an enormous mosque at the center, it has grown from just a village; yet,

apart from the mosque and the buildings built by the brotherhood at the center of town, it still looks and feels very much like a village with wagons pulled by oxen. Tivaouane, the Tijaniyya brotherhood's capital, is not too far from St. Louis, the charming colonial capital, but it is not as impressive as Touba.

Q: Did Senegal meet its milestones for the Millennium Challenge Corporation?

JACKSON: My entire three years, Senegal continued to develop the idea of the industrial platform, and President Wade, Prime Minister Sall, and I co-hosted an all-day forum to review the concept at one point. Shortly after I left, President Wade inexplicably pulled the plug on the idea and directed that a compact be developed that focused on roads along Senegal's borders. That concept was ultimately implemented with an investment of nearly five hundred million dollars.

The President's Malaria Initiative, however, took off after our new ambassador, Janice Jacobs, arrived in April 2006. Ambassador Jacobs had been deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs and deputy chief of mission in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic. Senegal was her first ambassadorship, and she presented her credentials to President Wade in a very nice ceremony that included some private time with him. One of her first official activities was to launch the distribution of treated bed nets to prevent mosquito-borne transmission of malaria. She was very interested in getting women more involved in these activities, and she hosted the first International Women's Day event that anybody in Dakar could remember. The Swedish ambassador, who was Ambassador Jacobs' neighbor, asked her why she was celebrating a communist holiday, and Ambassador Jacobs replied that she was celebrating women's involvement in health, education, business, and government. In fact, one of our most successful assistance programs trained women to become involved in local and national government and to run for office. She made the status of women a core focus, and I was more than happy to support her in that.

Unfortunately, Ambassador Jacobs and I ended up leaving about the same time because she was asked to return to Washington to be first principal deputy assistant secretary for consular affairs and then very quickly thereafter assistant secretary for consular affairs. So, we both left Dakar in July 2007, having done a lot to advance the Millennium Challenge industrial platform and PMI. Just a few weeks before we departed, First Lady Laura Bush came out to look at the PMI program. It was a good way to conclude our tours although her Advance Team made my life miserable for a month.

Q: What did you think as you concluded this tour? How did you see Senegal? Was it going to really move beyond the lower income strata into middle-income status anytime soon?

JACKSON: When we left Senegal, the economy was still based largely on agriculture and trading. There were people in government who wanted to help it to industrialize, but very few goods were produced in Senegal. Much of the economy was based on the

production and sale of ground nuts [peanuts]. Senegalese traders were and are all over West Africa, Europe, and North America. They are very skilled traders; they have not been as interested in manufacturing or services; so I worried about Senegal's ability to compete. It was an island of stability although a horrible thing happened a few months before our departure. Jeanie Fournier, the American wife of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegate whom we had known since our days in Zimbabwe, was killed when her vehicle hit a landmine in the Casamance Region. Her death was particularly shocking because it marked the first time that a major road in the Casamance had been mined.

While we were always monitoring security issues, this upsurge in violence shocked us and called into question the confidence-building measures and negotiations that the United States had been facilitating between the government and separatists. Not just a major policy setback, it was personally disturbing that someone we knew so well and had known for many years had been killed in such a horrible way. As I left, I worried both about security and the economy.

Q: Were there any significant international issues that the U.S. and Senegal had to cooperate on or deal with while you were there? I'm thinking in particular about UN peacekeeping or Iraq.

JACKSON: Senegal is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, and the U.S. provides much of the training. Senegal chose not to send troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, but it did increase contributions to peacekeeping in other places. We worked to get them more engaged on countering violent extremism and on Iraq with limited success. I suspect that the religious brotherhoods played a behind-the-scenes role in keeping Senegal out of those. However, the Senegalese were not openly hostile to involvement in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Q: Were there major drug issues?

JACKSON: The major drug issue was in Guinea-Bissau, which was a transit point for drugs. In 2005, Guinea-Bissau had presidential elections that saw the return of two-time President Nino Vieira. I was chargé at the time of the election and inauguration—the most unusual presidential inauguration that I ever witnessed. A number of ambassadors and chargés from Dakar accredited to Bissau took a charter flight to join the resident envoys from France, Portugal, Russia, China, Nigeria, Brazil, Senegal and a couple other African countries for the event at the new National Assembly building constructed by the Chinese.

Lining the walkway to the National Assembly, were about two hundred Bissau-Guineans who were totally naked. They were covered with red and white paint and had beads and various "Juju" as the Africans call it, but they wore no clothes. They were beating drums and playing other musical instruments. Never in my life have I seen any ceremony like that one. After the actual inauguration, we went to the other extreme because the King of

Morocco as a gift had sent two C-130 cargo planes with the food, chafing dishes, carpets, tables, chairs, flowers, and everything else that one needs for a banquet for five hundred to celebrate the president's inauguration.

We started the day with two hundred naked dancers and finished the day with this sumptuous lunch provided by the King of Morocco. I don't know how many chefs came, but there was plenty of food and a splendid setting under tents that the Moroccans had erected for the occasion with Moroccan carpets over the grass. And it was just spectacular and such a study in contrasts.

Q: Do you have any other reflections on Senegal and Guinea-Bissau before we talk about your next assignment?

JACKSON: Actually there is one important one that I had touched on but would like to expand. As a result of the November 2005 inspection Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Frazer proposed me for an ambassadorship. The paperwork made it through the Deputy's Committee. However, President Bush decided to nominate a non-career officer for that ambassadorship.

Frazer's other action was nominating me for the Baker-Wilkinson Award for DCM of the Year. In the fall of 2006, ten months after the inspection, I was on my regular ninety-minute, ten-mile commute from the embassy to the DCM residence, when I received a telephone call from Human Resources in Washington, informing me that I had been selected as DCM of the Year. Previously unaware of the nomination, I was thrilled. Two months later, I went to Washington to receive the award at the Annual Awards Ceremony in the Benjamin Franklin Room.

I mentioned my ninety-minute commute each way, and that also warrants some elaboration. President Wade decided to transform the two-lane coastal road into a modern four-lane highway from the airport to the city center. While that sounded like a great idea, forcing all of the traffic onto another two-lane road took my commute from about thirty minutes each way to ninety minutes each way. Consequently, I learned to take lots of unclassified reading with me in the car. If I had an after-hours event in town that my wife was also invited to, we would meet at the ambassador's residence, which was roughly halfway between the embassy and our home. She would drive to there; I would pick her up; and then we would proceed to wherever our event was.

Assistant Secretary Frazer really wanted me to return to Washington to be director of southern African affairs, but I was not particularly interested in doing that. Instead I interviewed for DCM jobs and some other office director positions back in Washington during my final months in Senegal. Just as I had decided to seek an assignment outside the Africa Bureau when I bid on Portugal, I again decided to focus outside the bureau. I was offered both the DCM position in Rabat and the one in Tunis. A critical factor for our political appointee ambassador in Morocco, Thomas Riley, was my selection as DCM of the Year.

When we left Senegal in July 2007, I went back to serve as chairman of the promotion board for FS-04 officers. I recall that we had something like five hundred candidates to review for promotion. Almost half of them had received tenure fairly recently; yet it was not difficult to identify the top performers among in their first two or three assignments. I was also lucky to work with a very congenial group on the boards. Preparing for Morocco, I used the beginning and end of the day for meetings about Morocco.

After completing the board's work, we went on home leave in the western United States and then headed off to Morocco via Senegal, where we had left our cats. After retrieving the cats, we flew to Casablanca to begin our next adventure.

Q: You were in the mid-2000s with the information revolution, cell phones, Internet, social media, and so on. Did these change how the embassy did business in a significant way?

JACKSON: Certainly cell phones were ubiquitous, and we were making extensive use of them. It was not until I got to Morocco that I had a Blackberry. Having a link to official email almost everywhere almost all the time meant that we were always reachable, and that changed weekends and evenings.

Q: Right. I raised the question because of your description of that very long commute. If you had had a Blackberry, think how much more you might have been able to accomplish.

JACKSON: Unfortunately, that was not the case.

Q: When you arrived in Morocco, did you find that your French was still useful?

JACKSON: I functioned in French although some Moroccans spoke excellent English, such as the foreign minister's chief of staff who is today Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita. In fact, most educated Moroccans spoke beautiful French and were actually more comfortable in French since they had been educated in French rather than Arabic. That is changing now that you Morocco has a government that is more Islamist. But, at the time I was there, the elite that had been educated in French was politically and economically dominant. Nearly all of my public activities were in French. I was blessed that my ambassador, Tom Riley, and his wife, Nancy, were fluent in French, which is unusual among political appointee ambassadors. Ambassador Riley had been President Bush's roommate at Harvard Business School; so he had ties to the president. He had a lot of experience as a businessman in a variety of fields and had already been in Morocco for four years when I arrived there. In fact, he asked the president if he could stay in Morocco until the end of the president's term, and the president agreed. Therefore, Ambassador Riley served until January 2009, allowing us to work together for about sixteen months.

Once again, my tour began with a promotion—from counselor to minister-counselor. My

wife and I had traveled to Morocco as tourists in 2001 just before we left Côte d'Ivoire, and we came back to a Morocco that was clearly on the move. We had a mission with over a hundred Americans at the embassy and another fifteen or so at our consulate general in Casablanca, which have been targeted by terrorists just six months before we arrived in Morocco, reopening a couple months before we arrived after extensive security upgrades. Combatting terrorism was definitely high on our agenda, but we were also doing a lot of development. Morocco is one of the lower middle-income countries that had a USAID mission and a Millennium Challenge Compact.

Again, we were involved in health and education, but also some unique activities. Our Public Affairs Section had piloted the Access program after the Casablanca bombings in 2003, bringing low-income children who might feel that they didn't have a lot of options in life into an English language program that really emphasized English and human rights. We had a dynamic regional English language officer [RELO], Ruth Petzold, who had been our RELO in Senegal. I was delighted to discover that the Public Affairs Section was not just managing cultural and educational programs and exchanges, but also real outreach and development activities.

Moroccans are very proud that their country was the first to recognize the independence of the United States. That is a subject that comes up a lot. Morocco's Millennium Challenge Compact had come into force just days before my arrival; so it had a five-year run. It was focused primarily on agriculture, specifically increasing olive oil and date production while building fish landing sites where fishermen could bring their catch and immediately put fish into refrigerated containers to reduce spoilage on the way to markets. There was also a crafts component focused on the city of Fez, one of Morocco's four imperial cities and former capitals. Fez has a huge crafts sector, and the city is unique because no motorized vehicles are allowed on the nine thousand streets within the walls of the old city.

Ambassador Riley took a very personal interest in monitoring MCC and USAID activities for their impact—to ensure that American taxpayers' money was being well spent. He and I agreed on a traditional division of labor, with me managing embassy operations and him focusing outward. There was also a Peace Corps program, with a lot of famous Returned Peace Corps Volunteers [RPCVs], including Ambassador Chris Stevens, Ambassador Robert Ford, and Ambassador Gordon Gray, who was in my A-100 class. Having learned Arabic in Morocco, all three went on to become State Department Arabists.

Some private foundations which enjoyed royal backing also received significant support from private Americans. One, the High Atlas Foundation assisted Berber communities in the High Atlas mountains. A second, the American Fondouk in Fez, provided free medical care to donkeys in and around Fez. A third administered the Tangier American Legation Museum, the only building on the U.S. National Historic Register outside the United States. A gift from the Sultan of Morocco to the United States in the early 1800s, it remains an active museum and educational center with an amazing library that includes

an extraordinary collection of maps.

Morocco is also home to several American schools—one in Tangier, one in Rabat, two in Casablanca, one in Marrakesh, and one in Fez. These schools have varying numbers of American students but all follow an American curriculum, and most of them receive support from the State Department's Office of Overseas Schools. Many Moroccans take great pride in sending their children to these American schools to acquire a strong foundation in English and to make them competitive for American universities. A lot of Moroccans attend university in the United States as well as in France, the UK, and other European countries. In fact, the American schools have a great record of placing students in prestigious American universities, which is not to say anything negative about Morocco's own strong public and private universities. Al-Karaouine University in Fez was founded in 859, making it one of the world's oldest continuously operating universities and underscoring how much Moroccans prize education.

Q: Security is always a concern, but I want to break it down into two parts—personal security with regard to crime and, of course, terrorism. How did you assess those while you were there?

JACKSON: Crime was very limited, and that continues to be the case. There was some pickpocketing although less than in Senegal. Crime is limited due to what I would call Morocco's neighborhood watch system. Different from Americans' concept of neighborhood watch—in every neighborhood there is an official paid by the Moroccan government who looks out for the security of that community. He's not the mayor; he's not elected, but every Moroccan knows that this person is there. He is as much a part of the community as the bakery, the hammam [place of public bathing associated with the Islamic World], the fountain, the school, and the mosque. Every community has these five or six elements. Babs and I had guards at our residence, Villa Monterey, but we felt very safe.

Terrorism was more concerning and was a key focus of our regional security officer, as well as the legal attaché, and the homeland security attachés. We had an active Law Enforcement Working Group, and there were threats, including death threats against me and my second ambassador, Sam Kaplan. However, there were no terrorist incidents during my three years. As DCM, I traveled in an armored BMW. When I went to Casablanca—about once a month—or on longer trips, we tended to use fully armored Suburbans.

Now, when I was in charge in 2009, I had the chief of mission's security detail, with an advance car, a chase car, and an armed bodyguard with me at all times when I was not at home or at the embassy. For all out-of-town trips, we also had a police escort; so I felt very safe. I traveled a lot—sometimes as the only American and sometimes with other embassy officers. Having a security detail takes a little getting used to because you lose all of your spontaneity. You have to plan your life to have the driver, the bodyguard, et cetera. However, the security team was supremely professional. Members of Morocco's

Royal Protective Service, they set the standard for all of the security teams with which I have worked. They could make the sea part like Moses when we were walking through crowded areas without any pushing, and they knew how to afford us privacy in restaurants and hotels while keeping us safe. They were so discreet that people barely noticed anything in particular. I do remember one day walking in the Medina in Fez, when we heard some Americans saying, "They must be important people," remarking on the burly Moroccans around us. One night, we were right down front at an Elton John concert—just feet from the King's wife, Princess Lalla Salma, and her entourage. Anyway, when Elton John came on the stage, you could feel people pushing to get closer, but I had no concerns because we had four enormous men behind us.

Q: Now, related to the security issue is Western Sahara. Is there still an independence movement or military groups fighting over that area?

