

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

AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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[Note: This is an interview in progress. Additional portions will be added as they are edited.]

Q: Today is the 8th of August, 2013. This is an interview with Kenneth Michael Quinn.

MY BRONX IRISH CATHOLIC ROOTS

Q: When and where were you born?

QUINN: I was born in New York City on May 26th, 1942, at Jewish Memorial Hospital in Manhattan; however my parents, George K. Quinn and Marie T. Quinn, lived in the Bronx. I am the oldest of three children. I have two sisters, Patricia Marie born in New York City in 1949, and Kathryn Mary, who was born in Bloomington, Illinois in 1954.

My Mom and Dad were both Irish, so I always considered myself 100% Irish. I recently did a DNA analysis with Ancestry.com, and was a little surprised that it came back as my being 85% Irish, 12% British, 2% Scandinavian and 1% split between West Asian and Pacific Islander.

Q: What do you know about where they came from?

QUINN: On my Dad's side, they were kind of red-haired Irish, so maybe there was a little Scots-Irish in their DNA, which may account for my British ancestry. His mother and father were both born in America and I think even his grandparents were born here. His great grandparents were said to be from Scotland.

Q: In the New York area?

QUINN: In New York City. On both sides of my family they were all from New York City. I think my Dad's father, Charles Francis Quinn, had reached a middle class level. He was involved in the sport of crew, and I have some rowing medals that he won at the New York Athletic Club. His family was in business.

Q: What kind of business were they in?

QUINN: I am not sure. He may have been in the insurance business. Someone in my Dad's family, perhaps on his mother's side, had a business about selling lighting fixtures.

Q: How about your father, what was his profession?

QUINN: My father graduated from high school in the Bronx and then worked in insurance and then later in the retail clothing business. As I remember, he worked for a WT Grant department store and then another retail store named Genung's. He was working in the shoe department when I was about five year's old. I remember going with my Mom and him fitting me for shoes. I recall the excitement when he was promoted to the position of Floorwalker, where he went between departments solving problems. This was all in the Bronx where we lived in the immediate post-World War II 1940s. When I was 10-years old, he somehow got a lead about a job so he could manage his own store, something I think he really wanted to do. But, the job was in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He accepted the job and went first to La Crosse. He then came back and in the spring of 1952, packed us all up and we took a taxi to Pennsylvania Station. We got on the Broadway Limited and went overnight to Chicago, and from there we took the Burlington Northern to La Crosse. I got off in a very different world.

Q: What was different?

QUINN: Well, I recall learning to speak with a Swedish inflection along the way. My Dad said we had to say things like, "That's for sure," with a high rising accent, and "Ya" rather than yes, and phrases like that.

Q: What about the background of your mother.

QUINN: My Mom was a black-haired, blue-eyed, probably more French Irish.

Her father's name was Michael Farrell and he was born in Portumna, County Galway Ireland in 1885. He arrived in America in April 1905 on the ship Oceania having sailed from Queenstown. Her mom, my grandmother, Mary Davin, was born in America. They married and he then became a New York City policeman. He died during the influenza epidemic of 1918 when my mother was only two years old.

My parents were both left without a father figure in the home. My father's father also died at an early age in 1925, when my Dad was just 11. It was very traumatic for my Dad when it happened. I remember him talking about waking his father at home laid out in the bed. My Mom's mother married again. She married another New York City policeman named John "Jack" Donahue. I remember him as my "Grandpa Jack." So I have some New York City police "blue blood" in my veins.

Q: Did she graduate from high school?

QUINN: She did. Both of my parents graduated from high school. And she went one year to college.

Q: Where did she go?

QUINN: I am not sure. It may have been Mary Mount or something like that. My Dad went to Evander Childs High School, which is up near White Plains Avenue and Gun Hill Road, where we lived right before leaving for Wisconsin.

Q: How old were you when you went to La Crosse?

QUINN: Ten. I was in fourth grade.

KENNY FROM THE BLOCK

Q: So let's talk a little bit about what you remember about New York and the Bronx?

QUINN: I have very intense memories of the Bronx.

Q: Well, let's talk about it. I assume you lived in an apartment --

QUINN: No, we lived in a single-family house. The address was 2965 Decatur Avenue. We were on the ground floor and there were boarders upstairs. There was a young man who was in law school at Fordham named Johnny Conroy. My Dad's sister Eileen and her husband Joe Gerz lived in one of the other rooms. There was a third room with another boarder, but I don't remember the name. Our family rented the bottom floor with two bedrooms and a living room and kitchen. I have very, very vivid memories. I can still tell you the names of all the kids on the block and the location of many of the stores

Q: Well, what sort of a neighborhood was it?

QUINN: It was a very diverse neighborhood, almost like out of a movie about immediate post-war New York. Kids were playing on the sidewalks and big events were the arrival of the Good Humor all white ice cream truck. The driver, all dressed in white, with a change dispenser on his belt would dispense ice cream bars or popsicles from the ice cold compartment on the back of his truck. Other interesting events that attracted kids to watch included the coal truck that would connect a chute to a basement window of our house and send in a load of coal; and the ice truck, from which deliverymen would carry large blocks into your home to be placed in your ice box, if you did not yet have a refrigerator. Horse drawn vegetable carts were another memorable draw, as were wandering itinerant knife and scissor sharpeners. They would stand in the court yard chanting loudly that they were there, so house wives would bring down utensils to be honed on their stone.

It was ethnically a very mixed neighborhood. There were Irish, Italians, Germans, Jews, Catholics, and Protestants. Everyone seemed to get along. Later I will tell you a

wonderful story of going back there 50 years later in 1999 with my own family, but I don't want to get ahead of things

Q: Well, was the neighborhood a safe neighborhood or were there no-go areas or –

QUINN: No. It was safe. There were legends about tough kids on other blocks. The street you lived on was kind of your identity. This part of my biography might be called “Kenny from the Block.” We were from Decatur Avenue. We believed that if we ran into kids from Marion Avenue, they might be toughs whom we had to fight. But we also heard that there were other kids from Decatur Avenue down near 198th Street, who would back us up, just because we had the same street identity. At least, this was the legend. Of course nothing like this ever happened. It was safe. There was no crime. There was no fear of going anywhere. It was a solid, lower middle class, working neighborhood: A true melting pot.

Q: Before we move to school, but what kind of games would you play?

QUINN: Versions of baseball were king, using pink rubber balls that you bought at Sid's Candy Store [the neighborhood “cultural center”] just around the corner on 200th Street. Stickball, which was played in the middle of Decatur Avenue, was huge. It required about four players on a side. If there were only two or three boys, then stoopball was the game of choice. This was played by the “batter” throwing the ball against the sharp edge of the bottom building block of an apartment building, or the edge of one of the steps leading up to the entry way [the stoop] of the porch on a single family house.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: You would use a rubber ball and you would try to bounce it exactly off the pointed edge of the building's bottom block, so it would sail far into the air. The other boys were out there playing fielder trying to catch it in the air or on the ground, in which case you were out. But, if you could aim it just right, it could fly over their heads. That would be a home run. So stoopball, stickball, and then we would play another baseball linked game called “rundown.” This was played on a little dirt strip along the front of my house. It approximated a baseball runner caught between two bases. There are two boys who have the ball throwing it back and forth. The one other kid—the runner- would be in the middle. You would throw the ball back and forth trying to tag him out before he got safely to the other base.

Hide and seek was huge. Ring-a-levio was big.

Q: Ring-a-levio I don't know that.

QUINN: Ring-a-levio is like Capture the Flag. There were two teams. You went out to capture people from the other team. You did this by putting your arms around them and saying, “Ring-a-levio, Ring-a-levio, Ring-a-levio.” Or you said “Ring-a-levio one, two, three.” And then you took them to your jail.

Q: So they were out of the game?

QUINN: Yes, they were out of the game, unless someone from their team could sneak into the jail and call “Alley, Alley Outs in free” or something like that. Then they could escape and hide again. If the other team could seize your flag, the game was over. It could go on for a long time until it was dark.

We had another game -- the test of manhood -- which was doing the Commando Course. This was right after World War II, so there was a military flavor to some games. The Commando Course consisted of climbing over fences and up telephone poles and over various obstacles that divided the properties that backed up to each other. There were no alleys between blocks. So the properties from Decatur Avenue backed onto the properties from Marion Avenue. So you would be climbing over this fence and then you would go up over a garage roof and then jump down and crawl under a fence. It ran like that for the entire block. That was the Commando Course. It was the ultimate test!

Q: Were girls part of the game?

QUINN: No. Girls -- well there were a lot of girls, and they had their girls' games, like hopscotch and jump rope and things like that. But there were a few times when you might play with the girls, if there weren't enough boys around. So I remember playing Red Rover: This was two lines of kids facing each other holding hands to create a fence. Then one side would issue a challenge by saying “Red Rover, Red Rover, let Kenny come over.” And then I would run as fast as I could and try to break through their linked hands. If you succeeded, you brought one of their team back to your side. But if they held, then you had to become part of their team. Some of the older girls were bigger and stronger and it could be hard to break through their arms.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: There was another game called soap-box racing or wagon racing. 200th Street was the main street going up the hill from Webster Avenue to the Grand Concourse. So you could take your little red wagon or home-made soap box cart up to Marion Avenue and then race them down the hill on the sidewalk of 200th Street, turning onto Decatur Avenue at high speed at the finish. It was terrific fun.

Q: How about the city?

FROM 103RD AND BROADWAY TO SUTTON PLACE

QUINN: Well, the other place for which I have strong memories is 103rd and Broadway on the Upper West Side in Manhattan. My grandmother, Mary Davin/Farrell/Donahue (whom we knew as “Maudie”) lived in an apartment there on the second or third floor with her second husband Jack. Their building was right on the northwest corner. I'd go

with my Mom and sometimes my Dad. We would go to visit. Sometimes we'd stay overnight or longer. I was pretty small then, but I can still show you exactly where the building is located. I remember looking out the window onto Broadway and watching the streetcars go by. That had to be around 1945 or 1946. My Dad would take me over to Riverside Park and we would walk around there, watching baseball games and football games. I still remember him buying me an orange drink that came in a cone shaped cardboard container that you could not get anywhere else.

Q: Go ahead.

QUINN: My Aunt Kitty, my grandmother Maudie's sister, whose maiden name was Kathryn Davin, was married a couple of times. Her first husband, Paul Travers, was a physician who died I think in a plane crash. They had lived in a brownstone townhouse on 104th Street near Riverside Drive. She later married a businessman named Sam Lipshie, and they had an apartment on 57th Street between First Avenue and Sutton Place on the East Side. Very, very upscale. Marilyn Monroe had an apartment across the street from her. They had a TV set when nobody had a TV set.

Q: I was going to ask -- my God, that's pretty early.

QUINN: Yes. They had a Du Mont brand TV. It was a huge, colossal piece of furniture. It had a radio built in, and a phonograph.

Q: My Goodness.

QUINN: We'd go there and my Aunt would have all these delicious Schrafft's chocolates and cookies out on the table. She had a maid/ cook and we would sometime have dinner there. She lived in a very, very different world than Broadway and the upper West Side, which was a working class kind of area. So I had a little experience in each of these worlds. Aunt Kitty once took us to The Brass Rail for lunch, one of the very top restaurants in New York at the time.

Q: Is it the Automat?

QUINN: No! Just the opposite! The Automat- Horn & Hardart - was just across the street on Broadway from my grandmother's apartment between 102nd and 103rd streets. I could see it from the front window.

Q: Yeah, they're fun.

QUINN: Yeah!

Q: It was good food too.

QUINN: There was a song about eating there that concluded with, "let's have another piece of pie."

Q: Yeah, yeah.

EARLY INSTINCTS TO EXPLORE: THE BRONX BOTANICAL GARDENS

QUINN: I remember the Edison Theater was also right across Broadway from her apartment. But I was only four or five years old, too little to go out on the street on my own in Manhattan. However, up in the Bronx on Decatur Avenue, when I was six and seven, I used to go wandering off. My mother had certain rules. I wasn't allowed to cross big streets alone, so I couldn't cross 200th Street or Webster Avenue. But, I found a way to get across 200th Street. I would go down to Webster Avenue, which was the next street down from Decatur Avenue. It was a main thoroughfare, where the elevated subway train, known as the EL, was located. And there were stairs going up to the EL station on both sides of 200th street. You could go up on one side and just cross over through the station without paying anything, and walk down the stairs on the other side of 200th Street, so I could get across this main thoroughfare without disobeying my mother.

The Bronx Botanical Gardens was nearby, but it was on the other side of Webster Avenue, which was also a busy street with cars, trolleys and the EL. There were businesses and taverns and grocery stores all along Webster Ave. I wasn't allowed to cross that street either. But just as I could cross over 200th Street by going up to the EL station and crossing over, so too could I go up two blocks to Mosholu Parkway which had a bridge, an overpass that crossed over Webster Ave. So I would go up there, walk along the sidewalk on the overpass over Webster Avenue, and come down on the other side.

There was a nice amateur baseball field there, named for Frankie Frisch aka "The Fordham Flash." Born in the Bronx, Frisch had attended nearby Fordham College and then was a major league player for the New York Giants. He was a local hero, and I remember my Dad telling me about him. Sometime I would stop and watch the game. Or I could continue along another overpass to the other side of the New York Central and New Haven Railroad tracks that ran parallel to Webster Avenue, and which separated the shopping area along Webster Avenue from the Botanical Gardens.

From there, I could walk into the Botanical Gardens and along the Bronx River and go exploring for blocks and blocks, again without ever violating my mother's rules. I would go off, always by myself, wandering around. I remember that there was a swimming hole with a rope on which boys would swing out and drop into the pond.

If I wanted to take a shortcut, rather than going back up to the overpass to get to Webster Avenue, I would cut across the train tracks, walking right over the New York Central and the New Haven Railway. So I often did that. I remember one day, I was in the middle of the tracks, when all of a sudden I heard a horn. I looked up and, there was a train barreling toward me with its bright light and the horn blaring (gasps). I froze! But then, somehow, I jumped off just in time. I still remember to this day how close it was.

Q: Oh yeah.

QUINN: I have really vivid memories of this period when I was seven, eight, nine, and 10 years old living in the Bronx on the "Block" of Decatur Avenue.

Q: What about your friends? Were you aware of the differences? I mean I don't remember as a kid -- I lived in the Los Angeles area -- and going to my Jewish friends' places smelled differently because the cooking was different.

QUINN: Yes.

Q: I mean were you aware of the differences?

QUINN: The first thing when you met a new kid, the first thing you asked him was, "What are you?" Which was meant to ask-- what's your ethnicity? "What are you?" And the answer would be German or Irish or Italian or -- whatever.

Q: What would you say?

QUINN: Irish.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: Irish. I wouldn't say Irish Catholic. I'd just say Irish.

Q: Irish.

QUINN: It was right after World War II. And so there's a little bit of antagonism toward kids who were German. I don't remember World War II, but I knew Germany had been our enemy. But you didn't immediately dislike or fight kids who were German just because of that.

Q: And what about the Italians?

QUINN: My best friend was Italian, Dougie De Matteo. He lived down the street from me in an apartment house on Decatur Avenue. The Antonucci boys, Johnny and Jimmy, also Italian, lived there as well. They were considerably older. I idolized them because they were big and good athletes. They were the best stickball players on the block.

GROWING UP CATHOLIC WITH JEWISH UNCLES

Q: But how important was religion?

QUINN: Extremely. Religion was the center of everything. I went to Saint Philip Neri Catholic Church and School up on the Grand Concourse. All my family was religious. We went to church every Sunday. I learned the catechism at home with my Mother and recall practicing those answers. In third grade I started training to become an altar boy, learning to recite the prayers in Latin with my Mom. So religion was central.

Q: What about the -- I mean did you have Jewish friends?

QUINN: There was one kid who was older, Mark Skopoff. His dad was a dentist. We weren't friendly, but not because he was Jewish, just because he was older and wasn't into sports. He never really joined in any street games with other kids.

Q: No, just --

QUINN: He was a different age and maybe had different interests. He didn't come out and play stickball or things like that. I had Jewish "uncles," relatives of my Uncle Sammy Lipshie who often came to our house. My Uncle Solly Rausch was a particular favorite of mine,

BABE RUTH'S LAST APPEARANCE AT YANKEE STADIUM

My Uncle Sam was the president of a shirt manufacturing company in New York named Salant and Salant. He was apparently a significant business leader because I recall my family looking at his obituary in the paper with his photo when he passed away. His position meant that I had a large supply of heavy shirts and outdoor wear. There was another advantage. He had box seats at Yankee Stadium which he made available to my Dad on June 13, 1948, which was Babe Ruth Day at the Stadium. It was an overcast day and the Yankees were playing a double header against the Cleveland Indians. We had never had seats so close to the field.

I recall sitting on the third base side and seeing the Babe come to home plate as part of a ceremony before the regular game started. He was wearing his old Yankee uniform. He even took a few swings and I remember him grunting with exertion and laughing at himself for not having a smooth swing anymore. Babe Ruth, as I now know, was dying of cancer at the time and would be dead about six months later.

Amazingly, 60 years later, on September 15, 2008, I sat in just about that same place to watch the Yankees play the Chicago White Sox. I was with my son Shandon and I was able to relate the story to him about how I saw the Babe make his last appearance in the Stadium that was known as "the House that Ruth built." It was particularly poignant, because this was the last week of the season, following which the old Yankee Stadium would be torn down. Shandon called it a real "father-son bonding experience."

I saw many other Yankee games between 1946 and 1951, and can recall every team I saw play. Included were the Philadelphia A's [with manager and owner Connie Mack, the

only manager who wore a suit in the dugout and not a uniform]; the lowly St. Louis Browns; and the Boston Red Sox on several occasions with such stars as Ted Williams and Johnny Pesky. On the Yankee side, I saw Joe DiMaggio, Yogi Berra and Phil Rizzuto all play, and watched Mickey Mantle break in as a rookie. I vividly recall him dropping a fly ball into the stands in right field, giving the A's a home run, which resulted in his being sent back to the minors.

I listened religiously to Yankee games being broadcast on WINS radio with Mel Allen calling the action, sponsored by Ballantine Beer and White Owl Cigars. I would amaze my uncles and other kids by knowing the Yankee line up by heart, including most of their current batting averages. I dreamed only of one day being a major league baseball player, and recall the exquisite pleasure when after games were over and fans were allowed to walk across the outfield grass to exit the stadium through the bull pen, my Dad leading me by the hand for this enthralling experience.

Then we would ride the Jerome Avenue El from 161st Street back up to 200th Street, where we would get off and walk home to Decatur Avenue. There I would add the 10 cents score card my father had bought for me to my collection of my most treasured mementoes. They went in my drawer with my comic books.

Q: OK, were you much of a reader?

COMIC BOOKS, RADIO "DAZE" AND THE BIRTH OF TELEVISION

QUINN: I was a reader of things that amused me. I had a ton of comic books with Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and other characters. I remember my Dad occasionally bought me some Classic Comics. Actually, looking back I think Classic Comics were really a pretty good idea.

Q: These were comics based on The Odyssey or other literary works? --

QUINN: Yes! Like the Tale of Two Cities -- but in comic book form. A regular comic book cost a dime and a Classic Comic was 15 cents. Probably my first choice would have been Donald Duck or Looney Toons or something like that. But I remember reading those Classic Comics and being introduced to more serious subjects. I was also a big listener of radio.

Q: What were your favorites -- "Lone Ranger," "Jack Armstrong?"

QUINN: "Lone Ranger," and "The Shadow."

Q: Oh yes.

QUINN: "FBI in Peace and War," "David Harding, Counter Spy," "G-Men". I sent away for a David Harding badge. I still remember getting it in the mail, with my own serial number. It could be turned into a magnifying glass for secret detection work.-

Q: How about "The Little Orphan Annie?" Was that --

QUINN: No. I don't remember listening to it at all. I didn't read it in the comics, either.

Q: It may have -- the --

QUINN: Maybe it was a little bit before my time or something.

Q: Yeah, it was big in my time but I think it may have slipped.

QUINN: Yeah!

Q: Ovaltine sponsored.

QUINN: Ovaltine.

Q: And Ovaltine was not that great.

QUINN: I still to this day drive around in our car listening to the old classic radio programs. My wife listens to them and enjoys them, and she's from Vietnam (laughs). I made my kids listen to old time shows like "The Shadow" while on trips in the car. I told them "I want you to experience what it was like when I was a kid growing up." I remember some of the scary shows, like "Lights Out" and "Suspense." Now, in 2016, I even make my twenty-something employees listen to these old programs like "Dragnet" when we are traveling together.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: "Henry Aldrich," "Meet Corliss Archer," and "A Date with Judy" we're other favorites when I was a kid.

Q: What about movies?

QUINN: I remember going to the movies in the Bronx. We didn't go that often. I know where the movie theaters were. There was one on 204th Street that we walked to from Decatur Avenue. Later we moved to another neighborhood. It was not for very long -- just about nine months. It was up at 211th Street and Gun Hill Road. The movie theater was on White Plains Avenue. Going to the movies was a neat experience, because the theaters seemed so grand. But I don't remember going very often. I remember going to see a film about Sgt. York and how he and just a few Americans captured a large number of Germans. He used an imitation of a turkey call to get enemy soldiers to pop up their heads and then he would shoot them.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: I remember going to black and white movies and there was usually a double feature. We would walk in the middle of one film, and then stay to see the end of it. You then would watch the entire second film. After that, you would watch the beginning of the first film until you said, "Oh, this is where I came in." The other memory I have about movies was very occasionally going to a theater near Times Square when we were in Manhattan. I recall going to a "Martin and Lewis" film that wouldn't have made it to our neighborhood theaters.

There were also recording studios in the Times Square area where you could make your own novelty record as a souvenir. My Dad made one where he had me as the star player for the New York Yankees, and then would interview other family members to ask them to comment on my greatness as a player. For some reason, I recall that he introduced my Grandpa Jack as the Commissioner of Baseball. Every now and then, my family would take it out at home and play it on our Victrola.

Another time, my Mom took me to mid-town Manhattan and wanted to give me a special treat, perhaps it was for my birthday. Aunt Kitty might have given her the money to take me out. I could choose between going to another Martin and Lewis premiere or seeing the Rodeo at Madison Square Garden. I was crying because I couldn't decide which I wanted. Both seemed wonderful and I didn't want to miss either, and as a result my Mom became very frustrated with me. We ended up going to the Rodeo, but to this day what I mostly recall is the terrible pain I felt not being able to decide.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: And then you went home.

Q: What about politically? Where'd your family fall? Or did you have any feel for it?

QUINN: Well, there were some members of my family who were strong Democrats. My folks were pretty conservative. I remember them sitting around at family events, yelling and shouting at each other about whether Roosevelt knew in advance that Pearl Harbor was going to be bombed. I think my Dad thought he did, and he would be shouting at his sisters and brother-in-law about why they didn't think that. I don't remember ever being told that we were Republicans or Democrats or how my parents voted. But I remember that they did vote. I recall my aunts talking about how the Irish were discriminated against and how they recalled the "No Irish Need Apply" signs just a decade or two earlier. I remember distinctly that in school the Nuns told us that we had to understand that because we were Catholic, we could never be president.

Q: What about in the neighborhood, were sort of the wives standing on the stoops telling kids what they could do? Sort of supervising you?

QUINN: Yes, of course they were! You were supposed to be within shouting distance of your home. If you were just out playing on the sidewalk, you were OK. The moms didn't stay out and supervise. But eventually, your mother would come out and shout your name very loudly. She would yell, "Kenny, Come Home!" That was your signal to go home for dinner. You weren't supposed to play outside of shouting range.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: That was your call, like a dog whistle or something. --

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: I remember my uncle would tell this story -- one I don't have any memory of it, but he told it many times. He said that I was having such a good time playing that I didn't want to go home. So to trick my mother, I would tell the other kids to "Call me Bobby." In that way, when my mother is looking for me, if she hears somebody referring to me as Bobby, she won't think it's me and I'll be able to stay out longer. It was early preparation for the duplicity that could be involved in some aspects of my later life in diplomacy and intelligence.

Q: (laughs)

QUINN: Moms would be looking around to check on you from time to time, but there wasn't a felt need for a constant presence. And kids didn't wander off too often, although, as I explained before, I did.

Q: Kids, if they got too far afield or a little bit too rambunctious, a neighbor would tell you what to do.

QUINN: That's right. Mothers might echo the calls of other moms looking for their kids to come home. Sort of like the jungle telegraph in Tarzan movies. So Mrs. De Matteo, might repeat my Mom's "Kenny, Come Home" call down Decatur Avenue if she didn't see me responding.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: Mrs. Antonucci or Mrs. Sacks might do the same. Kids on our block were different ages and had different rules.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: But since you all had to play together, you always understood where your place was in the pecking order on the block.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: Who's older and better at sports dictated the male hierarchy on the block of Decatur Avenue between 200th and 201st street. That was our Block, my universe. It even mattered on which side of the street you lived. When you left the Block, you were in an alien world with its own hierarchy and alpha kids.

Q: Incidentally, what were your favorite meals?

QUINN: I remember really liking grilled lamb chops with burned fat. I loved my Mom's Irish stew. That was always a favorite. But stew and lamb chops were for supper. Pancakes on Sunday morning were a huge favorite. I disliked liver, but enjoyed the bacon that came with it. We usually had tuna fish salad on Friday (no meat for Catholics), but I was not wild about it. I still recall how delicious a charred grilled hamburger was at the Dutch Mill (I think that was the name) restaurant on 204th street [it had a wind mill on top of the building or as part of the sign]. The smells of Coney Island and of the hot dogs there are another indelible olfactory memory.

Q: How about what newspaper did you get or --

QUINN: My Dad would bring the newspaper home. I recall the World Telegram, which later became the World Telegram and Sun. It seemed business oriented. At night we might go out and get the New York Daily News, which cost two cents. It was tomorrow's news, and it would hit the news stand at about 9:00pm. So somebody would give me two cents and I would go down a block and a half to Webster Avenue where the newsstand by the entrance to the El was located and where you could buy the New York Daily News and bring it home. On Sunday we got the Journal American. What I remember were the comics. My Dad would read the Sunday comics to me including "The Katzenjammer Kids" and "Jiggs" and --

Q: Hans and Fritz!

QUINN: Hans and Fritz. And, and then "Jiggs" and --

Q: Maggie.

QUINN: -- I believe it was called "Bringing Up Father?"

Q: Jiggs and --

QUINN: Maggie and poor Jiggs, dressed in his vest and wearing spats. He was always getting in trouble.

Q: Yeah, Jiggs and Maggie were Irish.

QUINN: Is that right? "Mutt and Jeff," was popular as was Blondie and Dagwood, which I still read religiously every morning even today in 2016. The only other comics I still read now are Doonesbury and Mother Goose and Grimm. I love Grimmy the dog. If

Calvin and Hobbes was still published, it would be on my must read everyday list, as would The Far Side.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: So getting to see the comics every Sunday was a big deal for me. Other than that, I don't remember reading the newspapers. I remember when we got TV, however, that was a huge occurrence.

Q: Do you recall any of the things on TV?

QUINN: Oh, I recall a large number of things on TV when we got it. I remember a local show in New York called, "Mr. I-Magination." It was on Sunday evenings. He was "the man with the magic reputation" or something like that. And he would tell stories and play the piccolo and the stories would magically come to life. Kukla, Fran and Ollie was on but I didn't care for it as much as I liked the Howdy Doody show, with Buffalo Bob and Clarabelle. Captain Video and the Video Ranger were huge. I got a Capt. Video ray gun for Christmas that was basically a flashlight with a pulsing switch, but it seemed so cool!

I also remember watching lot of old black and white serials that used to be shown in movie theaters every Saturday morning in the 1930s, but were later serialized on TV in the 1940s and 50s. Shows like "Don Winslow of the Navy," "Don Winslow of the Coast Guard," "Ace Drummond," which was about World War I pilots flying in combat; and "Radio Patrol" about police cars now linked for the first time to headquarters by two way radios.

There was also a short public service type clip I recall seeing many times that promoted race and religious relations. It was an all-star jazz ensemble made up of Black and white and Jewish musicians (including Lionel Hampton) and the "beautiful music they made together." It made a lasting impression.

I remember that occasionally I got to stay up late at night to watch "My Friend Irma," or the original, very first "Tonight Show," which was called, "Broadway Open House" with Jerry Lester." I remember watching Charlie Chan movies, and "East Side Kids" or Bowery Boys movies, which I really liked.

Q: Bowery Boys --

QUINN: Oh, I loved them.

Q: Leo Gorcey --

QUINN: Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall.

Q: Oh yeah (laughs)!

QUINN: That was New York City.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: I remember watching a show called “Big Town” with Steve Wilson the hardnosed editor of the Illustrated Press, fighting crime. Speaking of crime, I have distinct memories of watching Congressional investigations being broadcast live on TV, including the Kefauver Committee hearings on organized crime, and the House Un-American Activities Committee that included Sen. Joe McCarthy going after people inside the government and the State Department whom he suspected of being Communist sympathizers or spies. The Korean War was on my scope and I recall Eisenhower’s pledge that he would ”go to Korea” as part of the 1952 election campaign. So I guess I was beginning to pay attention to news and government and international affairs at the age of ten.

MY FIRST NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE: ALMOST DROWNING AT SUMMER CAMP

Another memorable experience was going to a day camp some place outside of the city when I was about six or seven. I recall that a red school bus would stop and pick me up at my house on Decatur Avenue and take us out to a farm where you could play during the day and even swim in a pond. For some reason I didn’t want to get undressed and go swimming. On rainy days, the camp operators took everyone to a movie house where we watched cartoons.

A few years later, when I was nine, I spent the summer at Camp Acadia, a Catholic camp for boys on a lake outside the city. I stayed in Tent B-8, with Fred Howley and Tom Mc Tear. The camp was divided by age groups and then into two teams the Orange Team [my team] and the Red Team. Victories in daily sports competitions determined whose flag flew over the camp each day. The most intense memory was of nearly drowning when I did a belly flop diving into the lake. As I was going down, I remember seeing my life pass before my eyes. I would have died except an alert counselor / life guard dove in and pulled me out. I never went back in and have reservations to this day about drowning if I go into deep water.

THE “TRAUMA” OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Q: Well, school now. You went to what, Catholic school?--

QUINN: Saint Philip Neri elementary school on the Grand Concourse near 201st Street. I started in first grade. I did not go to Kindergarten. I don't think it existed.

Q: Who ran it, I mean were they nuns?

QUINN: They were nuns. They were called Mother. So I don't know what Order they were, but Mother Mary Thomas was my first grade teacher. I was at that school for three years.

Q: How did you find them? I mean there were all these stories about nuns wrapping knuckles and --

QUINN: Oh yeah, but that happened when I was in fourth grade. We had moved so I transferred to Immaculate Conception school just off White Plains Avenue on 211th Street. I remember the nuns at Saint Philip Neri as being OK. Mother Mary Thomas, my first grade teacher, was especially kind. I don't recall a lot about what happened in class, but there were a few traumatic moments in first grade. One came on my very first day of school, where we were instructed to color the sections of a circle that was divided into three parts. First of all, I didn't have any crayons. None. I was mortified. And sitting next to me was Joseph Muceller, who I remember as a big heavy kid. He had this huge box of 48 crayons with every color imaginable. Desperate, I asked, "Joseph, could you let me use a crayon?" He was so nice and agreed. So, I was saved from trauma number one.

Mother Mary Thomas had given us instructions by drawing a circle on the blackboard. She said "Well, here's what you do, children. Divide the circle into three parts." And then she put a little dot in each one of the three sections and told us to make one red, one blue, and the third yellow.

So Joseph Muceller loaned me those three crayons, and I made a little dot in each section. He meanwhile was coloring in the whole section. I was laughing to myself thinking he didn't understand the assignment. I had my three little dots, which I was sure was what we had been instructed to do.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: And then, and then, Mother Mary Thomas walked up and said, "Oh Kenneth, you didn't understand. You were supposed to color in the entire section, just like Joseph did." Oh, the humiliation!