JACKSON: The Polisario continues to push for the independence of Western Sahara, and its status is a subject of ongoing dialogue. During my tenure, the United States first under Secretary Rice and then under Secretary Clinton made it very clear that we looked forward to a negotiated settlement, although we tacitly recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Both visited Morocco while I was there; in fact, it was a regular stop for high level visitors, including numerous members of Congress. Between 2007 and 2009, I believe over a hundred representatives and almost twenty-five senators visited Morocco—some more than once.

Unfortunately, Secretary Rice did not have the opportunity to meet with King Mohammed VI, but I was in a number of meetings with the King, who came to the throne in 1999 with a very definite vision for the country. He is determined to modernize the country and has taken a very different approach than his father, Hassan II. Mohammed VI has made infrastructure development a top priority, creating a foundation to focus on it. He has insisted that his ministers develop programs for the different sectors of the economy. The tourism sector provides a great example. He established a goal of growing the number of tourists visiting Morocco by a million each year. In 1999, there were about a million tourists a year; by building hotels, improving the highway system, improving the train system, constructing tram systems in both Casablanca and Rabat, and building new bridges, tourism in the country has exploded. Electricity access was high and reliable. Nearly every Moroccan has access to clean water, and with support from organizations like our MCC, the economy has grown fast, as have health care and education.

It is important to underscore that Morocco is not a constitutional monarchy; it is a monarchy with a constitution, which is different. There are some checks and balances, but the King is quite powerful and he has made it his goal to modernize his country—now for more than twenty years. Agriculture has exploded in spite of occasional droughts. Morocco is a leader in renewable energy with huge solar fields that Secretary Clinton helped to inaugurate. Morocco also has wind farms, and they are using other renewable technology. They have redeveloped old oil fields to extract every drop

from those oil fields. They continue to do oil exploration, especially in Western Sahara. I always regretted that as DCM, U.S. policy prevented me and the ambassador from going to Western Sahara. However, Western Sahara was getting more investment from the central government than Morocco proper.

We also had a very robust relationship with the Moroccan military. One of the things that I worked on extensively was the sale of twenty-four F-16 aircraft. That deal took years to negotiate, and finalizing the financing and repayment plan became a sticking point, which we eventually resolved. In the end, Morocco paid for the F-16s with long-term loans under our Foreign Military Sales [FMS] program. We also worked on the successful sale of M-1 Abrams tanks.

We had a very active American Chamber of Commerce in Morocco. General Electric managed a number of projects across North Africa from its office in Casablanca. Harley-Davidson opened in Morocco. Morocco had facilities to refurbish aircraft and tanks operated by American companies. While we were there, the economy boomed. It was an interesting place to be. We had fantastic and frank relations with the government; of all the foreign ministries with which I have worked, the Moroccan and Portuguese foreign ministries were the most professional. The Moroccans did not always agree with us. For example, on human rights issues in Western Sahara, we often had very difficult discussions. However, the officials would tell you what they were going to do, why they were going to do it, and you could agree to disagree.

The royal family, which is quite large and has palaces all over the country, was very involved in the country's development and cultural life. King Mohammed VI's aunt invited my wife and me to several equestrian events and a fashion show. In West Africa in general, there is a tradition of horse racing. Morocco has "fantasias" in which riders dress in matching outfits as teams show off their horsemanship and fire muskets in elaborate competitions during which riders fire their muskets at the same time without any of the horses crossing a line. It was very exciting to watch these fantasias with beautiful costumes and beautiful, well-groomed, well-fed horses all over the country. Under the patronage of the King, the fantasias and polo games in Rabat were very special. We met Robert Stack, the man behind Unsolved Mysteries, at one of the polo matches. Prince Moulay Rachid, the King's brother, often came to these matches; so we got to know members of the royal family through music, polo, and Fantasia. Overall, we enjoyed the country professionally and personally. It was fascinating with its rich history and superb cuisine. Moroccans do not talk about their excellent wines, which have been produced since Roman times, but they are certainly major consumers except during Ramadan. The Zniber family, who resided across the street from the old embassy—the one in which I worked—was involved in the wine industry and we got to know them.

We also had a lot of fun each year at the Moroccan Automobile Association Diplomatic [Road] Rally that took diplomats to different regions of the country. An American couple who had been with us in Senegal were the first to tell us about the rally and urged us to participate in our first year. We had a great time, coming in third out of more than thirty

participating teams. That was a shock and our best showing ever. In 2009, the bodyguards came along—in a separate vehicle. In any case, we had fun every year.

There was just so much activity. We made many friends there, including friends from the many embassies there. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's younger brother was the Ghanaian ambassador to Morocco; so we got to know him in Morocco and reconnected with him in Ghana. It was fascinating, and we felt we had really accomplished something.

Q: Where were the frictions in the relationship that you had to deal with?

JACKSON: The biggest frictions were around human rights, Western Sahara, and relations with Israel. King Mohammed VI chaired what's called the Arab League's Al Quds or Jerusalem Committee. Although Morocco invited Israeli diplomats to come to Morocco for meetings, Israel was not allowed to maintain any kind of diplomatic or consular presence in Morocco—despite the large Jewish community that remains in Morocco even after much post-World War II emigration to Israel. In fact, there are still thousands of Jews in Morocco; there are still several active synagogues in Casablanca and Marrakech, and synagogues are maintained in other cities although none of them have enough members for a minion. My second ambassador, Sam Kaplan, a Minneapolis attorney and major fundraiser for President Obama's first presidential campaign, was Jewish.

In January 2009, we held a splendid farewell for Ambassador Riley and his wife Nancy, and I became chargé a few days before the inauguration. As 2009 progressed, the administration was still getting organized. I wanted to put my name in the hopper for an ambassadorship. Normally, the Deputies Committee selects ambassadors and then the DCM Committee selects DCMs. Two thousand and nine was not normal, however, and DCM positions were advertised first. Because I could not be sure that I would secure an ambassadorship, I bid on six high-profile DCM jobs—London, Paris, Brussels, Ankara, Canberra, and New Delhi. To my shock and delight, I made the short list for all six DCM jobs, which I think must be almost unheard of. I interviewed for all but Brussels and Canberra. When I was offered Ankara, I was really torn and was placed in the awkward position of explaining that I really wanted to hold out for an ambassadorship. The European Bureau was amazingly gracious, saying that they could not hold Ankara open but would put me on the list for an ambassadorship in the Balkans. In the end, the Deputies Committee considered me for two posts in Europe and three in sub-Saharan Africa. I really thought that given my experience and my language skills, it was more likely that I would be selected for ambassadorship in Africa, but it was wonderful to have such an abundance of riches.

In January 2010, my wife and I were at the annual air show in Marrakech, and with the F-16 deal finalized, F-16s flown by the South Carolina National Guard and Beechcraft trainer aircraft were among the planes on display. We were watching the Moroccan Air Force do "skywriting" in Arabic, when my BlackBerry rang. Ambassador Don

Yamamoto, the acting assistant secretary for African affairs, was on the line, but I could barely hear him. When I got to a quiet place, he informed me that President Obama had selected me to be the next ambassador to Cameroon. I was thrilled and went to tell my wife, "It's Yaounde." She looked at the Arabic in the skies and asked how I could read that. Then, my meaning dawned on her, and we embraced. It had been a very strange bidding season, and I now had two weeks to complete a security questionnaire, an updated financial disclosure, and a host of other papers.

In April, the Office of Presidential Appointments asked Ambassador Garvey to request agrément for me to be her successor. The Cameroonian government mulled over the nomination for six weeks, finally giving its consent. On June 25, the White House announced my nomination literally eight days before our departure for consultations.

Q: Wow. Okay. You have been nominated to be ambassador and you have to get your confirmation right. Take a moment to reflect on what skills and abilities you had acquired that you feel got you nominated.

JACKSON: I believe the key skills that led to my being nominated were team building, interpersonal skills, and communication skills. Everyone brings his or her own strengths to an ambassadorship, but the inspection report from Senegal and my performance as chargé there and in Morocco, highlighting my ability to unite teams around shared goals, especially development challenges, were critical.

Q: Today is April 9, and we're resuming our interview with Robert Jackson as he prepares to become ambassador to Cameroon in 2010.

JACKSON: As we were leaving Morocco, President Obama publicly nominated so everybody knew what was happening, and we could finally talk about it. We flew to Washington, moved into the Oakwood Apartments in Roslyn, and I immediately began consultations in preparation for a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee [SFRC] in roughly three weeks.

Q: That's fast.

JACKSON: It was very fast, incredibly fast, but the Senate was willing to fit it in before Congress recessed, and that certainly suited me. I spent lots of time with the Cameroon Desk and post management officers, who often accompanied me to other agencies. Although I had been learning about Cameroon, it rapidly became clear that the real issues in Cameron were corruption and development; of course, corruption impacts development in a very negative way.

Next, I kept hearing about the state of Cameroonian democracy. Although the country had been a multi-party state since the early 1990s, President Paul Biya had been head of state since 1982 and kept getting re-elected although he was becoming older and older. Whenever he faced a serious challenge, his modus operandi had generally been to accuse

the challenger of corruption, try the person, and then imprison him. He has done that with three major opponents. During my Senate hearing, Senator Russell Feingold asked about the potential for violent change and Senator Johnny Isakson asked about corruption. After my hearing, the day before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was supposed to vote on my nomination, I received a call from Senator Inhofe's office. He wanted to speak with me urgently and I wondered if he had more questions about Morocco's expulsion of American missionaries for proselytizing. I prepared to again explain that proselytizing is illegal in Morocco, putting missionaries in a precarious position even as our embassy worked hard to assist them. It turned out some of his constituents had just been scammed by cyber criminals in Cameroon, and he wanted me to assure him that I would make this a priority; I assured him that I would. The next day, the SFRC voted to send myself and several other nominees to the full Senate for a vote. Only one career nominee, and I can't remember who it was, was not voted out although the person was subsequently confirmed. By early August, I had completed the Ambassadorial Seminar and been confirmed. Not anticipating such a fast confirmation, I had again been asked to chair a promotion board; so I spent the month of August chairing the promotion board for FS-02 political, management, and public diplomacy officers competing to become FS-01s.

Q: Let me just ask you if it is a little odd to slow an ambassador from going out to post with that kind of assignment.

JACKSON: It is unusual, but nobody knew when the Senate would confirm me; so I had agreed to chair this four-week promotion board long before my nomination. After confirmation by the full Senate on August 2, 2010, which is the day that the Senate recessed, I started the promotion board the following Tuesday. After the promotion board, we went to Hawaii for our home leave. We had been to forty-eight of the fifty states and wanted to make that forty-nine. I still need to go to Iowa, which I will do, scouting for presidential candidates no doubt.

By early October we were off to Cameroon with our three cats in tow, one American, one Portuguese, and one Moroccan. That was a story in and of itself because Brussels Airlines using an American codeshare was the best option, but Brussels Airlines' cargo is managed by SwissAir. We kept making reservations for the cats and then the reservation would be canceled; we would make another reservation for the cats; and the reservations would be canceled. Finally, Brussels Airlines assured me that the cats had reservations, but when we landed in Brussels, we were told that we had canceled our reservations for the cats while we were on the American Airlines flight, which I pointed out was impossible. It turned out that chicks were being transported on the same flight, and SwissAir was worried about the cats going nuts surrounded by all these chicks. Nonetheless, we all boarded, and people, cats, and chicks seemed fine when we deplaned in Yaounde. Lisa Peterson, the DCM, and a few other embassy officers greeted us at the airport and took us to our enormous residence.

Driving in from the airport and keeping in mind that my wife and I had served in five other African countries, we could not help but remark how underdeveloped Cameroon, an

oil producer with a fairly high per capita income, seemed. Looking at the houses and the roads, our eyes got bigger and bigger because it became clear that this was the least developed country we had ever lived in. Once we got the cats settled, we went to the DCM's house for dinner.

Q: So when you say that Cameroon in 2010 was less developed than Burundi in the mid-1980s, that really speaks volumes.

JACKSON: It does, and the statistics underscored the level of development. Thirty percent of the population had access to clean water; 30 percent of the population had electricity, but it wasn't necessarily the same 30 percent. While there was a lot of overlap, it was not complete. Nearly all of the roads in the country were just two lanes, and many were not paved. Consequently, it took a long time to travel around the country, which of course we did. This situation caused me to take a hard look at our assistance programs and to consider how the United States could contribute to Cameroon's development. I had planned to focus on corruption and democracy, but it became clear that development was a huge priority. Following a disputed presidential election, USAID had pulled out of the country in the early 1990s when USAID closed a lot of its missions; yet the need for aid was very real. USAID had two contractors at the embassy working on HIV/AIDS and other health programs; otherwise our assistance was a modest ten million dollars per year when I arrived. Working with other ambassadors in Central Africa, I began to push for a new USAID mission to serve most of the countries in Central Africa, with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, where there were missions. We formulated a request for a development counselor to be assigned for the region and logically based in Cameroon because it had the largest economy and flights to all of the neighboring countries. We began a long and intense effort to lobby USAID Administrator Raj Shah and the State Department, ultimately sending a joint Dissent Channel message when the initial response was no.

It can be hard to get six ambassadors to agree on something, but we agreed on this Dissent Channel message, which technically the deputy secretary is responsible for responding to. Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom tasked her staff with responding to our cable. After I met with her staff, they drafted a vague response encouraging USAID to consider assigning a development counselor for the region. That did not satisfy us; so we continued our push.

Q: I have a general question about Cameroon. Most of the other African capitals are or had been on the coast; yet Yaounde is pretty far inland. Is there a reason why the capital was situated there?

JACKSON: Yes, the French selected Yaounde because the climate is much better than along the coast. A German colony until the end of World War I, the German capital was Buea, which is now the capital of the southwest region not too far from Douala, Cameroon's main port and largest city. Cameroon became a trust territory administered by France and the United Kingdom until the two parts became independent in 1960 and

1961, when two of the four British administered regions joined French-speaking Cameroon under a federal system that guaranteed equality of language and preserved British common law in the English-speaking regions. The rest of British-administered Cameroon voted to become part of Nigeria. Today those regions are Boko Haram's primary area of operation.

Back to Yaounde, it lies about 2,400 feet above sea level. On most days, the temperature is in the eighties, whether it's the rainy season or the dry season; most nights the temperature is in the high sixties Fahrenheit. Temperature-wise, it is a perfect climate. However, it rains a lot and is frequently overcast—typical for the tropics. When you go to Douala, it is much hotter and more humid; the difference is quite striking.

Q: Besides Cameroon, did you have any other regional responsibilities?

JACKSON: My team did, but I did not. We had ambassadors in the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. In fact, three of the neighboring ambassadors—those to the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo [Congo-Brazzaville], and Gabon—had all been in my ambassadorial seminar. Thus, we had relationships before going to post, and I knew the ambassadors to Nigeria, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Congo-Kinshasa]. Knowing one another facilitated collaboration on regional issues, especially the critical environmental and poaching issues. Poaching and the bush-meat trade were decimating Cameroon's elephant and pangolin populations, as forests were being overexploited. Gabon was really taking the lead in the region, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked with embassies in the region to organize a major regional conference in Libreville with the express purpose of creating a regional wildlife enforcement network [WLEN] modeled on similar networks that had been established in Southeast Asia. One of my goals, which had not been a goal when I arrived, became to raise consciousness about environmental protection and conservation of Cameroon's natural resources, including its wildlife. Illegal logging was a huge problem since a lot of tropical woods were being decimated.

Interestingly, that led to a fascinating connection. Cameroon became the only country apart from Madagascar that was still exporting large quantities of ebony. One of the uses of ebony is for guitars, and Bob Taylor of Taylor Guitars came to Cameroon on an exploratory mission. My team and I were more than happy to meet with him. He ended up purchasing two ebony processing plants, and we helped him to negotiate his way through the bureaucracy, obtaining the necessary permits and so on. His mission became acquiring sustainably harvested ebony for his guitars. I always thought that ebony was black. In fact, ebony can be black, brown, or speckled—almost white with dark brown dots. Bob Taylor started marketing guitars that did not have black ebony, making people more aware that the wood had the same acoustical properties and the same hardness. Eventually Taylor Guitars closed one of the two wood processing plants and invested all of its efforts in a plant in Yaounde, which is really thriving. Taylor continues to source all of its ebony, sustainably and responsibly from Cameroon. That was a major commercial success. My team nominated Taylor Guitars for the Secretary of State's Award for

Corporate Excellence, and I had the pleasure of attending the January 2014 award ceremony after Taylor won.

Q: Let's go back to the question of illegal poaching of elephants and ivory. Were all the Central African countries members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species [CITES]?

JACKSON: Even though they were members, it still made sense to create a WLEN among them. The same Central African countries were all members of USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment [CARPE] and the Central African Forest Commission [COMIFAC] for wood products and forest management. Each organization holds an annual meeting, usually in Douala, Cameroon, because of ease of access. As my tenure in Cameroon progressed, there was a terrible massacre of elephants by Sudanese poachers in Bouba Ndjida National Park, a major game park on the Chadian border. Over four hundred elephants were slaughtered in the space of a week, and the ivory was taken to Sudan. This led me to press President Biya, the ministers of Territorial Administration and Defense, and others in the government to declare that this was a national security issue. I argued that if your ivory was illegally exported to another country by foreigners, this was a security issue, and my argument resonated. It also prompted greater support for the common regional effort to combat elephant poaching and ivory trafficking. We were less successful on pangolin poaching and the bushmeat trade, but little by little, we raised awareness.

The other big issue that I encountered was around Cameroon's elections. In 2011, President Biya had been in office for thirty years and was up for reelection to another seven-year term. Some people believed that his historic opponent, John Fru Ndi, the anglophone president of the Social Democratic Front [SDU], actually won the election in the early 1990s, but his support steadily declined.

I should note that Cameroon and Canada are the only two countries in the world that belong to both the British Commonwealth and La Francophonie based on both being officially bilingual countries. Whereas French speakers are a minority in Canada, English speakers are a minority in Cameroon, and since the early 1990s, the political opposition has hailed primarily from the two anglophone regions and neighboring Douala.

President Biya was not particularly worried about losing the election, but I still felt that it was important to observe the election and report on it; so we sent teams all around the country—fifty people in all—to monitor the election. What we observed was that the election actually ran pretty smoothly. However, turnout was exaggerated. Although it approached 60 percent, either President Biya or those around him wanted to show that he enjoyed great support from Cameroonians. Consequently, when the official results were declared, they indicated that something like 77 percent of eligible voters had voted, but we knew from our own observations and from observations by other diplomatic missions that simply was not true. Therefore, after consulting with the department, we publicly questioned the turnout numbers.

Some other governments, including France's foreign minister, had quickly endorsed the election results and sent congratulatory messages to President Biya. This was very awkward because the United States made a statement that while we recognized that President Biya had won the election, there had been problems, especially the apparent inflation of voter turnout. The State Department worked with the Quai d'Orsay and prompted the French prime minister to issue a statement building on the U.S. statement, i.e. acknowledging Biya's victory, but declaring that the elections had not been without problems. As you can imagine, the Cameroonian government was absolutely furious, and Philemon Yang, Cameroon's prime minister, convoked the entire diplomatic corps to condemn interference in Cameroon's internal affairs. I was called in separately by Minister of External Relations Henri Eyebe Ayissi, and I fully expected that he was going to declare me persona non grata. Indeed, he delivered a very stern message but stopped short of kicking me out. That was October 2011 about a year after my arrival. I had met with President Biya a few times over that year, but I decided not to seek any meetings until after the New Year.

When I saw him offer traditional New Year greetings, he suggested that we get together. When I went to see him, he did not raise the election at all, talking instead about regional and security issues. Boko Haram was gaining traction in neighboring Nigeria, and there were rumors that it was using Cameroon as a refuge. During my final year in Cameroon, Boko Haram started kidnapping foreign nationals, initially French nuns and priests who had resided in Cameroon for years. Although we weren't sure—and neither government would admit it—we strongly suspected that either Cameroon or France had paid ransoms. President Biya had long made a practice of buying off his political opponents; so it looked like this was a continuation of a long-standing policy. These attacks worried me; so we recommended that Americans not travel to the Northern Regions bordering Nigeria, and we made a very difficult decision to take our Peace Corps volunteers out of the two Northern Regions. All of them wanted to stay in Cameroon; so we assigned them to what we considered more stable areas. However, the attacks increased, with Vice Prime Minister Amadou Ali's wife being kidnapped by Boko Haram and held for a few months. We suspect that she was kidnapped not only because she was the vice prime minister's wife but also a medical doctor. That was the point when the fight with Boko Haram became regional rather than just Nigerian.

Prior to that time, Cameroon's security forces had focused on combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, where there were often attacks on vessels and oil platforms. Oil companies often quietly paid ransoms to Nigerian pirates, but the United States had placed a rotating team of Navy Seals in Limbe, Cameroon to train Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion [BIR] to fight the pirates. I am proud to report that the last successful pirate attack in Cameroonian waters occurred in April 2011, when pirates came ashore in Douala, raided a bank, and escaped with a significant amount of Central African francs before being pursued by the BIR.

We decided to build on the success of that program by making it a regional effort.

Working with NATO partners and Gulf of Guinea countries, we launched an annual exercise called Obangame Express, which has become an annual anti-piracy exercise in the Gulf modeled on what we were doing in the Indian Ocean off the Somali coast. In June 2013, Cameroon hosted a major international conference on combating piracy and developed the Yaounde Code of Conduct, to which all Gulf of Guinea countries subscribed. Togo subsequently hosted conferences for this group, but the secretariat is in Yaounde.

As you can see, there were a lot of professional issues on my plate: piracy, attacks by Boko Haram, poaching and conservation issues, democracy, human rights, and governance issues, but we should speak more about corruption, especially its tie to Wikileaks, LGBTQ rights, and development, especially education.

Q: Okay, but you had mentioned the Peace Corps. Roughly how many volunteers did you have, where, and what activities were they involved in?

JACKSON: Although the numbers fluctuated, there were approximately 120 volunteers in Cameroon. When I arrived, they were in all ten regions working on agriculture, health, and environmental activities. The agricultural activities had a business development component. When I traveled around the country—and I did travel to all ten regions—I made a point of meeting with the Peace Corps volunteers. For me, their most interesting programs were in the Northern and Far Northern Regions, i.e. the poorest parts of the country.

We were constantly looking at all of our assistance programs. Under my predecessors, Ambassador Janet Garvey and Niels Marquardt, a Food for Progress program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture out of the Agricultural Attaché Office in Lagos, Nigeria, had started. According to Counterpart International, the implementing partner, this school feeding program in the Northwest Region, one of the two anglophone regions, was responsible for amazing increases in school enrollment, particularly girls' enrollment. The key was the program's structure, which provided children who went to school with a hot lunch of pulses [rice, beans, lentils, et cetera] imported from the United States. In exchange, each participating school's parent teacher association had to establish and maintain a vegetable garden that provided green vegetables to supplement the pulses. I wanted to go see this program for myself because I was very skeptical that you could achieve and maintain these huge increases in enrollment. I also wanted to see if there was space in the schools for all these extra students. Consequently, Mika Cleverley, the chief of my political section, Babs, and I went to see this program. We met with the parents, students, administrators, and implementers. Sure enough, the statistics were accurate. There had been huge increases in enrollment because the other part of this that I had not been aware of until I was actually on the ground was that the students got to take food home to their families. Each day they were not only getting a hot meal, but they were taking food home. This was an incentive to send them back the next day, and if you sent more children, each child brought something home. Therefore, the more students you

sent to school, the more food they brought home. This was a win-win for the children and for the adults.

I was so impressed that I persuaded Counterpart to apply for another grant to work in the northern part of the country—not the Far North, where Boko Haram was attacking but the Northern Region. USDA approved the grant, and we began to build a network of schools that were participating in this school feeding program, getting more girls into school. This also filled a gap because USAID had previously funded a program through Winrock that had awarded girls scholarships, but that program ended my first year in Cameroon. This became something of a replacement.

Although Cameroon is supposed to be bilingual, the level of English in the francophone regions was abysmal even in the capital. Building on my experience with Access in Senegal and Morocco, I asked the State Department to launch an Access English language program, which again has both language and human rights components, partially fulfilling another of my other objectives in Cameroon. Thus, through a hodgepodge of non-USAID programs, we expanded U.S. assistance, and USAID—because of the 5 percent seroprevalence of HIV/AIDS, which was lower than in Eastern and Southern Africa, but still worrisome—made a commitment to assign more staff to Cameroon even if they would not assign a development counselor. After informing President Biya, I announced that we would be reopening the AID mission.

Unfortunately, Raj Shah, the USAID administrator, got congressional pushback about opening a USAID mission in a non-presence country; so USAID decided not to assign a direct-hire American but did continue to increase funding and contract staff. Remember that the total foreign assistance when I arrived in Cameron was about ten million dollars a year; by the time I left it was about seventy million dollars a year. That included the Food for Progress program and the hodgepodge of other programs that we had pieced together.

Q: Were there other programs for women?

JACKSON: Yes and no, there were no other programs. However, International Women's Day is a public holiday in Cameroon, and Chantal Biya, President Biya's wife, is a huge proponent of International Women's Day. Each year there were parades in every city. My first International Women's Day in March 2011, my wife and I were in Maroua, the capital of the Far North Region. The governor and his wife, a dynamic couple, invited us to participate, and we learned how many non-governmental organizations were working on women's empowerment; there were hundreds of them, and our Peace Corps programs in agriculture and education were emphasizing women's empowerment.

For our second International Women's Day, my Cameroonian staff insisted that my wife and I march in the parade over which the First Lady presided. Frankly I felt odd about marching in the parade since I'm not a woman in front of thousands of Cameroonians and the whole diplomatic corps—all thirty ambassadors. So I found a compromise. My deputy chief of mission, Lisa Peterson, who is now our ambassador to Swaziland, and

other women from the embassy marched the entire parade route, and my wife and I joined them for the long block in front of the reviewing stand. Mrs. Biya was thrilled. When we came back to our seats, she invited my spouse to join her for the official lunch at the Hilton Hotel. They actually became very good friends after that.

Allow me to talk about Chantal Biya. Some people think she is odd. She's very tall—taller than her husband who is not short—but she is over six feet with red hair that resembles a mane. She has often been photographed for her fashion, her hair, and her hats, and that is what people remember. However, she has a heart of gold. If her husband would listen to her advice more often, Cameroon would be better off as a country. She is very interested in health and development and has a foundation that does a lot of work at the community level to assist with equipping schools and health centers. She has enrolled the wives of ambassadors, women ambassadors in their own right, ministers, and ministers' spouses to support development. Thus she is far more than just a fashion icon.

After that International Women's Day, every time that there was a public event where my spouse and I were present, the president and Mrs. Biya always made it a point to spend some time with my wife, which was very touching. Even though President Biya and I had our ups and downs, Mrs. Biya and Babs became friends.

Returning to regional issues, my defense attaché was responsible for Equatorial Guinea as well as Cameroon. Equatorial Guinea has long been a very backward country, but it's an oil producer and that oil money has made the ruling Obiang family very wealthy, giving them the ability to buy Michael Jackson memorabilia, expensive automobiles, and other things. The oil wealth has also transformed a lot of Equatorial Guinea. Malabo, the capital, has beautiful hotels, big housing developments, and wide roads. When my defense attaché suggested going there for a long weekend to enjoy one of the luxury hotels, my first thought was that he had spent too much time sleeping in muddy fields.

The quality of hotels, even the Hilton, in Cameroon was not high, and the farther one ventured from the two major cities, Yaounde and Douala, the lower the quality of the hotels. In some places one was lucky to find a toilet seat. I traveled extensively around Cameroon and spent considerable time on the road since it used to take two days to drive from Yaounde to N'djamena, Chad, which is not a long distance in miles. It might have taken eight or nine hours if there were highways, but we were not on highways. The first time that I traveled north, my driver left a day before I did, and my team and I took the overnight train from Yaounde to Ngoundéré, where the railroad ended and from whence trucks would take merchandise on to N'djamena. From Ngoundéré we continued to Waza National Park and Bouba Ndjida National Park, seeing the wildlife and meeting officials as we made our way to N'djamena to consult with my counterpart, Ambassador Mark Boulware and his team. Then we flew back to Yaounde, taking less than two hours to travel the distance that had taken two days to drive. Driving, however, afforded a much better sense for the challenges that landlocked Sahelian countries like Chad face.