Q: Oh yeah.

QUINN: You can see that I'm still deeply scarred even until today.

Q: We all -- absolutely. I mean these are the things --

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: And you never really recover from them.

QUINN: No! And then--there was more. The only other memories I have of those first three years are: of making my First Communion, all dressed in a white suit with short

pants and walking in procession into Church on a Sunday morning: and of having a part in the first grade school play. I was one of three hobo-like figures whose job was to sing a song titled “I’m the Rag Tag Man from Rickety Row.” We rehearsed and rehearsed and I knew the song, but when the day came I panicked about being on stage. I told my Mother I was sick and couldn’t perform. She pushed and pressed and cajoled me, but I was adamant I had to stay home. She was forced to phone to tell them I couldn’t make it. I am sure she was super disappointed.

My grandmother, Mary Davin Donahue, whom I called Maudie, constantly told me, “Kenny, wait ‘til the Brothers get hold of you.”

Q: Oh.

QUINN: Fourth grade was when the Brothers (male equivalent of nuns, infamous for the physical pain they would inflict to enforce discipline) took over teaching at St. Philip Neri. The Brothers were supposedly strict, harsh and, demanding. Maudie said they were going to whip some sense into me.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: So I lived in mortal fear of fourth grade. And then deliverance came, when, for some reason, we moved to another part of the Bronx, where I would attend a different school. At first, I was thankful we were moving away so I wouldn't have to suffer under the harsh rule of the Brothers. We moved 11 blocks up to Gun Hill Road and 211th Street near White Plains Avenue. The same EL that ran along Webster Avenue turned and went up to White Plains. I don't know why we moved, but leaving the Block on Decatur Avenue—the locus of my identity--turned out to be so painful. It meant leaving all of my friends and my sense of belonging behind. I recall sitting in the taxi about to drive off when a group of the kids gathered and sang the traditional farewell song. It went like this:

“We hate to see you go!

We hate to see you go!

We hope the heck you never come back!

We hate to see you go.”

I still remember how deeply sad I felt listening to that song in 1951.

We lived on the sixth floor of an apartment building on Gun Hill Road. I went to this brand new Catholic school run by Dominicans, in an all Italian neighborhood, named Immaculate Conception. Every kid in school was Italian except for two boys: me and another boy named Patrick Bowden. We were the only Irish kids in the entire school, the entire church. They still gave the sermons in Italian at half of the Masses on Sundays, and heard confessions in Italian! The nuns were tough Dominicans, dressed in white habits.

At the time, the school only went up to fourth grade. They were adding a new class each year. The work load was incredible. I remember having this big heavy brief case that was filled with all sorts of homework every night. So, every morning, I would lug it over to school, a few blocks from our apartment, and put down my book bag in the place where we were supposed to line up and wait to be marched into school.

One morning, I was just running around, chasing other kids, when the nun who was the principal came and grabbed me and several other boys. She dragged us into the school and into an empty classroom that was not yet being used. She lined us up and started lecturing to us about how dare we run around before school. I recall even today standing there, quaking in fear, and not comprehending what I had done wrong. She then walked down the line and with her open hand slapped each one of us across the face as hard as she could. I can still feel that hit. I can still see the blue lightning that flashed through my eyes when the blow struck. I still didn't know what I had done wrong.

Discipline is the only thing I recall from that school. A good part of the time we didn't even have a regular teacher. We often had the maintenance man--the janitor, named Angelo--who would come in to keep order. All he cared about was whether anyone talked or not. If there was a slight hint of disruption, everyone had to sit silently at their desks with their hands clasped behind their backs. After a while your arms would start to hurt. Girls would start to cry from the pain. So my main memory of the school is being slapped and forced to endure what now sound like enhanced interrogation tactics (laughs).

Q: It does!

QUINN: Another memory I have of Gun Hill Road is of being forced to carry out atomic bomb drills during which our family had to practice taking cover in the basement of our apartment building whenever air raid sirens went off. We also were being processed at school to get dog tags so our bodies could be identified after any atomic bomb attack. There were signs being put up around the city showing where designated air raid shelters were located. The fear of attack by the Soviet Union, exacerbated by the Rosenberg trial for giving away our atomic secrets, was so palpable, that there were even prohibitions against sirens being played on TV as part of a movie. So if you were watching an old black and white cops and robbers movie on TV, whenever a car chase came on with police car with its siren blaring, the sound immediately went dead, turned off by the broadcaster.

Another memory from the fall of 1951 is that I stayed home from school in October to watch the Dodgers-Giants playoff game in which the Giants' Bobby Thomson hit the 9th inning winning home run that was called, "the shot heard around the world." It allowed the Giants to go to the World Series, which was a huge victory for their fans, even though they eventually lost to the Yankees. Having three teams from New York City vying for the pennant and Series crown, only added to the sense that post-war New York was the capital of America and the World.

It was my trivia knowledge of that game about who was on deck when Thomson hit his home run (the answer is a rookie named Willie Mays), that, 35 years later, would so impress Ambassador Winston Lord that, I jokingly say, caused him to hire me to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia Bureau, and eventually nominate me to be Ambassador to Cambodia. But that is a story for another day.

I may have been sick that day or just faking it to stay home and watch the game. I used to miss a lot of school because I had sinus infections. Who knows? Maybe I just didn't want to go to school since sometimes older Italian kids would chase after Patrick Bowden and me after school and threaten to beat us up. Thank goodness my Dad took a job in La Crosse, Wisconsin and we moved there sometime in the spring of 1952.

MOVING TO THE EAST BANK---OF THE MISSISSIPPI / THE AGONY OF A BRONX ACCENT

Q: You were well out of it. OK, then you were 10-years-old when you went to La Crosse.

QUINN: Yes.

Q: What was La Crosse like?

QUINN: Oh, my heavens. It was like I had landed on the moon. It was so different from what I came from. It was a small town of maybe 40,000 people. The downtown looked a little bit like a Bronx neighborhood in New York. I remember we got off the train and we stayed in the Stoddard Hotel on Fourth Street, and there was a movie theater across the street playing "Ma and Pa Kettle at Home." As I looked out the window, I was wondering, "Where am I? And how did I get here? I didn't know anybody. So by now I had moved twice from a school in two years, and had left behind all my friends on Decatur Avenue, which was heartbreaking. No problem leaving behind Gun Hill Road. But in Wisconsin, everything was so different. There was no TV. I was going back to listening to the radio. And, I was put in school in fourth grade in the middle of the year in the local Catholic school, St. Joseph's. No one knew me. I could play sports, so that helped a little bit. Gradually, I made a friend, Patrick Pralle, who became my best friend.

I was an altar boy, so that also gave me a little identity as my religious zeal was still strong. But, I remember one day being laughed at in class because I spoke with a Bronx accent. It happened despite my Dad's encouraging me to practice speaking with that Swedish accent; and reminding me to say "hi" to everybody on the street (whether I knew them or not); and remembering that water fountains were called "bubblers" ; and that it's not "soda," but "pop." My biggest language crisis came in fourth grade and it happened when the nun asked a question. I wanted her to call on me because I thought I knew the answer. I was thrusting my arm up in the air while shouting, "Sister, Sister." And she called on a couple others and --

Q: Sticking your hand up.

QUINN: Yes, my hand was up and I said, “Sister, Sister, I’ve got an ‘idear’.” The other kids started laughing at me a little bit. And, looking around, I said “Why are they laughing? I repeated “Sister, I have an ‘idear’.” With that they were laughing a lot more. So, finally I said, “Sister, why are they laughing at me? All I said was I have an ‘idear’.” By then, she was laughing at me with tears running down her face. And, finally she got herself under control and she said, “Well Kenneth, the word is ‘i-de-a.’”

I replied: “That’s what I said, ‘idear’.” And --

Q: (laughs)

QUINN: I figured it out finally, and I said to myself that “I don’t want to be laughed at like that ever again.” I vowed to myself that I was never going to speak with a New York accent again, and so I had to figure this out. The other memory I have of being embarrassed in that school came on the first day when recess took place in the middle of the morning. When the bell rang, I didn’t know what it was. We didn’t have recess in New York. I thought it must be lunch, but it was still very early. So everybody got up and went outside and started playing. I went outside and didn’t know anyone and didn’t want to appear stupid by not knowing what was going on. My Dad’s store -- the KayBee Store --wasn’t far away, so I ran over there.

When I got there, he asked “What are you doing here?” I replied, “Well, the bell rang and everybody went out. I guess school’s over.”

And the woman who worked for him said, “Oh, it’s recess.”

“What’s recess,” I asked? She explained, so I quickly ran back and when recess was over, we went back inside and continued school. That’s how I learned about recess.

Q: Well, by this time, what about courses and all? How were you in English, math, other --

QUINN: I was okay, I guess. I don’t really remember. I got pretty good grades. I think I was a good student -- I wasn’t the star student. I wasn’t the smartest kid in the class or the teacher’s pet, or anything. But I think I did well enough. I don’t remember getting bad marks. I don’t remember getting all A’s either. I was an altar boy and I played sports and got invited --- this was when I was a sixth-grader -- to try out for the school football team, which was all seventh and eighth graders. This was a big deal. I made starting right guard and played in the games against other schools like Blessed Sacrament. I had an old style, black leather football helmet which I took home and decorated with a strip of white adhesive tape to make it look modern. Then I painted the strip red with nail polish, so it was very with it.

MY FIRST JOB IN JOURNALISM

I also got a paper route in fifth grade. I used to deliver The Milwaukee Sentinel in the morning.

Q: How did that work? What time did you have to get up?

QUINN: Oh man, I don't know exactly. It was zero dark thirty.

Q: I had a cousin --

QUINN: Delivering the Sentinel wasn't like the La Crosse Tribune, where almost every house got one, The Sentinel subscribers were few and far between. So I had to learn the route and bring my bike and go down to the distribution office by the railroad station, since the paper was shipped overnight from Milwaukee by train. I would fold the papers first and then bike around town throwing them on doorsteps. It was arduous. Collecting the money from people took time so I didn't last terribly long at it. But I remember doing it long enough that it was a learning experience. I thought at first it was cool to be a paperboy. Then it was just hard work.

Q: How about the neighborhood? What sort of neighborhood was it?

FROM THE CROSS TO THE CRESCENT: REACHING THE WEST BANK

QUINN: We lived in a residential neighborhood. Our address was 421 North 8th Street. It was walking distance to downtown. One block off the state highway that went through town. But it had trees and all single-family homes. I had a bike and I would ride my bike everywhere in La Crosse, especially right after we arrived and I hardly knew anyone. That was how I got around. So I had a lot more mobility than ever before in my life. It encouraged me to explore the town and one day I rode across the Mississippi River Bridge into Minnesota. There was a small town there named La Crescent. [I don't think there was any linkage to the Muslim faith, but it is interesting that the town on one side is named for the Cross and the other the Crescent]. Anyway, I recall being so excited that when my bike wheels entered Minnesota that I hit a bump and toppled over onto the highway. I was so scared that there might be a car coming behind me that might run me over, that I hurriedly scrambled off the road and safely onto the gravel shoulder.

It was a little like my exploring the Botanical Gardens in the Bronx and almost being hit by a New York Central train. But looking back, I think it reflected some innate desire to go off exploring that seemed to always be a part of me. It was a passion that was abetted by the radio I listened to in our living room late at night, when I would carefully turn the dial trying to pull in some far off station and listen intently for its call sign and location.

MY FIRST TERRORIST EXPERIENCE

I also had an early experience with terrorism in La Crosse, or at least feeling terrified. It came the first time I encountered “June Bugs” or as they were sometimes called “fish flies”. I recall coming out of the Wisconsin Theater on Main Street after dark in the summer of 1952 shocked to find myself being swarmed by hundreds and hundreds of big buzzing bugs with large wings that were formed into huge black swirling clouds under every street light and around lights in stores. They had a terrible fishy smell, and they crunched when you stepped on them. With its multiple bulbs to attract movie goers, the front of the theater was full of them. Not knowing what they were or what they could do to me, I ran through them to the entry way of the next store only to be engulfed again. It was only when I ran at top speed away from the lights toward some darkened side streets that I finally escaped, but with multiple flies in my hair and still attached to my clothes. They didn’t bite or do anything to harm you, but they were obnoxious and scary in huge numbers.

I later learned that the bugs were bred in the river and would hatch each year in May or June and then rise up in unison out of the river and swarm for one night only. By the next morning they would have perished, lying around the downtown would be foul smelling piles of dead bugs. Legend had it that sometimes there would be so many that snow plows had to be used to remove them, but I never saw that myself.

I also kept up my fascination with police cases and crime. La Crosse was a town near an Army base named Camp McCoy. There were a lot of National Guard units training there. Soldiers would come to town to drink down on Third Street, which was the bar street in La Crosse. One night a Guard member was murdered and his body was dumped right across the street from our house. I still remember going over to see the indentation in the neighbor’s garden where the body had been dropped. There was also a terrible case of the disappearance of a 15 year old girl named Evelyn Hartley, who attended Central High School. There was a massive hunt for clues, including every car being inspected and issued a “My Car is Okay” sticker that appeared in the window. But, the case was never solved until some clues emerged very recently, over 50 years later.

We also had to call the police when someone vandalized my bike that was left sitting outside at night by the side of the house. I suspected a kid who lived in the next block with whom I had some kind of feud. Those crimes were really very unusual occurrences. La Crosse was a very safe place, a Catholic town, with Catholic churches seemingly everywhere: German Catholics, Irish Catholics.

Q: Well, there were you aware of the difference between Irish and Polish or --

QUINN: From living in New York, I was certainly aware of that. But I don’t remember many ethnic divisions in La Crosse. There weren’t many Italians in La Crosse. There were lots of Germans, Swedes and some Irish. But basically it was just being Catholic. That’s what made us different from everybody. And the nuns always told us that, “We’re the ones going to heaven and they’re not.” It was very reassuring.

Q: Well, this --

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: How about -- did you start picking up and showing interest in any particular subjects by this time, or was --

QUINN: No. I don't remember any -- I was interested in learning Latin for the mass. So that was intriguing. But it was memorization. I was saying words but didn't know the meaning, I was OK at spelling. I remember I did real well in fifth grade geography learning about South America countries and memorizing those. We also studied some of Africa. I used to know where Northern Rhodesia was and Southern Rhodesia and also the Belgian Congo: but, not Asia. I didn't know where anything was in Asia since we never studied it. That would come back to impact me years later on the GRE- the Graduate Record Exam, which was like the SAT except for graduate school, when I got a low score on geo-politics.

Q: Did the Korean War intrude at all?

QUINN: I was certainly aware of the Korean War. I remember Panmunjom and Eisenhower pledging to go to Korea. So I knew there was a war going on, but it didn't affect my family. We didn't have any relatives there. My Dad hadn't been in the military at all. Somehow he had missed the draft or had been exempted in World War II. So the only things I remember about Korea is from news reports I had seen in New York and then on radio. Yes, we only had radio, as there was no TV in La Crosse. So, I was back to listening to radio shows again.

I used to sit at night with the radio -- late at night--and turn the radio dial to try to find stations from far away. It was intriguing when I could get a station from Canada or a 50,000 watt clear channel station from Del Rio, Texas. Faraway places on the radio attracted me. It was this fascination that I see as the beginning of my yearning to explore the world which would draw me to the Foreign Service.

SPORTS-- THE CENTER OF MY LIFE

Q: How about sports?

QUINN: Oh, I was a huge sports fan and fanatic. Sports were the center of my life. I was a big New York Yankee fan when we lived in the Bronx. I remember going to Yankee Stadium numerous times, when we lived on Decatur Avenue. We would walk up 200th Street, past the Grand Concourse and down to Jerome Avenue where we would catch the EL to 161st Street.

I was there on Babe Ruth Day, June 13, 1948. I saw Babe Ruth in his uniform come out and take a few swings that day. It was six months before he died. I saw Joe DiMaggio in his prime and Mickey Mantle break in. I saw Ted Williams and the Red Sox play, and

Connie Mack managing the Philadelphia A's the only manager to wear a suit and tie at the game rather than a uniform. All during the big period of the Yankees dynasty, I would listen to Mel Allen broadcasting the baseball games on WINS, sponsored by Ballantine Beer and White Owl Cigars. I used to know all the batting averages and the starting lineup for the Yankees.

So moving away from the Yankees was traumatic. I was suddenly cut off from sports just as I now had no friends. There wasn't any major league team in La Crosse or Wisconsin. So trying to find sports and friends, I would make up imaginary teams and give first names to players and assign them numbers, and have them playing games against each other. I started doing this on the train traveling from New York and it continued during those first lonely months with no friends in La Crosse. I would draw simple pencil images of the players on the pile of old letterhead paper my Aunt Kitty had given us, with her late husband's name [Dr. Paul Travers] on the top. I would give them uniform numbers and assign them positions on the baseball field. A figure named "Mole" who was very short with a top hat played short stop. His number was 10. "Ken" wore number 27 and played second base. "Dog" with a long face like a pooch wore 18 and played outfield. It became my make believe world, one that compensated for my lack of friends.

During football season, I would go [alone] down to the YMCA on Main Street in La Crosse on Monday evening and watch the films of the University of Wisconsin football games from the previous Saturday. This was in 1952 and '53, the era of Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch. Then the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee, so I became a Braves fan, out of loyalty to my new home state. I remember cheering for them to beat the Yankees in the 57 and 58 World Series, but by then we had again relocated.

ILLINOIS SOJOURN / BASKETBALL DREAMS AMID THE ORIGINAL "MARCH MADNESS"

After just two plus years in La Crosse, we moved again-- just as I was finishing sixth grade -- to Bloomington-Normal in central Illinois. Once again, my Dad was transferred to another store. So I had to get used to listening to St. Louis Cardinal games. That was the only team you could get on the one radio station in Bloomington, WJBC. So I became a Stan Musial and Cardinals fan.

Q: Oh yeah, well it was a good time --

QUINN: Harry Carey was the Cardinals' announcer, and his sidekick was Jack Buck, the father of current TV sportscaster Joe Buck. Radio was magic, as the duo would describe how after the game they would go over to Stan and Biggie's Restaurant and have a steak. I dreamed of the day I could ever go and see that. I loved baseball. My dream had always been to one day become a major league baseball player. While that didn't happen, my knowledge of 1950s baseball trivia was key to my being nominated for an ambassadorship later in my life, but that is another story for a later day.

It was in Illinois that I became enamored of basketball. Illinois was this huge, huge high school basketball state, akin to Indiana. We had TV there, even though it was just one station, WCIA, channel 3 in Champaign- Urbana, where the University of Illinois is located. So when we arrived there in 1954, I saw my first ever Illinois High School Association Sweet Sixteen Basketball Tournament, televised from the U of I campus. It was known as “March Madness,” the appellation now reserved for the NCAA basketball tournament. I watched and absorbed all the passion of the little town schools with just 40 to 50 students playing against the big city ones in a David and Goliath type struggle. I just fell in love with the entire pageantry of it all. To just once be able to step onto the floor as part of a team playing in the Sweet Sixteen at George Huff Gymnasium, my life would be complete.

I would practice shooting at night when it was so black you could barely see the rim of the basket and on snow covered outside courts in the dead of winter. I dreamed about making jump shots. I was tall, almost 6 feet and I was pretty good grade school basketball player. I probably had the apogee of my athletic career in eighth grade at Trinity Grade School when I scored 30 points in one game against Saint Mary’s Grade School in Bloomington. That is a big total even in a 40 minute college game, but it was an unheard of amount since the quarters of a grade school game were only six minutes long. I averaged more than a point a minute, hitting jump shots from the free throw line area and grabbing rebounds and putting them back in. As I recall, I had 20 points by half time. I was doing so well, that our coach, Ed Tully, smiled and didn’t yell at us during his half time talk, which was a big change in his demeanor. I was so pleased that 40 years later, my friend Marty Capodice, still remembered my feat, and talked about it in amazement.

My second best game came against St. Patrick’s of Lincoln whom we beat 36 -34. I think I scored 16 points including making the go-ahead shot. That game took place in the Trinity High School gym, where I dreamed I would star when I enrolled there the following year. That win qualified us to go to the finals of the Catholic Diocesan Tournament on the floor of Spalding High School in Peoria. We lost badly, scoring only 15 points total as team, our worst game of the year.

We had a hard edged, demanding coach named Ed Tully, whom I revered, but who was just a college student from Illinois State Normal University. He told someone that I would be a star player in high school, but that never came to pass as that summer we moved again to Dubuque, Iowa and another new school. After that, my athletic career was sort of a slow glide downhill, despite whatever avocation I might have had. Eventually, I came to realize in high school that I wasn’t going to be good enough to ever do any of those things in sports.

Although much later in my career, I did have another exceptional basketball memory when I played in the Embassy Manila employee basketball league when I was DCM in the Philippines. I had one of the truly memorable moments of my Foreign Service career when the Motor Pool team that I coached won the embassy wide championship and the Filipino drivers triumphantly carried me off the floor on their shoulders. There is a photo of that moment on display in my office even today.

Q: (laughs)

QUINN: (laughs) You never give up.

Q: No.

QUINN: And then you live on through your children.

Q: When did you start getting interested in girls?

QUINN: Sixth grade.

Q: Sixth grade?

QUINN: Sixth grade at St. Joseph's School in La Crosse. I remember there were a couple of girls who came up to me after school one day, named Harriet Jungen and Gloria Kruschek. Harriet had kind of blondish gold hair and wore it short, and Gloria had long flowing black hair. And they said, "We want to tell you something."

And I said, "Oh, what is it?"

They said, "Oh, it's a secret."

I said, "Oh, OK, what is it?"

And they said, "We like you!" And then they ran off giggling. They were so shy. Nothing ever came of it.

Q: No.

QUINN: That the two of them thought I was cute made me feel special. So that is my earliest memory of girls interacting with me. I do remember back in the Bronx thinking that Clare Reilly, who lived across Decatur Avenue and up in an apartment, was pretty, but that was in first grade.

Q: Oh yeah, well it's a nice early memory.

QUINN: But then I moved away from La Crosse to Bloomington, Illinois where I went to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. It was there that I had my first serious girlfriend. Her name was Mary Shanks and she was a year younger than me and had a cute black pony tail. She was the first girl I ever kissed.

Q: Well, why you were in La Crosse, did you get involved with your father's store?

QUINN: No. I was too young.

Q: At Bloomington you were how old about?

QUINN: So when I got to Bloomington I was in sixth grade, so I would have been 12 or 13. We arrived in the spring, so I went to the last part of sixth grade for a couple of months, and then seventh grade and eighth grade at Holy Trinity Grade School in Bloomington. We lived in three different houses in two and a half years. The first was in Bloomington at 406 Jefferson Street.

One of my first experiences that summer was playing first base on the 7-UP team made up of my Holy Trinity classmates in the "1030am League" of the American Legion baseball program. I hit two home runs during the season, which helped bond me to the other athletes in the class like Jimmy Arteman, Mickey Robinson, Marty Capodice [who remained a lifelong friend] and Bobby Uhlrich. A great pleasure was stopping at the Zesto [soft ice cream] shop for an Orange Freeze while bicycling my way home.

The next two houses were in Normal, the then small college town just north of Bloomington. The first house in Normal was on Main Street next to a trailer park and a block from the original Steak N Shake drive in restaurant. The last one was a farm house with a barn located right on the Illinois Central railroad tracks and near Illinois State Normal University [ISNU]. My bicycle was essential to getting around, since we lived several miles from school and most of my friends and my girlfriend lived in Bloomington.

When we lived next to the trailer park, I started hanging around with some questionable slightly older kids. One, Jack Jones, was particularly into petty theft. I remember being with him, when we went into the locker room at ISNU, and he started going through lockers and stealing money out of the wallets left in clothes by people working out in the gym. He also would steal food items out of Lutz' grocery store which was along the Main Street strip as you entered Normal. I never stole anything, but I could feel myself being drawn into his circle and easily could have ended up a thief.

I was saved by our move to the smaller former farm house at 100 Irving St. I loved that it was right next to the Illinois Central railroad tracks, as I could sit on the lawn and watch freight trains go past, counting how many different exotic railroad company names and mottoes you good see, such as the Lackawanna and The Route of the Phoebe Snow.

The most significant cultural development that occurred during my grade school years was the birth of rock n roll. I have one foot in the juke box, swing era of popular music that spread around the country after World War II. The familiar setting was bobby sox wearing teen age girls jitter bugging with boys at the malt shop while songs popularized on the American Hit Parade TV show [sponsored by Lucky Strike every Saturday night] blasted out of the ubiquitous juke box. Snooky Lanson and Dorothy Collins were the leading crooners performing the top 7 songs every week. Boylans Malt Shop near Trinity High School was the hang out with a juke box for high school kids which featured this ambience.

And then, . . . and then, without warning, the movie *Blackboard Jungle* with its theme song *Rock Around the Clock* sung by Bill Haley and the Comets hit movie theaters across the country. I recall sitting in the theater in Bloomington in 1955 with the Jackson sisters [Jane and Rosie] transfixed by the power of the beat of the music. It was so completely different than anything before it. Soon it was at the top of the Hit Parade, but those singers couldn't do it justice.

A year later, Elvis made his debut on the scene and music for teen agers was forever transformed. I remember watching Elvis' first ever television appearances on a summer replacement program named *Stage Show*, featuring Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Blue Suede Shoes" soared to the top of the charts. A few years later, with the introduction of the twist, dancing while touching hands was gone as well.

The central experience of my two plus years in central Illinois was becoming obsessed with basketball. If baseball had been the passion of my life in New York, and I started playing football in La Crosse, it was in Bloomington-Normal that I would discover the infectious allure of March Madness as the Illinois State High School state championship tournament was called. All schools, no matter how large or small, all played in the same tournament, with the final 16 teams qualifying to travel to Champaign-Urbana for the final four rounds of play at George Huff Gymnasium on the campus of the University of Illinois. Known as the Sweet Sixteen, these teams would each be represented by a light bulb on a giant map of Illinois. As teams lost, their lights would go out until at the end of the week on Saturday night only one lit bulb remained.

And, best of all, it was all televised on WCIA, channel 3, which was the only television channel you could receive in Bloomington. While we were there, we eventually bought a new UHF TV set which could get channels 14 to 83. This then permitted us to see programs on WTVH channel 19 and WEEK channel 43.

The broadcasters of those state tournament games wove a tale of the great David vs Goliath victories by tiny high schools over big city schools, very similar to the movie *Hoosiers* [which while about Indiana high school basketball, still makes me cry]. I would be cheering for little schools like Shawneetown and Pinckneyville to beat the big schools and make it to the finals. As I told Dr. Robert Easter, the Chancellor of the University of Illinois, 50 years later, my dream in eighth grade was to just once during high school to step onto the floor of Huff Gymnasium in a Sweet Sixteen state tournament game. Then my life would be complete.

Of course, I never had that opportunity, since we moved away to Dubuque, Iowa just as high school was about to begin, and my hopes for an Illinois basketball experience faded away in the rear view mirror of the car as we left Normal, and eventually crossed the bridge over the Mississippi to the "West Bank" and headed north to Dubuque.

By the way, at the end of eighth grade at Holy Trinity School, there was a class prophecy written by a girl named Sally Cushing. She was a favorite of our teacher Sister Henrietta,

so she got this assignment. Some of the predictions were pretty funny, but when she got to my name, she read aloud “Kenny Quinn will be a garbage man.” I was nonplussed when I heard it. I never knew where she got this idea from or whether it was meant to be ironic or truly prophetic.

FAMILY TRAVAILS

Q: Your father was moving for different jobs?

QUINN: He still was managing a store in Bloomington when we moved from the first house to another. But then my Dad started having harder times. He lost his manager’s job there. Some representative of the company just walked in in the middle of the day and abruptly fired him. It had to be so traumatic. He was so well liked by his employees that the store-boy, a young kid named Jim Fenton just quit on the spot and walked out. My Dad tried to talk him into coming back because he needed the job, but he refused. My Dad was then trying to find other jobs. We were forced out of our nice house. It had to devastate my Mother. It was then that we moved to the farm house which was small and not very attractive, although I liked it.

Q: Very difficult obviously. He was older by this time.

QUINN: Yes, my Dad was in his mid-forties and he had left everybody in his family behind in New York. It was really hard on my Mom to be apart from her family. She became very insecure over the lack of money. She actually had these stresses even in New York. Looking back, I understand that she had psychiatric problems all of her life. She was being seen by a psychiatrist in New York and in La Crosse and in Illinois. It was so difficult for her to be there in the Midwest so far from her family. It became very acute in Iowa as she would drink to ease her pain. She was an alcoholic, and with pneumonia she had to have parts of her lungs cut away. She died when she was 48 years of age. It was terrible!

Q: That must have been very, very, very difficult for you.

QUINN: Extremely! Because there would be terrible scenes at home and my mother would become strange. She was taking strong anti-psychotic drug—a tranquilizer called Thorazine--which was new. She abused it, and would become almost zombie-like, and at other times become kind of destructive. When money ran short, she would take to drinking and hide the bottles of liquor under the kitchen sink and sneak drinks. I remember finding the bottle and in some adolescent way of trying to help her, pouring the whiskey down drain of the kitchen sink. She became very upset when she discovered what I had done.

She talked on unbelievably extended long-distance phone calls back to her mom and her Aunt Kitty in New York, just crying over the phone, looking for some sort of relief and support. All that family structure had been left behind by our moving to the Midwest. So

it was really, really hard on her, on our family and on my Dad. He, of course, felt terrible because he had lost his job and our income. At one point in Illinois, he became a Fuller Brush salesman. I remember riding with him one day to Eureka, Illinois [Ronald Reagan's college town] and following him as he went door to door trying to make a sale. He was doing any kind of sales job he could find. It was a scene straight out of Death of a Salesman.

Finally, he got hired by another one of these retail clothing companies --Jordan's-- in Dubuque, Iowa. He got the job and he went there ahead of us -- until I finished eighth grade. A week before starting high school, we packed up and moved. I left behind my girlfriend Mary Shanks and my dreams of playing sports at Trinity High School. On the other hand, it was like a new beginning for my Mom and our family since now we had a steady income, so she stopped drinking. I don't remember how we got to Dubuque, but it must have been in the car. We lived there for the next eight years, so I attended high school and college all in Dubuque.

Q: How about when -- by the time you got to the Midwest how did you find winters?

QUINN: Well winters were extremely cold. *That's for sure*, as the Swedes would say.

Q: Lots of snow.

QUINN: Lots of snow. But I had lived in New York during the 1948 blizzard, where the city was just buried in snow. So I don't remember it being that much different in Iowa or a shock. I didn't ice skate. Many kids ice skated in the Midwest, but it was too late for me to learn without looking silly and falling down.

MOVING TO THE WEST BANK, OF THE MISSISSIPPI / PLANTING ROOTS IN DUBUQUE

Q: What grade were you in when you went to Dubuque?

QUINN: I had just finished eighth grade.

Q: Which put you in your first year of high school?

QUINN: First year, yes. I was a freshman in high school, and I didn't know a soul. I had kind of established myself with the little Catholic school in Bloomington. I was going to be moving into the Catholic high school where I would be somebody. I was a good -- one of the two really good basketball players in my class. So I was looking forward to playing sports at Trinity High School and being known and identified even if it was just a small school. As I told you, I had my first serious girl-friend; my first kiss was with Mary Shanks in Bloomington. And then, boom, we were up and gone and with it all of my dreams when unexpectedly in the summer of 1956 we moved to Dubuque, Iowa. There I would essentially be beginning all over again.

From Third Grade to Eighth Grade [between 1951 and 1956], I had lived in seven different dwellings, in six different neighborhoods, in five different cities, in four different states.

Coming to Dubuque had now added one more to each of those numbers. However, like transplanted rice, my roots would sink deep in Iowa soil as over the next eight years, we lived in the same house in the same neighborhood. I would attend high school and college in Dubuque all while living at home. To this day, if someone asks me where I am from, I say Dubuque Iowa.