Now, back to Equatorial Guinea. Ostensibly, it was much more developed than Cameroon

and Chad and a much higher per capita income; so we finally decided to go for a long weekend, with plans to meet the chargé and his team. Many Cameroonians work in Equatorial Guinea, and the mainland faces the same environmental challenges as Cameroon. In Malabo, we met the team at our very small embassy; we had an opportunity to see the fantastic conference center and housing built for African Union summits and to visit the incredible Israeli hospital, La Paz Hospital, which had a workforce of approximately seventy Israeli doctors in addition to other staff. They were providing very high quality medical care. Initially, I did not think much about the hospital, but it was interesting to see. About a year later I needed an urgent medical procedure, and the regional medical officer made arrangements with the Israeli doctors to get me treated there. I think I'm one of the few Americans in the world who has ever been medevaced to Equatorial Guinea. Moreover, my neurosurgeon turned out to be an Israeli doctor who invented the MRI in the Soviet Union before emigrating to Israel. He decided to spend two years in Equatorial Guinea to have more time for research and for the development of more patents.

During my three years in Cameroon, LGBTQ rights loomed large. The LGBTQ community is abused, and their situation is one of the most flagrant examples of abuse in the world. Most Cameroonians can best be described as homophobic. This stems from strong religious beliefs, but Cameroonians were not only hostile, they arrested and jailed men and women for homosexual acts. Working with the department, LGBTQ rights advocates from Europe and the United States, and other diplomatic missions, we attempted to educate people and to provide aid to those who were discriminated against and worse. People are arrested for homosexual acts and sent to jail. Sometime people are caught in the act, but even when they were not, it was hard to prove that you were not homosexual.

Q: I have a question about the human rights issue of the LGBTQ community in Uganda. There have been reports that Christian groups and Christian missionaries advise Ugandans on how to create laws that are particularly harsh against the LGBTQ community. Was that also true in Cameroon?

JACKSON: Certainly missionary groups in Cameroon tend to be very anti-LGBTQ. However, Cameroon inherited very strict laws from France that made homosexual acts illegal. The Catholic Church took it upon itself to lead marches against LGBTQ rights, and Cardinal Tumi, the Catholic Cardinal of Douala was at the forefront of that effort. I made a real effort to engage the Cardinal and urge him to be more tolerant. Pope Francis came to occupy the Holy See during my tenure in Cameron, and he made the statement that it was not for him to judge, but that had no impact on the Cardinal. One of the worst moments of my professional life was learning that a LGBTQ rights leader in Yaounde had been horribly tortured to death. I made a big point of attending his funeral, and I convinced a number of other diplomats and human rights activists to accompany me to make a very public statement that what had happened was not acceptable, but the tragedy continues.

The Wikileaks revelations created another tragedy. Hamidou Yaya Marafa, the University of Kansas-educated, long-time minister of territorial administration, had told my predecessor in confidence that he aspired to be president of Cameroon. We actually kept a picture of his meeting with President Kennedy in the front office. President Biya, however, has often accused political opponents of corruption, and they have subsequently languished in prison for years. True to that tradition, Marafa was accused of corruption. When Biya reshuffled his cabinet after the 2011 presidential election, Marafa was one of the cabinet members who was ousted. He came to my house on a Sunday just before Easter and told me that he expected to be arrested. He didn't want me to do anything, but he wanted me to know. A few days later, he was arrested. My team and I monitored the sham trial. No evidence that he had been involved in corruption was ever presented although there was circumstantial evidence of corruption because he had a significant amount of Total stock, an apartment in Paris, and nice homes in Yaounde and Garoua. At the end of the trial, the judges issued a thousand-plus page plus judgment, saying that he must have known and been involved in a corrupt plan to purchase a presidential aircraft. First, writing such a long judgment must have required the judges to begin months in advance. Marafa was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison, where he remains, and the United States *Annual Reports on Human Rights Practices* always label him a political prisoner. Prior to my departure from Cameroon, I went to see Marafa to underscore my concern and solidarity. That visit leaked to the press, which was not my intention, but I wasn't sorry that people found out because it sent a message that we care about our friends. I still think of him often. Ironically, my public statements may have contributed to the early release of another Biya confidant who was tried and imprisoned under similar circumstances decades earlier.

Q: You had a military attaché. Was that principally because of Boko Haram and terrorism?

JACKSON: The military attaché's primary concern was pirates in the Gulf of Guinea. We had a Seal team in Cameroon, training Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion [BIR in French]. When I traveled to northern Cameroon, the BIR would always supply six soldiers to escort me, and they would stand guard wherever I spent the night. Since they had been trained by U.S. Seals, our Regional Security team felt good about this arrangement. However, we used to joke about being followed by the "beer" truck.

My last year in Cameroon, because of the Boko Haram attacks, the United States established a second Seal team, meaning that the Seals came for six months, conducted training, and then a new Seal team would take over. We maintained the Seal team on the coast doing anti-piracy work and established the second in Maroua to assist the BIR in countering Boko Haram. Of course, I had secured President Biya's support for this initiative, but I then asked if he would be amenable to our establishing a base from which we would fly reconnaissance missions. Shortly after I departed Cameroon, the United States created a camp for approximately 180 men and women at the airport in Garoua, the capital of the Northern Region, to support and execute these reconnaissance flights. By late 2013, Boko Haram was on the rampage and the United States, France, and the UK

were coordinating with Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, establishing intelligence sharing agreements.

Q: Were differences among ethnic groups an issue for you in carrying out any of your mission goals?

JACKSON: Not exactly. Of course, we faced the anglophone-francophone divide; it was a simmering issue. However, Cameroon has approximately 275 distinct ethnic groups, and no single group composes a majority or even plurality; therefore, President Biya cobbled together ethnic and regional coalitions in his party and his government. In fact, he actively brought different ethnic groups in different regions together. While the anglophones tend to be largely in the opposition, they and other ethnic groups were represented in government.

Q: Another question: Albert Schweitzer worked in Cameroon, if I'm not mistaken. Is there anything left of his hospital?

JACKSON: There's a monument, and I think there's still a health clinic there, but it's certainly not what we would call a hospital today. From a health perspective though, we have learned that Cameroon is the country from which HIV in humans emanated, spreading from there down into the Congo River Basin and then really exploding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and from there spreading across Africa and across the world.

Q: Had tourism increased while you were there?

JACKSON: I tried to encourage more tourism and worked with the minister of tourism. During my first few months, I was approached by ARK Jammers [Acts of Random Kindness Jammers, an American NGO registered in the state of Maryland, with a number of Cameroonian, French, and American members]. ARK Jammers decided to organize visits to Cameroon for African Americans who had done DNA testing and determined that they were of Cameroonian descent. People are well aware of Gorée Island in Senegal, which was the point of no return for many slaves. Along the coast of Ghana, there are thirty slave castles in various states of repair from whence slaves were exported. And in Cameroon, there's a site near the city of Limbe not far from near Douala, which has the remains of a slave market and slave holding cells. This site called Bimbia has real tourist potential for African Americans and Cameroonians who want to learn about their history. ARK Jammers made me aware of this site and brought a group of about fifty African Americans at Christmas time in 2010, my first year in Cameroon. They visited Bimbia; so the next time I was in Douala, I made it a point to go to Bimbia, which was not easy to access although it is on a beach. We hired a local guide who knew where it was to literally hack through bamboo and vines to take us to this site.

I subsequently went to talk with the minister of tourism about the site, and he asked if the United States could do anything to develop it. Well, the embassy applied for an

Ambassadors Cultural Preservation Fund grant and secured it; then we hired a Cameroonian citizen who was a professor in France to help us research and curate the site. He worked with an African American professor from Arizona State University who researched sailings of slaves from this site using ships' manifests. In clearing and preserving the site, they discovered that in addition to the four buildings and the slave auction platform, there were foundations of twelve or more buildings. There were even chains, manacles, et cetera. A goal of the grant was to turn the building that still had its walls into a small museum, place signage around the site, build a proper path into the site, and generally preserve what was there. Unfortunately, the minister of tourism who succeeded the one who had asked me to become engaged was less interested, and he handed the project to the minister of arts and culture. She was miffed that I had not approached her initially; so this became a long, drawn-out saga, slowing the restoration of the site. We did complete the grant, and the site is now much better preserved and much more accessible to people.

In retrospect, I wish that I had contacted Minister of Culture Ama Tutu Muna, but the local mayor, the local chief, and my first minister of tourism had all enthusiastically signed off on the grant. I had no idea that the minister of culture wouldn't be as excited, but I think she wanted it to be her project. However, a larger group of African Americans came to Cameroon in 2011, and they all went to Bimbia. For its part, ARK Jammers continues to work in Cameroon, now focusing on creating opportunities for youth affected by Boko Haram. ARK Jammers continues New Year's Eve concerts to raise money, and they have garnered more support in the United States, France, and Cameroon for their good work.

Q: Since we were talking about tourism and getting Cameroon a bit more on the map, did you have a foreign commercial service officer or even a local hire who was developing commerce?

JACKSON: We had a local hire who worked with the Foreign Commercial Service Office in Nigeria. The commercial officer, like the legal and agricultural attachés and various others, would come over very occasionally. However, some large American companies, such as General Electric, opened offices in Cameroon while I was there, and the Department of State advocated on their behalf. In addition to helping Taylor Guitars and General Electric, we helped a company called ECC with a big water project. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency financed some feasibility studies for various energy projects. Virginia-based AES Corporation had a major stake in the Cameroon National Electricity Company [SONEL]; Noble and Kosmos Energy were actively exploring for oil; and Geovic Mining owned rights to a huge cobalt deposit. Exxon Mobil and Chevron own the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, which ends in Kribi, Cameroon, where tankers regularly load Chadian oil; so American companies have a foothold there, and their business is expanding. During my three years, U.S. exports to Cameroon more than doubled albeit from a very modest level. We also supported American companies through the American Chamber of Commerce in Douala, which grew significantly.

One of my other challenges was that the inspection team that had come out early in my tenure had arrived with the idea that we should close our Embassy Branch Office in Douala, where a single American and eight locally employed staff worked. The United States had closed the office once before—in the 1990s—and was quickly forced to reopen it because of the importance of the port and the airport. I pointed this out, but it didn't have much impact. Well, then-Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson was on a flight from Brussels to Kinshasa when his plane was struck by lightning and forced to make an emergency landing in Douala. I received a call from the Operations Center about eight o'clock at night informing me that the assistant secretary was in Douala although they had few details about why. In any case, I immediately asked the branch office director to go to the airport and make hotel arrangements for the assistant secretary and his special assistant.

As it happened, my DCM was down in Douala for LGBTQ and civil society meetings, and there was to be an AmCham luncheon the next day. There was also a political demonstration that the Branch Office was monitoring; so we invited the assistant secretary to various events. At the end of the day he called me and said that we could not close this office, and I replied that I completely agreed not only because the post was in an important transshipment point but also because we needed someone who could do public diplomacy, political reporting, economic reporting, commercial work, and literally be a one-American show with the support from our local staff and the embassy in Yaounde. Carson went back to Washington and convinced the department that Douala is necessary. Today the embassy branch office director in Douala is selected by the DCM/Principal Officer Committee, and the incumbent continues to do all of these things on behalf of the United States with the support of the embassy, which is a short distance away in miles, but a long distance away in terms of accessibility.

Speaking of accessibility, before I departed, we were able to complete the transfer of the CDC Office from Limbe to Yaounde, making coordination with the embassy and the host government infinitely easier, and we were able to relocate the Peace Corps office from a high-crime neighborhood to a building visible from the embassy.

As my tour was drawing to an end, I decided that I wanted to return to Washington to be an inspection team leader. I had been inspected many times and felt that I could contribute something, coaching colleagues to address some of the challenges they faced. In fact, I thought that was as important as finding waste, fraud, and abuse. I strongly believe that inspections should assist embassies and bureaus to operate better. I was paneled for the position and was due to leave Cameroon in early August 2013 to train as an inspector. Toward the end of July, I received a call from then-Director General Linda Thomas-Greenfield. To my complete surprise since we knew each other but had never worked together, she asked me if I would be willing to serve as her principal deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, as she transitioned to be assistant secretary. Of course, I said I would be honored to, and once the Deputy's Committee, which also decides on ambassadorships, approved my assignment to be PDAS—a horrible acronym, my assignment to the Office of the Inspector General was broken. Two thousand thirteen

was a time when the Senate was not confirming ambassadors; so Under Secretary for Management Pat Kennedy decreed that ambassadors had to stay at post until he said otherwise. With my departure up in the air, my wife and I nonetheless packed up the residence and traveled to the United States so that she could resume work as a speech and language pathologist with Fairfax County Public Schools. After purchasing a new car and getting her somewhat settled, I returned to Cameroon. A key reason for going back was Cameroon's legislative elections at the end of September in which USAID financed a get-out-the-vote campaign and a parallel vote tabulation. I am very proud to say that the 2013 legislative elections were the most transparent in Cameroon's history up to that point and perhaps ever. Once the elections concluded, Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield prevailed upon Under Secretary Kennedy to allow me to leave Cameroon to become PDAS. As I was leaving, I paid a farewell call on President Biya. He decorated me with Cameroon's highest civilian honor, the Cameroon Order of Valour presented for high services to the state and gave me a stylized peace pipe made of bronze. I am convinced that that was very symbolic and that he wanted to underscore that we had come to respect and value one another. The fact that no other departing ambassador received a peace pipe as a farewell gift indicated to me that he had thought about the gift, and that the choice was very deliberate. To my knowledge, not many other ambassadors were given Cameroon's highest award either; so I left Cameroon in October 2013 on a very high note.

Q: Concluding, you go back by yourself because your spouse is already working in Washington.

JACKSON: I take one cat with me. Babs had taken one cat back with her, and our third cat, our Portuguese calico, had died in Cameroon. The cats hate change, but they adapt. They loved the ambassador's residence in Cameroon. It's a huge house—over five thousand square feet of living area and fabulous, flexible space for entertaining. The living room had four seating areas and a grand piano, but you could rearrange it by clearing it in whole or in part for dinner parties with multiple tables. We hosted performances in there as well as on the large terrace. During my tenure, we never used it for the Marine Ball, but in years past it had seen more than one ball. Moreover, the house was convenient to the old embassy in the downtown area and convenient to the new embassy compound about a ten-minute drive away. It was in a nice residential area across the street from the Moroccan ambassador's residence and around the corner from the Gabonese and Russian ambassadors' residences, as well as near some shops. We loved the house and the huge yard that we could use for events. We enjoyed the pool and tennis court, but the inside was amazing. We had a covered patio on the main level, and upstairs, the mirror of the patio was a screened-in porch, where we would often spend time on the weekend or in the evening since the climate was so pleasant.

Q: And none of the other animals in Cameroon ever presented a problem for the cats.

JACKSON: No, the cats stayed inside. In fact, unlike in Morocco, where stray cats were everywhere, in Cameroon, we did not see many other animals. Small animals tended to

become someone's dinner; so one didn't want to let them out.

My team and I had made progress on democracy. Civil society was much stronger than when I arrived. Thanks to USAID, civil society organizations had learned to work together and to be less dependent upon international donors for their survival. We had started phenomenally successful school feeding programs and a great Access English language program. In sum, when I look at my record in Cameroon, I feel that in three years I accomplished a lot.

I took just a few days of leave, deferring home leave until December. I had been an office director but I had never been a deputy assistant secretary or principal deputy assistant secretary; so I was trying to figure out my role and how I could add value. Each of the deputy assistant secretaries had regional responsibilities and functional responsibilities. However, the only office under me was the executive officer with its management and human resource responsibilities. Sometimes, an office director would come up to be acting DAS if the DAS were on leave or travel, and sometimes I would cover that DAS's portfolio depending on what was going on. During my twenty-six months as PDAS, Linda Thomas-Greenfield was on travel or leave a lot; I ended up being acting assistant secretary for eight of the twenty-six months. That was very demanding, and it evolved over time. Initially I was familiarizing myself with the various portfolios, getting into the rhythm of Policy Coordination Committee [PCC] meetings chaired by National Security Council [NSC] staff at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. I went there at least once or twice a week and more if the assistant secretary was traveling.

During one early meeting, we were reviewing President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative [YALI] and discussing the Regional Centers that were being set up across the African continent. I argued for a Lusophone Regional Center, but the strong preference was to invest primarily in young leaders who spoke English.

At State in mid-December 2013, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, whom I greatly admire, asked me to sit in on her meeting with South Sudan's foreign minister. The U.S. special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan's Office was part of the Africa Bureau even though the special envoy reported to the secretary and to the White House. Under Secretary Sherman wanted to deliver a very strong message about the need for reconciliation in South Sudan, and she did. In fact, I left the meeting very satisfied that the South Sudanese had no doubt about how concerned the United States was about the political situation. I began my delayed home leave that evening. The next day, President Kiir staged the alleged coup and launched his ethnic struggle against Vice President Machar and the Dinka people. I have often wondered if we had delivered our message earlier if it would have made any difference. There was discussion of whether I should return to the office to assist with the crisis, but with the approach of the holidays, the assistant secretary decided that I should continue my delayed home leave. The bureau could manage without me, and they did. When I did return to the office four weeks later, the South Sudan crisis was still in full swing, and we were looking at the evacuation of our embassy, which we had already drawn down significantly. President Obama, National

Security Advisor Rice, and Secretary Kerry took a very active interest in South Sudan. However, my focus became planning for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in early August 2014.

In February 2014, I embarked on my first trip as PDAS, traveling to Botswana, South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles. In Gaborone, I met with our management officers from across Africa. In Antananarivo, I met with the brand new president of Madagascar to put that relationship back on track after a very difficult few years, and I led our delegation to the Madagascar Contact Group. Visiting Port Louis, I called on Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials and met with business leaders. Finally, in Victoria, I highlighted concerns about human rights and piracy in Seychelles.

In June, I accompanied Deputy Secretary of State Heather Higginbottom on a pre-summit tour of sub-Saharan Africa. We visited Senegal, where I had been posted previously, Kenya, and Liberia. The trip allowed us to engage the Senegalese, who were good partners, on wrapping up their Millennium Challenge Compact, which was ultimately successful as a transportation infrastructure project. In Kenya, we reviewed the results of a painful rightsizing process driven by terrorism in Kenya. The attack on the Westgate Mall had taken place just before I became PDAS, and the National Security Council decided we had to downsize our mission in Kenya, limiting the number of people there on temporary duty. The deputy secretary held a town hall meeting with the staff to explain why she felt it was so necessary to downsize the mission, particularly the USAID mission. In Liberia, we looked at the impact of the Ebola epidemic, which was raging in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. After Higginbottom returned to Washington, I continued to Guinea, getting a better sense of Ebola and learning much more about the transmission of Ebola. I knew basically that bodily fluids and funeral rites involving washing bodies were a big part of transmission, but I did not know that contact with bats had contributed to the epidemic. Convincing people to change cultural practices and diets is very difficult. I wound up the trip in Guinea-Bissau to attend the presidential inauguration, which was very different from the previous presidential inauguration that I had attended there. This time, there were no naked dancers, and the ceremony took place in the National Stadium instead of the National Assembly.

I returned to Washington with a much better understanding of Ebola, which reached Nigeria just before the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit. The Department of State, Centers for Disease Control, USAID, the African Union, and China all became more and more involved. I personally asked the French government to take the lead in Guinea. The UK agreed to take the lead in Sierra Leone, and the United States took the lead in Liberia. Our allies' efforts were never as large as ours, but the model of isolating people and educating them about funeral practices in particular bore fruit.

As cases emerged in Spain, the UK, and the United States, Americans, including very senior officials, worried about whether any Africans coming to the summit might have Ebola, and the National Security Council became intensely focused on the disease. Special Assistant to the President Gayle Smith convened the initial meetings and included

the new UN special envoy for Ebola; Margaret Chan, the director general of the World Health Organization [WHO], various U.S. government representatives, including Dr. Tom Frieden, the director of the Centers for Disease Control, and me. To her credit Chan said that the U.S. military needed to be involved because it was the only organization in the world that had the logistics capacity to deal with the Ebola crisis. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and I co-chaired a meeting with senior officials from Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone to discuss Ebola. We really pressed Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and his minister of health to take this very seriously because if Ebola spread in Nigeria with its much larger population and densely populated cities, it would be a disaster that we probably would not be able to get under control quickly. They took our coaching very seriously, containing the epidemic. While it took another two months for the U.S. government to reach Chan's conclusion, the Ebola discussions on the margins of the U.S. Africa Leaders Summit were invaluable, as Ebola spread to Mali and Senegal. Those discussions intensified at the UN General Assembly in September.

Chan was absolutely right about the importance of logistics. While our troops arrived in Liberia as the epidemic was waning, their logistical capacity was critical. It was a huge operation and a great success, but there were days when I felt that instead of being principal deputy assistant secretary for African affairs, I was the PDAS for Ebola affairs. The disease gave me a greater appreciation of pandemics and the dangers that they pose to every country, including the United States. The experience led to the development of the Global Health Security Agenda, which was one positive outcome.

Q: How was the entire U.S. approach and the deployment led? Was it led by committee or was there an Ebola czar?

JACKSON: I clearly did not have the time. First, we turned to John Hoover, our ambassador-designate to Sierra Leone to lead the effort; then Nancy Powell, who had been ambassador to India, Ghana, Togo, Pakistan, and Nepal, and who had worked on avian influenza, took over, supported by Ambassador Steve Browning and Ambassador Bisa Williams, the DAS responsible for West Africa.

Q: Do you think this overall effort had staying power and was sustainable? In other words, are all of these countries now much smarter about Ebola and have something established to continue to prevent it?

JACKSON: They are definitely smarter about it; yet Ebola persists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Even with all of the lessons that have been learned, security issues still loom large and impact epidemic control. We must also remember that many of the health professionals in Liberia, Guinea, and in Sierra Leone died from Ebola. The health infrastructure of those countries was absolutely devastated. Thus, rebuilding their health systems, including hiring and training new personnel, has been essential.

Q: Now, at the same time, the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit was proceeding. Who was

invited?

JACKSON: Most African heads of state were invited, with the exception of Sudan and Zimbabwe. The King of Morocco chose not to attend for personal reasons, but his minister for external affairs and cooperation came. Algeria did not send anyone, and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf decided to remain in Liberia because of the Ebola outbreak, sending her vice president. Almost all African countries were represented by their heads of state, and President Obama personally chaired the three plenary sessions. I renewed my acquaintances with the presidents of Cameroon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, and Senegal. I met the presidents of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan, attending bilateral meetings with several of them.

We hosted the 2014 Young African Leaders Initiative [YALI] Summit almost immediately after the Leaders Summit, and President Obama and Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield were very involved in that. The two summits prompted President Obama to plan one final trip to Africa as president. He had been to Egypt and Ghana during his first six months in office; then, he went to Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania. The post-summit itinerary was South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia; so after the summit, we began to plan initiatives that might be announced during that trip.

The September 2014 UN General Assembly focused a lot of its attention on Africa. An attempted coup occurred in Burundi when President Nkurunziza made it plain that he was going to seek a third term in spite of the Arusha Accords that precluded him from doing so. After the UNGA, my focus shifted to Nigeria. We were deeply concerned about Boko Haram's activities and developed a plan for countering the terrorists, encouraging the Nigerian government to take a more active role. We also were concerned about whether the 2015 elections in Nigeria would be free and fair; so we began working with the U.S. Institute for Peace [USIP] to bring Nigerian governors and election commissioners to the United States for training. Linda Thomas-Greenfield decided that I should oversee a Nigeria Policy and Operations Group [NPOG], taking the Nigeria Desk from two people to almost twenty people. We asked Steve Schwartz, the director of West African affairs, to lead NPOG and asked Brian Neubert, who had been Under Secretary Sherman's special assistant for Africa, to be the deputy director with his extensive interagency contacts and experience. NPOG developed strategies for countering Boko Haram and ensuring transparent elections. In October, Brian and I made a trip to Nigeria. I also went to Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana on that trip, pressing Malian President Keita to promote reconciliation and renewing acquaintances in Côte d'Ivoire.

We coordinated our Nigeria strategy with the British and French governments, and we appointed retired Ambassador Dan Mozena to be our Boko Haram coordinator. Dan built a team of Nigerian, Cameroonian, Chadian, Nigerian, British, and French officials to create a regional strategy and action plan that expanded upon the U.S. strategy.

Our work on the Nigerian elections continued. At the request of the Africa Bureau,

Secretary Kerry visited Lagos just before the election, and he co-signed an op-ed with his British counterpart stressing the importance of those elections. Ultimately, we witnessed very successful elections that saw President Buhari return to power after approximately twenty years in the least violent elections in Nigeria's recent history. Afterward, we wound down the NPOG, reincorporating a group of six into the Office of West African Affairs.

In April 2015, I made my last trip to Africa as PDAS, going to Malawi to meet President Peter Mutarika and meeting with management officers in Durban, South Africa, while also examining anti-poaching efforts, food security, and President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR] activities in both countries. The day that I returned to the U.S., I essentially went straight from Dulles Airport to the White House for President Obama's meeting with the presidents of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone about Ebola recovery efforts.

Although President Obama had approved my serving as his ambassador to Ghana in June 2014, I was only finally nominated in late July 2015 both because the White House took an exceedingly long time to vet me and because Ghana took months to grant agreement.

Q: Before we go on to that, the U.S. media does not cover the multi-country alliances of the willing combating Boko Haram very well; yet Boko Haram has killed more people than ISIS has. It's not entirely clear how well we are doing or even the criteria that we use to measure or evaluate our success.

JACKSON: In 2014, Boko Haram controlled an area the size of France. Under President Buhari's leadership in Nigeria, with international actors doing a lot, Boko Haram was pushed back to just the Sambisa Forest. The Chadian armed forces were deeply engaged; Cameroonian armed forces were active; and Nigeria's armed forces joined the effort. Nonetheless, Boko Haram is still a threat not only in Nigeria but to the other three countries. However, a bigger issue has been the emergence of ISIS West Africa, which initially split off from Boko Haram for ideological reasons. ISIS West Africa is much more lethal and more disciplined than Boko Haram, which has regained territory since 2015, while ISIS West Africa has established its own territory. This is due in part to Nigeria's waning efforts. Chad and Cameroon are doing a much better job of keeping Boko Haram and ISIS out of their territory thanks to the aerial reconnaissance and surveillance that the United States provides from the air base in Garoua, Cameroon. I hope that President Buhari will beef up efforts, but the last time that I testified about Boko Haram before the House Foreign Affairs Committee [HFAC] and Senate Foreign Relations Committee [SFRC], I sounded a cautionary tone. Congresswoman Bass, who at that time was the ranking member of the HFACs Africa Subcommittee organized some informal briefings for invited members of Congress and interested people at which I spoke. She, other members of Congress, and people involved in the Save Our Girls [the Chibok girls] organizations continue to keep Boko Haram in the public spotlight, but it's true that Western media is not paying much attention to Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa these days, except when U.S. soldiers get killed as they did in Niger.

Q: As a result of the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, were there any measurable gains in any particular areas for African development, commerce, and so on?

JACKSON: Coming out of the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, the African Centers for Disease Control were established, and both Power Africa and Trade Africa were reinforced. Power Africa's initial goal was to create thirty thousand megawatts of new generation capacity in Africa and sixty million new connections. Millennium Challenge Compact proposals in Ghana, Malawi, and Tanzania all centered on expanding electricity. Trade Africa was designed to increase export capacity, helping African countries to take greater advantage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act [AGOA]. President Obama also announced the Security Governance Initiative [SGI] and the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Program [APRRP]. The Young African Leaders Initiative [YALI] was already underway, but it expanded with the four regional training centers in Dakar, Senegal; Accra, Ghana; Nairobi, Kenya; and Johannesburg, South Africa, conducting training in addition to what's provided here in the United States for the Mandela Washington Fellows. Thus, the summit provided momentum for all of these activities and served as a launching pad for the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Nairobi, which President Obama attended.

Q: Were you concerned about China's growing influence in Africa?

JACKSON: Yes and no. Many people believe that we are in direct competition with China, but I don't see it that way. The goods that China is selling in Africa are not goods that the United States produces. Moreover, the kinds of infrastructure projects that China is involved in are not infrastructure projects that American companies would be involved in. If we wanted to finance or invest in those infrastructure projects, we would do it through the World Bank or the African Development Bank. We are and should be concerned about China's mercantilist approach and about the debt load that it is placing on African countries that are just now realizing the benefits of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries [HIPC] Initiative. China's loans and its exploitation of minerals and other natural resources have had a very negative effect on some African countries. China imports lots of endangered tropical hardwoods; China continues to import ivory, rhino horns, and pangolin scales, endangering elephant, rhino, and pangolin populations across sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, China's record is negative on many fronts; yet we have been able to cooperate with China on some environmental and health issues. It is a mixed picture, but I prefer to look at our competition on a case-by-case basis and make it clear to Americans and others that we are not competing for the same kinds of projects or resources. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross has a great way of expressing this; he says, "Buy Chinese; buy thrice. Buy American; buy once." I think that really sums up the commercial competition. There is no doubt that China has greatly expanded its exports to Africa, and the number of Chinese citizens in Africa has exploded. However, American companies can compete on a level playing field. When the playing field is tilted because of corruption, Chinese companies have a clear advantage.