So, as we got to Dubuque in August, 1956, my Dad had a job and my Mom was stable. Dubuque was a hugely Catholic town. I mean like 60% were Catholics. We lived in a parish--St. Columbkille's--that had a Catholic high school, but there was also an all-boys Catholic school called Loras Academy, which was taught by priests and the students wore military uniforms. My Mom thought that a military school, that looked so prestigious and taught by the priests, was just what Kenny needed. So they figured they would come up with the additional tuition and I would go Loras Academy.

So I showed up at Loras Academy on the first day of school. My Dad dropped me off in his car. I went in. I did not know a single person. I didn't even know how to get home, but my Dad was going to come to pick me up after school. Well, they let school out early. It was the first day and just orientation. I walked out the door, and didn't know where to go. I didn't know how to phone my Dad. I knew my address. I had memorized that, but no idea where it was or even in what direction. I was standing there looking lost. One boy sort of looked at me and said, "Do you know where you are going?"

And I replied, "No, I don't know. But I need to get home."

And he then asked, "Where do you live?"

And I told him the address and he said, "Well, I go that way. Come on, I'll show you the way." His name was Bob Holz and he's still my oldest and dearest friend. He lives in Des Moines now. Anyway, he walked me to his house and from there he pointed me in the right direction and I got home.

Q: Well, what was Dubuque like in those days?

QUINN: Dubuque was about 50,000 people, a little bigger than Bloomington, and was built on those beautiful hills created by the glacier that gauged out the Mississippi River. It was a very Catholic town; it was a river town; it was the western-most extension of the Industrial Revolution. So there were all these factories along the Mississippi river. It was a union town and heavily Democratic, unlike any other place in Iowa. There were packing plants and woodworking companies and a molasses company and businesses that had blue collar workers. It was a hardworking place with a lot of ethnic Germans and Irish. The Irish and the Germans each had their own Catholic church, their own Catholic

grade school, whether it was Dubuque or even little towns around Dubuque. It was a hugely religious place. There were five Catholic high schools and several seminaries for training young men for the priesthood. There were mother houses for the training of nuns. There was a Catholic hospital, a Catholic sanitarium, a Catholic men's college (Loras College) and a Catholic women's college, (Clarke College).

There was no hard liquor to drink in Iowa in those days, but you could buy beer if you were 21. Dubuque was filled with taverns. It had to have one of the highest per capita array of taverns in America. It had a tavern culture of going out to your neighborhood tap to have a beer. It's where you socialized, where you played shuffleboard games and in a few instances, where you bought a pizza, which was just becoming a thing. Pizza was just coming on the scene in '56 and '57. Euchre was the local card game of Dubuque, a sort of working man's bridge that was played in almost every tavern. I recall playing Euchre and eating pizza from Don's Tap in the basement of Bob Holz's house. Others in our posse included Ron "Red" Mc Dermott, John Jensen, Bill Reilly and John "Fingers" Delaney. When we were 21, the game moved to college bars such as the Holiday Inn [no relation to the hotel chain] and the Cavalier. If you got very far from Dubuque, no one had ever heard of Euchre. I taught my wife from Vietnam and our three children to play Euchre and we still have fun playing it when our family is together.

There was a summer Holy Name Baseball League for teenagers in which each parish had a team and we played under the lights at Petrakis Park, down near the river front. I loved playing for St. Columbkille's team and was an outfielder and relief pitcher. I played football [for two years] in high school at Loras Academy and baseball and ran a little track, but basketball was my main sport. I was pretty competitive at basketball for a year or two and was a starter on the Freshman Team. My best memory was sinking the winning jump shot from the left side of the basket in overtime against Jefferson Jr. High, just as our coach yelled "Nooo!" imploring me not to shoot. It bounced once on the rim and went through to put us ahead right before the buzzer sounded. To which the Coach then yelled "Yessss!"

But, as other boys got bigger and better and I didn't grow any taller than I was in 8th grade, I dropped down significantly on my amount of playing time. Still, one of my biggest thrills was just making the team at Wahlert the new Catholic high school in my senior year.

I went to Loras Academy, a Catholic all-boys school, for the first three years of high school. There also were three girls' academies and then one mixed boys and girls coed Catholic high school, plus a public high school in Dubuque. In my senior year, a new central Catholic high school called Wahlert opened, replacing all of the other Catholic schools. It was named not after a bishop but rather Harry Wahlert, the man who founded the local meat packing company-- Dubuque Pack-- and who had given a significant amount of money for the construction of the school. As a result, they named it after him and his family. I worked one summer at "the Pack," including a memorable stint right after graduation from college in the "hide house" spreading skins of just slaughtered cattle still covered in blood and feces.

My other connection to food and agriculture came through my friend Ron McDermott, who lived up the street from me in Dubuque. We hung around together and played Holy Name baseball at St. Columbkille's, even though we went to different high schools. Ron's dad kept a small farm outside Dubuque near the towns of St. Catherine's and St. Donatus. They retained the old French names although most of the settlements now were German and Irish. He would take us out to work on some neighbor's farms so I learned to shock oats and throw bales of hay, clear brush and enjoy hearty "hired hand" lunches on Willie Knepper's farm.

One interesting thing about the little towns surrounding Dubuque, was that while they were all Catholic, there would be a clear separation between Irish Catholics and German Catholics. In Cascade, a town of just 2,000 people or so, there were two Catholic churches: St. Mary's for the Germans and St. Martin for the Irish. Each had its own grade school and its own separate high school.

Q: Who was running Wahlert high school?

QUINN: It was a diocesan school, with diocesan priests and nuns. There were nuns from several orders who taught there. There were also some lay teachers. At the time it opened in 1959, it was the largest high school in the state.

Q: Did you get any feel by this time for foreign affairs, foreign countries?

QUINN: No. What I did at in my one year at Wahlert was that I excelled in science. I won the Bausch and Lomb Science Award as the top science student. I took both biology and chemistry in my senior year. I got A's in both. I thought I was going to be a chemical engineer, which was what I started out to study in college.

I made the basketball team at Wahlert. I didn't play a lot but I was on the team, which was a big deal, as we were the biggest school in the state, ranked third in the state in basketball. We seemed destined to go to the state tournament and my grade school dream of stepping on the court during the state finals was about to come true --until we lost the first game of the tournament to cross town rival Dubuque Senior High. We were 14 and 4, and Senior's record was just the opposite. Plus we were playing on our home court where we had never lost. With a few seconds left, we were behind 57 to 55, when my close friend John "Fingers" Delaney launched a three quarter court length shot just as the buzzer sounded. The Wahlert crowd went crazy when the shot banked in believing he had tied the game and would send it into overtime. But when the referees turned to the official scorer, Professor Bob O'Connell a physics teacher at Wahlert, he waved it off as being too late. It was the right call and an amazing display of ethical behavior by Prof. O'Connell, but it is still a heartbreaking memory to this day.

Q: Oh yeah.

QUINN: I had a girlfriend in my senior year whom I met by asking her to attend the Military Ball, our biggest school dance of the year. Military training was a required part of our school curriculum for boys. We had had it all through high school at Loras Academy and it continued at Wahlert. It was high school ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps). We wore army uniforms to school three days a week. I did really well in ROTC and when I was a senior I was made the cadet commandant of the Battle Group, the entire brigade, with the rank of colonel. I was the top military student. A photo ran in the local paper of my date Carol Dolter pinning on my colonel's eagles.

I guess to the extent that military training prepared us for war, this training began to orient me internationally. But the thing that most got me intrigued in foreign affairs was that in 1956 John Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy, the young, Catholic junior Senator from Massachusetts, gave the commencement address at Loras College. I wasn't there, but it was a big deal. After he became president, it was really significant, because I had been brought up being told by the nuns that I had to accept that I could never be president because I was Catholic.

Q: Yeah.

A FOREIGN SERVICE INSPIRATION FROM JOHN F. KENNEDY VERSUS POLITICAL DREAMS OF THE SENATE

QUINN: But when Kennedy became president, which was the year after I graduated from high school (1960), of course I paid close attention to him and whatever he said. It was such an astounding development that suddenly changed everything. I think it really broadened my horizons. I recall specifically that Kennedy had said that if he hadn't gone into politics that he would have wanted to be a Foreign Service Officer. That's when my focus on the Foreign Service began. It seemed to be a high prestige, elite, hard-to-attain type of career that involved one in matters of great consequence.

Beyond that, Kennedy gave you the sense that the world with all of its problems was out there, and that America had a positive, leadership role to play in it. He talked about the New Frontier and what America could do. America's central leadership role in the world began to be intriguing to me. It seemed that America was this incredible force for good and that America could do almost anything it put its mind to.

Moreover, Washington seemed like the center of the universe, which was reinforced by my reading the novel *Advise and Consent*, which was about the world of politics in the US Senate. I had never been to Washington and it began to have a magical, almost mystical, attraction for me. I dreamed of being a United States Senator or a Foreign Service Officer, just like Kennedy.

Q: Oh yes.

QUINN: So, all of a sudden, it became so interesting, so intriguing. Oh, if I could ever, some day ever go to Washington D.C., just to be there in the midst of all of it, was my vision. But what an impossible dream it was, if you were from Dubuque, Iowa, like me. Washington seemed so far away. I'd never even been on a plane. I had had this train trip from New York, but, Washington -- I mean Des Moines was almost like a foreign trip from Dubuque, it was so far away. So going to Washington was almost unthinkable. But by the end of high school, between ROTC and Jack Kennedy and his legacy in Dubuque, they all had combined to make me interested in politics and foreign affairs.

Q: Well, I mean were you up to that point particularly interested in doing well in school?

QUINN: Oh yes. I was very interested in doing well in school, and I did well. At Loras Academy I was at or near the top of my class. I led the honor roll a couple of times in my class, and it was that plus being involved in sports and, and doing well in military subjects, that got me named the top military cadet in my senior year at Wahlert.

Q: In all this time, did you -- would your family take trips anywhere, or did you see much of the country or not, or?

QUINN: No, not at all. I'm trying to remember any vacation trip we might have taken. When we lived in New York City, I recall vaguely a trip to a lake in Connecticut and those weeks at Bel Harbor on the ocean just outside the city. In Wisconsin, we took a day trip to Wisconsin Dells once. Other than that, I don't remember taking any family trips or vacations. Maybe a Sunday drive to Peoria or Farmer's City in Illinois.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: We drove to Peoria one Sunday from Bloomington when I was in sixth grade. My Dad didn't have a driver's license yet, just a permit. He wasn't supposed to be driving alone. He almost rolled our 47 Plymouth over when he went slightly off the highway. I can still hear my Mom yelling "Jesus, Mary and Good St. Joseph," when it appeared we were about to roll over. Then, later during our drive through Peoria, he struck a parked car.

Q: Oh boy.

QUINN: (laughs) It was a parked car and nobody was in it. He broke the taillight, so he stuffed some money in the broken light and we high tailed it back to Bloomington. We were afraid he would be arrested because he wasn't supposed to be driving. He had bought a car but had no driver's license. He was still learning to drive. Living in New York, he never had to drive. And he didn't drive in La Crosse because we lived so close to downtown. But, even though he could now drive, I don't remember going anywhere else in the Midwest on a vacation with my family.

While I was in college, I made a road trip to New York. My assignment was to pick up my Grandmother Maudie and her sister, my Aunt Kitty and drive them to Dubuque to be

with my Mom, who yearned for their presence as a stabilizing element for her. My friend Ronnie Mc Dermott made the trip with me, sharing the driving as we traversed the toll roads over several days until we rolled into New York City through the Lincoln Tunnel. Not sure which way to go, we made a right turn and were suddenly in a line to go back through the Tunnel. A New York City policeman, seeing our Iowa license plates, took pity on us and stopped traffic so we could extricate ourselves.

So we headed for Aunt Kitty's apartment on 57th Street between First Avenue and Sutton Place where we would stay for a few days resting before setting out on the return journey. In the end, Maudie and Aunt Kitty decided the trip would be too arduous for them, so we drove back alone. Before doing so, however, we had several nights out on the town, including a trip to the Copa Cabana night club with my Uncle Johnny Keating.

Another night, we somehow met two girls and took them to the Peppermint Lounge on 45th Street, where Joey Dee and the Star Lighters were performing the mega hit *Peppermint Twist* and people were doing that new dance craze on a cramped dance floor. Looking back, it was a remarkable experience for a kid from Iowa. Having been alive when rock n' roll was born in 1955, now here I was in the heart of Manhattan, doing the latest radical dance innovation [in which you never touched your partner] at one of the earliest and most iconic venues in the history of early rock music.

Having practiced my moves in New York, shortly after returning to Dubuque, I took a date to the brand new Timmerman's Super Club in East Dubuque, Illinois [where liquor by the drink could be sold, unlike Iowa where only beer could be served in bars and restaurants]. Timmermans had live music and a dance floor, but generally attracted an older clientele. When the band started playing the Twist, my date and I were the only ones who had developed the knack for doing the gyrations involved. We were soon surrounded by all of the other, older couples who were watching us and clapping. I distinctly recall several of the women shouting "Look at him go." It was absolutely the only time in my life that anyone paid any attention to my moves on the dance floor.

Q: By the time you graduated -- 1960, is that right?

QUINN: High school.

Q: During that summer and all, did you get involved in the political campaign? It was Nixon versus Kennedy.

QUINN: No. I didn't. I wasn't active politically at all. I wasn't sure whether I was a Democrat or Republican. But, I was fascinated by watching the competition of electoral politics. I attended Loras College in Dubuque. It was the same campus where I went to high school for three years. It was an all-male Catholic institution of about 1,500 students. Every four years' there was an event at Loras College called the Mock Convention. I did get involved in that in '64 when we had a mock Republican presidential convention. I got to play a role in it as chair of the Massachusetts delegation and we succeeded in nominating Henry Cabot Lodge. But everyone took part whether

you were a Republican or Democrat. So, no, I wasn't involved in any real political activity. I remember there were a few individuals in our class who were more politically oriented and who either liked Nixon or who liked Kennedy. And of course, since we were Catholics, we were supposed to like Kennedy.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: (laughs) He was a Catholic. And I remember we had been told by the nuns that Catholics could not be president. That's how I grew up, knowing I could never be president.

Q: Well, how did you find, looking back on it, up through -- well, through college -- but through grade school and all, how pervasive was the influence of the nuns and the fathers?

QUINN: Oh. The nuns and the fathers were enormously influential. All through high school and college I was a practicing Catholic. I was an altar boy. I led prayers at Mass on Sunday. In college I became a sports coach in Catholic grade schools. So I would work with the priests. Living up to the Catholic ideal and the Catholic standard and conducting your life that way was a significant obligation. You were supposed to act a certain way that your faith dictated. It was about believing in God and going to church and acting in a way that Jesus would want you to act. And it meant being religious and being pious and being a part of the sacraments and the ceremonies. I loved High Mass-- the Gregorian Chant, the incense, the rituals, the architecture of the church. It was mesmerizing and very powerful. Reading the prayers in Latin contributed to the sense of mystery of the Mass and made you feel part of a two century old tradition. It made the mysteries of the religion believable.

The Church, the school, the ethics, it all was the structure of your life. You adhered to it, because if you broke it you would receive the stigma of being looked down on by those whose respect you enormously desired: the priests, the nuns, your parents and your neighbors. The priests were revered and had a respected position. There were no problems of the kind that there are today. The priesthood was not besmirched. There was on the Loras college campus a three story residence hall just for undergrads who were studying to become priests.

Q: I have to ask a question.

QUINN: Yeah, sure.

Q: But there was none of this taint of homosexuality or anything like that from the Fathers?

QUINN: There were a couple of priests who had a reputation among the students when we were in college that they might be oriented that way. There were one or two. There

were stories around that I think were credible of them being interested in the boy students. So there was a little bit of that around.

Q: But they were kind of to be avoided.

QUINN: Yes, that's right. You kept your distance.

Q: That took care of it.

QUINN: Yes, generally.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: They stayed away from the boys who were athletes.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: It wasn't a big thing, but it was certainly there. I could tell you the names right now of who they were. But I won't.

Q: But I --

QUINN: You didn't want to be around them.

Q: But it's -- I think it's important to try to capture as much of the feeling --

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: By the way, were you picking up -- I was sort of removed from things and even in those days in Wisconsin. But, what about race relations? Did that even cross your radar or not?

QUINN: There were almost no Black people in Dubuque. There were some in Waterloo and Davenport, but those cities were 90 miles away. So we played football and basketball in high school against Black kids from those cities. But race wasn't an everyday issue. There were very few Jewish kids. I went out with a Jewish girl in high school named Donna "Fibber" Farber. Some of my friends would kid me by calling me "Kosher Ken." But it wasn't hateful, just unusual. It didn't dissuade me. Forty years later, that girl --now a grown woman--came to the ceremony when I was sworn in as Ambassador.

Q: What about Protestants? , I was born in '28 and brought up in sort of an Episcopalian, not a very developed Episcopalian thing. But I was kind of -- in my group we were kind of warned against, "You really don't want to mess around with Catholic girls."

QUINN: That sounds right.

Q: Because Catholic girls will make your kids be Catholic.

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: And somehow or other this was the end of the world.

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: So you didn't do that.

QUINN: Mixed marriage? Oh no, it was frowned on.

Q: Did you --

QUINN: I like to tell people for my family a mixed marriage was an Irish Catholic and a German Catholic.

Growing up, for us Catholics Protestants were considered different. There was a sense that we were two camps that rarely interacted. The one thing we Catholics had in common was that we all prayed in Latin. And if you went to Catholic school, all you dealt with were Catholics. So there was a separation from Protestants, as opposed to anything that was based on animosity. The nuns and priests would say ours is the only one true faith, and because we have this status, we will go to Heaven and the Protestants won't, and aren't we lucky that we're the ones to be saved. (laughs).

Q: Well I interviewed Bob Strauss who was ambassador to the Soviet Union.

QUINN: This is the USTR (United States Trade Representative) person?

Q: Yes, this is the Head of the Democratic Party.

QUINN: Yes, that Bob Strauss.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

QUINN: I worked with him briefly and admired Bob Strauss enormously.

Q: Jewish, a Jewish Texan.

QUINN: I never knew his religion

Q: And he said his mother told him, he said at one time when he was sort of young "Bobby you're Jewish and we're the chosen race. But don't tell other people."

QUINN: (laughs)

Q: So he said he used to walk around feeling, Gee, I'm chosen.

QUINN: And, we Catholics would say they're not. It's us!

Q: And they're not.

QUINN: Yeah.

Q: So we all had these views--

QUINN: I had a different connection to Jews. Although I never went to the temple, my Uncle Sammy was Jewish. He married my grandmother Maudie's sister, Kathryn Davin. Her married name was Kathryn Lipshie. He was an extremely successful business man who was president of a shirt company named Salant and Salant. So we had a number of Jewish friends and relatives. I remember my Uncle Solly, whose name was Solomon Rausch. He always drove big Buicks and would come to our house in the Bronx. When he was there, we would get to sit in the car and play like we were driving, or if we were lucky, actually go for a ride. On other occasions, he would drive us out to Bel Harbor in the summer where we would stay near my Aunt Kitty and Uncle Sam's summer place. It was on or near 116th Street. They had a summer house and we would get a room in a boarding house nearby, just a few blocks from the beach. There were very nice to us. As I said, I was born in Jewish Memorial Hospital.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: Because that's I think what my Uncle Sam arranged.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: That's why I was born there. I don't remember thinking of him as being a Jew and being different. But I was aware he was Jewish as was my Uncle Solly.

Q: No, and this is very much an, very, very American in a way.

QUINN: Yeah. When I was in my 20s living in College Park and going to graduate school, I met a Jewish girl at a mixer. Her name was Debbie Kahanowitz and she had graduated from Syracuse. We really hit it off and dated for over a year and were pretty serious for a while. Then as I was headed to Vietnam, we broke it off.

Q: I mean the way it should have been. Not always.

QUINN: In Dubuque, there were only a couple of Jewish families. I went out with one of the Farber girls, Donna Farber. Her nickname was "Fibber." And she had a couple of brothers and they lived right up in our neighborhood. I have very nice memories of her and her family. So while we went to different schools, I would sometime see them in the

same stores. But I also learned a terrible lesson about the pain inflicted by anti-Semitism or racism. I remember her brother Jimmy Farber walked into the neighborhood store where teenagers hung out. I saw him and waved and he smiled. There was a bunch of Catholics sitting in the back of the store talking among themselves. One of the guys wanting to criticize another for being cheap in not buying a soft drink said in a loud voice, "Oh, you're a damn Jew." He hadn't seen Jimmy Farber coming in the store. He wasn't talking about him, just making what he considered a jocular jab at his friend.

Q: No, no.

QUINN: He didn't mean to say it in front of Jimmy. But, I remember the look on Jimmy's face. When he heard that, his smile changed to a frown and a terrible look of hurt. I thought oh, my gosh, what a horrible thing to have happened. I remember that moment to this day, and never ever wanted to be part of anything that could inflict such pain on someone about any aspect of their life, including race or religion.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: But in Dubuque, our world was divided into Catholics and Protestants. And they were the other guys. They had opposed the Pope and there had been this schism of Christianity and this had been awful. To us Catholics, Protestants should have been listening to the Pope the way we do, since the Pope is really the one who has inherited the mantle of Jesus.

Q: Get with the program.

QUINN: Protestants seemed to exist in a separate and very different world than me as I was growing up in high school and in college. I never went to school with non-Catholics until I started my Ph.D. program.

Q: Mm-hmm.

QUINN: Even in college, Protestants seemed almost a separate entity with whom I didn't have a lot of interaction. Other guys did, if they dated girls from public high school.

Q: In 1960 you went to where?

QUINN: I went to Loras College, a small Catholic liberal arts institution in Dubuque with about 1,500 male students. So, I went from three years of high school at Loras Academy, to one year at Wahlert High School (the brand new Catholic co-ed school), and then back over to the Loras campus for four more years of all male college education, basically in the same place where I spent high school. I lived at home, so there was nothing like the experience a student has when they go away to college. I often make the point that Loras was the only college I could possibly have afforded to attend, and only if I lived at home. The tuition at Loras was more than that at the University of Iowa, but when room and board was added, going away to college was impossible. I tell young people today, that in

my time the University of Iowa was for rich kids. I felt lucky to be able to go to college. Loras made that possible. But, I never had the experience of the start of the transition to adulthood that comes with going away to college at age 18.

Q: Where is the name Loras --

QUINN: Loras is the family name of the first bishop of Dubuque, a French priest named Matthias Loras, who arrived in Iowa in the mid-1830s. That was about 40 years after the first European settler in Iowa arrived, a fur trapper named Julien Dubuque. The French explorers and settlers all came down the Mississippi River just as Louis Joliet and Pere Marquette had. Iowa was French territory until 1804, so there was considerable French influence. These French priests established Saint Raphael Seminary to train priests in 1839, which made it the first institution of higher learning in Iowa. And eventually, the college was re-named in honor of its founder and the first bishop. Bishop Loras, in fact, was the archbishop of the entire American west from the Mississippi River out to the border of California where the Franciscan missionaries were in charge.

Q: Good.

QUINN: Loras was a diocesan college. It was the only college I could afford. I couldn't afford to go to the University of Iowa. Without Loras, I could not have gone to college. I worked through high school and college, first in my Dad's store for 60 cents an hour and subsequently at a variety of other jobs, including the Post Office at Christmas and at Myers-Cox a wholesale tobacco and candy company. I did this to save for college and to put gas in my 1950 Ford [that cost \$95], so I would be able to drive around and "drag the gut" as going up and down Main Street was known in those days. It was like something out of the movie American Graffiti, but with a much less cool car.

I earned a little money in contests run by local civic clubs in Dubuque, that held competitions for graduating high school seniors. The first one I entered was run by the Chamber of Commerce. The question was about coming issues in business. I don't know where it came from but I wrote an essay about the problems that would be encountered in the future as automation took away jobs now performed by salaried workers and union members. I was so proud of it, even though it pointed to a somewhat dark future. Needless to say, not being upbeat, it did not get chosen for a monetary prize.

Having learned my lesson, I took first place in the Kiwanis Club competition, where the topic was "What does Dubuque have to offer to new graduates." I received a \$100 prize [which was a huge amount, equivalent to half a semester's tuition] and got to read my essay at the Club luncheon, where the members enjoyed my optimistic overview. But the money helped a lot with my first year tuition and to this day whenever I am invited to speak at a Rotary or civic club, I almost always accept, as a way to say thank you for that desperately needed support I received all those years ago.

I also worked on the Loras campus all four years earning money in the library and working at intramural sporting events to offset tuition. I could not have afforded to go to

Loras, if I had to live in a dorm. It was only by living at home that college could be financially possible, and even then I had to work my way through school. That was college life for me, basically the same experience as high school, but just with some more well off guys from Chicago and other parts of Iowa on the campus.

Q: What was it like?

QUINN: I lived at home! I didn't go off to a campus in a far-away place and have that new exciting phase of life that most 18 year olds experience when they leave home for the first time. I just continued that same sort of life as in high school. I lived at home and drove to campus each day, but now earned college credits instead of high school ones. Of course, some of the people I interacted with were different, in that they came from Chicago or western Iowa. But, I basically had the same friends that I had in high school. The student body at Loras was about 1,500, all male at the time.

SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT ROAD

All of us were looking for the way you would be headed in life. Having won the Bausch and Lomb Science Award as the top science student at Wahlert High School in my senior year, I started out thinking that I should be a Chemical Engineering major. I started down that road but then quickly discovered that it involved a huge amount of math, a subject in which I was not as proficient as would be needed. So, I literally started reading through the Loras course catalogue to see what might interest me. When I got to Political Science, the courses there jumped off the page at me. I was intrigued.

In retrospect, I had only gotten to the P's, in the Loras course catalogue, so there might have been some other major that started with the letter R or S or T that might have been even more appealing. But I never got back any further than the letter P. I stopped and said to myself that "I'm going to be a Political Science major," because it seemed to be the road to either a life in politics or in the law, which were the goals of 18 year old Ken Quinn. That was how I structured my college experience at Loras.

A CAREER IN POLITICS—ADVISE AND CONSENT VERSUS PERRY MASON DREAMS

I had become hooked on politics when I read the novel *Advise and Consent* about politics in the U.S. Senate in Washington D.C., which fascinated me. This had been exacerbated by the election of 1960 and John Kennedy's victory. Suddenly I could envision a career in Iowa politics and being elected to office and maybe even the United States Senate. It was dream that would stay with me for several decades and eventually bring me back to Iowa in the middle of my Foreign Service Career to test the waters.

My other dream was that I would become a lawyer. I wanted to go to law school. I was very taken with watching Perry Mason episodes on TV on Saturday night and his

masterful role in the courtroom and solving cases. As I watched, I said to myself "I'd like to do that, if I could." And so I was a political science major with minors in philosophy, history and economics, but law school was where I felt I was headed all through my four years. I did some debating for a couple of years on the college debate team. I was elected class vice president in my senior year, and did pretty well in school, but I wasn't a four-point all A student. I was a kind of B+ / A minus guy, eventually graduating *cum laude*.

COACHING SPORTS—A LIFELONG AVOCATION

When I entered college, I had given up the idea that I could ever compete at the collegiate level in basketball or baseball. But the love for sports still coursed through my veins, so I found an outlet in coaching grade school sports. There was even a little pay in it and I found that I had a knack for teaching skills and motivating young athletes. My first gig was at Nativity Grade School right next to the Loras campus. I stepped into a situation where not many of the boys had played basketball before and I still recall the humiliation visited on us in the first game that we lost 43 to 6. Fueled by the desire for revenge or just to show my players that we could improve, I went back to stressing fundamentals and by the end of the season we were winning some games and came close to upsetting the team that had trounced us in that first game. I remember how proud all my players were walking off the court after that last contest having redeemed themselves in their own eyes.

The next two years, I would move to St. Columbkille's Grade School and Junior High, which was my home parish, where I coached football and basketball for two years. This provided some marvelous and exhilarating experiences as well some painful moments that still resonate with me 50 years later. The central figure among the players on both sports was Denny Conlon, an incredibly gifted athlete who would go on to hold Iowa state basketball tournament records for many years. I feel satisfaction that I was able to help him develop some special capabilities, such as by emphasizing drills to give him dexterity with his left hand.

Denny was also the star of the football team playing fullback and being our most potent weapon running sweeps around the right end where his speed and ability to out fake would be tacklers always allowed him to evade being brought down. That fullback sweep play was called "39" in our playbook. We were undefeated in the season with a formidable offense that also featured a seventh grader named Pat Barder at Quarterback, and Denny's cousin Tim Conlon at right half back. In the line, Donny Heller, Randy Nigg, Larry Gaspar and Tim Mayne were strong players.

In the last game of the season, we played St. Anthony's, also undefeated, for the league championship. They were leading 7 to 0, late in the fourth quarter, when we went on a final drive down the field, with Denny Conlon amassing large amounts of yardage on multiple carries on play 39. We got to the two yard line on fourth down. We had one last play on which to score a touchdown to tie the score and be co-champions. Everyone

expected that Denny would get the ball and sweep around right end into the end zone for the score.

It was then that I outsmarted myself. I sent in a different play, a “43” which would have Pat Barder handing off to Tim Conlon going straight ahead between the guard and the tackle. I thought this “quick hitter” would catch the opposing line off guard. I can still see the re-play in my head even today more than 50 years later: As Tim got the ball from Pat, he dove into the line to try to penetrate the goal line. Their defense was immovable. They stood him up and pushed him back, effectively winning the game.

Sometimes I get asked about looking back over the past 50 years, what if anything in life I might do differently. On my short list of responses, is that if I had it to do over, I would call a 39 run around end with Denny Conlon carrying the ball on that play. A few years ago in the Super Bowl, the Seattle Sea Hawks head coach Pete Carroll called a goal line play that ended up in an interception and a loss of the biggest game of the year. He was criticized for not going with his top runner carrying the ball, the play everyone expected. Someone quoted him as saying he would forget about the pain the next year. I drafted an op-ed for the Seattle paper with the title “Pete, the pain never goes away,”

At the same time I was coaching, I also held several other jobs during the school year. I worked at two jobs on campus to pay off my tuition and at the Post Office or selling Christmas trees during the holidays. My family again went through a very, very hard time. My Dad had lost his job on several occasions and as a result my Mom had terrible anxiety and mental problems. She was under psychiatric care and she was an alcoholic. Our home life disintegrated in a lot of ways. It was a struggle to have money to keep going and paying for school. At one point we just ran out of money and people were bringing food to our home. But somehow, we always found a way to keep going. But things had improved somewhat by my senior year of college in 1964, and I was figuring out where am I going from there and what would I do after Loras with my Bachelor of Arts degree in political science.

TAKING THE WRONG TURN TO FIND THE RIGHT ROAD

As I said, my dream was to go to law school, for which you had to take the admissions test known as the LSAT or law boards. The other option was the Graduate Record Exam for admission to graduate school. Each test cost \$15, but, hard as it may be to believe, I only had enough money to take one of the two tests, not both. I was going with my heart and planed to do the LSAT. But, then reality set in. I thought that if I spent my \$15 on the LSAT, what would it really result in? I could not afford to go to school without some kind of extensive scholarship, and no school really had scholarships to give for law school. So, even though my heart was yearning for law school, I put my \$15 towards the Graduate Record Exam, thinking that maybe I could get some type of scholarship help, and that would be a way to shape my future. It would be the wrong turn down a different path than my dream, but it would at least be something to allow me to keep building toward a meaningful career.

I also had developed some interest in city planning and urban renewal and considered going for a master's degree in public administration at Northern Illinois University so I might become a city manager. In fact, my senior thesis at Loras was entitled "A Plan of Urban Renewal for the City of Dubuque." But, my GRE scores were such that I was accepted to the brand new Master's program in Political Science at Marquette University in Milwaukee. It would begin in September. After graduating in spring of 1964, I was sporting my new class ring and feeling that my future now had an upward direction.

But it felt like I was making the wrong turn and not following the direction I dreamed of to law school. But this "wrong turn" would eventually end up with me on the "right road" in terms of my career and my life. In retrospect, this is a theme that would recur again and again throughout my career.