Q: As you step back from this kind of macro picture of Africa, where would you put money to help Africa take the next step? What would that be?

JACKSON: I wish that we were investing much more in entrepreneurship. Young Africans have so many ideas and are so innovative. YALI has helped to channel and build on some of that creativity. However, investment in human capital is so necessary and has the potential to create jobs that we are not creating through our assistance programs. When you ask Africans what their priorities are, job creation tops the list and that is what fuels migration out of Africa. However, when one looks at U.S. assistance to Africa, the largest proportion is for health; the second largest proportion is for education; then there is some support for democracy and governance. There is more security assistance when Africans would really like us and the Chinese to be more involved in job creation. The Chinese have had to adapt their model because Africans hate Chinese labor. There is still a lot of Chinese labor and Chinese management in Chinese projects, which Africans resent because they have skilled and unskilled labor. Africans want American companies because American companies tend to have very small expatriate staff due to the costs.

Q: Today is May 7, 2019. We are continuing our interview with Ambassador Robert Jackson as he concludes as the principal deputy assistant secretary [PDAS] in the Bureau of African Affairs. How did becoming ambassador to Ghana actually come about?

JACKSON: It took a long time. I was informed in June 2014 that President Obama had selected me to be ambassador to Ghana. For whatever reason, the clearance process, even though I had been through it under the same administration, took much longer the second time. It was only in April 2015 that agrément was sought. That also took a long time because the United States had refused agrément to a Ghanaian nominee for ambassador to the United States. Thus, the Ghanaians were in no hurry to approve my nomination, but they finally did. I was nominated in July, and my hearing finally occurred on October 1, 2015. Once I had my hearing, things went very quickly. I was confirmed within three weeks. I agreed to stay on as PDAS until the end of November and then take some leave and packed up the house. My wife and I then made a road trip to see friends and family in the southern United States. When we got back to Washington, we got the cats, got on a plane, and flew off to Ghana.

We arrived in Ghana on Friday, January 15, 2016, barely a week after two Yemeni ex-detainees from Guantanamo had arrived in Ghana; thus, I walked into a media frenzy. The Ghanaian government had not prepared the Ghanaian public or Parliament for the arrival of these ex-detainees. We were very grateful that Ghana had taken them and were confident that they did not pose any security threat, but the press was filled with rumor and speculation. My team had been doing its best to tamp things down. My first meeting on Monday morning, which was the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, was to present copies of my letters of credence to Foreign Minister Hanna Tetteh, who asked me to come back that same afternoon to meet with the Catholic Bishops Conference about the ex-detainees; so I was literally off and running before I had even been to the embassy or

met most of my staff.

That was an unusual beginning, certainly very different from my launch in Cameroon, but we had good exchanges with religious leaders, both Christian and Muslim. I persuaded Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the largest church in Ghana—an evangelical church called Action Chapel—who is married to an American citizen to talk with other religious leaders about these two Yemenis and the process that the United States had used to determine that they were not a security threat. Ghana conducted its own vetting, having Ambassador and retired General Joseph Smith meet to interview them.

Q: Let me ask you to explain why it was important for you to meet early with the religious leaders.

JACKSON: The church wields enormous influence in Ghana, and the religious leaders were leading the charge, alleging that these two ex-detainees would make Ghana a target for terrorism and might lead a jihad in Ghana. Therefore, convincing religious leaders as well as other opinion leaders and politicians that the ex-detainees did not pose a threat was absolutely critical to calming the waters and moving the debate onto other issues. Because it was such a hot topic, it required a lot of media engagement. I had to be careful as well because even though I had presented copies of my credentials to the foreign minister, I could not attend meetings where President John Mahama would be present, and I had to limit my media exposure until I presented my credentials to him.

For his part, President Mahama was in no hurry to accept my credentials; so that did not happen for a few weeks. When we finally met, we had a very wide ranging discussion—a public one, which is unlike the practice in most other countries. That was preceded by a very nice ceremony, with drummers, trumpeters, and lots of pomp and circumstance. He and I both spoke knowing that our exchange would be on national television; so we were very careful about what we said. While we both mentioned the ex-detainees, I emphasized other issues in the relationship, such as the importance of our energy compact to move Ghana toward energy independence and greater efficiency. In fact, I emphasized all of our development activities, our military cooperation, and the larger relationship. I declared that it was because the United States saw Ghana as a stable and forward-leaning country that it was natural for Ghana to be one of the fifty-five countries that accepted ex-detainees from Guantanamo. The ceremony calmed the media a bit, but apprehension re-emerged throughout my two and a half years in Ghana. I am proud to say that the Yemenis are both now married; they have children; they have small businesses; and they are well integrated into Ghanaian society. My assertions that they did not pose a security threat to myself or to Ghanaians were on the mark, and I am very glad the story has a happy ending.

Q: Were the initial meetings with the religious leaders valuable for subsequent issues that you had to deal with?

JACKSON: Yes. In fact, Archbishop Duncan Williams and I became good friends. He

hosted a very large farewell dinner for my spouse and me. I remained in contact with key Catholic leaders, and I became good friends with the Anglican Bishop of Accra, who said a mass for my departure. So, while not the circumstances that I would have chosen for my arrival, the situation ended up working out pretty well in terms of initial contacts and relationship building. It also helped to set the stage for many of the other activities that we were involved in throughout my tenure, and the meetings underscored the power of the church in Ghana.

I worked not only with Christian leaders but also with Muslim leaders. About 30 percent of Ghanaians are Muslim. While there are more Muslims in the northern part of the country, unlike many of the countries along the West African coast, the north-south religious divide is less clear; Muslims are well represented in the south, and there are huge Christian churches in the north. St. Theresa's Minor Basilica in Nandom, Upper West Region, was built in the 1930s and is enormous—one of the largest churches in West Africa. Understanding the power of religious leaders, I took an interest in visiting churches and mosques on my trips outside the capital.

Muslim leaders were very receptive to my overtures, especially the national chief Imam, who was ninety-seven years old when we met and who just recently celebrated his hundredth birthday. Virtually blind, he remains very engaged intellectually. He became a real partner in promoting dialogue.

As Ghana prepared for national presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of 2016—at the end of my first year there—I engaged the religious leadership, many of whom were members of the National Peace Council, a uniquely Ghanaian institution that promotes peace and reconciliation and works with youth in particular. I was very pleased that the religious leaders became strong allies in our efforts to promote free, fair, nonviolent elections. One of the concerns that I had heard repeatedly in Washington prior to going to post was that the potential for violent elections was high. Although Ghana does not have a history of violent elections, many opposition supporters believed that the 2012 election had been stolen. Ghana's Supreme Court ruled that President Mahama had won that election fair and square, but that decision came eight months after the election. Much of the rest of my first year was devoted to doing what we could to promote fair and peaceful elections.

Q: I want to go back one second. The National Peace Council is kind of unique in Africa. Could you give another example of that kind of thing?

JACKSON: Let me give an example of the kinds of things that we were doing in the run up to the election because I think they underscore the National Peace Council's activities. They organize meetings with youth from both major political parties to highlight the importance of getting out the vote, but doing so in a way that encourages voter participation and reduces fears about going to the polls and expressing divergent opinions while exercising their democratic rights in the run up to an election or thereafter.

The U.S. mission worked with the National Peace Council, particularly in the northern regions where we believed the potential for violence was higher based on competition between the two parties in those three swing regions. The National Peace Council and USAID organized lots of seminars, inviting other nongovernmental organization partners. The participation of Methodist, Anglican, Evangelical, and Muslim leaders in the National and Regional Peace Councils, as well as other leaders from civil society, was a real catalyst for discussions about how to ensure that Ghana's elections were free and peaceful.

Q: You mentioned that your first year was taken up a fair amount with preparations for elections. Describe for a moment the embassy and its responsibilities.

JACKSON: Embassy Ghana, our fifth largest embassy in sub-Saharan Africa, has over eight hundred employees and between 160 and 200 direct-hire Americans from a wide range of agencies. Eleven agencies were represented, but there were many more international cooperative administrative support service [ICASS] entities. i.e., the administrative mechanism by which the embassy apportions responsibility for various services that are received from the embassy or from USAID, which is also an ICASS provider in many places. We had the Department of Defense, with a large office of security cooperation, and a defense attaché office with an attaché and three assistant attachés. Our defense attaché was a marine. He and other attachés were responsible for supporting twenty-two other embassies in western and Central Africa, with a C-12 aircraft to ferry military and civilian officials, especially ambassadors, to parts of those countries that were not easily accessible. Typically two of the attachés were on the road for part of any week, and the other two would be in Accra or on other military assignments. We had both a bilateral USAID mission and a regional one that covered much of west and part of Central Africa. We had a Centers for Disease Control office that focused on combating malaria, supporting the President's Malaria Initiative, as well as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR]. We had a foreign commercial attaché, a foreign agricultural counselor and attaché, a Millennium Challenge Corporation office to support the energy compact, and we had an interesting mix of agencies working on development and security issues, including a legal attaché from the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], a Naval Criminal Investigative Service [NCIS] office managing force protection, and a drug enforcement agency office. Of course, we had the typical State Department offices and a few regional ones. Our consular operation was very large because a lot of Ghanaians apply for visas each year; in fact, more Ghanaians enter the Diversity Visa Lottery each year than any other nationality. In 2018, twenty thousand Ghanaians received non-immigrant visas. We had robust public affairs, political, economic, and management sections, but we also had the regional environmental office that covered more than twenty countries from Accra. Thus, while my focus was purely on Ghana, there was a lot of regional engagement, and I worked to keep abreast of that, meeting regularly with the USAID regional mission director sharing information with my fellow American ambassadors. The amount of travel in and out of Accra by all of these folks was tremendous. In sum, Mission Accra was a large, active operation with a diverse mission.

Q: With all of the different functions that were going on, did you also have a fair amount of American tourists coming?

JACKSON: Obtaining visas for business and tourist travel to Ghana is time-consuming. Nonetheless, a lot of Americans, particularly African Americans, visit Ghana as tourists because along the Ghanaian coast there are thirty or forty so-called slave castles. Some of them look like medieval castles. Some of them are in ruins. Some of them have been converted into government offices, prisons, and museums. It's quite an interesting mix. The three most famous slave castles are Christianborg Castle in Accra, which was erected by the Danes; Elmina Castle, which was built by the Portuguese; and Cape Coast Castle, which was occupied by the Portuguese, the Swedes, the Dutch, and, finally, the British. These slave castles have historical significance, especially to African Americans, and very good records about exports of slaves from Ghana still exist—just as there are good references about exports of slaves from Cameroon. The U.S. embassy through the Ambassadors Cultural Preservation Fund and other cultural programs has attempted to support the preservation of these castles. We did a lighting project to illuminate Cape Coast castle at night.

Visiting these castles is a very moving experience. You hear the stories and imagine the conditions under which people went through the "door of no return." Several recent American presidents have visited these castles. President Obama's visit in 2009 is one of the most memorable. That visit was also when he talked about the importance of Africans building strong institutions, and he picked Ghana for that trip and that message because it has become a successful democracy with a multi-party system where control of the executive and legislative branches has peacefully changed between political parties multiple times. That happened again as a result of the 2016 election.

In addition to American tourists, we estimated that there were roughly thirteen thousand resident Americans, and approximately half of those were African American, many of whom had lived in Ghana for decades. In fact, some have acquired Ghanaian citizenship; so they are dual citizens. Some have not visited the United States in many years. W.E.B. Dubois is buried very close to the embassy in Accra. He had been invited there by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president. Dubois' house is now a cultural center near the embassy, and the African American Association of Ghana [AAAG] frequently holds functions there.

Q: You had mentioned earlier that a lot of your attention was on the 2016 election, and I don't want to stop you from getting into the details of that, but given how many other U.S. government agencies were there, do other events or other activities by perhaps the DEA or perhaps military-to-military ties, even issues regarding agriculture and development, such as exports meeting U.S. phytosanitary requirements figure?

JACKSON: Indeed, we are working with Ghana to strengthen its agriculture. Ghana's primary source of protein is fish, but fish stocks are declining due to overfishing and

climate change; so USDA had a program to promote chicken. I had occasion to speak at two annual chicken dinners where I, of course, felt obligated to tell chicken jokes. The first year, I opted for "Why did the chicken cross the road?" And every American child knows that the answer was to get to the other side, but this is very cultural. When I told this joke, the Americans in the audience howled, but the Ghanaians were clueless, asking why that was funny. Thus, for the 2017 chicken dinner, I had to up my game on chicken jokes. My wife researched chicken jokes, and the one we settled on was, "Why did the chicken cross the road, roll in the mud, and go back to the other side?" The answer, of course, is because it was a dirty double crosser. That one went over a bit better.

People involved in promoting poultry consumption were serious about their work though because egg consumption is very low, and chicken production had been so seasonal that KFC could not find a steady supply. Today, KFC is able to source all of its chicken in Ghana, as a result of this USDA project. Thus, this fifty million dollar investment in Ghana's egg and poultry industry was a success. The project was actually one of the first things that I highlighted on my first trip out of the capital in April 2016, when I visited Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city and home to Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology [KNUST].

USDA's office in Accra is also helping to sell more American grains to Ghana and West Africa. Wheat and maize are important imports, and we are assisting with phytosanitary requirements for Ghanaian exports to the United States, particularly for mangoes and fresh orange juice. We have offered to assist a major juice producer that's exporting to Europe, but limited air cargo and the company's wish to not use any preservatives in its juices have restricted the potential, which is unfortunate since the company is already one of Ghana's largest employers.