FROM THE HIDE HOUSE TO THE WHITE HOUSE

QUINN: After graduating from Loras in spring of 1964, I needed a summer job where I could make some money to pay for graduate school. So when I heard that they were "hiring at the Pack," I jumped at the chance. My first job after graduating from college was working at the Dubuque Packing Company, where my earlier assignment had been screwing down the tops of jars of pork products to tighten them as they came past me on a conveyor belt. It was mindless, monotonous work. This time, I was hired to work at the Hide House. The Hide House was the place where the cattle skins, the hides, would be brought right after they had just been stripped off the slaughtered cattle. They would be transported in a huge dump truck that would back into this open processing area, where it would raise up and deposit in a huge pile all of these freshly cut hides covered with blood, fecal matter and other fragments of animal entrails left from "the kill" in the packing plant.

Our job, three or four of us, would be to sort through this incredibly gross, dirty, fetid and unattractive assemblage and pick them up, hide-by-hide, and spread them into an orderly pile. Somebody else would then shovel salt onto the hide to preserve it, while we picked up the next one. It was dirty, smelly and difficult work. The good thing about the Hide House was that if you could work fast enough to "make the rate," you could earn a bonus payment each hour.

The Hide House was my inaugural job after college. But standing there amidst those piles of animal skins dripping with blood and feces in May 1964, I could never have imagined that just 10 years later, almost to the day, I would be walking into the White House with a foreign policy job dealing with America's most significant military conflict at that time and involved in some of the most tragic and historic aspects of it.

Q: Oh, wonderful.

QUINN: Now, I look back with some considerable pride about getting, I mean literally, getting my hands really dirty. So as somebody said to me, the one thing this job at the Hide House will teach you is to not bite your fingernails [a subject that would come up again at other times during my career].

Q: Yeah (laughs).

QUINN: And it was true. So, I had that experience at the Dubuque Pack, but was rescued from it by the opportunity to attend the 1964 Republican National Political Convention.

FROM THE COW KILL TO THE COW PALACE: PRESENT AT THE BIRTH OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

I had a few experiences as an undergrad at Loras which were meaningful and impacted the direction of my life. One such experience was our Mock Political Convention. In 1964, my senior year, the more interesting political convention would be the Republican one since the Democrats held the White House and Lyndon Johnson was certain to be nominated and run again. The big unknown was who was going to be the Republican nominee? So even though Loras was a Catholic school [and thus overwhelmingly Democratic], and Dubuque was a union [and thus Democratic] town and most of the student body would be Democrats, we held a Republican Mock Convention. Everybody pretended to be Republican. I was Chairman of the Massachusetts Delegation, and we succeeded in nominating our favorite son, Henry Cabot Lodge, for president, beating out Barry Goldwater.

The keynote speaker was an emerging, young Republican Congressman from Michigan by the name of Jerry Ford, with whom I would cross paths a dozen years later. So it was a lot of fun and especially meaningful because I began dating one of the members of the Massachusetts delegation--an attractive history major from Clarke College named Kathy Griffin, who would become a very serious girlfriend, and someone with whom I discussed marriage.

But in terms of an immediate political experience, what happened as a result of the Mock Convention, came in the summer shortly after I graduated in 1964. One of the local Republican Party leaders had reached out to a classmate of mine, a fellow Political Science major named Pete Geisler, who was really a conservative Republican. The party leader invited Pete to come to the real Republican Convention in San Francisco and to bring along a couple of his friends, even if they weren't Republicans. So Pete invited two of us-- me and Mike Mihm [another Political Science grad who would later be a federal judge in Illinois] --to go with him.

We jumped into Pete's Chevy Corvair and started driving west on Highway 20 from Dubuque. After a couple of very long days passing through Wyoming and places like Elko, Nevada, we finally got to San Francisco. Our Dubuque Republican host had a system for getting us into the Cow Palace, where the Convention was being held. A

colleague of his had two official tickets. He came out to meet us and then one by one gave us the extra ticket and escorted us into the hall. Once inside, we would return the ticket to him and he went back outside and repeated the process twice more. So suddenly, there I was on the floor watching the convention that nominated Barry Goldwater.

We wandered about and at one point were recruited by the comedian Marvin Kitman who was “running for president” as a comedy routine. He was disappointed when, after initially leading him on, we had to admit that we weren’t real delegates. But I have this amazingly vivid memory of one other part of the Convention that seems especially relevant today.

In my mind, I witnessed the birth of the conservative movement in American politics, the one that you now see manifested in the Tea Party and the Freedom Caucus wing of the Republican Party and the anti-media elements of the Trump populist movement. It was just getting started back then in 1964. Barry Goldwater in his book *The Conscience of a Conservative* had hit a nerve and generated the support that had carried him to the Republican nomination. But, the moment I remember more than anything else was seeing large numbers of the delegates, those who were the really strong Goldwater conservatives, standing and shaking their fingers up at the three network television press booths that were high up on the side of the Cow Palace. I was transfixed watching them shouting--shouting at the mainstream press from whom they considered they did not get fair treatment. This is a theme still so very evident more than 50 years later. But in 1964, it was an absolutely new phenomenon. So, that was an amazing experience for me to be present at what I consider to have been this seminal moment.

When we had arrived in San Francisco, we had no place to stay, and all the hotels were either full or priced way out of our range. Sitting in the bar of one of the main convention hotels wondering what to do, we were befriended by a political insider, who, feeling sorry for us, went to the front desk and helped us score a room on a high floor. It seemed like a miracle. Our room, by chance, was directly opposite a penthouse apartment in a neighboring hotel. It ended up being the suite which would be occupied by Representative Bill Miller, the little known Congressman from upstate New York whom Goldwater would choose later that day as his running mate.

This decision was something of a political earthquake at the time. There had been a strong push from the conservative wing of the party for Goldwater to take Miller, rather than the moderate Pennsylvania Governor Bill Scranton who had been Goldwater’s main rival for the nomination and was the conventional wisdom choice to be the Veep. We saw Scranton parading down the street still trying to generate the enthusiasm he would need to convince Goldwater to pick him as his running mate.

The conservative theme at the time was a “Choice not an Echo,” and Goldwater’s selection of Miller can now be seen in retrospect as the beginning of a historic trend within the Republican Party of not compromising with moderates. At the time, however, many observers were inclined to see the entire Goldwater experience as an aberration,

especially after Goldwater suffered such a lopsided defeat in the general election, winning only six states.

In any event, we had advance notice of which choice Goldwater would make as we had a front row seat and literally were able to watch Miller and his family arrive and move into this fancy suite which would be his operating base during the apogee of his political life.

After our experience at the Convention, we started driving south stopping in the incredibly charming sea-side town of Carmel, which seemed as close to paradise as I had ever experienced. Mike Mihm had an aunt who lived in a spectacular home near the ocean. It was incredible. California truly seemed like the Promised Land in 1964. Everything was new and modern and so different from Iowa. Mike then suggested we stop and visit a girl he knew who attended Clarke College in Dubuque.

We stopped in Las Vegas along the way which was still in its infancy without any tall hotels along the strip. We had met a young priest when we stopped at a local church to go to Sunday Mass, who ended up taking off his collar and going to a casino with us. He had a great time dancing, while urging us to call him “Joe” and not Father. We next drove to Prescott, Arizona to visit the girl who attended Clarke whom Mike knew. She and her family were welcoming so we had a place to stay and eat for a day or two. It was a real western frontier town in the mountains, and we felt out of place like eastern dandies at the town cowboy bars. We even saw a cougar or mountain lion crossing the road at night.

From Arizona, we headed back to Dubuque via a drive along the legendary Route 66. We had almost no money left, so we just took turns driving all night. I recall that we stopped once in Lenexa Kansas to rest. It was dollar night at the local drive-in theater, so we sat on the ground outside the car, pretty exhausted. I was driving when we made it to Des Moines, which we bypassed on a small section of the new Interstate Highway system that was just being built. I fell asleep at the wheel, and was only awakened by the rumble strip along the side of the road vibrating the car. I pulled off and went to sleep.

“NO GIRLS ALLOWED”? GINGER MIKHALAKIS IS OUR FIRST BASEMAN –A 1964 COACHING EXPERIENCE

It was mid-July 1964 when we got back and I needed to find a job to keep earning money for graduate school. I heard about an opening as the director of a playground in Dubuque, which was named Peter Cooper and was located right next to the Dubuque Packing plant. As a result there were terrible smells which made it a neighborhood in which no one wanted to live or work, but I was used to the odors from my time in the Hide House. Moreover, I needed the work, so I signed up. It would, unexpectedly, give me another truly memorable coaching experience.

The area was known as “The Flats,” and it was the absolute poorest part of the city, with rundown, ramshackle housing, trash littered streets and broken families. There wasn’t really a playground, just a narrow strip of grass along the street with a set of swings.

There was no fence, no ball field and none of the other facilities you might find on a school playground, not even a basketball hoop. Only a few kids would show up on any given day. They all came from homes at the bottom of the social ladder in Dubuque. Most of the families had never had much sense of cohesion or accomplishment.

At the end of the summer, there was a city wide softball tournament which involved each playground forming a team of 12 year olds [or younger] and then playing against each other in an elimination tournament. One of the kids told me that Peter Cooper never participated because the kids felt they could never win even one game. But I eventually rounded up nine kids to make a softball team, one of whom was an 11 year old young girl named Ginger Mikhalakis. Ginger was kind of a tomboy, but she was a really good softball player. She was tall and could really hit the ball. She played first base.

We had this ragtag team of kids, none of whom had very good clothes and only possessed beat up old baseball gloves. The one who stood out as the prime example of this look was our shortstop, whose last name was Herkimer, but everyone called him Herky. We practiced a few times and I had my doubts about how well we would do skill wise, but they were very tough kids. So, we entered a team in the tournament to play against all the other playgrounds in Dubuque [there were about a dozen or so] for the City Playground Championship. If nothing else, Peter Cooper, aka The Flats, would be represented.

So we showed up at the first game at Bryant School playground in the richest part of town. The other team had matching shirts and hats, and it being 1964, was comprised only of boys. As our team took the field, there was Ginger playing first base. While we were warming up, the other team's coaches came over and said something to the effect that "no girls can play in this league."

And I responded, "Oh? Where is that written down?"

They answered that while it was not written down, everybody understands it is a rule, blah, blah, blah.

So I retorted, "Well, she's on our team and there's no rule against it, and she's our first baseman, and she's playing."

And they said, "In that case, our team is not going to take the field."

And I replied, "That's fine. We're happy to have a victory by forfeit and then move on."

They mumbled and said something about a protest, but they played the game apparently thinking they would win easily over a team from the Flats. But, we won. And we kept winning and got all the way to the championship game. The kids became excited and taken with their success. I remember Ginger saying something to me about how I made them believe in themselves. It is one of the nicest and most memorable comments I had received.

Now, suddenly the parents of almost all of these kids showed up, as they had finally something to cheer about. We played against another very good team in the championship game. It was really close game right until the end. The parents were all cheering enthusiastically and the kids played hard, but we lost. The local newspaper -- the Telegraph- Herald--came and covered the game and they ran a story about Ginger and about the team and about how hard we played.

At the end of the game, a lot of the kids, including Herky and Ginger, were crying. Some of the parents were wiping away tears. It was an incredibly poignant moment, because it had been such a meaningful experience, none of them thought could ever be possible. I loved that team, and I loved coaching sports. Probably if I had not become a Foreign Service Officer or an attorney, I would have liked to have been a high school basketball coach, like Gene Hackman in the movie "Hoosiers."

TAKING THE "WRONG TURN" TO MILWAUKEE BUT FINDING THE "RIGHT ROAD"FOR MY LIFE

By the end of the summer, I had been admitted to Marquette University with a partial scholarship to study for a master's degree in Political Science. My Dad was working so it seemed like my family would be okay. I made an arrangement to share an apartment with two other Loras grads and signed the lease. Right after Labor Day, the day before I was to leave, I received a phone call from the University of Iowa, offering me a similar scholarship to study political science.

My dream had always been to go to Iowa. I might even be able to figure out how to use it to go to law school. But, I had made the commitment to my two friends and paid money toward the rent. I can still recall feeling incredibly sad standing in the dining room of our house [where our phone was located. Our number, by the way, was 2-3858] at 38 McEvoy Place and turning down that offer. If only it had come a few weeks earlier. I felt like I was trapped into taking what I thought was the wrong turn onto the wrong road to the wrong place.

But, the next day, I got into my 1955 two-tone green Mercury and drove across the Mississippi River on the steel-mesh north-end bridge from Dubuque into Wisconsin and toward Milwaukee, which was a couple of hours drive. It seemed like the "wrong turn." I was not really clear about what it would lead to, but I felt that going to get an advanced degree would help me in some way related to government or public service. And, I was moving away from home and would, at last, have that liberating experience that most students feel at the beginning of their undergraduate study.

So I would have a year in Milwaukee and in that 12 months I would finish my course work and write my thesis. And I ended up taking the Foreign Service exam at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in the fall of 1964, which I would not likely have done in Iowa City. So, it turned out that the wrong turn actually led me to the right road-a

theme that would recur throughout my life. However, a number of tragic things happened along the way.

HEARTBREAK

I had the most heartbreaking experience of my life, in December, 1964, when my Mom unexpectedly -- at least to me -- died. My father called me in the afternoon while I was working in the Marquette Library and told me the devastating news. I still remember his exact words. In a calm voice he said, "Kenny, you have to come home." Then breaking into tears and crying he said, "Mommy died." She was only 48 years of age and all of the terrible ravages of her illnesses, the stresses and the alcohol all combined to kill her.

Q: Oh boy.

QUINN: It was very, very traumatic. I had just seen her at Thanksgiving. The drive back to Dubuque was interminable.

Q: Oh yes.

QUINN: Her death broke apart our family. My father and my two sisters soon moved to New York where he could have the support of his two sisters and their families. They were life savers to my sisters Pat and Kathy, but the trauma left them affected all their lives. Both sides of our family came to Dubuque from New York for the funeral. I was so moved when the student body of St. Columbkille's Grade School filled the church for the funeral Mass. I broke down crying out loud and was comforted by my girlfriend.

This was followed just a few months later by a romantic break up. I had fallen in love with a young woman named Kathy Griffin who went to Clarke College in Dubuque. We had met in the middle of my senior year at the Mock Republican Convention on the Loras Campus. I was Chair of the Massachusetts Delegation and she was a member of the delegation. I noticed her when she was wearing one of those straw hats often seen at political conventions [at least in those days] and asked her out. There was an amazing mutual attraction and we were soon deeply in love.

I particularly recall when she visited me at the Peter Cooper Playground. We were sitting in the swings when she said, "I told my parents we were thinking about June." I remember being startled and then feeling something akin to panic at the prospect of being married at such a young age.

Kathy was in her senior year while I was at Marquette, and we were continuing to talk about getting married when she graduated. But her parents didn't like me, or more accurately didn't think I was good enough for their daughter. They were from Glenview, a well-off suburb of Chicago, and I was a town kid from Dubuque who drove up in a rusted out car. I wasn't the guy they imagined would marry their daughter. They were thinking it would be some preppy guy from Notre Dame whose future would be in the

business world. So her parents, especially her father, who was a prominent Chicago business executive, really worked on breaking us up, and they succeeded. It happened a month or so after my Mom died, so it was sort of a double whammy.

On top of that, I had money problems. While the scholarship money paid my tuition, I had to get a loan from a bank to pay my bills and that money ran out quickly. Soon I was back to working three jobs in Milwaukee. I worked at the A.O. Smith auto plant on the assembly line taking off pieces of auto frames. I loaded papers and drove trucks at The Milwaukee Journal and Sentinel [the same paper I delivered house to house in La Crosse 12 years earlier]. I would go to the printing plant on Saturday night and load papers, the Sunday edition, and then hop in the truck and drive out to Green Bay or Racine or whatever route I was assigned, delivering the newspapers to the distributors. In addition, I worked in the university library on campus, earning money towards paying my tuition.

MY FALLBACK CAREER- THE FOREIGN SERVICE / A JFK INSPIRATION

In the middle of all of this personal turmoil while I was at Marquette, I took the Foreign Service Exam. I drove up to Madison, Wisconsin on a Saturday from Dubuque. It was right after Thanksgiving 1964. Best of all, it was free. It wasn't like the law boards or GRE where you had to pay. I wanted to take the test despite believing that the Foreign Service was an impossible dream; one that I was certain would never come true. I mean what chance did a kid from Dubuque have? But I remembered John Kennedy saying somewhere in an interview that if he hadn't gone into politics, he was seriously thinking about the Foreign Service. That made a deep impression on me. I understood the Foreign Service was basically for Ivy League graduates, so it was a long, long shot. But it did not cost anything, so I thought "what the heck, I'm going to go for it."

I showed up, took the test, and then didn't think anything more about it, until the envelope came several months later informing me I had passed. I was shocked. I started telling the faculty in my Political Science Department at Marquette about it. Suddenly their opinion of me shot way up, because it was the common perception about the Foreign Service Exam that you had to be really smart to pass the test. So few people passed the written exam, that just doing so was considered a mark of distinction. I later saw this dynamic in action when, having been turned down for an interview at J.P. Morgan, that decision was immediately reversed when I told their representative I had passed the Foreign Service Exam

Most of all, I impressed myself. With my spirits raised, I worked hard on improving my writing, turned in an acceptable thesis and graduated 12 months after I started with my M.A. I immediately got an offer to join the faculty of Gannon College; a Catholic school in Indiana that I had never known existed. The salary was about \$4,500 a year. I turned it down.

Q: Well Ken, to what do you ascribe your doing well in the written exam?

QUINN: I don't know. I'd be hard pressed to tell you anything about the test. I don't have any memory of it. I don't even remember how it was structured or what sections they were. The only thing that occurs to me is that a lot of my Catholic education involved information being stuffed into me. I knew a lot of information about dates and places about American history. I knew a fair amount about geography. I knew about world history. I had taken enough political science courses. I wasn't up to speed on contemporary things that were happening in Southeast Asia or Vietnam. I'd say it was probably that rigorous, systematic, memorization of dates, names, places, which I still know to this day. I always feel good about how many trivia questions I can still answer.

But with passing the Exam, suddenly the future looked quite different. Prior to getting my scores, I had applied to go on to graduate school and continue towards a PhD. It wasn't my dream to be a college teacher, but I had thought that somehow the more degrees I got, the better I would do in life. I still didn't have a way to go to law school, but I could get financial help to do a Ph.D. So I applied to a number of schools but had to have financial aid. I couldn't afford to just go to graduate school on my own.

For some reason, during this period I became fascinated with the idea of studying in Sweden and applied to and was accepted for a special English language program in politics at the University of Uppsala. I applied for a fellowship and even wrote to a Swedish movie star in Hollywood asking her for financial help, but never got a response. When the cutoff date came, having no source of funding, I had to turn down the offer of admission. It was a painful end to a dream.

Not having a big league Master's degree from a major university, I received rejection after rejection from an array of American universities in regard to financial assistance or a graduate assistantship. In the end, there were only two schools interested in me for their PhD programs that offered me some money. They were the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which had a halftime assistantship that paid \$1,200 a year, and the University of Maryland in College Park, which would provide a \$2,400 a year full-time teaching assistantship. UMass seemed like it might be the better school and it was in Massachusetts where there were so many other good schools. I was torn about which to pick and was leaning towards UMass, but one professor at Marquette named Victor Zitta helped me decide. He stressed to me that Maryland was interested in me and had offered me the full money. Most importantly, they wanted me. That made a lot of sense to me.

Forty years later, I would give that same advice to a young intern from Ukraine working at my foundation, trying to decide between Johns Hopkins with no money available and the prospect of enormous debt, and the University of Iowa which gave her a full ride. She chose the latter and became an oncology research scientist at M.D. Anderson Cancer in Houston, one of the very top medical centers in America.

GRADUATE WORK AT MARQUETTE: COMMUNISM, FASCISM, & NIETZSCHE'S
THEORY OF *RESENTIMENT*

I worked my way through Marquette while taking a full load of courses. My goal was to get my degree in one year, in order to avoid the expense of another 12 months of paying tuition and living expenses. I did okay academically, still kind of a B + / A – average. One of my proudest moments, however, was getting an A from Dr. Quentin Quade, the most demanding professor in the Political Science Department. It was in his graduate seminar on Communism, using original Marx and Lenin texts almost exclusively. Since in the 60's, such books were not sold in ordinary book shops or at the Marquette University book store, to obtain them I had to go to Mary's Book Store in the poorer section of Milwaukee. It was referred to as a "Communist" front, and the rumors were that the FBI watched who went there, so it had the feel of doing something furtive and illicit just to walk into the shop. I remember keeping my head down and getting in and out quickly. But, I learned so much from Dr. Quade and recall him as one of the two or three best professors I had at any level of my graduate education.

Two other exceptional and memorable professors were: Dr. Don C. Piper who taught International Law and Game Theory at Maryland and introduced me to thinking in new systemic ways about international relations. I was so thrilled when he praised my idea of applying a system of tracking and predicting stock market prices to charting statistics on conflict in order to anticipate the outbreak of war. He called it innovative and original and gave me an A; and Dr. Thornton Anderson, also at Maryland, a Southerner who provided brilliant insights into American political theory. I recall to this day his lecture about John C. Calhoun's Theory of the Concurrent Majority, which Anderson described as the most significant and only original American contribution to the structure of democracy.

In the debate in 2017 about whether to abolish the 60 vote majority in the U.S. Senate, Calhoun would have argued that it was such super majority requirements that would hold disparate states in the Union together by preventing any political ideology from forcing its will on another. Of course, he was using this to protect slavery in his home state, but he provided the insight about how the 13 colonies were able to create the United States in 1776 under the Articles of Confederation and later the Constitution.

Getting back to 1965 in Milwaukee, I found out a couple of other things along the way. One very painful discovery was I could not write clearly or effectively. I did some papers and turned them in to professors who just ripped them up. This came to a head when my I started work on my Master's thesis. My advisor was harshly critical of my inability to write well and in an appropriate academic style.

At the time, I lived in an apartment house at 525 North 20th Street. Down the hall were a couple of young female schoolteachers with whom my roommate and I had become friends. We would play cards together and hang out. They offered to help me. It was like I was in grade school again with the teacher correcting my work. But I had to become a better writer just to graduate and get my degree. It was an agonizingly slow process, but eventually I was able to write in an acceptable academic style.

My adviser finally told me with a considerable amount of disdain that he would accept my thesis because he “didn’t want to stand in the way of my progress, if that was what I considered it.” He left no doubt that he didn’t consider me much of a student.

My thesis topic was the “Description and Analysis of the Concept of Total Control of Political, Economic and Social Life in National Socialist Germany.” It was 73 pages long and upon re-reading it in 2016, I have to concede that it was a journeyman-like effort of no special distinction. Except, . . . except that I took one insight from my 1965 thesis that has stayed with me my entire life and which I found extremely helpful in doing political analysis, including coming to the judgment months in advance that Donald Trump would be elected president in 2016. In researching about the National Socialist approach to mobilizing the political masses, one author pointed out that:

“[They] gave credence to Nietzsche’s idea of *resentiment*--the secret hate for those more favored than I . . .”

Understanding the power of *resentiment* would be critical to my analysis both of what happened in Germany and in countries that had successful Communist revolutions. In 1965, it was a stunning insight, one that stayed with me all of my life. Suddenly I perceived the incredible force that Lenin, Hitler and Mao had been able to unleash. In my thesis, I noted that the National Socialists used this force to turn employees against employers as they nationalized many industries, in the same way that they would fill the peasant *volk* with disdain against old line political leaders. Hitler had mobilized huge parts of the disaffected German population behind his policies. He knew what grievances the bottom elements of society felt and how much they hated those at higher echelons of society who were better off.

When I saw candidate Trump appealing to just these type of former factory workers and union members, people with whom I grew up and had worked in Dubuque and Milwaukee, and whose lives had now slipped downhill economically, I immediately recalled my thesis and how incredibly powerful this message could be. It was appealing to their *resentment* of the upwardly mobile, more highly educated elites in big cities and university towns. It led me to predicting months in advance Trump’s election victory, even when most of my Republican friends in Iowa were certain he would lose.

SELLING SOUP MACHINES / YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN THE NUMBERS

I had one other experience that has stayed with me throughout my life, but it was not learned in the classroom, but rather going door to door, as my father had done. It was one of the most important learning experiences of my life. I spent that summer of 1965 writing my thesis and selling “soup machines” to offices and small businesses. I carried a rectangular black box and I would ask the decision maker to “Give me 32 seconds of your time.” Once he agreed [they were all men], I’d flip open the box, revealing a bottle of water and an immersion heater. I would fast plug it in, push a button, and it would start heating water. At the same time I would open a little package of powdered chicken soup

and pour it into a Styrofoam cup. Thirty seconds or so later, the boiling hot water would come out into the cup. I would stir it all up, and give it to the prospective customer to taste. It actually was pretty good. As a result, they would often like it. The initial cost to place a heater with a supply of soup and instant coffee was \$15, of which I got \$10 for every one I put in. On my best days, I could sell four or five, which was pretty good money in those days.

Q: Yes.

QUINN: And it built my confidence. At first, I went for days doubting I could succeed in selling even one. I had a roommate who was a legend as a salesman. He was saying "Oh, I put three in today, or four or five" in just one day. And he would be placing all these soup and coffee machines, while I was having trouble getting up nerve to even go in and make the pitch. I would walk halfway there just thinking to myself that "Oh, I know they don't want one. I can just tell looking at the door." But the most important lesson I internalized was that if I didn't sell any soup machines, I didn't eat. That relationship between making a sale and having money and eating had never been brought home to me so directly.

One day my roommate said to me "Look, what you have to understand, what you have to believe in, is the numbers. If you make enough calls, you'll make sales." And sure enough, I kept going and then, gosh, I remember the first time I finally made one sale. And then I had two, and then I did three, and finally I had a day where I placed five. I believed in this approach and I was gaining confidence and making, a bunch of money. I remember going out, buying a new green tweed blazer. It was fantastic having enough money to buy that new jacket, one that I didn't have to have but I bought just so I would look nice. And what a feeling that was to have extra money. It was something I had never before experienced. Along the way, I was offered jobs selling insurance and real estate. This built my confidence.

At the end of the summer of '65, I got in my car to drive from Milwaukee to College Park, Maryland to start my PhD program. As I was leaving Milwaukee, I was owed \$125 in commissions by the sales manager. He promised that he would send it to me in the mail. I was trusting, and I am still waiting to get the \$125. I learned another hard lesson.

Q: Oh boy.

INSIDE THE MARYLAND BELTWAY: GATEWAY TO WASHINGTON DC--THE MECCA OF AMERICAN POLITICS

QUINN: In the fall of 1965, I drove up to the University of Maryland in College Park and remember being so impressed with the southern architecture of the chapel and other historic buildings that faced onto Route 1 or Baltimore-Washington Boulevard as it was known. After 17 years of attending Catholic schools, I was finally going to enroll at a public institution. Even more meaningfully, I was now living on the edge of Washington

D.C., the city I had dreamed about while reading *Advise and Consent*. My world was expanding rapidly.

At first, I lived with my aunt and uncle in a Virginia suburb, which was an hour drive from College Park. It ended up being so inconvenient that after one semester, I found a place in Hyattsville, Maryland which I shared with three other graduate students. For those first few months, however, I drove sometimes going around the Capital Beltway, which had just been completed. It was only two lanes in Virginia and three in Maryland.

More often, I drove through the District going out New York Avenue, which was shorter and also would take me past the monuments and the Capitol itself. I can still recall the thrill when I saw it for the first time. It was more exhilarating than even seeing the White House or the Washington Monument. The Capitol, after all, was where *Advise and Consent* took place: the dream that powered my desire for success. If a law degree wouldn't get me there, then perhaps a graduate degree in Political Science would.

But instead of an entryway into politics, my years in graduate school in the Washington D.C. area from 1965 to 1968 would be shaped by experiences related to civil rights for African-Americans and the coming tumultuous upheaval related to the Vietnam War.

GRADUATE SCHOOL YEARS SHAPED BY THE CONFLUENCE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND VIETNAM

My drive each day through the city to College Park, took me into the African-American sections of Washington. This was a startling new experience. In some ways, it seemed like a parallel universe, while in others quite similar. For example, from time to time, I would stop at the McDonalds and would be the only white customer. It did not seem a big deal, but a few years later after Dr. King's assassination, it would become a different situation. But in 1965, having just arrived and wanting to understand the distinctions within the city, I was anxious to explore this alien [to me] world, and often listened to Black oriented radio stations. For a while, I knew the names of many of the "Boss Jocks" who hosted programs on WOOK.

At the University, I started my graduate assistantship working for a very kind full professor named Dr. Guy Hathorn in the Department of Government and Politics. He had written a text book on American government, which was the required text for all G&P 1 courses, entitled *Introduction to US Government*. The classes were very large with lecture sessions of more than 100 students. My job was to take attendance, prepare and grade the tests and to hold hours each week during which students that had questions about Dr. Hathorn's lectures could come by and I would try to answer them.

At the same time, I was taking courses myself toward my Ph.D. Having passed the Foreign Service Exam, I was more and more interested in international affairs. I started taking some courses on Latin American politics and international law and diplomacy. But, again, I found that the \$2,400 stipend the University provided was not enough to live

on. So I started moonlighting by working at Sears in Silver Springs on Colesville Road. It was just inside the Beltway so I could drive over from College Park and work there at night taking credit applications and earning extra money. Next, I tutored football players in the Athletic Department. That was a very interesting experience.

Q: What were they like? Were these sort of hired football players?

QUINN: Yes, these were the scholarship players on the varsity football team and they had mandatory study hall every evening Monday through Thursday. I was paid \$5 an hour and was basically told to, "Just turn in your hours." What it meant was that all they cared about was that these athletes passed their tests and stayed eligible. If I did that I could turn in extra hours for payment, even if I didn't actually work them. Having grown up in Iowa, I could never bring myself to do that.

So I'd be sitting there at the table with the quarterbacks and the defensive backs, walking them through the basic facts of American government. Just like with soup machines, if I repeated often enough what they needed to know, they could get at least a C on the test and stay eligible. So that was interesting.

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE CLASSROOM AS A COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR

And then I was hired by the Department of Government and Politics to teach summer school courses. I would drive down to the old University Dental School building in Baltimore twice a week and teach for three hours a night. This was my own course. I was the Instructor and, in fact, I never learned so much as when I had to lecture about a subject. I discovered how hard it was to prepare. The first night I taught, I thought I had prepared enough materials for about three weeks. I used it all up in the first hour and a half (laughs). So I had to let everybody go home and then ran back to my apartment to start preparing huge amounts of material for the next class.

I found that I had a knack for lecturing in a clear, structured, outline format. I was pleased when students would come up to me and say something like, "Oh, you make the class really interesting." And, "we really like being in your class." This also happened when I would stand in for the professor for whom I was working. I would be lecturing to a couple of hundred students at a time and after class one student would walk up and hand me a note saying that my lecture "was great," or "we wish we had you all the time as our teacher."

In any event, what I had learned was how to present information systematically in an outline form. To be understood, material had to be logically structured. This was a big jump forward from my struggles with writing and presentations at Marquette. These were lessons that stayed with me throughout my Foreign Service career.

In addition, I would bring up, as dispassionately as I could, some of the very important current issues. This was now 1965 / 66 and there were starting to be student

demonstrations about Vietnam. I knew Vietnam was important as an issue, but it was not any great personal interest of mine. Nevertheless, I thought I should incorporate something about it into my lectures. So I found articles that were both pro-Vietnam and opposed to the war and then tried to have discussion in the class about the arguments on one side and what are the arguments on the other side? Because I thought that was what being a college instructor was about.

I did the same thing about civil rights. I had some African American students in the class, and it was such a polarizing time. But one of the most rewarding things that I remember to this day involved a pretty hard line white student who had a lot of objections about the civil rights issues and voiced them in class. He came up to me at the end of the year and said, "You have really made me think a lot about these issues, and I have come to see things differently and have different views as a result of your lectures."

And I thought, "I've done this not by being charismatic or saying this is right, this is wrong, but by trying to help people see the argument on the other side." So that was pretty rewarding to me.

THE MOST FAMOUS NCAA TOURNAMENT BASKETBALL GAME IN HISTORY / A FOREST GUMP MOMENT

March 19, 1966 was the date for what was arguably the most significant college basketball game ever played, the 1966 NCAA national championship between Kentucky and Texas Western, in which the latter won with the first ever all African-American starting line-up.

The tournament was held at Cole Field House on the campus of the University of Maryland in College Park where I was carrying out my graduate assistantship. Being a passionate basketball fan from my years of living in Illinois, I sent in a check and was delighted when I received tickets.

I know this may be hard to believe, but in the pre-ESPN sports era of 1966, the NCAA basketball tournament was a truncated affair with only 22 teams, compared to the current field of 68. Amazingly, the NCAA championship game wasn't televised nationally, and "March Madness" was still the slogan of the annual Illinois state high school tournament.

As a 24 year old graduate student at the University of Maryland, having scored a ticket to Cole Field House, I remember watching Kentucky play Duke in one semi-final game that had all the buzz of being the national championship contest. The crowd exhibited southern frenzy, waving Confederate flags as the pep bands played Dixie. Duke led by a point at the half, but a last minute surge gave Kentucky an 83-79 victory.

The second semi-final game seemed by comparison a desultory after-thought in which the Texas Western Miners prevailed over Utah 85-78. The Saturday night final game was

seen as being so anti-climactic, that numerous fans were giving away their tickets as they exited Cole Field House.

But I was there on Saturday March 19 to watch the final. As the starting time approached, a familiar college football player with his entourage came to stand beside me and watch-- Broadway Joe Namath.

When the teams lined up for the tip off, it suddenly became apparent just how unusual this contest would be. For there, wearing their white and blue Kentucky uniforms, were five white players, while the Texas Western starting team in gold were all African-Americans. Never before had an all-Black team ever started the national championship game.

The mid-1960s were a time of dramatic change and considerable volatility in terms of civil rights and integration. Despite major legislation, de facto segregation still existed in many forms, including in college sports. Adolph Rupp's Kentucky, like many other southern teams, had an all-white roster and was not open to recruiting Black players.

Led by point guard Bobby Joe Hill, the Miners played carefully, making few mistakes and penetrating to get good shots close to the basket. They controlled the tempo of the game and, keeping the usually boisterous Kentucky fans subdued, had the lead at the half.

Conventional wisdom in the stands was that this would be reversed in the second half. Kentucky's skill and experience would eventually dominate, and as the band played Dixie and the crowd waved the Stars and Bars flag, the Wildcats would seize their fifth national championship,

But as the second half played on, Texas Western continued to control the flow of the game and the Kentucky effort to stage a comeback faltered. As the time inexorably wound down to just under two minutes to go, I remember looking up at the score board and suddenly realizing that maybe, just maybe, the impossible was about to become a reality.

The final score of the game was 72-65, but in terms of national implications for college sports and opportunity for African American athletes, the result was an extraordinary breakthrough and a dramatic acceleration of integration. College basketball and sports would never be the same, as the prejudiced belief in the inherent superiority of white athletes, was left shattered on the floor of Cole Field House.

In an interesting parallel, the calendars of 1966 and 2016 matched precisely so that Saturday March 19 was the exact 50th anniversary of that stunning Saturday upset. It seemed especially fitting that Kentucky would be playing in Des Moines where I now lived.

So I once again had gotten tickets and my son Shandon and I were in the stands watching Kentucky play. While I may have been the only person at Wells Fargo Arena that night,

who was also at Cole Field House in 1966, the implications of that improbable Texas Western victory was evident on the roster of every team playing, including Kentucky, which in 2016 had an all-Black starting lineup.

Q: Well, I want to pick up something here before.

QUINN: Yes

Q: You talked about a real sort of life experience. How about the world outside? Were you picking up much about the world outside during this period?

MARYLAND POLITICS / THE GOOD GOVERNMENT COMMISSION / ENCOUNTERING SPIRO AGNEW

QUINN: My fascination with American politics drew me to become interested in Maryland which had its own long traditions and a strong legacy of Democratic party leadership. It also had a reputation for corruption among governors and in Baltimore City governance. I was therefore exhilarated when a young attorney named Dave Scull from Montgomery County [the affluent DC suburb with a strong reputation for honest administration of county government] invited me to join a five person state-wide Maryland Good Government Commission. [Interestingly, Dave and I would cross paths again in Vietnam where he was an Army intelligence officer living down the same side street as me {Hoang Dieu Street} in a suburb of Saigon named Gia Dinh].

Our Commission conducted a series of hearings around the state with politicians and administrators testifying and giving ideas for improving Maryland's executive branch, the legislature and its financial practices. We even attracted the Republican County Executive of Baltimore County [essentially the suburbs surrounding the city of Baltimore] named Spiro Agnew, but whom everyone referred to as "Ted," to appear. He was running for Governor, but was given little chance to win because of the lopsided Democratic voter registrations.

Even though he was not a compelling orator and did not exude charisma, Agnew was actually a fairly attractive candidate. Despite not having been in office very long, he represented that idea of fiscally conservative Republicans who need to be elected from time to time just to put things back in order. His testimony was well received. I had some exchanges with him and some place in my attic I have a photo of him with the inscription "To Ken Quinn, with thanks" and then signed "Ted Agnew."

Our Commission's printed final report attracted some positive media attention and our photo even ran in the Baltimore Sun with a nice story about our efforts. This supplemented my other foray into Maryland politics when I volunteered to help one of the other Graduate Assistants in the Department of Government and Politics run for the State Constitutional Convention. His name was Neil Thigpen and he had grown up in the

Baltimore suburbs. He spoke with a rich southern twang and I could listen to him for hours telling stories about great figures in Maryland electoral politics.

I spent several days going house to house with him around Catonsville, and then going to political “crab feasts” at the Timonium Fairgrounds. He didn’t get elected, but it was interesting being involved in the process and to savor the distinctive flavor of “Old Line” politics.

In the 1966 gubernatorial election, Ted Agnew suddenly was catapulted into prominence when George Mahoney, a George Wallace oriented segregationist Democrat won the Democratic primary contest, besting the favored County Executive from Montgomery County. Suddenly, large numbers of liberal Democrats were plastering “Democrats for Agnew” bumper stickers on their cars. As a result, Ted Agnew was swept in to the Governor’s mansion in Annapolis with a large majority. Like most Maryland residents, I was pleased that Mahoney had lost and believed that Agnew would likely do a solid if not very flashy job.

But that was nothing compared to my astonishment when Richard Nixon chose Spiro [no more Ted] Agnew as his running mate. For those of us who knew Agnew, it was incomprehensible. Just two years earlier, he was the Baltimore County Executive. Nothing in his career would have prepared him to deal with the array of international issues facing our country, including the Soviet nuclear threat. Moreover, listening to him testify and respond to our questions did not leave the impression that he was a great intellect. He was an acceptable state level official, but clearly not someone demonstrating the brain power or experience to operate at the very top of the US government.

Moreover, it turned out that he had an extreme political streak within him, which was unleashed on the campaign trail and afterwards in some of his infamous speeches. He went from buttoned down executive to ranting orator delivering diatribes against the press and the president’s political opponents. What could Nixon have been thinking, I asked myself.

Of course, later when he was discovered receiving bribes in his office at the Old Executive Office Building, it became clear that Agnew was affected by the same sense of avarice that led other former Maryland governors to trial and jail. Forced to resign in disgrace, Agnew had gone full circle and ended up back at the roots of corruption from which he rose. The good thing is that his ignominious disgrace opened the way for Jerry Ford [the junior Congressman who spoke at our Mock Convention at Loras College just a decade earlier] to be installed as Vice President, a position from which he would eventually become the nation’s savior after Watergate.

INTRODUCTION TO ASIA: PART I-TEACHING VIETNAM / SAMPLING THAI AND KOREAN FOOD

At the same time, Vietnam was becoming this huge issue and a very hot topic. There were protests starting on the Maryland campus. In March, 1967, I recall attending a Simon and Garfunkel concert that filled Cole Field House. Sitting there with fellow graduate student Bob Weber, we were somewhat nonplussed as we watched younger undergrad students rushing the stage and giving peace signs as opposition to the war. Weber, who was in his 30s said something like "It's hard to figure kids these days," and I remember agreeing with him.

Even though I was just three or four years older than many of those undergraduates, I felt part of a different generation- -one that didn't feel things in the same way. In the Introduction to American Government course that I taught in the summer of 1966, I had included a section on Vietnam, trying to give two different perspectives on the War and why the U.S. should or shouldn't be involved. I drew on an article from Foreign Affairs that was written by CIA analyst George Carver for the pro view [never imagining that just nine years later I would be riding with him on a plane to Saigon as part of the Weyand Mission sent by President Ford as South Vietnam was collapsing].

In my own classes, I had originally become more interested in European and Latin American issues, but even though I didn't recognize it at the time, the pull of Asia was beginning to take hold.

My introduction to Asia had actually started back in Milwaukee. One of my classmates in the master's program at Marquette was an older man named Chang Soo Lee. He was essentially a political refugee from South Korea, who would invite a few classmates to his apartment to eat *bulgogi* (thin sliced strips of beef that he grilled with sesame), and share stories. The food was so delicious and he was so interesting having been purged by President Syngman Rhee.

I had another experience as a teaching assistant for the Government and Politics I course at Maryland which also gave me nudge in the direction of Asia. I held "hours" each week where students could come and ask me questions about any aspect of the course that was not clear or about which they wanted further information. One day, a young Asian woman came in and said something like, "I'm from Thailand, and I'm having a terrible time."

The problem was that she had only recently arrived in America, did not have any American civics education background, unlike every American student who had such classes all through grade school and high school. There were very few international students at any university in those days, so I felt sorry for her. I spent a number of hours, as I did with the football players, helping her understand the background of American government. She ended up getting an okay grade.

As it turned out, she was the daughter of a senior military attaché at the Thai Embassy. To thank me for my help, she invited me to come for a dinner with her father at their residence. It was my first "diplomatic" event, and the food was exotic and delicious. It was another entrée into things Asian that was slowly turning me to the East.

INTRODUCTION TO ASIA: PART II-- LEARNING JAPANESE / PREVENTING A SUICIDE

At Maryland, my interest in international affairs grew as I was taking courses. I had an ethnic Chinese professor who talked about the issues of China; a Hungarian professor who lectured about the Soviet Union, and a retired military professor who taught national defense issues. There were also some other experiences that began to ever so slightly begin to draw me toward Asia. I had taken a class on Japanese politics since the Meiji restoration in 1867 from a professor named Ted Mc Nelly who had served in Japan after the end of the War. He made that country seem especially intriguing.

Then, I learned that I had to take a language course, because a requirement for a Ph.D. was to demonstrate proficiency in two languages. I had taken some French in college, but from Mc Nelly's class I had become attracted to the idea of Japanese as the second one. So I signed up to take a Japanese course one night a week at the Japan America Institute in downtown Washington. There were just five or six participants. The teacher was a young Japanese graduate student who was in a Master's program in Economics at Johns Hopkins SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies). He struggled in English but was obviously a high performer, as he had been selected in Tokyo for this prestigious program.

It quickly became apparent to me that I was never going to be able to learn enough Japanese characters to pass a Ph.D. language proficiency test. So this was a misbegotten idea. But since I had paid the money, I decided to stick it out for the semester. The individual who was the director of the Japan America Institute language program was a Japanese woman named Fumi Wickel. She was married to a man named Jimmy Wickel, who was one of the lead interpreters in Japan for Douglas MacArthur. Their daughter named Rosalind was taking the class as an undergrad. She was cute and I asked her out for a date. I remember her dad being very wary of me being so much older, but we had a nice time although nothing ever came of it.

I also got to know the teacher, the young Japanese grad student from SAIS. As I recall, the Japan America Institute was on Massachusetts Avenue near SAIS. He did not have a car, so I gave him a ride home one night after class. He lived out near American University. When we got there he said he wanted to talk to me. I didn't know what he wanted, but I did not want to talk to him because there was some big prize fight on radio that night and I was so anxious to hear the fight and see who would win. I don't even remember who it was fighting, whether it was Ali or Cassius Clay as he may have still been known then. I tried to be polite to the young guy, but then he started talking about his inability to cope with his economics courses at SAIS. Almost in tears, he said that he was failing and that he was going to disgrace his family. And then ... and then, he blurted out that he was contemplating suicide.

That riveted my attention. Turning off the radio, I tried to say something to bolster his spirits, but he was inconsolable, desperate for anyone to help him and with no one else to turn to. Then he further revealed that his Department had given him one last chance to do a take home test to make up for the tests he had failed. He explained that he had to write some three or four essays responding to questions he had been given. If he passed these essays, then he would not be thrown out of the program. "Could you please help me?" he almost begged.

Here I was a political science major, with little facility in economics. The logical thing would be to say that I was sorry and couldn't help. But this man was so desperate. This human being sitting across from me in the front seat of my car was pleading for help. So I said, "Well, maybe I could help look through the questions and maybe give you some ideas." An incredibly happy look spread across his face.

So, to make a long story long, he ran up to his apartment and brought down all of his text books and the test questions and gave everything to me. I drove home out to Annandale, Virginia, where I was staying, and sat up for the next two or three nights reading and trying to figure out what in the world the questions were about and what the professors were looking for. I set out to make an outline of what he needed to write -- or more accurately what I thought would help him stay in school. That seemed ethical to me. But basically I ended up answering all the questions for him. I realized that maybe this wasn't the academically correct thing to do, but, here was this desperate human being looking for help and who seemed very sincere about the possibility of killing himself. So, I thought I should help him.

When I next saw him, it appeared that he had received a good enough grade to stay in the program. I don't know what happened to him after that. I didn't stay in touch. But it had been a riveting experience and one more encounter that helped point me in the direction of Asia.

A MUCKRAKER MOMENT: THE FOREIGN SERVICE ORAL EXAM AND A QUESTION THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

The other important thing that was going on in my life was that, having passed the written test, I now was preparing for the oral exam for the Foreign Service. I started reading voraciously. I even subscribed to the State Department Bulletin and would read the speeches being given by the assistant secretaries and undersecretaries. I would search for foreign affairs articles in Time Magazine and Newsweek and Fortune, anything I could get my hands on to prepare.

Q: Yeah. Well --

QUINN: I don't remember when exactly I took the oral, but I think it was sometime in early 1966 because I had come to Maryland in the fall of '65 and my interview took place in Washington. There I was, sitting across the table from three Foreign Service Officers,

two from State and the chairman from USIA. The reason for USIA leading my interview was that when I filled out my Exam application I had checked the box to be a USIA (United States Information Agency) officer, not a State Department officer. Not really understanding the difference, I had thought that if you're in USIA you must go out and explain American policy, and that was what I liked doing --explaining situations or policies--, it would be just like teaching, or so I thought.

The oral exam was two hours of sitting across the table from these three men answering their questions. There are three things I recall about the entire experience:

First, early in the interview, I was asked what motivated me to become a Foreign Service Officer, what role I envisioned myself playing in terms of shaping or implementing foreign policy and diplomacy. It had the implication of getting at whether I had a grandiose desire to be a lead negotiator or an ambassador or the author of a new policy. I had not really thought about that a great deal, so after a moment of reflection, I answered that I would hope to be "a footnote to history," to play a part, maybe a small part, in some significant international development or set of events.

Second, I worried throughout the entire two hours that there would be some type of hidden psychological trick as part of the test. This was an era in which subliminal advertising and the use of sub-conscious methods were being talked about at big PR firms and Ad agencies. I remember reading about tricks that interviewers might pull on people to test how they would react in an unexpectedly awkward moment. For example, they might invite you to smoke, and then you would light up only to discover that you didn't have an ashtray. How do you react to that? Or they might give you a dribble glass which had little holes in the glass so that when you tried to take a drink, water would run out down the front of your shirt. They would observe how you would react to that.

There was a pitcher of water and a glass on the table in front of me, and I was invited numerous times by the chairman to have a glass of water. I was so certain that it must be the dreaded dribble glass that I spent the entire two hours with a parched throat but always politely declining to take a drink.

The third thing I remember about the oral exam is that the questions started out rather general but would become more specific to test your depth of knowledge in a range of topics. Questions would come about topics totally unrelated to your background or foreign affairs. Then there was a sort of make-or-break question, in that it seemed to be aimed at weeding out candidates who could not handle the toughest questions or who were unable to demonstrate a broad range of knowledge, especially about America.

Toward the end of the two hours came my most challenging question. I was asked to give an overview of the Muckraker Era of American history and to assess its impact. This seemed to be a topic about which many individuals would know little or nothing. I was shocked by how different it was from all of the previous questions. Suddenly, I understood that this was almost certainly the make-or-break moment of my entire oral

exam. From the looks on the faces of the interviewers, I thought that they expected me to be stymied.

Sitting there across the table, I thought back to a history class that I had taken at Loras College taught by a professor named Robert Balfe. He was not considered one of the most engaging teachers at Loras. In fact, he was thought to be just the opposite --kind of dull and boring. Not many students signed up for his classes, but I was a history minor and he taught a class about American history from the end of the Civil War to the mid - 20th century or something like that. I signed up for it because it was in the early afternoon and fit well with my schedule, in that it ended in time for me to get out to the baseball field with the equipment I had to deliver for the intramural program that I managed to pay for my tuition.

Dr. Balfe would lecture for an hour and 20 minutes in a monotone voice. But he lectured using an outline with points and ideas and names all listed in a systematic way. He taught in the same way I did later as a college instructor using this outline format. It was thus very easy to take notes as he spoke and write down the key pieces of information. So sitting there, with all three Foreign Service examiners drilling me with their eyes and waiting to see if I would falter, suddenly in my mind pops up -- as if it were on a computer - my notes, my outline that I remembered taking from Dr. Balfe's lectures on the Muckrakers. All I had to do was mentally scroll down through it and tell the examiners about Ida Tarbell and then Upton Sinclair and then Lincoln Steffen and then the history of Standard Oil, and the expose of the slaughterhouses in Chicago. So where it would have been easy to strike out, I hit a home run. I am convinced -- although the examiners never told me this -- that my answer was the difference in my passing the oral exam. Dr. Balfe was the one who permitted me to pass the Foreign Service oral exam.

So after the two hours were over, the chairman said that they were going to leave the room to have a discussion and then would come back in and tell me the result. I was sitting there drained. It had been an exhausting two hours. So, with nothing to lose, I poured a glass of water, something I had been afraid to do. Of course, there was no dribble glass. I could have had water throughout the entire interview. I felt silly for having worried about it.

And then the Board returned and all three members sat down at the table. They showed no emotion. I was ready for the worst. I never really thought I would pass the written exam, much less the oral. I steeled myself for the inevitable bad news.

The Chairman, the USIA officer, then explained how their evaluation process worked, and on what categories I had been assessed and judged. The look on their unsmiling faces told me that they were preparing me for the letdown of having failed. I knew this had been a long shot and that individuals like me from a virtually unknown, small Midwestern college didn't pass this rigorous test process, but having come so close, it was still going to be very disappointing.

But then,...but then, he said that they wanted to let me know that I had “passed.”

It would difficult to find the words to describe the exhilaration that coursed through my entire being. In that one moment, with that one sentence, with that one word, I felt that my life had been changed forever. Somehow, I had climbed the highest hill imaginable. I had reached that pinnacle of public service that John Kennedy himself had identified as a noble and elite calling.

Then, when I thought the entire event was over, a second life and career changing moment occurred. The Exam Panel Chairman continued speaking and said, “We listened to you and heard you speak about your interests and your background, and we think that you might be better suited to be in the State Department working on political affairs, and not in USIA.” You are free to do as you wish, he added, but our suggestion would be that you consider whether you want to change and become a State Department applicant. They said I could wait to make a decision.

I wasn't sure what to do and might well have decided to think about it. One of the State Department examiners, however, then privately urged me to change. So I did, right then and there, I revised my application to become a State Department officer. Without that change, I never would have had the opportunities or jobs that I experienced over the next three decades, nor ever had become an ambassador. One moment, one small conversation, changed everything.

Q: Huh!

QUINN: As I left, Oh, my God, I was unbelievably high. I mean the unthinkable had just happened. Me, a nobody with no family money or legacy from Dubuque Iowa, had miraculously passed “the test.” I was now going to be a Foreign Service Officer. I just had to get through the security interview and the medical examination, but they would be no problem. I could drop my Ph.D. program. Who cared anymore about that? I was going to be a diplomat. Shortly thereafter, I did my security interview and satisfied the agent that I did not have anything in my past that could be exploited, no affairs with married women or whatever.

“GIVE ME A SPECIMEN”-A MEDICAL IMPEDIMENT AND A WEST VIRGINIA MIRACLE

And then, I took the medical exam at the Department. This, I thought, would be the easiest part since I had no sicknesses or health problems. But when my lab tests came back, I was told that albumin had been found in my urine. There would have to be some further tests to determine what was causing it. Still, I wasn't too worried.

So the State Department sent me to Georgetown University Hospital, to one of the leading urologists in America. Over the next several months, he put me through an unbelievable array of tests. I had to go in to the hospital as a patient and have a barium x-ray of my kidneys. Then I had to do an unheard of array of tests. I literally had to collect

all my urine in large jugs for several weeks and store it in my refrigerator in the apartment I shared with three other grad students out in Hyattsville on Kenilworth Avenue. That caused a lot of distress on the part of my roommates.

Then, on the last day, I had to lay flat on my back all night, get up and collect that specimen. Then I had to go outside and run for an hour and collect a specimen right after that in another separate jar. Next, I had to stand with my shoulders against the wall with my back arched in what is called the exaggerated *lordotic* position for half an hour, and then collect that specimen.

Finally, I had to gather up all of my specimens for the whole week, jugs and jugs and various vials and jars all labeled, put them in my car and drive for an hour across D.C. to Georgetown University Hospital during the morning rush hour traffic to deliver them to be analyzed. All the way, I worried about what would happen if I were in an accident and had to explain all these jars and jugs of urine to the police, or worse, if they were broken and spilled all over my car.

Having delivered my cargo without incident, after several weeks, the doctor wrote a long report that said I had a structural problem in my kidneys called *orthostatic proteinuria*. He explained that there is a gate in your kidney that is supposed to close and keep the protein in, but for some reason my gate stays open and protein escapes. In his written assessment, the doctor wrote that it will probably not be a serious problem but noted that recently there have been some articles in the literature that suggest that this could be a "harbinger of future problems." The doctor told me that frankly this is not going to keep me out of the Draft, but it is an issue and he had to write about it. So the doctor wrote a long report, it was three or four-inch file with all of these medical reports and tests, indicating there was a possibility of some future medical problems.

The report arrived at the State Department and the counselor at the Board of Examiners told me that I was not cleared and thus could not be inducted into the Foreign Service. He explained that they have an endless pipeline of individuals who are in perfect health and that the Department needs to have people without any health issues to send overseas. So, he informed me, my problem will exclude me from the Foreign Service as long as I have it. But, he reminded me that my exam scores were good for two years and if my medical problem got cleared up, I could come back and still be accepted.

This was so incredibly devastating. My dreams literally went down the drain; I guess it would be accurate to say, with my urine specimens. Still, I couldn't bring myself to give up. My scores were going to run out in nine months, so I signed up and took the Foreign Service Exam a second time, this time in suburban Maryland. I was out drinking the night before with other grad students when I should have been getting a good night's sleep. But, I thought, what's the point? So I spent the Friday evening before the test at the Varsity Grille and the Rendezvous, the two college bars in College Park. I had a terrible hangover when I arrived at the test site the next morning, but, I once again passed the written exam, this time with even higher scores.

I only had a few months left on my original scores, and was thinking about repeating the whole process again and having to pass the oral exam again and wondering whether I had the drive to do it, only to still have this medical blockage. Then, totally by chance, I took a train trip to Huntington, West Virginia to visit my Mom's brother, Joseph Farrell. Since my Mom was no longer living, I wanted to have some connection to her family. He was the one remaining member of the Farrell family. So I went down to visit with him and his children, just to be in touch. I remember we went out to Shakey's Pizza Parlor for dinner the night I arrived. He had a wonderful family, and I thought how happy they seemed, and what a good dad he was.

As we were sitting around the house after dinner, he asked about where my life was going. I explained where I was in my PhD program, what I hoped to do, and about the Foreign Service and my disappointment with the medical side of things. Then he said, "Why don't you come with me in the morning?" I said OK. So we drove down to his office, which was in the Huntington Bank building. I'm sure you are familiar with what these little American towns looked like. The tallest building was usually about eight stories, which was about as high as an elevator in pre-World War II America could go. When we got to his office, he said, "Come on with me," and we went up one more flight and he took me in to the office of the local urologist. It was a small office. The door was made of beveled glass with the doctor's name written in gold on it. It was a two person operation with one nurse /receptionist and the doctor and one examining room in this old bank building. When we met the doctor, my uncle said, "Tell him your story." So I told him about all the tests at Georgetown and the results.

The doctor just said, "Give me a specimen."

So I went in the room and I peed in the jar. He poured it into a test tube right in front of me, put the test tube in a centrifuge and turned it on. It spun around a few times but never got up to full speed. He then took the test tube out and held it up to the neon ceiling light in front of us. He then said, "It looks clear to me."

He then wrote me a letter on his official letterhead. Now, he was a little one man office urologist in Huntington, but he apparently went to all of the meetings of the American Urological Society, because he was the president-elect. His letterhead said, "From the Office of the President-Elect of the American Urological Society."

And on it he wrote, "To Whom It May Concern, I have examined Kenneth Quinn. His urine is free and clear of any problems."

He signed it and gave me the letter. When I got back to Washington, I went down to the State Department, walked into the Medical Clearances Office, and gave it to the clerk who looked at it. He put it in my enormous thick file, filled with the extensive assessment and lab reports done by one of the most eminent urologists in America, and said "Well, I guess you're in." Shortly thereafter, I received a letter inviting me to join the A-100 class in August of 1967. It was all thanks to an offhand remark to my uncle and a one page letter from a small town doctor.

Q: That's a wonderful story.

QUINN: It is all true! A true story (laughs). I should add, however, that I almost didn't make it to that Monday appointment, because of an incident that happened after my last class at Maryland.

RUMBLE IN COLLEGE PARK

As chance would have it, I finished my last course at Maryland the Friday before I was to show up to begin my Foreign Service career. Appropriately, the course was titled the Conduct of American Diplomacy, taught by a retired Foreign Service Officer named Willard Barber.

I had the weekend off to celebrate the transition from the academic world to that of international diplomacy, so I went out for a last night at the Varsity Grill bar in College Park for a few beers with a couple of graduate students and a young professor in the Government and Politics Department named Jimmie Stevens. It almost ended up potentially ruining my career before it even started, because we were confronted by a group of local toughs looking to beat up what they thought were unpatriotic, anti-war college students.

Following a confrontation inside the bar, suddenly we were outside in the middle of Route 1 in this standoff between about 15 of these local guys and four of us, including professor Stevens. Badly outnumbered, we would be assuredly beaten up if it came to blows. I could already see the headlines in the morning paper "Would be diplomat arrested in street fight, disqualified from Foreign Service."

Jimmie Stevens, who was an airborne Army veteran, had, however, just about convinced this gang that they had made a bad mistake in challenging him and us, because of his military service. They were about to back down and the "rumble" was all but averted. I breathed a sigh of relief, as their gang leader turned his head away from Stevens to tell his buddies that it was all a mistake. As he did that, Jimmie, who was significantly inebriated, threw a wild punch and cracked the guy on the head. Suddenly the fight was on! As punches were about to be thrown, a police siren went off as a squad car approached with lights flashing. Suddenly, we were all scrambling in different directions to get away from the scene. I barely made it home unscathed but with my prospective career still intact.

Q: So when did you enter the Foreign Service?

QUINN: I entered in August of 1967. So, the following Monday, I showed up at 19th and Pennsylvania where the A-100 class was to gather – at an office building where the junior officer program office was located. I showed up early and went across the street to Walgreens or whatever the drugstore was named. By chance, I happened to sit next to

Lynn Pascoe at the counter of the coffee shop. He was the first person I met in the Foreign Service and we are still friends. We then went over and signed the papers and went through the induction process and then showed up for the A-100 class a few days later over in Rosslyn, and embarked on my career.

Q: OK. You went to the basic officer course, which is the A-100.

QUINN: That's correct.

Q: Could you describe your class?

“JOE COLLEGE” JOINS THE 80TH A-100 JUNIOR OFFICER ENTRY CLASS

QUINN: Ours was the 80th A-100 class. I believe there were about 60 officers, mostly male, but a few women. Probably the name that sticks out the most was Theodore Roosevelt IV. I remember that on the first day, the head training supervisor, an officer named Fred Chapin, gave an overview of the class. He mentioned how many class members there were from Harvard and how many from Princeton and how many from the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. And then in a joking way meant to get a laugh said, “And there are two from Loras College.” It got a big laugh because so very few had ever heard of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: The other class member who was a graduate of Loras was named Chuck Ahlgren, who had studied for the priesthood but dropped out and had subsequently served in the Peace Corps. I had not known him at Loras, since he had graduated a few years before me.

Q: Yes.

QUINN: I don't have many memories of the actual training. There were a few of us who played touch football on the weekends. We had a field trip to Baltimore to see American industry. I made a few friends. Lynn Pascoe, whom I met on the first day was one of the most successful members of our class. He ended up as Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. He was a distinguished Soviet specialist and a Chinese language officer. Others in the class whom I got to know well included Al Adams, who was an ambassador in several places, and one of the six officers who ended up going to Vietnam. Janice Bay, who held some positions in AFSA, was also in our class. I was friends with her and two other women officers, Jerrilynn Pudschun and Gail Gulliksen.

Probably, the most memorable aspect of the entire class was the appraisal that was written on me, not by Fred Chapin but by the other male FSO training officer, whose name I don't recall. He wrote a very severe critique of me. It described me as somebody who went to Loras College, that I had a “Joe College attitude,” which I think came from

my gregarious actions in leading the singing on the bus when we were returning from Baltimore after visiting the National Brewery and drinking too many free beers. Included in the evaluation was a statement that I had studied for the priesthood, which I had not, and the assessment that I would never compete for senior positions in the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh.

QUINN: -- We did not get to see this report at that time. The Foreign Service evaluation system back then included one part that the rated officer did not get to see. A few years later that system was changed and I was able to read the report. I was able to challenge the report because he had me confused with Chuck Ahlgren who had studied for the priesthood and I had not. I was able to point out that he had me confused in that respect, and so his other judgments were suspect as to whether they were about me or not. And so the entire evaluation was thrown out.

Q: Well, what -- were you sort of picking up anything about the Foreign Service culture? I mean how did you feel about being with this group?

QUINN: I was so proud to have made it through the testing process and to have been sworn in up on the eighth floor in a formal ceremony as a Foreign Service Officer. This was my dream come true. I thought that here I was with the others from Harvard and Princeton who had made it through this entire testing process; and we all had been selected because we had gone through this very rigorous set of tests and assessments and been evaluated to be among the very top people in the country. I was thrilled to be part of it. And now to be walking through the doors of the U. S. Government, it was as if I was in that Allen Drury novel, "Advise and Consent." I was just intoxicated with how special and how privileged I felt to be part of this.

The Foreign Service Institute [FSI] building in Roslyn, where our A-100 training class was held, was a newer building, a standard office high rise with a lot of glass and steel. So even though it wasn't filled with chandeliers or a building of relevance in history or anything like that, it was special to me. The woman I was dating at the time and who had worked in the government for several years would laugh at me for romanticizing the building and my experience. But, here I was inside the U.S. Government. It was all very heady, and I was anxious to be a part of it, and wondering where I'd be going. Diplomatic sugarplums danced in my head, as I dreamed those dreams of Europe and the chandeliered ballrooms and the grand salons that I imagined diplomats moved in as a matter of course. This was the destiny I saw for myself.