The other major focus of my years in Ghana was our energy compact. Signed in August 2014 at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit [at which time I knew that I was likely going to Ghana as ambassador but couldn't tell anyone], the energy compact had not entered into force. We found that the Electricity Company of Ghana's [ECG's] six thousand employees were actively trying to undermine the compact because part of the compact required that a private company operate the utility, and corruption was rife in the utility. The employees claimed, for example, that the compact required privatization, which it did not, and they claimed that Ghanaians would be subject to the whims of a private company that would raise electricity tariffs, which was untrue because tariffs are set by Ghana's public utilities regulatory commission. The employees also claimed that there would be a loss of efficiency, when the reality was that between 2010 and 2015, Ghana's economy had lost roughly twenty-five billion dollars because of blackouts and brownouts initially because of very low dam levels leading to insufficient hydro-electric production. However, lack of investment and failure to collect payment were major contributing factors. President Mahama's government had launched a number of emergency initiatives to build new power plants and to bring in power barges to address the horrible blackouts, with significant success by the time I arrived.

However, energy remained very expensive, and reliability remained problematic. In 2015, Accra suffered more than fourteen hundred hours of blackouts and brownouts. Against this background, I pressed the government to move ahead with the energy compact. Senior officials from the Millennium Challenge Corporation came to Accra multiple times to meet with ministers and others in the government to keep the compact moving. Finally, in September 2016 after we had issued an ultimatum that either the government move ahead with the compact or we would withdraw some of the funding, the Ghanaian government took the courageous decision to move ahead and to counter some of the rumors and falsehoods surrounding the impact of the energy compact. I said publicly and privately that Ghana's utility would continue to be run by and for the people of Ghana. The compact finally entered into force, but intense public debate and criticism persisted.

I'll come back to the 2016 elections, but in 2017, we had to educate the new leadership about the energy compact and its importance and get them on board. The new vice president and the new ministers of energy and finance became allies. However, the new president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, had doubts about the compact. Every time I met with him, I would bring up the compact and the importance of moving ahead with it. Unfortunately, he became personally involved in negotiations with companies that wanted to run the utility, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the utility itself. Things became very messy, and some of the bidders decided to withdraw because of the president's involvement. Just as I was ending my assignment, we finally secured parliamentary approval for a private Filipino company to operate the utility. After I departed, the Filipino company took control for a while in the face of sabotage by the ECG employees. In 2019, the Ghanaian government cancelled the Filipino company's contract. That resulted in the U.S. withdrawing $190 million, the company withdrawing five hundred million dollars, and the World Bank withdrawing one billion dollars. It was so sad.

Three American ambassadors to Ghana, myself included, had strived to make the compact a model for other African countries, but vested interests blocked us again and again. In 2016 and 2018, I used all of my diplomatic skills to keep the compact on track. We wanted the private company to operate the utility because we felt that this would show other African countries how a private operation could manage the power sector. U.S. taxpayers are still investing over three hundred million dollars in new transmission lines, solar street lighting, new power stations, and other power infrastructure to address the loss of almost 40 percent of the power produced before it ever reached consumers. That is roughly 35 percent more transmission losses than the worldwide average.

Q: Was that mostly because of theft?

JACKSON: No. There was some theft, but the losses stemmed primarily from lack of investment in infrastructure over decades. There were also huge problems with billing and non-payment, with the Ghanaian government being the biggest culprit. There were a lot of problems, but I considered the power compact a real win for our development cooperation and a great demonstration project. I had seen the power of having a private

company operate the utility in Cameroon, which was a pioneer in this area, and I drew on that experience to try to educate people to the realities of how a private company would operate ECG.

Q: Were renewables being developed at the same time?

JACKSON: Ghana is very appropriate for renewables. For years it relied almost exclusively on hydropower from the Akosombo Dam, which was built during the Kennedy administration. Jacqueline Kennedy visited the dam just after she was First Lady. The United States paid for one quarter; the British government paid for one quarter; and the Ghanaian government paid for half of the dam. For years, the dam provided most of Ghana's power and functioned efficiently and successfully. Drought early in this decade had a terrible impact on reliability. Nonetheless, the dam remains a symbol of the partnership between Ghana and the United States in the energy sector, making the energy compact very symbolic.

Q: Okay. You had mentioned the election; so I want to give you a chance to talk about how you organized and deployed people as the election approached.

JACKSON: American taxpayers invested about seven million dollars in Ghana's elections. USAID provided one third of the seven million dollars to the election commission, primarily for public education and for its computer system. In fact, we provided personnel to help with the setup and administration of the computer system. We also sponsored voter education, which Election Commission Chairperson Charlotte Osei and I rolled out in a joint ceremony. USAID also invested in civil society programs, working especially with the Center for Democratic Development, which administers the Afrobarometer, to conduct polls and to field over seven thousand Ghanaian observers to conduct a parallel vote tabulation [PVT]. Finally, as we discussed, we invested in the National Peace Council's activities.

Other international partners, including the British and the UN, were tremendous. British High Commissioner Jon Benjamin and I ended up making some joint statements about the election. UN Resident Coordinator Chris Evans-Klock organized numerous meetings, and UN Secretary General's Special Representative for West Africa Mohamed Ibn Chambas came to Ghana several times to promote peaceful elections. He gave a very powerful speech shortly before the elections about how to have free, fair, and transparent elections.

In late October, roughly six weeks before the election, opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo's house was attacked by thugs from the ruling party. The British high commissioner and I decided to make a joint statement about the importance of a peaceful election, threatening visa sanctions on people who committed electoral violence or electoral fraud. The statement was extremely effective because Ghanaians love to travel to the UK and the U.S. We both received a lot of criticism from the ruling party for the statement, with the ruling party alleging that we had taken sides, which we had not. In

fact, we did not make a judgment about who was responsible for the election violence. Then, we looked at opinion pieces that had been issued by the secretary of state and the British foreign secretary for the Nigerian elections; we redrafted those for Ghana, got them cleared by our respective governments, and published an op-ed just before the elections. It was a full court press.

For the actual election, we sent about fifty election observation teams around the country, coordinating closely with other diplomatic and international observers. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield and I visited polling places around Accra, and the overall observation mission was hugely successful. The International Republican Institute conducted training in the run up to the election, and it joined with the National Democratic Institute, which sent a large delegation headed by former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson. We also had a tremendous control center at the embassy, and we invited people from other embassies to participate in the effort, utilizing the Foreign Affairs Network so that no non-USG employees had access to the embassy computer system.

CDD's seven thousand observers and their parallel vote tabulation gave us a great sense of the results the morning after the polls closed. The PVT predicted that opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo had won the election with 53.4 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, the election commission's computer system was hacked, slowing down its vote tabulation. To her credit, Election Commission Chairperson Osei soldiered on. When we shared the PVT results with her, she told me that she truly did not know who had won and she was not going to make any premature judgments or announcements.

The ruling party started claiming that it had lost control of the Parliament but had retained the presidency; so the British high commissioner and I sought a meeting with President Mahama. The afternoon after the election, Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield, High Commissioner Benjamin and I went to see the president. Instead of meeting with us, he sent his vice president, national security advisor, and minister of interior. When they persisted with their claims, we presented the PVT results and urged that the Election Commission be allowed to do its work. We underscored that the international community was convinced that President Mahama had lost the election and that the ruling party should not encourage the idea that it had won. Thomas-Greenfield, having confidence in me and my ability to manage the situation, went back to Washington after the meeting.

I spoke with President Mahama and with opposition leader Akufo-Addo over the next twenty-four hours, emphasizing the results of the parallel vote tabulation. In fact, Akufo-Addo's party had done its own PVT and was certain it had won a resounding victory with 170 of the 270 seats in Parliament and a comfortable margin of victory in the presidential election. About forty-eight hours after the polls closed, President Mahama called me to say that he was going to concede; then, the election commission announced the results, declaring that Akufo-Addo had won with 53.3 percent of the vote; so the PVT was within one tenth of 1 percent of the final tally, which is amazing. It showed how well

CDD had done its work. In the end, the election was a real model of transparency and peace in spite of all of the fears expressed in Washington, London, Ghanaian cities, and other parts of the world.

My team and I celebrated. Political Chief Tom Lyons, USAID Deputy Mission Director Steve Hendrix, DCM Melina Tabler-Stone, and many others played key roles. I had met Vice President-elect Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia before he was ever elected, but I met with him again to intensify that relationship. We also began to meet with leaders whom we expected to become ministers even before they were formally named in order to educate them about the U.S.-Ghana relationship and bring them up to date. Many of them had served in previous New Patriotic Party [NPP] governments prior to 2009 and had participated in International Visitor Leadership Programs. Utilizing those contacts, we got off to what I thought was a good start, but there were serious issues to address, including things like the status of the ex-detainees; the energy compact; development programs in health, education, and agriculture; trafficking in persons; and Ghana's role in international peacekeeping operations. We were implementing thirty-two U.S. Presidential Initiatives in Ghana; so keeping all of those initiatives moving forward was a major undertaking. USAID managed many but not all of these activities. Making certain that the new Ghanaian administration understood these programs and how we could work together to advance them became the next priority of my tenure as ambassador.

The inauguration occurred in early January 2017—just before President Trump was inaugurated in the United States. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield and Representative Karen Bass led the U.S. delegation to the Ghanaian inauguration, and presidents from many West African countries flew in. Managing the transition in The Gambia was on everyone's mind, and Akufo-Addo wasted no time in achieving consensus on the way ahead, reprising his role as Ghana's foreign minister during Liberia's transition.

Q: We have now covered a couple of very big areas of the U.S.-Ghanaian relations. Were there important military issues between the two countries that you can actually talk about? I imagine there were some that were classified.

JACKSON: The biggest military issue was support for Ghana's international peacekeeping through the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership [APRRP] and the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance [ACOTA] program. The former was designed to provide Ghana with over twenty million dollars in equipment for peacekeeping deployments, complementing the training that we do through the latter and through regular International Military Education and Training [IMET].

Because our military cooperation has expanded enormously over the years, the United States wanted to negotiate a new defense cooperation agreement that covered all of the military exercises and other training that the United States and Ghana conduct. Chargé Melinda Tabler-Stone had presented a draft text to the Ghanaians before I arrived in Ghana, but negotiations were derailed by the ex-detainees and the Ghanaian elections; so

one of the issues on which I educated the Akufo-Addo government was this proposed agreement. Our military cooperation was roughly two decades old and was based upon an exchange of diplomatic notes signed when Jerry Rawlings was president of Ghana, i.e. under a National Democratic Congress [NDC] government. Two subsequent agreements had been signed—one by an NPP government and one by another NDC government. The accord that we proposed was designed to bring together all of the elements of the previous agreements and address the tremendous increase in the size and volume of military cooperation, including Ghana's training of U.S. troops at its Jungle Warfare Center. In fact, as far as I know, Ghana is the only African country that trains U.S. forces outside attendance at military schools.

The first half of 2018 was consumed with selling this agreement to the government and the public. The fierce NDC opposition caught me off guard. After a round of negotiations and some clarifications about taxation and immunity, the Ghanaian government had presented the unsigned agreement to Parliament for approval. Unfortunately, the Ghanaian government had done a poor job of preparing the public for this agreement. Although Parliament approved the agreement by a very narrow margin, the now opposition NDC used the same arguments that have been used to attack Ghana's acceptance of the ex-detainees from Guantanamo, claiming the accord was an attack on Ghana's sovereignty and that Ghana was getting too close to the United States. This was in the context of Ghana having refused to host U.S. Africa Command [AFRICOM] when we were seeking a home of it in 2006–07.

I pointed out that the United States and Ghana were military partners and that this agreement was similar to fourteen other such agreements that we had with other African countries. We insisted that it did not impinge on Ghana's sovereignty and that the tax, duty, and entry and exit provisions in the agreement were similar to agreements that we had with NATO and major non-NATO allies, including Japan, South Korea, Morocco, and Thailand. The Ghanaian government feared that embassy statements could make matters worse, but as the media frenzy continued, Washington and I grew so concerned that I scheduled a lunch with Vice President Bawumia to discuss public messaging by both governments. I shared a draft press release with him that could be issued by either or both governments, and he arranged for me to meet President Akufo-Addo that same afternoon. After the president reviewed the text, he said that he did not want to issue a press release but had no objection if I did. The draft press release laid out the facts of the agreement and attacked the inaccuracies that the opposition had presented. NDC members told me that their effort was not anti-American and that they were attacking the NPP government's handling of the accord, but I was not convinced because the agreement was clearly in Ghana's interest. However, political opportunity again won out over national interest. The NDC continued to organize public demonstrations, and a week after our embassy press release, which had been crafted by my superb public affairs team in cooperation with the National Security Council, State Department, Defense Department, and Africa Command, President Akufo-Addo finally went on national radio and television to defend the accord. After that, the media frenzy began to die down, but it was another month before the agreement was actually signed by the defense minister and

myself. We had our agreement.

My first year was occupied by the election; all three years were occupied by the energy compact; and my third year was really occupied by the Defense Cooperation Agreement. You would not think it would be hard to give away five hundred million dollars for energy infrastructure or more than twenty million dollars in military equipment and training, but it was extremely difficult. One just never knows how foreign audiences are going to react. Various Ghanaian opinion leaders confided that Ghanaians tended to look at international agreements with skepticism, based upon their negative experience with the agreements that had been signed with the Portuguese and the British during the slave trading days when Europeans came to "the Gold Coast," negotiated agreements with the local chiefs, but never left or did not leave for decades or centuries. Thus, Ghanaians saw these agreements in much the same way—no matter what my team and I said or did. We got both agreements signed, but part of the energy compact collapsed, and one of my least diplomatic moments was actually yelling at senior NDC officials about their opposition to the Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Our security cooperation did grow through the Security Governance Initiative, which was the first accord I signed after my arrival and presentation of credentials in February 2016. That agreement addressed four areas of cooperation: maritime security, border security, cyber security, and what we called "rule of law" as an overarching area. Some of those are self-explanatory, but I think I should explain that a fundamental objective of SGI was to enhance cooperation between the various Ghanaian agencies responsible for border security and maritime security. We made significant progress; in fact, I would say that a very small investment of just a few million dollars allowed us to train and equip Ghana's investigative agencies to improve their ability to detect cybercrimes. I was told that in 2018, that investment was the largest such USG investment anywhere in the world, and roughly two to three million dollars brought two FBI agent trainers to Ghana full time for six-month stints to conduct training and participate in joint investigations.