Q: Yeah, I can remember being a bit concerned that I didn't have a tailcoat --

QUINN: (laughs)

Q: If --

QUINN: I was wondering when I was going to get the training about the wines I would have to know about. And, I was looking forward to learning which corners you turned up on your calling card when you left it on the silver plate when you paid a courtesy call. There was so much to learn about what I thought was the essence of diplomatic life.

Q: Yes. Did you feel out of place, or how did you feel you fit into this new environment with these officers?

QUINN: I don't remember feeling completely out of place, but I certainly was aware that my origins and where I had gone to school were unlike almost anyone else in the room. There were a few class members who in those days were Foreign Service Staff Officers (FSSOs) who maybe didn't have that same elite background and schooling. I think class members started gravitating to, or hanging around with people with similar backgrounds or interests. I remember there was one person in the class named Pat Garland with whom I became friends. I think he was from Illinois, sort of a Midwestern guy like me. So, I remember names, I remember people, but I don't remember a lot of interaction with specific people or anyone becoming my new best friend or anything like that. Even the other officer from Loras, while we got to be a little friendly, we didn't pal around or anything. I had been living out in Maryland while I was going to graduate school, so I knew people out there and had a serious girlfriend named Debbie Kahanowitz, so I spent most of my evenings and weekends with her and my graduate school friends.

TAKING THE WRONG TURN TO MY FIRST ASSIGNMENT

So the training was an experience about learning and being briefed on this and that and planning where I wanted to ask to be assigned. You didn't bid on jobs in those days. You just expressed your interest during an interview with a personnel counselor and the people who were running our class. You got to say what your interests were in terms of geographic specialization or language training and what your first and second choices geographically would be.

And then I took the language test in French, which was the only language I had studied in school. I had taken two years of French in college and I thought I might be able to speak a little bit. I quickly discovered that I couldn't say anything and the teachers conveyed this to me by their looks of severe disappointment. I got a zero plus on my French test. I began to realize that the chances of me being assigned to Paris were not all that great.

Then we started hearing about Vietnam and who among us might be chosen to go to Vietnam. Basically it was if you were single, if you were male and under age 26 [and thus draft eligible] and if you hadn't been in the military, there was a very good chance that you'd be assigned to something called the Pacification Program. This was all occurring in September of 1967 as the disquiet and protests about the war were becoming more and more common. Going to Vietnam was not thought to be such a great assignment as it came with very considerable risks involved. It was certainly not what I or probably anybody had come into the Foreign Service expecting. There were two men

in the class who when they were interviewed volunteered for Vietnam, but I wasn't one of them.

1967-ASSIGNMENT VIETNAM: CLASSMATES CRYING ABOUT MY “DIPLOMATIC DEATH SENTENCE”

QUINN: We went through the six weeks of the A-100 course and on a Friday afternoon at the end, FSI held a sort of graduation at which you were given your first assignment. At the time, you were not told your assignment in advance. Rather you learned it only at the A-100 "graduation" event on that Friday afternoon of the last week of training. That was when you found out. The assignments were announced one by one alphabetically. You walked up and were handed your orders in a nice envelope along with orders for any additional training you were to receive.

After that, most everyone would go on for two weeks of consular training. But those who were going to Vietnam did not go to consular training. The joke was that it was because the Department knew you likely weren't coming back and so why waste money on the training that would never be used.--

Q: (laughs)

QUINN: So the first officer in the class whose name was called was Alvin Adams. He had told everyone he had volunteered to go to Vietnam. It was announced that he was assigned, not to the embassy, but to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program or CORDS in Vietnam. He went up and received his envelope and people applauded. They started going through the list as everyone was anxious to learn who was going where. And there was approving oohs and ahhs when one woman Jerrilynn Pudschun was announced as going to Lyon, and again for Gail Gulliksen, another young woman in the class, going to Singapore. Teddy Roosevelt IV was assigned to Ouagadougou, but he had asked to go to Africa and wanted the French language training. There were assignments around the globe, virtually all eliciting cheers and smiles and applause. So most people were getting something they liked and most of it was with two weeks of consular training followed by language and area study.

Then they got to Kenneth Quinn. Here was the moment I was waiting for. But rather than being excited, I was apprehensive. It was like being in court waiting to hear the jury's verdict in your trial. Were they going to sentence me to Vietnam? Then I heard the words "Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, Vietnam," The other 40 or 50 officers sitting there let out a very sad collective moan after hearing it. There was no applause, only very downcast looks. As I walked back to my seat, some people averted their eyes so as to not see my unhappy countenance. Others mouthed the words, "I'm so sorry." Or they gave me looks of condolence as if at a funeral.

There were six of us in the class assigned to CORDS. There was Adams and myself and then four other names were called, all coming after mine, Sam Smith, Sam Starrett--who

had volunteered to go--Harvey Wechsler and John Zerolis. The class knew that Sam Starrett had asked for Vietnam, but the others as their names were called also elicited moans from the group. This was in contrast to everybody else who got cheered and received happy comments. They were going to be living their Foreign Service dream. We, the condemned, had been relegated to Foreign Service hell, and a possible death sentence, all after 10 months of language training in Vietnamese and area studies.

So afterwards a group of us [including the four Vietnam draftees and the three women officers] went to a place in Georgetown for post-graduation drinks. It was a modern cocktail lounge on M Street, I believe very appropriately named the Pall Mall. It was supposed to be a celebration, but it was more like a wake. Those of us going to Vietnam were downcast and the women officers were literally crying for us. When the cocktail waitress came over and asked "Oh, what's wrong?" One of the women replied "They're going to Vietnam." Then the waitress started crying too.

What added to the "pall" was the fact that everyone in the class, except those of us going to Vietnam, had received orders to take the Consular Course, a two week training block that introduced you to visas and passports. Reflecting the prevalent mood, we posited that we were not being given the training because the Department knew we likely weren't coming back alive and didn't want to waste money training us for something that would never be used. In any event, we had a short break and I believe the Vietnam course started right after New Years in the Vietnam Training Center [VTC], which was in the basement of one of the apartment buildings in a complex called Arlington Towers in Rosslyn.

Q: Yeah.

LEARNING VIETNAMESE-THE MOST DIFFICULT INTELLECTUAL ENDEAVOR I HAVE EVER UNDERTAKEN

QUINN: By then, I actually lived in Arlington Towers, but in a different building. So, for the next 10 months, I would just come downstairs and walk over to the VTC training center each morning, which was a dull, nondescript place where people walked around changing rooms every hour while learning Vietnamese. Six hours a day was spent in the class room and then you would take your tape recorder home and practice at night. It was a depressing regimen in a depressing place. Learning Vietnamese was and still remains the single most difficult intellectual endeavor I have ever undertaken. I couldn't mimic the tones, so I was a very poor student.

Moreover, from the hard language assessment test, my score indicated I had a marginal language aptitude, which would not have gotten me into other hard languages. I wouldn't have been accepted to study Arabic or Japanese or Chinese. But Vietnamese capability was considered a necessity of the war effort, so FSI waived that requirement, and there I was in class trying to learn those impossible tones, which I didn't recognize when I heard them and so didn't mimic them properly.

At the same time I was doing that, I was studying for my PhD comprehensive exams. I had finished all my coursework, but I still had to take comprehensive exams in three areas. So I would be studying for these tests at night and on weekends while also learning Vietnamese. Many PhD candidates would take six months or a year off just to study and prepare for the “comps.” On top of all of this stress, I had a new girlfriend who was very anti-war and constantly raised the moral questions about whether the war effort in Vietnam was right? Is the war worth dying for? The combination of these three factors created enormous stress on me.

THE 1968 TET OFFENSIVE AND DOUBTS ABOUT THE WAR

Then the Tet Offensive took place in February, 1968, very early in our training cycle. That was a psychological trauma, because a number of FSOs were killed, some of them individuals whom we had met at the Vietnam Training Center and had just been a couple of classes ahead of us. Others had been pulled early from training and sent to be refugee officers. Now their bodies were coming home.

Other officers who had survived were sending home audio tapes that they had made when they were trapped in buildings and were being hunted down by the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese Army. Along with all this depressing news was the sense that the war was now going so badly that it wasn't win-able. So you started to ask yourself, what's there to go and fight for or to die for? Plus, there was the sense that from the time you got off the plane in Vietnam, the likelihood was that somebody would be trying to kill you almost immediately. It was all we talked about every hour during the break between language classes.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: So it was an awful, awful period. The Tet offensive on January 31 interjected a whole new anti-war element into the presidential election campaign, which would be most significantly manifested in the Wisconsin primary election scheduled in early April.

President Lyndon Johnson had seemed to be on course for re-nomination and likely election to a second full term in the White House. Having succeeded to the presidency in November 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson had overwhelmed Barry Goldwater in the 1964 race, and was constitutionally eligible to run again. With a unified southern Democratic base and a legacy of passing civil rights legislation that attracted northern liberal and working class Democrats, Johnson seemed a lock as 1967 ended. I was in my fourth month of Vietnamese language training at the State Department Foreign Service Institute in Washington, but uncertain if I would really be deployed since intense negotiations were underway in Paris to end the war. Suddenly, the War burst into the political process on January 31 with the TET offensive. When Viet Cong forces were able to militarily penetrate the American embassy in Saigon, despite the presence of more

than a half a million U.S. troops in the country, it sent a political paroxysm across the country and through the Vietnam Training Center.

Suddenly, the outcome of the conflict became uncertain and the sacrifice of young American soldiers seemed pointless to many. And when Walter Cronkite, the avuncular CBS news anchor sighed during his broadcast and expressed uncertainty about the war being winnable, Johnson famously said to his political advisors that "...if I've lost Cronkite, I've lost middle America."

1968- THE WORST YEAR EVER / VIETNAM AND CIVIL RIGHTS CONVERGE / WASHINGTON BURNING

As protests on campus and anti-draft rallies grew in size and intensity (dissidents would subsequently blow up an ROTC building on the University of Wisconsin campus), pressure grew for an effort within the Democratic Party for a candidate to give voice to these dissident feelings. Into this vortex stepped Senator Eugene McCarthy, who started to attract large gatherings.

As the April 2 Wisconsin primary approached, the unthinkable suddenly loomed. It appeared from party polls that McCarthy would beat Johnson. With an apparent deep seated desire to not be seen as losing that election and re-nomination, Johnson stunned the country when he went on national television on March 31 to announce that he would not be a candidate for re-election.

Then immediately following on the TET / Vietnam issue and Johnson's withdrawal were the political traumas of Martin Luther King being assassinated on April 4 and Bobby Kennedy being murdered on June 5. Coming so soon after President Kennedy's death, it felt as though the country's stability was being cracked. When RFK's funeral took place, I recall watching with great sadness as the hearse and funeral procession crossed Memorial Bridge *en route* to Arlington Cemetery. I could see it clearly from my apartment on the 10th floor of the Washington Building of Arlington Towers.

Even more startling was seeing parts of Washington going up in flames after Dr. King's murder. I still remember coming out of the Vietnam Training Center and looking up and seeing the black smoke billowing up from Washington just across the Potomac River as people were fleeing the city. A few days later, I drove through the city and saw the 82nd Airborne with bayoneted rifles and standing on the street corners throughout the downtown, after they had re-occupied the nation's capital.

McCarthy did win that Wisconsin primary by almost 20 points, but eventually could not deny the nomination to his fellow Minnesotan Vice President Hubert Humphrey at the party convention in Chicago that was beset with violent protests. The tumult within the Democratic Party and conflict over policy on Vietnam opened the way for Richard Nixon's political resurrection and victory in November.

A week after the presidential election I boarded a plane for Saigon and the start of my six year experience in the war zone. It is impossible to know what might have happened to the negotiations that were underway early in 1968 to achieve a cease fire in Vietnam had Johnson remained in the race and been re-elected to the Oval Office.

What is clear, however, is that the Tet Offensive and the outcome of that 1968 Wisconsin primary set off a chain of events that with the King and Robert Kennedy assassinations represents one of the most turbulent periods in recent American political history, culminating six years later with the fall of Saigon, Watergate and Nixon's resignation, which I personally witnessed in the East Room of the White House.

TRAINING FOR VIETNAM

At the Vietnam Training Center I was in a cohort that was called CORDS 6. You had a numerical identity, somewhat like being in the eightieth A-100 course. CORDS had both a short term area studies component and a 10-month language training program. A new CORDS class would begin every four to six weeks. There were really a lot of people in total at the VTC, as everyone called it. Each CORDS class began with an extended multi-week training segment about all of the U.S. government programs being implemented in Vietnam, including: national police / public safety; *chieu hoi* (luring Viet Cong to defect to the government); PSDF (people self-defense force or a civilian militia); land reform; village development; RF/PF (provincial military forces); agriculture; *psy-war* programs; Revolutionary Development cadre (a sort of “up with people” type anti-Viet Cong endeavor); and *phoenix* [the intelligence effort previously run by the CIA to root out the Viet Cong political infrastructure, which had been taken over by the Army and renamed *phung hoang*].

For the first three weeks of training, there were a lot of non-language training students, persons who had been hired as contractors by USAID just to work in Vietnam as field advisors in the provinces. Some were World War II vets or military retirees who were getting back in the government to go overseas as civilians. Others were mid-career civilians looking for adventure or a change in career patterns.

I remember one of the police advisors in our class was a very nice man named John Moxley. He had been the police officer who didn't read Miranda his rights in the famous case that went to the Supreme Court and that eventually led to everybody being read their rights when arrested. So poor John Moxley, had been forced out of the police department, wherever that was, and was now on his way to Vietnam to be a police advisor.

So it was a real motley group of people. Only a small number of the individuals in the class were designated for the 10 months of language study, a mélange of FSOs, former Peace Corps Volunteers and AID direct hire young development officers, almost all males.

After the initial three week orientation, those individuals who were not language students left for Vietnam, while the remaining cohort began full-time language study. We were divided into groups of three or four students with a Vietnamese tutor. You changed tutors every hour. Class consisted of rehearsing and repeating "dialogues" which were like a conversation between two persons. The tutor would say the sentence and then you repeated it, trying to give the correct pronunciation and the correct tones. It was impossibly difficult, and I could not discern the tones and thus did not give the correct intonation when I spoke.

I wasn't the only one who struggled with the language, and sometime we would be so bad that the tutors, mostly young, not terribly sophisticated, women, would break down laughing at us. It was particularly painful for usually successful college graduates to be made to feel like such incompetent failures.

In written Vietnamese there are diacritical marks that tell you which tone to say, but I had to learn how to make a rising tone and a falling tone. I finally did it by standing in front of a mirror in the bathroom of my apartment and watching my Adam's apple move as I said each word. It was said that those who could sing could mimic the tones and learn tonal languages like Vietnamese with ease. In grade school in La Crosse, my singing was so off key that during music class, the Nun sent me to the back of the room to color and draw pictures with Willie Housler a German immigrant boy who could speak no English. So, I ended up in the group of CORDS 6 students who moved at a slower pace. We were evaluated every six weeks to see if we were proceeding at an acceptable pace, and if you couldn't keep up, you would be sent to Vietnam early. This was now one more stress inducing aspect of the entire period.

There were a few diversions. At one point, we went off to Catoctin National Park Lodge in Maryland for a retreat. We played an insurgency war game out there with participants assuming different roles in a Vietnamese province. One would be a village chief, another was a merchant who was a secret Vietcong, and still another was an American development advisor, etc. I remember my A-100 classmate Harvey Wechsler was playing a government official and I was the secret Vietcong. Somehow, he had figured out that I was an enemy agent so he assassinated me. I remember him coming in saying, "All right, Quinn, you're dead." I was irate at a summary execution and was screaming at him that he couldn't do that. But we were good friends. We got to be friendly with everybody in the class at these off site events.

MY FIRST DISSENT AND ALMOST BEING THROWN OUT OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

But in the training process, all the pressures involved took a heavy toll. Harvey Wechsler was having a really tough time with the language, plus he had a lot of doubts about the policy. So he went to the people who were running the Vietnam Training Center and told them that the language was just too difficult for him and asked to be sent early to

Vietnam. He emphasized that he was not trying to get out of going to Vietnam, but just did not want to go through this language frustration anymore.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: Rather than accommodate him, they came down on him like a ton of bricks. Eventually the leadership of the VTC threw him out of the Vietnam program for refusing to follow discipline and sent him back to the State Department. There, he was put down in the bowels of the building answering letters from people critical about the war. He couldn't take it for very long and soon he resigned from the Service. It was so incredibly sad.

Then there was another wonderful individual in our language class who was a second tour officer named Terry Tiffany. He had been serving in Latin America and, even though he was married, had volunteered to go to Vietnam. When he arrived, he was a strong supporter of the policy, but the doubts that emerged as he studied Vietnamese began to gnaw at him and undercut his desire to learn the language. When there was a need identified for some officers to go to Vietnam early, he volunteered and went there ahead of us. But when he was on the ground, his doubts were reinforced and finally he went to somebody at the Embassy and said he would not be part of the war effort anymore and asked to be sent back home.

So Tiffany came home from Vietnam and I believe he had to resign as well. He had only been there for a few months and had had such a crisis of conscience with the policy and was so unhappy that they sent him back to the U.S. This really set off some ripples in the Department and senior officials sent a message to the new Director of the Vietnam Training Center, Cliff Nelson, asking why he wasn't weeding out individuals with doubts like Tiffany before money was spent sending them to Vietnam.

Cliff Nelson had been in Vietnam. The popular image of him among the students was the photo we saw of him wearing a pith helmet and out in the field in his shorts. He was a bit of an object of derision among some of the officers for being a caricature of someone gone native. He was very gung-ho for the policy and the program. So shortly after getting the message from the Department about weeding out doubters, he convened the entire VTC student body, all of the classes: CORDS 6, CORDS 7, CORDS 8, CORDS 9, etc. He gave a big talk based on the Terry Tiffany case, and how the Government did not want to repeat the experience of officers getting to Vietnam only to leave because of their doubts about the policy. He told the assembled trainees that it was very important if anybody had any such doubts, if anybody had any hesitations about what we are doing in Vietnam, they needed to be straight forward. They should come and tell him about it, because they owed it to the Government and the Department to be honest.

As I listened, I thought to myself, "Well, this is great. Our leaders are very open and want to hear about the doubts that I and others felt, doubts that were expressed openly by many officers in almost every conversation we had in the post TET offensive period." Nelson concluded his remarks by saying that anyone with any doubts should come and see him

in his office. As soon as the meeting ended, I rushed out the door wanting to be at the front of the huge line I expected would be forming outside his office. But when I got up to his office, I was shocked to see that there was no one else there.

Then Nelson came walking up and, seeing me, asked: "What are you doing here?" I replied that "I just heard you say that anyone who has any doubts about our policy and involvement should come and see you, so I'm here to see you." He was so taken aback that as we walked into his office, he viscerally laid into me shouting, "I don't know what's wrong with you. I don't know why a red-blooded American boy can't go and serve his country and fight for his country." He told me I was a disgrace, and that he was going to throw me out of the Vietnam training program, and, if he could, have me put out of the Foreign Service.

I was stunned and stammered a reply saying that "I'm just doing what you said by coming here. I have doubts about the policy and I wanted to be honest." He shouted for me to get out of his sight and repeated that he didn't want me in his program and that he would do all that he could to have me kicked out of the Foreign Service.

I went back to class thinking that there was not much point to studying Vietnamese anymore and wondering what was going to happen to me. I thought that I had finished my career before it even got started. He might well have me put out of the VTC program, but apparently the word came back from State telling him that the Department was having a really hard time getting anybody to go to Vietnam, and that they had invested a lot of time in my training and that I had not asked out, so he should let me stay. So a few days later he called me back in. I thought the end was coming. Instead, he told me that the "powers that be" think I should stay in the program, so I was still in. He told me to go back to class.

So [laughs], that was quite an adventure. But through all of this, I was still doing pretty poorly in learning the language. The senior language officer who was running the program was named Chick Sheehan. He was this very garrulous Irishman who was given to jokes and harsh language, but he also would be tough about the language study and very serious about it. I liked him a lot. It got to where I had finished all but the last six weeks of the course and he said to me, "I think you have gone as far as you can go, and that it's time for you to go to Vietnam." This was in August or September 1968.

I didn't want to leave right then. I still had my girlfriend and wanted more time with her. Plus, the election was coming and many of us held onto the thought that perhaps, depending on the outcome of the presidential election, the war effort might suddenly wind down and we wouldn't have to go. Most of all, I didn't want to have a feeling of failure by being selected out of the language training. I asked him to please, please let me finish the course. He relented and I got to stay until the end of the course in November, right after the election. When I tested, I was a S-2, R-2, a minimum proficiency grade, while some students in our class were receiving 3+ scores [on a 1 to 5 scale where 5 was a native speaker].

At the same time I was studying Vietnamese, I also was preparing for and ultimately passed the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams in International Relations at the University of Maryland in the summer of 68. I remember the night when I finished them; I went with one of the other graduate students, a wonderful older student named Dick Clarke who had been one of my roommates in College Park, to a Washington Senators game down at RFK (Robert F. Kennedy) Memorial Stadium. We saw Frank Howard play. I remember sitting there in the upper deck just feeling this enormous sense of relief at having survived and made it this far.

Except for when my Mother died unexpectedly, this had been the most difficult year of my life in many respects: the pressure of trying to learn the impossible tonal Vietnamese language; studying for the Ph.D. exams; the sense of uncertainty about risking my life by going to Vietnam in the post TET period when so many officers had died and the war seemed pointless; the prospect of being sent early if I did not continue to make progress in the language; almost being thrown out of the Foreign Service for expressing doubts about the policy; all exacerbated by the intense relationship with the woman I was dating, Diane Knuckles, who had a passion for civil rights and against the war. I wasn't sure I wanted to leave her. She kept asking me if I knew what I was doing in going to Vietnam.

It was an extraordinarily difficult period psychologically. My nerves were badly frayed. Sometimes I wondered if I was going to make it through impact of all these various pressures. I worried about mentally faltering under all of the stress. It was the hardest thing I ever had to endure.

PREPARING FOR MY FIRST DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENT: PART I- WHICH HAND GUN TO BUY?

In the middle of all of this, as it started to get close to the time to go, the discussion turned to what kind of gun to buy, because it was made very plain that we would not be issued a weapon when we got to Vietnam. The training program did, however, include optional training in firing weapons and we had weekly target practice and small arms training at the old USAID Police Officers Training Academy. It was in Georgetown right across the Key Bridge on M Street in the old car barn where the trolleys and the electric buses used to be kept. It was easy to walk over from Roslyn once a week for a couple hours.

One of the FSOs in our class, Mike Skol, who was a fairly small guy, had bought a huge .44 Magnum pistol, the same weapon that Dirty Harry [Clint Eastwood] used in his famous eponymous San Francisco police movie. It was the biggest and most powerful hand gun made and had incredible stopping power. But it had strong recoil and was very obtrusive and thus would be hard to carry and conceal.

This led to endless discussion among our class members about which gun we should buy. So I began to read up on the assessments of various types of pistols. The training staff passed out articles about the ballistic analysis of the killing capability of different types of

hand guns and bullets. This was what I was doing instead of having consular training or learning about which wine to serve at dinner. I remember reading about the differences between the snub-nosed .38 Chief Special revolver and a .38 long barreled pistol and the .44 Magnum.

The bottom line point that I distilled from all of this research was that if you shot someone with a .38, it would kill them, but they might not die before they shot and killed you. So the stopping power of the .38 was not that great. You could wound an adversary badly and if you shot them in the right place, they would die, but not quickly enough to protect yourself. The .38 had those drawbacks. On the other hand, the snub-nosed versions were easy to conceal and easy to get out and fire, as opposed to a big holstered .44 Magnum, which, because it was so bulky, could take a long time to get out to start shooting, during which time your adversary could shoot you several times.

Next, I started reading about the various kinds of ammunition and became fascinated with .38 bullets called Super Vel, or super velocity ammunition. This was a much more powerfully packed .38 round that could hit with a greatly increased impact and could have stopping power approaching a .44 Magnum. Finally, the day came, when I had done all this studying, and now had to make my decision. I remember going down to one of the gun shops in D.C. and buying a snub nose .38 Chief Special and a box of Super Vel ammunition. When the time came, I packed it in my air freight going to Saigon. Even though it was illegal to ship a gun across a state line, we believed that nobody was going to search air freight going to Vietnam. So that was how I got my gun to Vietnam.

In my basic training in the Foreign Service, I never did learn how to fold up the edge of calling cards or to select wine or anything about the fancy life I had assumed would be involved as a diplomat. What I learned, instead, was how to buy a pistol with which I could kill people with a great deal of assurance, which seemed important, given my expectation that Viet Cong secret terrorists would be trying to kill me within 10 minutes after I got off the plane in Saigon.

PREPARING FOR MY FIRST DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENT: SPECIAL WARFARE TRAINING AT FORT BRAGG

During our long-term Vietnam training, we went to Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina for a week of jungle warfare training. I particularly remember the lecture by a Special Forces NCO who talked about escaping and evading behind enemy lines. Part of his lecture was about what to do if you come upon a lone Viet Cong sentry and you did not have a weapon. He then demonstrated the use of a piece of camping equipment called a finger saw. It was a jagged wire connected to two large circular finger loops. By putting it on a finger on each hand, it could be pulled back and forth to cut through fairly small tree branches or the stalk of a large plant.

The instructor then demonstrated how you could use this as a weapon when evading. You would sneak up behind the armed guard and then you would cross your hands so that you

made a loop and from behind him, in one quick motion, you would put the jagged wire over his head and down to his neck and then you would pull your hands tight and cut his throat. You would garrote him and kill him.

The instructor did this demonstration with such high drama that I was left feeling that I was almost certain to find myself in just such an incredibly threatening situation once I got to Vietnam. When he finished somebody asked where we could get one of those finger saws, which was now perceived as an absolutely vital piece of equipment. He replied they were for sale at the Special Forces store. As soon as the lecture was over, I and several others ran, we didn't walk, to the Special Forces store to buy one. I packed it in my air freight so it would be there when I arrived, since I was sure that we could easily be shot down flying out to the provinces, and I would have to have it to survive. Of course, I never crashed and was never down behind enemy lines. So I never took out the saw and it is still in the original package some place in my basement almost 50 years later.

Then that same week we had other kinds of training at Fort Bragg. We got to walk through the Booby Trap Trail, which was actually very useful. The Booby Trap Trail was designed to show the various types of small land mines and other devices that the Viet Cong would set along foot paths in villages to prevent government forces from entering their base areas. These were devilishly clever devices with trip wires covered in grass, or hand grenades in trees so that if your head would brush a limb, an explosive device would fall and explode. Other traps were just a disguised hole in the ground, which when you stepped on it your foot would go through and be impaled on a Punji stick -- a sharp pointed wooden stake covered with excrement. In this way, your foot would not only be wounded, but also poisoned and infected.

All these devices were just models, of course, which didn't explode or injure you, but they taught you what to watch for when you were in Vietnam. I remembered every one of them as I walked down many jungle paths over the next several years and saw soldiers injured. The invaluable lesson I learned was always step exactly in the footprint of the man walking ahead of you.

At Fort Bragg, we were taught to take apart, re-assemble and then fire six weapons, all in one afternoon. It included the M-16 automatic rifle, the M-2 carbine, the M-1 rifle, the M-3 submachine gun, the .45 caliber pistol and the Thompson submachine gun.

The final training I recall was the "Gabriel Demonstration." It involved walking through the jungle and suddenly being confronted by Special Forces troops who would ambush you. They were hidden in a foxhole covered with grass, so well camouflaged that you couldn't see that they were there even when you were right next to them. Suddenly the hidden soldier would spring up and fire his weapon loaded with blanks right at you. This experience would come vividly back to me two years later when I was walking through a Viet Cong base area with South Vietnamese troops and the enemy could be hidden just a few feet away. But at the time of the training, it just reinforced the sense that we were

going into this swirling cauldron of never ending danger, only lightly protected and fairly unlikely to survive it all.

THE 1968 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION / IF HUMPHREY WINS THE WAR COULD BE OVER

As we were finishing our 10 month language training course, it was November 1968 and the presidential election was upon us. My anti-war girlfriend came over and we watched the returns while drinking *Mateus rose* wine and eating cheese in my studio apartment in Arlington Towers. She was in love with Humphrey, and Nixon was all about continuing the war. When Nixon edged out Humphrey, it really was the event that created the final strain on our relationship. It was clear that I would now definitely leave for Vietnam and she was asking how I could be going off to do this.

So, two weeks before Thanksgiving of 1968, I got on a plane for only the second or third time in my life and for the first time ever left the United States and flew off to Tokyo and then to Taiwan, Hong Kong and eventually to Vietnam. I had a coveted black Diplomatic Passport, but nothing about what was ahead for me was at all about diplomacy.

Q: Well, in your own mind as you're thinking about it, how'd you feel about the war the news and all?

QUINN: Well, I was asking myself is this worth dying for. I wasn't sure that it was. On the other hand, being in the Foreign Service was my dream. I didn't want to give that up. What would I do, where would I go, if I resigned. Moreover, my two sisters were still in school and my Dad had lost his job and didn't have any way to take care of them. They were living with relatives. So my sisters became my dependents for whom I was going to receive a Separate Maintenance Allowance while in Vietnam to help support them and pay for their schooling. Needing that extra money for them made the decision to get on the plane and go easier.

So while Vietnam was never the place I would have picked for myself, and it was never where I would have gone on my own, and I wasn't looking forward to it with any positive anticipation, it was something that I was going to do. It was something I couldn't avoid. It was to be endured and somehow survived, after which I would go on to whatever a real Foreign Service career was about. It was definitely a "wrong turn" in my career.

Q: How about when you were back home? Were you getting any feedback from your family, your father, or relatives?

QUINN: I don't remember any. That was a very hard period for my Dad. His life had collapsed and he was just struggling to keep things together. I don't remember going home very much. My family was now living in Nyack in Rockland County just outside New York City. I'd go up to visit from time to time. My Dad's sister's husband had been in World War II. For the World War II generation, Vietnam was just more of the same.

But, being in the protesting generation that was the '60s, the anti-war sentiment was palpable. It was amazing how much pressure there was and how many doubts there were about the war. I certainly had more pressure from contemporaries than my family, especially after Tet. Then with *Vietnamization*, it seemed clear that we weren't going to stay there until we won the war, and that we were now in the process of leaving. That was a very different atmosphere than before Tet. You had to ask, is this something now to go and die for. That was that was the hard part -- that was the terrible part of it. No one wanted to be the last person to die in Vietnam in a war we were no longer trying to win.

Q: What about -- you were in Washington during Tet.

QUINN: Yes.

Q: How did that play with you?

QUINN: Well, the thing that I remember is being so stunned that the Vietcong could get into the American Embassy in Saigon. That was such an unthinkable thing to happen. It caused me and many others to think that, if we can't keep the American Embassy safe, then how could we make anything else in that country secure? Even though I'd never been there, I grew up with the sense of American military superiority. After winning the wars with Japan and Germany at the same time, and fighting the Chinese and North Koreans to a stalemate in Korea, and when we had 500,000 troops there, how could it be that this jungle army could get into the American Embassy, of all places? It was the symbolism of that and what it seemed to portend that made such an enormous impact. It really brought home to me how precarious the situation was and how difficult it was for our policy.

RETROSPECTIVE ON 1968 WHEN VIEWED FROM 2018

Fifty years later, I wrote about the incredible impact that the TET offensive had on the attitudes toward the war, and how all of the events of 1968 combined to fundamentally disrupt the political cohesion of America. Although I did not realize it at the time, I was living through one of the most tumultuous years in American history, one which ended the period of post-World War II triumph and optimism.

JANUARY 30, 1968 -- THE TET OFFENSIVE / SIX HOURS THAT ENDED AMERICAN TRIUMPHALISM

January 1968 had not started in an apocalyptic fashion. On New Year's Day, the Beatles were atop the pop charts with their hit "*Hello, Goodbye*" followed closely by Aretha Franklin's "*Chain of Fools*." Two songs that might in retrospect have been seen as prophetic in terms of Lyndon Johnson's political fortunes and the reputation of his national security advisors by months end.

The month also featured two sporting events that fascinated the entire country. On January 14, Vince Lombardi and the Green Bay Packers put small town Wisconsin on the map with a triumphant 33-14 victory over the Oakland Raiders in only the second Super Bowl ever played. A week later, in the first regular season college basketball game ever televised nationally, the underdog University of Houston ended UCLA's 47 game winning streak.

The triumphal sense that America was a force for good and capable of accomplishing almost anything it put its mind to-- having begun with victory in World War II and taken us to space--still pervaded the country. As a result, Lyndon Johnson seemed securely ensconced in the White House as he was preparing to launch his re-election campaign. While there were some disquieting signs that anti-war elements were causing unrest on college campuses--something I had witnessed as an Instructor at the University of Maryland--as the year began, the opinion polls still showed a firm majority supporting the war effort in Vietnam.

Indeed, if there were doubts about any military situation in the world at the beginning of 1968, it might have been about the aggressive behavior of North Korea. The regime in Pyongyang infiltrated a military assassination squad into the South which launched an attack on the Blue House attempting to kill President Park Chung-hee. This was followed by the capture of the U.S. Naval ship *Pueblo* and the temporary detention of the crew. Fascinatingly, 50 years later, despite the harsh year-long rhetoric, the North Korean advance guard landing in Seoul in January 2018 was to participate in the Olympics and led by K-Pop girl group singing idol named Hyon Song-wol.

Saturday January 27, 1968 was the first day of *Tet Mau Than*, the Vietnamese New Year celebration which marked the beginning of the Year of the Monkey. While the media ran stories about the informal military cease fire that was going into effect across South Vietnam, as a long term Vietnamese language student at the State Department Foreign Service institute, I was immersed in learning phrases to extend wishes for good health and prosperity.

As a 25 year old, brand new Foreign Service Officer from Dubuque, Iowa, my visions of diplomatic soirees in chandeliered ballrooms in Paris or London had been crushed when, as a single, unmarried and draft-eligible male, the personnel mavens at Foggy Bottom assigned me to 10 months of language training followed by a tour in the provinces of South Vietnam as a pacification advisor.

Our training center was in a drab, charmless basement of the Arlington Towers apartment complex in Rosslyn, just across the Key Bridge from Georgetown. For six hours a day, we would be in small groups of four to five officers and a "tutor," squeezed into windowless rooms, endeavoring to mimic the seemingly impossible sing-song tonal language that was Vietnamese.

I could not have realized that this setting would provide me a front row seat to the most tumultuous period in American Politics since the Civil War. In a remarkable connection

back to that most divisive internecine conflict, January 30, 1968 was the first day a performance would be held in Ford's Theater since April 14, 1865, the day Abraham Lincoln was shot.

Ten months later, as I boarded a plane to fly to Saigon and my assignment in the Mekong Delta, the country, our politics, race relations and the war effort would again be forever changed, in a manner not dissimilar to the Civil War.

It would all begin on January 30 when the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong , breaking the traditional "New Year's" truce, opened a surprise nation-wide attack. The images of the fighting, which impacted every major population center in South Vietnam including the capital of Saigon, flowed almost instantly into millions of homes across America via television, sent by a new generation of skeptical, young correspondents, reporting first hand from the scene of battles.

While the fighting was intense and the number of American casualties the highest ever, the single most dramatic and impactful event of the TET Offensive, and, in retrospect the entire Vietnam War, occurred at 2:45am Saigon time on January 31. It was then that a 20 man Viet Cong sapper team blew a hole in the wall of the brand new U.S. Embassy and rushed inside to storm the building. Frustrated by the ballistic doors, they marauded about the grounds in search of targets.

In the most dramatic episode of the Embassy assault, several of the attackers had gained access to an annex building where a senior official, George "Jake" Jacobson (who four years later would be my boss) was trapped without a weapon on the top floor.

As the attackers were making their way up the stairs inside the building, Jake opened the window and yelled to a Marine Security Guard for help. The Marine threw his .45 caliber pistol up to Jacobson, who, according to the reports making their way back to the Vietnam Training Center in Arlington, spun around and shot his would be assassin in the face.

In tactical terms, the assault on the Embassy was a failure. By 920am, just six hours later, the episode had concluded. The guerillas had not been able to get into the chancery building. All of the Viet Cong were dead, their bodies strewn around the Embassy grounds where Ambassador Ellsworth came to inspect them with a coterie of western journalists recording every image.

But in strategic terms, the penetration of the U.S. diplomatic compound, the heart of American power and authority, was the single most traumatic and devastating aspect of the Tet Offensive. For the television reports of it undermined the confidence of the American people in the conduct of the war, and the honesty of the government officials speaking about it. Thus began the erosion of the will of the country to prevail in the conflict.

More than anything that happened during the month long country-wide TET offensive, the perception that even with 500,000 U.S. military personnel in country, we were not even able to protect the Embassy-- the most vital center of our operations--spread across America. Even for military hawks, the view took hold that something was profoundly flawed in the war effort, and that the President and General Westmoreland had badly misled the American people and foolishly ensnarled us in an un-winnable conflict.

The visit to Vietnam of CBS evening news anchor Walter Cronkite in February and his on air commentary upon his return expressing doubts that victory was possible, was the dagger to the heart of President Johnson's re-election bid. Approval ratings of the war effort dropped below 50% in just one month, and as a result, the insurgent Democratic candidate Senator Gene McCarthy came close to pulling an upset over LBJ in the New Hampshire primary.

Johnson who had produced a stunning array of legislative accomplishments in civil and voting rights following the JFK assassination, had in effect presided over what would be the final year of America's post-World War II triumphalism. Up to this point, this was an ever ascending period of U.S. global leadership and dominance, which made New York the commercial capital of the world, Washington the epicenter of global military and diplomatic power and influence, and America be seen as the ubiquitous bulwark against Communism.

Then in a stunning array of increasingly traumatic political tremors and tragedies, America's triumphal position came undone in violent paroxysms that rendered the country's political fabric, deepened racial divisions and intensified opposition to the War. In late March, as the Wisconsin primary approached, trailing badly in the polls, Johnson stunned the country by withdrawing from the presidential race.

That was followed just a few days later by an enormous racial earthquake on April 4 with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I can still vividly recall standing transfixed outside our training center in Arlington, as huge plumes of black smoke rose out of our burning national capital, which had not experienced such a widespread conflagration since the War of 1812. Cars filled with government employees and business people fled home across the Key Bridge, carrying with them the remnants of a decade of improved race relations.

That weekend when the fires had been put out and order restored by units of the 82nd Airborne flown in from North Carolina, I drove into D.C. and observed the results of the rage that the tragic murder of Dr. King had unleashed. The sight of burned buildings and helmeted soldiers carrying rifles with fixed bayonets seemingly on every street corner remains with me to this day.

It was then, in the midst of the charred ashes of American political unity that Robert Kennedy stepped to center stage. Carrying the mantle of Camelot, he appeared to offer the chance to restore the ascendancy of the New Frontier and the justice his brother Jack had pledged to African Americans. It seemed that the triumphalism of post-World War II

America that JFK had symbolized could be restored. If there was any hope of undoing the damage to the body politic of the past four months, Bobby Kennedy personified that possibility. Indeed the vibrancy of his campaign and soaring rhetoric, made millions feel that the ship of state was being righted.

And then...and then, in a hotel ballroom, that last chance for redemption was shattered forever on June 5 by an assassin's bullet that took Robert Kennedy's life and with it the possibility of restoring political tranquility to the nation. Anti-war protests, demonstrations in inner cities and turmoil at the Democratic national convention in Chicago that produced harsh responses by law enforcement that critics referred to as "police riots" left the political process convulsed. Watching the hearse carrying Bobby's body across Memorial Bridge *en route* to Arlington Cemetery, I recall feeling an incredible sense of depression about the future of the country

With the election of Richard Nixon later that year and the beginning of Vietnamization, it was clear that the U.S. was no longer trying to win the war, only to find a way out. In that situation, the attitude of "no one wanting to be the last person to die in Vietnam", spread through the U.S. Army eroding discipline and morale, especially among draftees, and would eventually lead to stories of "fragging" American officers who were too aggressive.

While Nixon's election can be seen as temporarily providing a respite to the political turmoil that had, like an Iowa tornado, swirled the nation uncontrollably, events over the next few years continued to keep tensions high. The killings at Kent State, the Cambodian incursion and eventually Watergate, which I observed first hand as a member of the National Security Council staff, left America exhausted, divided and without the will to continue the Vietnam struggle.

The ignominious disgrace of the evacuation of Saigon in April, 1975 with the American ambassador fleeing the advancing North Vietnamese Army, was the final blow against American triumphalism. It was the culmination of seven years of political upheaval, all of which began on January 30, when those 20 Viet Cong soldiers blew their way into the American Embassy, the very same building from which the helicopter would take off carrying the American Ambassador and with him the remnants of America's reputation as a dependable ally and a bulwark against Communism, and the sense that triumphal America could do anything.

Q: Well, when did you go out to Vietnam?

QUINN: When training finished, I spent a few days in New York where my Aunt Kitty, my Grandmother Maude and my Uncle Johnny Keating held a farewell party for me in Barone's Tavern on Dyckman Avenue in upper Manhattan. It was in the same neighborhood that Lew Alcindor lived, before decamping for UCLA and a basketball career as Kareem Abdul Jabbar. It was a neighborhood bar and grill, with an ambience straight out of the 1954 movie *Marty*. When I returned to D.C., I sold my car and put a

few things in storage and flew with my CORDS 6 classmates first to Hawaii and then onto Japan. It was all so incredibly exotic.

MY INTRODUCTION TO ASIA

We stayed at the Okura Hotel in Tokyo, which was the top place in the country. We had a few days there and I remember going by train to Kyoto to visit the historic temples and where I had my first Kobe beef at the Suehiro restaurant. Then it was on to Osaka where we explored the Dotonbori entertainment area. When we tried to go in one of the bars, we were denied entrance because it was “Japanese only.” Japan has always seemed mysterious and its culture hard to penetrate. That is why it was so fascinating.

From there we went to Taiwan for a week of agricultural development training in Tai Chung, the most memorable of which was the demonstration of how semen was extracted from a boar. The idea was for us to see how much Taiwan had accomplished, because this was our model for what we wanted Vietnam to become in terms of agriculture and rural development. We also had a few days in Taipei. China was so different from Japan, so much more approachable and open to foreigners.

One of our classmates from our A-100 Class, Blaine Porter, was assigned to the embassy there and he took us out every night. One night we went to a Chinese night club that seemed to have been taken out of a 1930s American movie but with Chinese singers and a chorus line performing American songs in Chinese. I loved it and didn’t want to leave. I had my first haircut and scalp massage from a woman barber, which made me think about what I had been missing all of those years. On our last night one of his Chinese businessman contacts took us all to the hot springs resort town of Peitou for a seven course meal with Geisha like attendants singing opera and serving the food. If I wasn’t thrilled about going to Vietnam, Asia was beginning to really place a hold on me.

Our last stop before Saigon was a weekend in Hong Kong. Al Adams, who knew his way around because his Dad had worked for Pan Am, had convinced me to join him and book a room at the Peninsula Hotel. Our other classmates had found something much, much cheaper at a YMCA out on Nathan Road. When we arrived at the airport, there was a Rolls Royce with bellhops in their all white 1940s style uniforms with little round hats, there to pick up Al and me, while the others were trying to figure out which Public Light bus to take. I remember their incredulous, jealous looks as we drove off in our chauffeured limousine.

Hong Kong was so incredibly different in 1968 than now. The only tall building was the Hilton Hotel near the U.S. Consulate on the Island. The elegant Peninsula Hotel was right on the waterfront of the Kowloon side with unobstructed views across Victoria Harbor and the Peak on the main island. I can still recall watching the Star Ferry traversing the harbor and Chinese style junks endlessly moving back and forth, while sitting in the breakfast room on the second floor drinking exquisite freshly-squeezed orange juice, eating buttered toast and reading the South China Morning Post. Colonial life seemed

quite addictive. I was really beginning to like Asia. I never got tired of coming to Hong Kong for R&R.

But then...but then, it was time to fly to Vietnam. In those days, there was fear of anti-aircraft attacks even on commercial planes, so airline pilots would keep a high altitude and then cork screw down to land at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon. We arrived in the afternoon and I recall that it was extremely hot as we walked across the tarmac to the processing area, and then loaded onto a military bus for the trip downtown. From the minute I walked out the door of the terminal, I expected the attempt to kill us would come almost instantly. That was the impression I had from everything I had seen and read about the war. I expected the violence would be incessant, but nothing happened. The streets were peaceful and the bus ride uneventful.

That was when I began to understand the dynamic of news reporting across oceans. The violence in the war zone in Vietnam was news there because it happened only infrequently. However, those viewing the news in the U.S. perceived the violence to be constant, because that was all that they saw. They never saw the hours and hours of uneventful, even placid life that could be the reality on the ground.

ROOM 428 AT THE EXCELSIOR HOTEL / THANKSGIVING IN SAIGON

In any event, we made it to our hotel without incident. I figured it must be an aberration and, as we checked in, considered myself lucky to not yet have been shot at. I only remember the name of the non-descript hotel at which we stayed and my room number, because they were listed as my home address on my Vietnamese gun permit that was issued to me during our initial week in Saigon before being assigned to one of the province advisory teams. Needless to say, the Excelsior was far, far below the standards of the Peninsula in Hong Kong, where we had spent the previous night.

Saigon was a city still on edge from the Tet Offensive eight months earlier which had brought the war and firefights to the streets of the capital city. There was a 10pm curfew and all U.S. military personnel had to carry their M-16 rifles with them. I still have the memory of seeing an American G.I. walking down the main street carrying his rifle in one hand while using the other to hold his Vietnamese girlfriend's hand.

It was just a few days before Thanksgiving of 1968 when we arrived. I remember that because I had Thanksgiving dinner at the USO (United Services Organization) across Nguyen Hue Boulevard from the Excelsior.

Q: Yeah.

QUINN: I remember going over to the USO at 7pm only to discover that they were already closing down. I felt so lonely and now depressed because I was going to miss my one chance to have Thanksgiving dinner. The USO staff felt so sorry for me that they brought the food back out just to feed me. It was nothing special, just cafeteria style, and

I recall having some mildly warm turkey loaf, watery gravy and dressing. As I was sitting all alone under fluorescent lights, eating off paper plates on a plastic table, I noticed large envelopes taped up on the walls, each with a state name on the outside. Intrigued, I got up and walked over to the one marked "Iowa." Inside were dozens and dozens of letters written by school kids to soldiers overseas. I took some out and sat back down at the table. Reading these sweet letters filled with good wishes and descriptions of scenes back home, while I ate my tepid turkey loaf, is still one of the most memorable Thanksgiving meals I have ever had.

Q: Well, wasn't there sort of anybody to kind of sponsor you when you –

GIVING MY GUN TO MY BEST FRIEND SO HE COULD STAY ALIVE

QUINN: Oh there was somebody from USAID Personnel who met us and gave us some guidance, but no, there wasn't a sponsor. We were there in Saigon for about a week for an in-country orientation before we were assigned to a region and a province. I remember that Al Adams, with whom I had stayed in the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong, was going up to Da Nang for an interview in what was called Military Region 1 or *I Corps*, which was the northern-most part of South Vietnam.

The impression one had at the time was that *I Corps* was the most dangerous part of the country because it was where the most main force North Vietnamese units were. I was really worried for him. Al had not brought a gun with him to Vietnam, but my air freight had arrived. I opened up my trunk and took out my .38 Chief Special and my Super Vel ammunition and I went over to his room. I said something like the following, "Al, you're going off to I Corps, and into the belly of the beast." "You need protection." As I handed him my pistol, I added, "Here, you take my gun. You're going to need it more than me." Al responded emotionally, taking it as a great gesture of friendship on my part. He went up north, had his interview, came back alive, gave me back my pistol and thanked me for it.

Q: And what happened to him?

QUINN: He took the job as a District Advisor in I Corps and did about a year of his initial 18 month tour there. He then came back to Saigon and was interviewed and chosen as Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's aide in the embassy. While he was there, he fell in love with a Vietnamese woman who was an employee of Pan Am, which hired a number of very sophisticated young women in Saigon in those days. He did a couple of more years in Vietnam as aide to Ambassador Bunker, married his girlfriend and then was assigned to work at the NSC at the White House. I eventually followed him to that job in 1974 when he moved over to State as Special Assistant to Henry Kissinger. Al recommended me to Bill Stearman who hired me to join the NSC in April 1974. So, Al and I remained very good friends through all those years. When he left the job with Kissinger, I was going to put in to replace him, but Brent Scowcroft privately counseled me to avoid the job because of how difficult HAK could be.

UNDERSTANDING THE MAZE OF MACV

QUINN: -- In Vietnam, administratively we were still State Department officers as that was the organization that sent my pay check to the bank every two weeks. However, we were seconded to USAID as development officers in Vietnam. While USAID acted as our personnel system in Vietnam, USAID would then, in turn, assign us to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam [MACV] where we would become part of the joint civilian/military advisory organization, known as Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support or CORDS. USAID had some of its career professional staff who did stand-alone USAID projects in Vietnam, but the larger tail that wagged the USAID dog was the number of temporary hire USAID officers and FSOs who were assigned to the CORDS provincial advisory program. At the end of that first week, I was assigned as a Rural Development Advisor in Sa Dec Province in Military Region 4 in the Mekong Delta, as part of MACV/CORDS Advisory Team 65.

To understand how all this worked, it is important to first point out that there was a four star commanding general of all United States Armed Forces in the Republic of Vietnam [USARV], who was also known as COMUS- MACV. General Westmoreland had just left this position as I arrived and his replacement was General Creighton Abrams, a decorated World War II veteran, but who had not commanded troops on the ground in Vietnam.

Abrams wore two hats. Number one, he was the commanding general of USARV- all of the American military forces that were deployed in or operated into the country. Those were the Army and Marine divisions, such as: the Ninth Division [the “Old Reliables”] that was in the northern part of the Mekong Delta which was militarily known as IV Corps; the 25th division [Tropic Lightning] deployed in the “Parrot’s Beak” area northwest of Saigon in III Corps; the First Division [Big Red One] in II and III Corps; and the First and Third Marine Divisions [Marine Amphibious Force] in I Corps including near the DMZ.

It included all of these US military combat units and US Air Force [in Vietnam, Thailand and Guam] as well as U.S. Navy units [the brown water boats on Vietnamese rivers and blue water ships off the coast], which operated independent of and separate from South Vietnamese military units all over the country. The headquarters that controlled and supported and coordinated all of these stand-alone U.S. forces was known as USARV and was located at Bien Hoa, a large city about 45 minutes from Saigon with its own military airport, considered at one point to be the busiest in the world. Abrams, as the Commanding General of USARV, had a three star general as his deputy who ran the day to day operations of all of these U.S. combat and support units.

General Abrams, the four-star commanding general, was also the commander of what was known as MAC-V, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam. This was the combined US military and civilian advisory program that existed in the four military

regions [same as the Corps] into which Vietnam was divided by the South Vietnamese government. MACV was structured to follow the way the South Vietnamese had established their military commands and their civilian governmental organizational set up. MACV headquarters was in a huge two story air conditioned, prefabricated building at Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon.

One part of MACV was a component that advised the main force units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. South Vietnam had stand-alone army and marine divisions and an air force and a navy that mirrored the U.S. military. Each of these South Vietnamese units had American military advisors, but no civilian advisors. General Abrams had a three star general who was his deputy for this part of his responsibilities as COMUS- MACV

The other part of MACV was the provincial advisory structure that was a combined civilian- military command organization known as MACV-CORDS. Here General Abrams had a civilian deputy, Ambassador Bill Colby, an Intelligence officer who would later become the Director of the CIA. Colby was one of the smartest and most thoughtful individuals with whom I came in contact during my career. While his formal title was Deputy COMUS MACV for CORDS, he was known by all as the "DEPCORDS." From that position in MACV Headquarters, he ran the entire provincial advisory operation on a day to day basis.

There were joint MACV CORDS advisory teams in the four Military Regions and each of the 44 Provinces into which South Vietnam was divided. Each of those Military Regions had a two star U.S. military officer who was the commanding general of all US military and advisory activities. In the Mekong Delta, he was referred to as the CG [Commanding General] MR4. MACV headquarters for MR 4 was in the city of Can Tho [pronounced *Can Toe*, by Americans and *Kun Tuh* by Vietnamese] on the banks of the west branch of the Mekong River.

The CG MR4 had two deputies: One was a US Army officer who oversaw the US 9th Division, US Naval operations and all of the advisors to the Army of Vietnam [ARVN] main force units. The other deputy to the CG MR 4 was a civilian State or USAID officer, who was known as DEPCORDS MR 4 and who directed all of the day to day operations of all provincial advisory teams in the Delta. The DEPCORDS was our boss and to whom each Provincial Senior Advisor [PSA] reported.

MY ARRIVAL IN THE MEKONG DELTA / AVOIDING JOHN VANN AT ALL COSTS

Each province had a Vietnamese civilian government and administrative structure and a Vietnamese military component, which was separate from the regular armed forces of Vietnam. A senior Vietnamese Army officer headed both the civilian and military elements in each province and was known as the Province Chief. The US advisory

program that existed in each province was a combined civilian and military effort. It was designed to parallel the Vietnamese governing structure.

Each U.S. provincial advisory team had a number. I was assigned to Advisory Team 65 in Sa Dec Province. The civilian side of the team was known by the acronym CORDS, which stood for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. So we civilians would refer to ourselves as being “in CORDS.”

I had specifically asked to go to Military Region 4 because one man whom I had heard speak in Washington at the Vietnam Training Center [VTC] was the senior CORDS advisor in Military Region 3. His name was John Vann. I wanted at all costs to avoid being near him.

Q: Oh yes.

QUINN: When I heard Vann speak at the VTC, I thought he was a crazed fanatic. He talked about having his advisors do things that sounded quite extreme, particularly to somebody like me, who had some doubts about the whole thing. He made you feel like you were going to be out there on the frontlines and very engaged in the whole war. So, when I interviewed with the USAID personnel officer in Saigon during my first week there while I was staying at the Excelsior Hotel, I said: “Look, whatever the case, I want to go anywhere but Military Region 3 where John Vann is.” So they assigned me to Military Region 4 to a place called Sa Dec, which was a province in the Mekong Delta, located between the two branches of the Mekong River.

I would never have believed at that time that I would come to see Vann as one of the individuals that I most admired from the Vietnam War, the man who would give me a transformative opportunity to perform in combat, and whose body I would help carry off the plane in Saigon when he had been killed.

MY FIRST DIPLOMATIC POST: MACV -CORDS ADVISORY TEAM 65/ SADEC PROVINCE

In each province, the Vietnamese governor was a military officer who was called the Province Chief, and who exercised authority over all military and civilian organizations that were a permanent part of the province. The Province Chief had two deputies, a civilian for administration and development, and a military officer for military operations carried out by the units assigned to the province, sort of like the National Guard in the United States. There were two types of provincial military units: one called “Regional Forces,” or RF, which were better equipped and trained and could operate anywhere around the province. They were organized as company’s made up of three platoons each, with anywhere from 60 to 90 men per company. The other units were “Popular Forces” or PF, which were village-level military units of about 20 to 30 men that worked only in their own village or home district. Both RF companies and PF platoons operated out of ubiquitous, usually triangular shaped mud walled outposts surrounded by barbed wire.

So the organization of the Vietnamese provincial government was a combined civilian / military structure, just as the U.S. advisory program also combined civilian and military personnel and leadership. In about half of the provinces in Vietnam, the province senior advisor or PSA would be a US military officer, usually a lieutenant colonel, while in the other half the PSA would be a civilian State, USAID or, as was the case in Sa Dec when I arrived there, a USIA officer. Wherever there was a military officer as the Province Senior Advisor, his deputy, the DPSA, would be a civilian, and vice versa.

As to the American staff on the provincial advisory team, on the civilian side there was a unit called "New Life Development," which was essentially the USAID development programs. It would almost always be headed by a civilian, but might have military engineering advisors as part of its team or USAF medical teams attached to it, as was the case in Sa Dec. There were also USDA agricultural advisors, who were part of the NLD office. A separate civilian section of the CORDS teams advised the National Police. The *Chieu Hoi* team [chew hoy], which urged Viet Cong to "return home" to the government side, was advised by the Public Affairs advisor, who might be from USIS but could also be a military officer, such as the Navy Lt. Commander who had that job on Advisory Team 65.

There was a military component of Team 65 that advised the provincial military operations and who coordinated, support to and supplies for the Regional Forces and Popular Forces. Provinces were further subdivided into districts, villages and hamlets. The provincial advisory operation in the province capital town was generally an office type situation, with all team members returning at the close of the day to their houses, apartments or military compounds [known as "hooches"] or, if you were lucky, in a low class "hotel" room in a dingy structure the US had rented.

Each district, the subdivision of a province, was headed by a Vietnamese army officer, usually a major, who exercised both civilian and military authority. The District Chief, like the Province Chief had a small civilian staff and a larger military team, usually with several Vietnamese army captains as his key subordinates. Their principal task was confronting the Viet Cong military and political infrastructure which operated out in the villages and hamlets.

In each district, there was a US team to advise the Vietnamese district government and military command, known as a sub-sector. The parallel U.S. MACV CORDS district advisory structure was an 8 to 10 man team in almost every instance headed by a U.S. Army major or a captain, known as the District Senior Advisor or DSA. The district advisory team was almost always comprised of all US Army personnel. There would be two or three other officers and several sergeants [NCOs] and one or two enlisted men [usually the radio operator] as part of the team. There would also be some Vietnamese employees, including civilian secretaries, a cook and maid, and military interpreters who were assigned by the Vietnamese army.

These US district teams lived in a makeshift "team house" right next to or even inside the Vietnamese district chief's fortified headquarters compound. Given the threat that existed to them as military operations centers, these US district level advisory compounds were run on a strictly military basis. Everyone lived, slept and worked in this small, usually sand bagged, ramshackle structure.

I flew from Saigon to the Mekong Delta on Air America, which was the US government contracted airline to move its civilian and MACV personnel around the country. Air America was considered to be a CIA operation, but unlike in Laos there was nothing "spooky" about it. It nonetheless had a "Terry and the Pirates" feel, since many of the signs inside the plane were in Chinese and English, reflecting considerable previous service in Taiwan or other remote areas of Asia. The trip to Can Tho where MR 4 headquarters was located was on a DC -3 whose engines coughed and sputtered a lot when first started, but managed to get us off the ground without any problem.

There were several days of processing in Can Tho before leaving for Sa Dec, during which I stayed at the CORDS hotel, a several story no-stars local hostel rented by the U.S. It was there, on my first night, I had my first up close experience with the war. At about midnight, there was an incredible string of seemingly endless explosions that sounded as though they were just outside the hotel. I was sure that another TET offensive was underway. I was startled and sat up straight in bed. All I could recall was listening to several audio tapes made by officers who were hiding under the beds in their hotel rooms during TET as Viet Cong sapper teams went through their buildings executing anyone they could find. I grabbed my .38 pistol and dressed only in my shorts stood waiting for someone to break through the door determined to shoot them with my Super Vel ammunition. After about 30 minutes, when no one attempted to enter my room and there were no sounds out in the hall, I was unsure what to do. So, I climbed back into bed with my pistol under my pillow, and fell asleep.

In the morning, I dressed and went outside expecting to find the entire area destroyed by the explosions I had heard. But, life was going on as normal, with no sign of any war damage. Over powdered eggs at the CORDS club restaurant, I learned that what I had heard were the explosions of B-52 "arc light" bombing missions against suspected Viet Cong and NVA positions actually several kilometers away. It was the beginning of my learning about the military conduct of the war that several years later would have me calling in air strikes against Viet Cong units and designing target boxes for similar bombing missions against North Vietnamese Army (NVA) positions along the Cambodian border.

The next day I went back to the airport for my flight to Sa Dec which was on a small, single engine Air America Porter aircraft, which had STOL [static takeoff and landing] capabilities, meaning it could take off with only a minimal taxi and fly almost straight up. This was important to evade any enemy who might try to shoot down a plane that had a long glide into or out of a landing strip or the airport. In the case of Sa Dec, however, there was no airport. After having to abort the initial attempt because an oblivious *cyclo* driver ignored the barbed wire that had temporarily been pulled across the road to create

a "runway," the plane landed on a single lane black top road, which had a small parking area where the pilot could pause, with the engine running, while I jumped out with my bags.

An FSO, John Nesvig, was there to meet me and take me to the local CORDS apartment house where he and I would share a room, while it was figured out where I would be assigned. John was the assistant NLD chief. He was married and his wife was in "safe haven" in Taiwan, since no spouses or dependents were allowed to reside in Vietnam. John, like everyone on SMA (separate maintenance allowance) was permitted a monthly trip to Taiwan to visit his family.

Sa Dec was a small market town of maybe 20,000 people located on the east or upper branch of the Mekong River. It had no structures of special note or charm, and only one short street with a few upper class houses. Most commercial activity centered on the waterfront with river craft coming and going and an array of fruit, vegetables, chicken and fish for sale. I would walk about taking it all in and trying to say a few words in my halting Vietnamese. Like everywhere in Vietnam, Sa Dec was under curfew with everyone off the streets by 10pm.

Advisory Team 65 had no dining facility, so we had to eat at the US Army mess at Advisory Team 60 which was the organization that mentored the ARVN 9th Division that was located across the river. To get there, you had to drive across a single lane "Eiffel" bridge that had been erected to handle large 2 1/2 ton US military trucks which the ARVN had. The food was pedestrian but it was very cheap and there was a club where you could buy beer or soft drinks for 10 cents a can, all paid in MPC (military payment certificates), the substitute currency that all US government and military personnel were required to use instead of greenbacks. This was intended to keep the local Vietnamese economy from overheating due to a massive infusion of U.S. Currency. In fact, there was a black market for MPC among Vietnamese who referred to it as *do do* (*doe daw*, meaning "red dollars") as opposed to regular dollars known as *do xanh* (*doe san* meaning "green dollars").

There was also a Navy mess which had much, much better food than the Army, to which eventually the civilian members of Team 65 were granted access. Sa Dec was a base for U.S. "brown water" units such as Swift Boats, PBRs (Patrol Boat, Riverine) and an occasional SEAL Team. Of particular note is that during my time in Sa Dec, a young Naval officer named John Kerry was stationed there. While I cannot be certain, there is a reasonable chance that he was among those many young Ensigns and Lieutenants who, at some point, sat across from me at the Navy club.

Sa Dec was such an unsophisticated, rural backwater that it did not have even one restaurant that provided inside seating or anything approaching a cheap Chinese eatery. A night out on the town involved walking down to the edge of the river where there were a few individuals with a small table or two with very low stools on which to sit, and who would cook stir fried chicken or vegetables over a bar-b-que type grill. Everything was dipped into the pungent smelling but okay tasting fish sauce called *nuoc mam* (nuk mom,

meaning water made of pressed fish oil). You washed this basic food down with bottles of 33 brand Vietnamese beer, which was called "*ba muoi ba*." Almost everyone drank their Vietnamese beer with huge chunks of local ice. Twenty five years later, this practice would lead to me being infected with Hepatitis E from drinking a beer with tainted ice near Da Nang with Assistant Secretary Winston Lord. But for the six years I was in Indochina during the war, every beer I had was with ice.

Food in private homes in Sa Dec, on the other hand, was fantastic, and I quickly came to love *cha gio*, (*cha yaw*) which were vermicelli noodles, thinly sliced carrots and minced pork, wrapped in extremely thin rice paper and then fried in oil. Sa Dec was famous for having the best rice paper and also the best shrimp chips known as *banh phong tom*. Before I left Sa Dec two years later, I would have eaten dog, rat, rice paddy snails, turtle and drunk high octane rice wine, that was so pure it would burn with a blue flame.