By the time I left in July 2018, U.S. and Ghanaian investigators had identified the perpetrators of more than a hundred million dollars in cybercrime, particularly tax fraud, by people based in Ghana, Nigeria, and the United States. The effort led to several arrests and prosecutions. Thus, this modest investment yielded a huge success in combating cybercrime in a sub-Saharan African country that has a pretty high internet penetration rate and fast Internet. I am very proud of that investment. The other SGI success was under the rule of law rubric where we developed a case tracking system for the police, Ministry of Justice, judiciary, and prison service. In 2018, Ghana was still relying on paper files for all of its police and court records; so we agreed—initially using SGI funds and then supplementing those with USAID democracy and governance funds—to allow police, prosecutors, and judges to input information and follow cases through the judicial and prison systems. The idea was to allow officials to track people who were in detention, who had been sentenced, and who were serving time in prison. The contract had been awarded by the time I left, embraced by the attorney general and chief justice, laying the groundwork to vastly improve the administration of justice in Ghana.

I want to highlight another area where I think our development assistance was really critical, on which I spent a lot of time building awareness during my tenure. Prior to my arrival, USAID had tested second and fourth graders' reading comprehension, and they discovered that less than 10 percent were able to read with comprehension at grade level, which was shocking. This was in spite of Ghana's exceeding its Millennium Development Goals in getting children into school. While the children were in school, they were not learning. Effectively, these children were parked in the schools, but education was not occurring. Therefore, USAID developed an ambitious program to provide phonics training and appropriate reading materials in eleven languages—ten indigenous languages plus English. In the initial phase, USAID distributed more than five million books in the eleven languages to public primary schools in every region of the country, but not necessarily every school district. USAID trained more than thirty thousand teachers. In July 2018 we got the initial results from second graders who had gone through the phonics program; they showed that more than 50 percent were reading with comprehension at grade level either in their indigenous language, English, or both, which is an astronomical increase and tremendous success.

In the health area, I supported the President's Malaria Initiative by participating in the distribution of bed nets for children to take home from their public primary schools. Through these and other activities, the United States brought the incidence of malaria in children and pregnant women way down. Annual deaths from malaria fell to less than a thousand, representing a significant improvement over prior years. Therefore, in security, governance, education, health, agriculture, and energy, significant U.S. investments paid real dividends and showed great results.

One area where progress lagged was in combating trafficking in persons. Approximately a hundred thousand Ghanaians have been trafficked—mostly children working in the fishing industry. Poor parents sell their children for as little as fifty dollars, believing that the children will obtain an education and learn a trade. The reality is that the children are often mistreated and forced to dive into frigid waters to untangle nets, sometimes drowning when they get tangled up themselves. Ghanaians do not like to talk about this, and I suspect it is because of the role they played in the slave trade. In any case, throughout my tenure I promoted our Child Protection Compact, pressed for a rehabilitation center to be renovated and reopened, and highlighted modern-day slavery in my speeches.

Q: Remarkable. At the same time, you have talked about how you needed to use your public affairs office in promoting and explaining U.S. views. Were there other things you used the social media footprint for?

JACKSON: First, I did not tweet, but people tweeted for me, and we did a lot of postings on Facebook, especially about my travels around the country and other activities that the embassy was involved in. We promoted the Young African Leaders Initiative [YALI] that brought young Africans from across the continent to the United States for six or more

weeks of leadership training in entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, or public service. We worked very closely with USAID on the administration of one of the four YALI regional leadership centers, i.e. the one that was in Accra for English speakers from across Western and Central Africa. By the time I left, more than four thousand young Africans had graduated from the Regional Leadership Center, and roughly eighty Ghanaians had come to the United States as Mandela Washington Fellows under YALI.

Having highlighted our work at the primary, tertiary, and post-tertiary levels in education, I should also mention the professional training we were providing. Peace Corps was filling some gaps by teaching math, science, and English in public high schools, working with teacher training colleges, and assisting the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of teaching around the country. We had a Peace Corps program to work in schools for the deaf in Ghana. That was very successful and very appreciated. We had volunteers who were themselves hearing impaired working in those schools. The Peace Corps also worked in health and agriculture; so Ghana, which was the first Peace Corps country, still has approximately 150 Peace Corps volunteers working in roughly equal numbers in health, education, and agriculture.

The U.S. investments in education were at multiple levels. We were not only concentrating on phonics but also doing STEM. We had programs for young women in STEM. When the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency visited Ghana in 2016, she met with young women who were interested in science, technology, and math. Through our Regional Environmental Office, we worked to preserve mangroves and pangolins, clean beaches, and educate people about the importance of recycling plastic.

Ghana has not had any terrorist attacks; so I feel that our partnership with the security forces, both military and police, has borne fruit. Of course, you cannot prove a negative, but many of the surrounding countries have been victims of terrorist attacks. I believe that part of the explanation lies in President Kwame Nkrumah's policy requiring high school students to go to boarding school outside their home regions. I would meet leaders from business and civil society who had gone to boarding school together. In those days, they were required to conceal their regional and ethnic origins; they were all known simply as numbers—as one might imagine in a prison. You might be number seven, and to this day, leaders still remember their numbers. The benefit of this initiative, which continues to some extent today, is that the elite is much more aware of the diversity of the country and comfortable with diversity. I really feel that this policy has contributed to Ghana being a united country that values its diverse languages and religions.

To our knowledge, only a dozen Ghanaians have joined ISIS over the years, which is extremely few by West African standards and testifies to Ghana's success in limiting radicalization. It is also interesting that the Ghanaians who did join ISIS nearly all hailed from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. They were from middle class or upper class families who became self-radicalized because of what the university describes as a lack of a religious education. The university has now taken steps to ensure that imams and Christian leaders are more present at the university to

guide and mentor young people.

Ghana has a lot going for it. Its economic growth has been in the high single digits, which is impressive and places Ghana in the top ten fastest growing economies in the world. Oil has fueled much of that growth, and American companies have played a central role. Kosmos Energy was the first to find oil, and it remains a major stakeholder today along with Anadarko [Anadarko Petroleum]. Hess explored Ghana for a number of years, and in 2018, Exxon Mobil signed an exploration agreement to conduct offshore exploration at more than eight thousand feet below sea level. In fact, all of Ghana's discovered oil resources are offshore, usually in very deep water. These discoveries have made Ghana a net oil exporter and have allowed Ghana to create a sovereign wealth fund, setting aside assets for future generations.

Ghana continues to have a vibrant cocoa industry and is the world's second largest cocoa producer—after neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. American companies, like Cargill, are very involved in the cocoa industry. In keeping with Ghana's colonial name, the Gold Coast, gold is the other leading export. American company Newmont Mining is one of the leading investors in Ghana's gold mines.

These companies are members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Ghana. Other American investors range from long-standing franchises, such as KFC, Hertz, and Avis, to more recent market entrants like Pizza Hut, Burger King, Counter Burger, Steak Escape, Pinkberry, and Harley Davidson. Huge multinationals like Dow DuPont, Caterpillar, and Marriott give American companies a voice to press for improving the investment climate, which President Akufu-Addo has publicly stated is a high priority. I worked with American investors and potential investors on trade deals and investments and attempted to assist when problems arose. For example, we helped General Electric with its investments in the oil services and power sectors. We also helped an American company that is building middle-class housing. Through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Export-Import Bank, we have provided home loans to Ghanaians and have also built some of the finest hospitals in Ghana. Thus, the United States has been very active on the commercial front. On average, I made approximately one speech a week and often those speeches were in the context of the business environment, opening a new business or celebrating with the American Chamber of Commerce in Ghana. In July 2018, my final month in Ghana, we hosted Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross for four days, which is a long time for a cabinet member to visit anywhere.

He was there for our Fourth of July and made gracious remarks at our ceremony, alongside myself and Ghana's minister of lands and natural resources. The vice president of Ghana and a number of other Ghanaian ministers were present for my last national day as an ambassador. Earlier that day, Secretary Ross and Ghana's minister of finance launched Prudential's largest investment in Africa, a new insurance company. He also signed a memorandum of understanding on investment and discussed with his Ghanaian counterpart in great depth various sectors that the Ghanaian government hoped to expand. He commented on how American companies might help, and he cautioned that he did not

think some areas were ripe for investment and might be lower priorities.

USAID worked with U.S. Customs on facilitating the movement of goods through Ghana's ports and across the land borders. USAID also studied Ghanaian exports, identifying more than a dozen greater export potential. USAID then invested in vocational training for workers in Ghana's textile industry, resulting in five hundred workers being trained to work in a Ghanaian-American joint venture company called Dignity-DTRT [Do the Right Thing], which partnered with SanMar. As a result, Ghana's textile exports have grown from about five million dollars a year, a few years ago, to more than twenty million dollars a year. Moreover, significant potential for growth remains because Ghana is closer to U.S. markets than textile producers in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, and Southern Africa.

While my engagement on commercial issues was episodic, it was a regular theme of my tenure in Ghana. In fact, that commercial relationship complements all of the other things that we were doing in terms of governance.

Q: Given your experience in Africa, can Ghana export its relative success to other countries? And if so, how?

JACKSON: Ghanaians have successfully exported their security model, with more than a third of the armed forces deployed in international peacekeeping operations either under the aegis of the United Nations or the African Union. Ghana has also shown how to have free, fair, transparent, and peaceful elections very successfully. It is a good model for other African countries in many ways. However, I would like to see Ghana do more to improve the business environment and combat corruption and trafficking.

President Akufo-Addo has said that he is committed to scoring higher on the World Bank's Doing Business Indicators. Unfortunately, Ghana has been moving in the wrong direction in spite of the public rhetoric. Ghana has not done as much as it needs to combat corruption. President Akufo-Addo named a special prosecutor to look into corruption cases, selecting a former NDC attorney general to lead that effort and to show that he was not making this a partisan undertaking, but rampant corruption is holding Ghana back. You see it in public sector contracts—way too many of which remain single-source contracts. Lack of open bidding is a real problem. Corruption may have declined during the Akufo-Addo administration, but there is still a lot of political interference, and there are more single-source contracts than are appropriate or necessary. Giving the private sector the ability to really develop the economy and draw on the entrepreneurial spirit of the Ghanaian people, who have developed a huge informal sector and are very entrepreneurial, would allow Ghanaians to develop their economy more rapidly. Government remains too important, not only governing but operating the economy. There are many state-owned enterprises, which are extremely inefficient and not just in the energy sector. Ghanaians are not comfortable with privatization, but having private companies operate the state-owned ones would ensure that public sector enterprises are more accountable and make a profit rather than operate at a loss.

A tremendous amount of housing is owned by the government and whether people pay rent or get that for free is something that needs to be examined carefully. Ghana could be a real model and could show how private sector development could take off in West Africa and Africa more broadly. Ghana has made an effort to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to increase trade with its neighbors, but all of its immediate neighbors are francophone countries who have a common currency. They are also members of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], where the drive for a larger common West African currency gets lip service. However, the reality is much slower.

Movement across borders, while free in theory, is much more complicated in practice. Although Ghana complains bitterly about deportations by the United States of the seven thousand Ghanaians facing deportation from our country, a few hundred are actually deported each year. For its part, Ghana also deports people, primarily other West Africans. It's the pot calling the kettle black.

Q: I can certainly understand that. Corruption will retard growth, no matter how good the growth is. It creates rent-seeking opportunities and problems with how a market economy works. Looking back on the period that you spent there, and once again I asked you this question about Cameroon, if you were again able to really invest in one particular thing to take the next step, what would that be?

JACKSON: In addition to the investments that we're making, we could encourage the Ghanaian government to invest more in infrastructure. I would do that through a third Millennium Challenge Compact. Our first compact focused on infrastructure and agriculture. Our second compact focused on energy. A third compact could construct a highway from Lagos all the way to Dakar or even to Casablanca. That would tremendously improve the movement of people and goods across West Africa. Lack of road infrastructure is one of the things that's holding Ghana back, with so much of the growth concentrated in and around Accra, which already has a population of probably five to seven million people—approximately one sixth to one quarter of Ghana's entire population, which is growing by eight hundred thousand people per year.

That very high growth is symptomatic of the population challenge across West Africa. The unregulated growth leads to tremendous traffic jams, great inefficiencies, and lost productivity. Improving the highway all along the Ghanaian coast would allow for more growth outside Accra. Similarly, you need to finish the highway from Accra to Kumasi and build a highway system that better connects different parts of the country. The road network is certainly better than Cameroon's but not great. It is not anywhere near as good as Nigeria's or Côte d'Ivoire's. So, first, I would invest in infrastructure.

I would also love to see more international interest in population growth. Adding eight hundred thousand people to the Ghanaian population every year is not sustainable. There are not going to be enough jobs for these people. Job creation is clearly lagging even when you look at the success of the informal sector and the entrepreneurial spirit that has

been and can be unleashed in Ghana. Those would be my two priorities, and the United States can be a catalyst for both. Even if we do not provide the primary investment for either one. These are our challenges for Ghana and for West Africa. We could encourage Ghana and other international partners to focus more on these issues, and I think West Africa would realize substantial benefits.

There is one other success story that I want to highlight because I am very proud of the job creation that resulted. I mentioned that Ghana has great Internet connectivity, and there are literally more cell phones than people in Ghana. Many people have two cell phones—one with each major network. Interoperability and change of provider are theoretical options, but practically they are not always available. Prior to moving to Ghana, I met with the leadership from Uber at a conference organized by the Business Council for International Understanding to allow me to meet people who are doing business in Ghana or interested in doing business there. During my first few months, Uber came to Ghana to do more market analysis. At that time Uber was already operating in Nigeria and South Africa, but Uber looked at the Ghanaian market, saw the Internet penetration, saw the traffic situation, and looked at its business model for other countries. With a lot of help from my embassy and myself, Uber secured meetings with the minister of transport and the mayor of Accra. It introduced a unique model in which Uber actually bought vehicles for drivers to pay off as they drove. At that time, Uber was not doing that in other countries. Anyway, in June 2016 Uber launched to great fanfare at a ceremony I was very proud to attend with the minister. Two years later, Uber had more than four thousand drivers in Ghana, and they found this a very lucrative job. Unlike the taxi fleet that often consisted of second-hand, un-air conditioned vehicles, Uber had new air conditioned vehicles, and people wanted to ride in them. Taxi drivers subscribed to the platform; so rather than be opponents, they bought into it. I consider it one of my great successes to have assisted in the creation of some four thousand jobs and to help an American company expand its network. There we are.

In July 2108, Babs and I left Ghana, went into the Retirement Seminar and Transition Course, which are fantastic, moved into our new home in Vienna, Virginia, and began our next chapter, traveling, working on genealogy, teaching and mentoring at the Foreign Service Institute, and enjoying the freedom one has when you do not have to go to work every day.

End of interview