The PSA, province senior advisor, in Sa Dec was a USIA officer named F. David James, who was an O-3 or O-4 level officer (in the old Foreign Service ranking system). He had been "in country" for 18 months and would soon depart. His deputy was an Army Lt. Colonel, who was coming to the end of his 12 month tour. In Vietnam, the conventional wisdom was that, with the very short tours of only 12 months for military personnel, you quickly became a veteran. James decided that I should spend a few months working at the provincial headquarters in the NLD office learning about the various development programs.

The very first task I was given was to observe the distribution of USAID cooking oil and PL-480 rice to refugees who had been displaced by the fighting during TET and only now were able to return and re-establish their homes and farms. The government allocated this food to assist the returnees until their first rice crop could be harvested. The provincial officials had a list of names submitted by the village and had brought enough supplies for all of the persons listed. At the set time, the villagers were summoned to the village office where a small ceremony was held, with speeches thanking the government and the US assistance program. I was encouraged that I could understand much of what was being said, even though it was in a Delta twang, far different from the more precise and clearly articulated Saigon accent.

After the speeches, I was invited for drinks and some treats while the mundane work of handing out the rice and oil would be handled by the local staff. The objective seemed to be to keep me occupied so I didn't notice that there was a fair amount of the commodities leftover. But since I was going to have to counter sign all of the documents confirming the distribution was carried out appropriately, to the dismay of my hosts, I insisted on witnessing the entire process. It was then that I saw bags of rice being carried off by military personnel. I then refused to sign until the documents were revised to reflect what had actually been given to the refugees. It was a lesson about the kind of corruption that permeated the South Vietnamese society, but which also seemed to form the glue that kept the governmental structure operating by giving benefits to under paid [at least in their eyes] officials and officers .

My next assignment was to work with the Vietnamese province Director of Social Services. I accompanied him to one social welfare distribution. There weren't any problems, but the next week he committed suicide. I wasn't sure if it was anything I said or did. I later learned that he was being investigated for corruption. In any event, all of the civilian advisors went to his funeral and burial, where I learned of the tradition of burning faux paper money which was to give the spirit of the deceased spending money for the journey to the celestial resting place. I also can't get the image out of my mind of the grave diggers smoking and urinating next to the grave while his widow and children, all dressed in white, wept uncontrollably while lying atop the coffin. In a short time, I had been exposed to some new cultural practices, raw human emotions and tragic events.

Like all civilian staff, I was given a two door International Harvester Scout utility vehicle, a forerunner of the SUV, but, thanks to an egregious oversight in government procurement, was without 4- wheel drive. It looked something like a Land Rover. I remember my first trip to the provincial city of Vinh Long which was about 30 km to the east. There was a US Army base and airfield there with a PX, so it was an anticipated opportunity to be able to buy some American candy or a hamburger. The highway was in terrible shape with deep ruts and pot holes so we had to drive slowly, making your vehicle an easy target for an ambush or a command detonated land mine. As a result, I learned to drive on the far left hand side of the road to be as far away as possible from any explosive device that might be set off.

MY FIRST LIFE AND DEATH SITUATION / A FATHER'S HUG

It was December, 1968, and I had only been in Vietnam a little over a month and was still assigned to the provincial advisory staff when I had my first direct encounter with a life and death situation. I was driving to the MACV provincial headquarters when the calm of a languid tropical afternoon was abruptly broken by a crowd of wildly gesturing people standing in the middle of the road. Since the Tet Offensive had only been only a few months earlier, my first reaction was one of apprehension: was this some type of Viet Cong trick that we had learned about in training to try to get me to stop? As I slowed my vehicle preparing to do a U turn and get away, I saw a young man emerge from the crowd carrying the limp body of a boy about 8 or 9 years old, whose eyes were shut and his stomach covered with blood. He was desperate for someone to help him and had an anguished look on his face that was begging me for help.

I reached over, opened the door, and pulled the seat forward and the young man climbed into the back seat of my Scout holding what turned out to be his younger brother. As I pulled the door shut, he told me in Vietnamese that there was a gun in the house, someone had been playing with it and his younger brother had been shot and now appeared dead.

I knew there was a military hospital at the 9th ARVN Division headquarters, but it was on the other side of the city and across the river. With the horn blaring and the headlights flashing, I began driving wildly through the heart of this typical provincial town, made up

of narrow streets clogged with pedicabs, motorbikes, and vendors. People shouted and gestured menacingly at me for being the rude American and disregarding their safety.

Once I was through the market area, the biggest impediment of all remained. It was the one-lane bridge that crossed the Sa Dec canal, which had a person sitting in a tower in the middle controlling traffic with a stop and-go sign. The hospital was on the other side and there was no other way across.

As I roared up the ramp, cutting off other civilian vehicles to go on to the bridge, the sign turned from green to red for stop. I could see at the other end a convoy of huge Vietnamese military trucks beginning to pull onto the bridge. The military always took precedence over civilian traffic, and such convoys would sometimes take 15 or 30 minutes or more to pass. Thinking we could not wait, I drove out onto the bridge and at high speed raced toward the other end straight at the oncoming trucks.

The Vietnamese military drivers began sounding their powerful truck horns and waving to me to back off. They were not about to back down from a smaller civilian vehicle. But I just kept coming and when I got up close to the lead truck, I leaned out the window and yelled in Vietnamese “bi thuong nang, bi thuong nang, indicating that someone inside was “gravely wounded.”

Whether it was out of compassion because they understood what I was saying or a judgment that I was crazy and never going to back up, the military drivers did the unthinkable and backed their trucks off the bridge. I swerved around the lead truck and off the bridge and drove the last few hundred meters to the entrance to the military hospital.

Once there, I had to use Vietnamese to shout my way past a non-English speaking sentry, so I could drive in and begin looking for the emergency room. All those months of language training were paying off. We were soon there and the hospital staff rushed out and helped carry the apparently lifeless young boy inside.

Having done as much as I could and believing the boy was dead, I went back to work. When I told the PSA and others at our office what I had just encountered and what I had done, it didn't evoke much interest or reaction. I assumed incidents like this must happen all the time.

Later in the afternoon, out of curiosity I went back to the hospital, expecting I would be told that the young boy had either been dead on arrival or had died shortly thereafter. I was therefore surprised when one of the Vietnamese military doctors greeted me and led me into the ward where the young boy, now surrounded by his family, was lying in bed, his eyes open and his stomach heavily bandaged. The family seemed incredulous that the boy had survived, but only nodded when they were told that I was the person who drove him to the hospital. As the doctor escorted me out, he said to me that at first they did not think the boy would survive, but he added “your getting him here so fast saved his life.”

The next afternoon as I was leaving the provincial headquarters where our offices were located, an older Vietnamese man wearing ragged clothing approached me. It was the young boy's father. They were obviously a poor family. Without saying a word, he reached forward and grabbed my right hand with both of his hands and then in a most un-Vietnamese-like gesture came forward and pressed his body onto my arm and squeezed as tight as he could. It was a hug I have never forgotten.

Then keeping hold of my hand, he started to lead me across the road and down the bank of the Sa Dec Canal toward a very rudimentary restaurant. We had what was the equivalent of the best table in the house, except there was no house -just a totally open-air setting with a wobbly table and several little three-legged stools set on the muddy bank just a few feet from the edge of the dirty river. The man ordered the specialty of the house, an entire chicken, whose head was unceremoniously chopped off with a cleaver right in front of us. The decapitated torso of the bird, still driven by the last impulses of nerves and energy, tried to fly away but fluttered into the Mekong just a few yards out. The restaurant owner waded in and dragged the headless chicken back to shore where it was plucked clean and then cut up and fried. It was delicious washed down with Vietnamese beer which the father ordered.

I tried speaking to the father in Vietnamese, but never imagining I could speak his language, he just seemed to tune me out. All through the meal there never was a sentence spoken by him, only a constant, wonderful smile on the father's face and a look of deep gratitude and affection in his eyes that he never took off me.

When we finished the meal, he squeezed my hand again and we then went our separate ways. I never met him again or his son. But I can remember to this day the look of supreme happiness on the father's face and the feel of him intensely holding my arm. It brings home to me in a way that few other things could a lesson I learned later in life - that the greatest treasure of being a father is the love you feel for your children.

ASSIGNMENT DUC THANH DISTRICT: TORTURE, AGENT ORANGE, EXORCISMS AND THE HOA HAO

In early 1969, language trained civilians from State and USAID were being placed in districts as assistant development officers, so my next assignment in Sa Dec was to work in Duc Thinh District, which included Sa Dec City. My boss was an Army major named Keith Reed. That was a short lived detail, because in the spring of 1969, I was transferred to be the Assistant District Advisor in Duc Thanh District which was about 15 km from Sa Dec city on the road to Long Xuyen. My new boss in Duc Thanh was an extremely thoughtful Army captain named Vandaster Tabb, who, when he retired, ended up working in an administrative position at the State Department.

Duc Thanh was an interesting challenge for a number of reasons. First, the living arrangements were pretty basic. The officers (including me and two lieutenants in addition to the District Senior Advisor, always referred to as the DSA) all squeezed into a

beaten up old house trailer that had been heli-lifted in a few years earlier. Major Tabb, the DSA, had the one bedroom to himself, while the other three of us each had a basic metal bunk all squeezed into what had been the living room. We were right next to each other.

As a team member, I was expected to pull "guard duty" for an hour each night, which meant being awakened at 2 or 3 am, and along with the team dogs, Fuzz and Slick, watching for anyone trying to infiltrate through the barbed wire in order to kill us. I learned that the dogs were invaluable because Americans and Vietnamese had different smells and the dogs understood for whom they worked. Any American could drive into our compound and Fuzz and Slick would just glance at him and go back to napping. But, if a Vietnamese approached, even our employees, the dogs would be up snarling and biting at their feet until we called them off. When we went over to the District Chief's compound, the reverse process occurred.

I recall five years later, after all U.S. military advisors had been withdrawn, landing at a remote village deep in the Ca Mau jungle. When I alighted from the helicopter, a dog ran up to me with his tail wagging furiously and a happy look on his face. He followed me everywhere and watched wistfully when I flew off a few hours later. I was told that he had been the long departed American advisors team dog.

AGENT ORANGE

It was in Duc Thanh that I was exposed to Agent Orange, which at the time seemed like a godsend, as it instantly eradicated all of the weeds and foliage that had grown up over our rows and rows of barbed wire, obscuring our view of anyone attempting to crawl up close to our team compound. Before Agent Orange, a Viet Cong sapper could have made it right up to the edge of our team house without our seeing him. With just one spraying of Agent Orange, we suddenly had a clear view of the entire approach for 50 meters and could easily shoot anyone attempting to infiltrate.

It would only be 10 years later when I was diagnosed with Sarcoidosis (an inflammation of the lungs that produces fibrosis) that I would figure out that it must have been caused by the Agent Orange. I filed suit against the State Department for \$1 million, but the case never came to court or settlement because there was not proof of the cause being the chemicals, nor were there clearly defined damages. In addition, I did not have the funds available to pay for expert witnesses to testify. The disease was, nonetheless, debilitating in that I had to take fairly heavy doses of the steroid drug "prednisone" for four years. Thankfully, the steroids worked and I did not have any lingering effects of the disease.

In any event, pulling guard duty and living in a military environment, I also learned to wake up to the US military radio station, which at 6am had the " Dawn Buster" whose elongated "Goooooooood Mooooorning Viet Naaaam" wake up call became famous and was, after the war, made into a movie starring Robin Williams. We also had a TV set and an outside antenna which we could rotate by hand. AFRTS carried the 1969 moon landing which I watched in Duc Thanh surrounded by a dozen of our Vietnamese

"counterparts," the phrase we all used to designate those officials with whom we had an advisory relationship.

RETAKING VIET CONG CONTROLLED HAMLETS

A second interesting aspect of my time as the A/DSA was that I made my first forays into Viet Cong [VC] controlled hamlets and villages. The Vietnamese government, having lost so much ground during the TET Offensive, was now systematically working to re-assert its presence and influence in populated areas. Duc Thanh District was sub-divided into eight villages, which in turn were divided into hamlets, which could number anywhere from three to seven per village. There were a number of populated hamlets that had no government presence and so were completely controlled by the VC.

In addition to populated areas, there were several large areas of land in Sa Dec Province that no longer had any population or houses, because they were the war zone where the Viet Cong had built fortifications and from which their military units could operate. These were known as "VC base areas," and mostly existed in Duc Ton District, which was along the road to Vinh Long.

However, two villages in Duc Thanh abutted VC base areas and many or all hamlets in them were totally under VC control when I arrived. One hamlet was part of the village of Hoa Long, which was the administrative center of the district where the District Chief resided and our compound was located. The other was Phong Hoa Village, the most remote in the district, accessible only by boat from the Mekong, where all of the hamlets had been under full VC control. As I arrived, the government was making a concerted effort to re-assert control over them as part of the post TET pacification effort.

The tactic to accomplish this goal was to use a significant aggregation of military force, including in some instances parts of the US 9th Division and / or ARVN 9th Division, to make an initial foray into the VC base areas and hamlets to force the main VC military units to withdraw. As this was happening, helicopters with loud speakers would hover above announcing the government's return and urging the local guerrillas to give up. Then, an occupying PF platoon, now armed with M-16 automatic rifles so they were no longer outgunned by the Viet Cong AK-47s, would march in.

Along with this military presence, came all sorts of service providers with planned activities to "win the hearts and minds" of the villagers. Included were a USAF "medcap" team to do medical exams and dispense medicine, social welfare cadre distributing rice and a team of Revolutionary Development or RD Cadre, young South Vietnamese males all dressed in black (like the VC) but who carried out projects such as building small bridges, or erecting a hamlet headquarters.

As a brand new advisor in Duc Thanh, one of my very first assignments was to walk into this VC hamlet in Hoa Long village with this occupying force. I watched and observed, drinking in all the sights and learning lessons such as how to tell how deep the VC

control was by watching the expression on the faces of the inhabitants and their body language. Kids and their reactions toward outsiders were a particularly good way to assess the progress the government was making or the degree of influence the Viet Cong still exercised. This was a skill that I would hone over a life-long career during which I have visited and reported on villages in Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Lebanon, Gaza, China and several countries in Africa.

Another, somewhat similar experience involved my visits to Phong Hoa village which had been totally controlled by the Viet Cong. The village was strung out along a straight canal starting at the entrance from the lower Mekong River and running inland for about 10 km. Farm families had their dwellings lined along the canal so they were close to water for drinking, washing and other necessities, as well as having access to fruit trees and palm trees that grew along the banks of the canal. The farmers would walk out to their fields that extended in broad flat expanses across to the next "tree line," which grew along the next canal. The fighting at TET had caused all of the residents of Phong Hoa to flee as their thatch dwellings were all burned or destroyed by artillery fire and rockets.

Now after almost a year as refugees, the GVN had succeeded in re-taking the village and was providing assistance to each family of "war victims" to return and re-establish their homes and livelihoods. Each family was to get six sheets of metal roofing with which build a basic dwelling, and a six month supply of rice and cooking oil to tide them over until they could harvest a new crop. As the development advisor, I would walk along the side of the Phong Hoa Canal, interviewing families in Vietnamese about their experience, especially about whether they were now sleeping at night in their re-constructed homes, the most significant measure of the remaining degree of Viet Cong control and / or the success of the government's pacification efforts.

With each conversation in Phong Hoa or other similar places, my language facility improved and my Delta twang developed, which would be an important (but not positive) factor when a year later I would meet a refined young woman in Saigon who spoke with a precise Northern accent, and who would, despite my "speaking like a country bumpkin," eventually become my wife.

In reflecting on my work in Phong Hoa and other hamlets, I have come to see the significant impact that such face to face contact with refugees and people suffering from other aspects of the war had on me personally and, I believe, on a certain cohort of the Foreign Service. It was impossible to not come away from such close observation without developing a deep empathy and a desire to alleviate such human misery. It would become impossible to just turn your back and walk away. This would lead me to a series of future jobs both in the Department and in Iowa dealing with refugees and starvation.

Since there were hundreds of FSOs with somewhat similar experiences, assistance to refugees became a widespread avocation within State that shaped both policy and the bureaucratic structure of the Department. The issues surrounding refugees following the War in Indochina were, in fact, so significant that the State Department created an

entirely new bureau to deal with them, from what had been a one officer desk in the IO Bureau.

One of the prime examples of this phenomenon was Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. Dick, for whom I served as his first employee when he became Assistant Secretary in 1977, had served as a provincial USAID representative in the Delta in the 1960s while still an FSO. From those experiences with unfortunate refugees and war victims, as well as his time as a Peace Corps country Director in Morocco, Dick carried a passion for assisting displaced or suffering people. This was evident from his focus on the Boat People refugees from Vietnam, to the Dayton Accords, to Afghanistan.

CHAPPAQUIDDICK REDUX

Another narrow escape came a few months later after I was the DSA in Duc Thanh and my counterpart and I were attending a celebration to welcome the new Vietnamese Sa Dec Province Chief. It was an outdoor dinner held in a brick factory located in a village along the lower Mekong. It was a very big deal with many of the provincial senior GVN officials and their American advisors all in attendance with the food, beer and rice wine flowing liberally. We all had had a lot to drink.

Since the event was taking place in my district, the new American Province Senior Advisor [PSA] Robert Traister, a Vietnamese speaking, USAID direct hire and a protégé of John Vann, had picked me up in his Scout, driven by his Vietnamese driver. With the dinner over, I was riding in the back seat of this two door utility vehicle, as we began the drive out of the brick yard, which involved traversing a number of very narrow, small bridges over the myriad canals and tributaries that drained into the Mekong. Since it was the end of the rainy season, the water in the canals was quite deep.

What we didn't realize is that while we were eating and drinking so too were the Vietnamese drivers, at least the PSA's driver, who was so inebriated that while driving at a high rate of speed, let the left wheels fly off the side of the bridge, tumbling our Scout into the canal where it quickly sank underwater to the bottom landing on its left side. As the interior filled with water, the rush of cold water quickly sobered me up, and as it did, it was followed by a rush of fear. I instantly recalled the story from earlier that year of Senator Ted Kennedy and Chappaquiddick, where Mary Jo Kopechne had drowned, trapped inside the submerged vehicle he had driven off a bridge.

I could see some trace of light out through the window of the right door which pointed skyward, which fortuitously had been rolled down by the PSA to get air while we were driving. All we needed to do was to squeeze out the window and we could get to the surface. Acting on instinct, I started moving from the back seat toward the window when Traister shot out his arm and, with the power of a steel rod driven by his overwhelming need to survive, forcefully held me back while he exited and headed to the surface. I started to follow him, but then I noticed the inebriated driver almost unconscious still immobilized in the driver's seat. I couldn't leave him behind.

So, all the while holding my breath, I pulled him up and out the window and then followed him as I pushed him up to the surface. Standing there, I contemplated our good fortune. Had the vehicle gone off the right side of the bridge and ended up with the driver's side window the only way out, I am not sure we could have moved the drunken driver and escaped.

A PERSONAL RELIGIOUS INSIGHT LEARNED IN VINH THOI VILLAGE

Next to Phong Hoa village was Vinh Thoi a lesser populated series of hamlets strung out along the Mekong, which had also been the scene of heavy fighting during TET. In delivering support to ARVN forces as they re-took the village in 1968, an American aircraft had inadvertently struck a Catholic Church with a rocket causing significant damage to the stucco structure. The Army had provided funds to repair and essentially rebuild the church which was completed in early 1969. As a new development advisor in Duc Thanh District, I was among those invited to the dedication, which included Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Vinh Long who made a special trip to this remote settlement.

Sitting in the church, I was startled that most of the prayers were still spoken in Latin, with Vietnamese interspersed in just a few places. I sat up as these parishioners chanted the opening prayers-- Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam --"To God who gives joy to my youth,"-- the very same words I used to recite as an altar boy. Latin had not been used in the vernacular Mass in the United States for several years, so it had been a while since I had heard it spoken, but it immediately made me feel a bond with these Vietnamese peasant villagers, individuals who could not have been more different from me in every respect: the color of their skin; the language they spoke; the way they ate their food with chopsticks; the clothes they wore.

I had understood that the word "Catholic" meant "universal," but until that moment I had not really understood exactly what that meant. Now, half way around the globe, 12,000 miles from the churches I attended in Dubuque and Bloomington and La Crosse, I came to understand the role that Latin played, not only linking Catholics back through history to the very beginning of the Church, but to other Catholics all around the world, no matter what their native language.

Years later, my wife and I attended a Catholic wedding of Vietnamese who lived in Trois Rivieres, Quebec, Canada. The church where it took place was architecturally quite similar to St. Columbkille's in Dubuque that had been my home parish; most of the wedding guests looked just like me in their ethnicity and dress; the cars they arrived in were just like mine, as were the houses in which they lived. But the Mass was entirely in French. The words had no meaning for me and I felt no connection to those attending, unlike at that village church in Vinh Thoi, where the Latin made me feel a special bond to everyone kneeling in prayer.

It made me wonder about the reforms introduced by Pope John XXIII to make worship more meaningful by having prayers spoken in the native language. To me it had removed the "mystery" of the Mass, and now I saw how it was removing an element that previously united all Roman Catholics around the globe. I had not expected that I would learn in a village in Indochina about the religion in which I grew up in America. It would not be the last time I would come to a profound insight into Catholicism in Duc Thanh or into what it means to be an American from an experience in Indochina.

THE HOA HAO BUDDHISTS AND INSIGHTS INTO MY OWN RELIGION

My assignment to Duc Thanh District in the spring of 1969 exposed me to a fascinating series of religious institutions, practices and individuals that would provide me with insights into the behavior of contemporary Vietnamese individuals, as well the practices and beliefs of the Catholic Christian faith in which I grew up and possibly of the earliest members of that church who lived at the time of Jesus.

The entryway for this range of experiences came from the prevalence of the Hoa Hao Buddhist religion which seemed to dominate life in almost all the villages in the district. The Hoa Hao were followers of a reform minded Buddhist preacher and holy man named Huynh Phu So, who was born in 1919 in Hoa Hao village of An Giang Province, which sits astride the lower branch of the Mekong River, often called the Bassac.

So, who was usually referred to as Duc Thay or "Venerable Teacher" by the faithful, had become "enlightened" or transformed when in 1939 he made a pilgrimage to Nui Cam or Cam Mountain in the That Son (Seven Mountains) region of adjoining Chau Doc province, which was an extension of a range of mountains in Cambodia. For Vietnamese, it seemed that anything spiritual was exponentially increased in its intensity if it were associated with Cambodia, because that country was seen as mysterious or forbidden territory.

It was considered an article of the Hoa Hao faith that while on retreat on Cam Mountain, Duc Thay was enlightened- -i.e. became imbued with a spirit that had previously been shared at various times by several former monks or holy men, who had lived up to 100 years before him. Most notable among them was a preacher referred to as Phat Thay Tay An (Enlightened Prophet of Western Peace), in whose memory a beautiful temple was constructed in Chau Doc. Tay An, who became enlightened in 1849, was associated with a mystical Buddhism known as Buu Son Ky Huong, or the Fragrant Spirit Emanating from the Mountain. That theology was considered the antecedent of the teachings of Duc Thay.

When he came down from Cam Mountain in 1939, Huynh Phu So began preaching and making comments of deep spiritual significance. Eventually, his sayings were compiled in a book entitled the Sam Giang. He induced thousands and thousands to follow his teachings as he traveled up and down the Bassac, reportedly healing the sick with special herbs and leaves he recommended (which were referred to as "thuoc nam" or southern

medicine), and perhaps, as some followers later told me, even raising the dead or near dead back to life.

So's reformed approach to worship eschewed large temples with monks and instead taught that a small simple family altar in the front yard of your dwelling was all that was needed in terms of a religious structure. So also prescribed that his adepts pray four times a day, somewhat analogous to the Muslim faith that had also traveled up the Mekong centuries earlier. The Hoa Hao would later also adopt prayer towers from which prayers would be chanted several times a day, again very similar to Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim practices.

It was estimated that in just three or four years, more than one million Vietnamese became converts or followers of Duc Thay's simplified Buddhism, almost all of them along the Bassac in the Delta provinces of Phong Dinh, An Giang, Sa Dec, Vinh Long and Chau Doc. With his religious charisma, So also attracted several men who were regional war lords, each of whom committed his military fighting force to the service of Duc Thay. Among them were Tran van Soai, Ba Cut and Lam Thanh Nguyen.

The period during which Duc Thay was most active was a volatile one as it came during World War II when Japan exercised suzerainty over Indochina, while French officials of the Vichy regime continued to implement the colonial laws. There had been a Japanese airfield in the Mekong region and there were still sunken Japanese gun boats to be found in the canals of Kien Giang province in the 1970s. As the Japanese presence receded, the French officials became nervous about exercising full control.

Fearful of his potential as a revolutionary, the French authorities in Saigon arrested So and held him in a psychiatric hospital, where he reportedly converted his Vietnamese doctor. Other Hoa Hao followers, claimed that it was during this period that So was able to exercise powers of teleportation by miraculously transiting his body from Saigon back to the Delta.

When the Japanese army retreated from Indochina as the war came to an end, various indigenous forces in Vietnam began the effort to throw off French colonial rule. The Vietnamese Communist led coalition held sway in Hanoi and the northern part of the country, but in the southern half and especially Saigon and the Delta, there were several strong and independent minded factions, including the Binh Xuyen, Cao Dai, and very notably the Hoa Hao. Well-armed and well led, the Hoa Hao were a strong force that exercised predominant control all along the Bassac and parts of the upper Mekong from 1945 onward.

Lam Thanh Nguyen, who survived into the 1970s told me a hilarious story about how his Hoa Hao force took over one village, right as the Japanese were leaving. Nguyen, who was dark complected, round faced and sporting a mustache, said that he would enter a strange village where he was not known, along with some of his local commanders. All of the villagers were assembled and then he would address them impersonating a Japanese military officer, known for their harsh demeanor. He would shout in a forceful

manner a bunch of nonsense, made up words with no meaning, and his "interpreter" would tell the villagers he was speaking Japanese and saying that they were to absolutely obey these Vietnamese Hoa Hao subordinates he was leaving in charge. Anyone who refused would be dealt with harshly. Then he would march out of the village leaving all of the people cowering and his Hoa Hao followers in charge.

In April 1947, the event that would forever make all Hoa Hao the implacable enemy of the communists, took place. Duc Thay disappeared under unknown circumstances. It was believed that he had been abducted by the Viet Minh, the agents of Hanoi, thus earning the undying hatred of every Hoa Hao. There are Communist movement documents in the French language that purport to be an indictment for treason authorizing So's arrest, and a report confirming his execution. So would never be seen again.

At the same time, the Hoa Hao elders, however, did not accept that Duc Thay was dead. There was a slip of paper in what was said to be his hand writing, dated after the day on which he disappeared, which was taken as proof of his still being alive. I was given a photo copy of the paper in 1972, and even then, 25 years after his disappearance, Hoa Hao leaders still believed that Huynh Phu So was alive and would return one day. I could not help comparing it to Biblical stories of Jesus rising from the dead and appearing to his Apostles.

With the Geneva Accords in 1954 and the partition of the country, an anti- communism and anti-dissident approach animated the new South Vietnamese government in Saigon. Without their charismatic leader, the Hoa Hao lost some of their military prowess. As France ceded its control, the new government led by Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem sought to suppress dissidents. Ba Cut was captured, tried as a renegade and beheaded in Can Tho.

While Duc Thay was gone and his military supporters de-fanged, Hoa Hao political influence remained strong. There were gold and dark maroon signs in every village for the Viet Nam Dan Chu Xa Hoi Dang (Democratic Social Welfare Party, usually called by its shorthand name, the Dan Xa Dang). This Hoa Hao political party exerted significant regional political influence. The Viet Cong had a very hard time gaining any influence in Hoa Hao areas.

As I heard these stories, I became fascinated with the origins of the religion, especially because its founder- - Huynh Phu So- - seemed to have had many parallel experiences with the life of Jesus: being enlightened after going up a mountain; making large numbers of converts in a short period of time; rejecting those Pharisees (monks) in the temples; healing the sick and raising the dead; being arrested by the occupying government; being killed by a local, indigenous group; coming back from the dead.

Here was a religion that had emerged in parts of Vietnam that were little changed from the society of even several hundred years earlier. I could not help but wonder if the way people thought about religion and Duc Thay here in the remote parts of Vietnam might provide insights into how the earliest Christians thought about Christ. I was hooked.

Eventually, this fascination led to my request in 1972 to be assigned to Chau Doc province in the Delta, so I could do the research to write my Ph.D. dissertation on Duc Thay and the Hoa Hao as a political movement. I perused every book store I could find in Saigon and in every provincial capital looking for books about Duc Thay. I carried out interviews with people who actually had known Huynh Phu So. It was to me as if I were speaking to followers of Jesus, 2000 years earlier.

I had two other related religious experiences that provided further insights into Huynh Phu So and suggested parallels to the life of Jesus. The first came when I was visiting Lai Vung, the town and marketplace for Thanh Tan, a near 100% Hoa Hao village in Duc Thanh. The Village Chief wanted to show me a religious phenom, a young boy about 12 years of age, who was able to chant very profound religious passages, reportedly without having read them from any book or previously having had them taught to him. It appeared the boy was able to make up highly complex religious teachings on his own. They brought him over to me so I could witness it for myself. It was stunning to hear him recite, without a note, his sayings in this unique cadence usually associated with monks chanting or teaching in a Buddhist temple.

The boy was referred to as Ong Dao Nho (Little Mr. Religion). The name was meaningful in and of itself. Ong was the Vietnamese word for grandfather, and also the pronoun by which a grown, mature male would be addressed. A 12 year old would normally never be called Ong. In this case he was called Ong to reflect the mature, highly developed statements he made, which were those that would normally be uttered by a fully grown man. He seemed to be replicating stories about Huynh Phu So when he was a young boy.

Once again, my mind went to the Biblical stories of Jesus as a young boy teaching in the temple and being listened to in amazement by the elders. Was I seeing a parallel experience almost 2,000 years later here in a Vietnamese village? Was Jesus like Little Mr. Religion?

THE EXORCIST OF HOA LONG VILLAGE

The final event that provided the most significant insight for me into both Huynh Phu So and the Catholic religion came on a night in Duc Thanh, when Lt. Nhan, the District Chief's closest aide, invited me to an exorcism that was taking place in a home right in Hoa Long village where the district headquarters was located. It was always pleasant to walk in Mekong villages day or night when they were tranquil. Light from kerosene lamps reflected in the slow moving canal as we walked down the dirt trail lined with palm trees to the simple wood and thatch dwelling where the procedure would occur.

When we reached the home of the Exorcist, we were offered the equivalent of front row seats on the benches that were set behind a young woman wearing pink pajamas seated on the floor with her legs crossed tightly in front of her in the lotus position. With her back to us, she was bowing repeatedly as if in prayer. Lt. Nhan whispered to me that she

was the possessed who had been brought down from Saigon by her family who had heard of the powers and effectiveness of the man who was the exorcist, now entering the dirt floored room.

I recall him as thin and slightly twisted older man, walking with a limp. Without any explanation to the now crowded room, he sat down at a spare, rustic wooden table in front of the young woman, so he was facing her across the table, while she continued her ritual bowing as if in a trance. He had a round jar with a square cardboard cover over the mouth of the jar on the table in front of him. Alongside it was a knife, a teapot and a small glass cup that was a ubiquitous part of every common tea set. A bit further away was a candle, a small taper with a cotton ball on the tip and a bottle with a clear liquid.

With an assortment of relatives and curious villagers now filling most of the seats in this cramped wood and thatch dwelling, the exorcist began his preparations. While reciting some type of apparently religious or mystical chant, he ritually uncovered the jar removing the square of cardboard that covered it. The vessel somehow reminded me of the chalice used by Catholic priests celebrating the Mass, with the cardboard just like the pall used as an essential element in the ceremony when the wine, mixed with water, is miraculously turned into the blood of Christ.

The jar, however, was empty. Then the Exorcist took the knife in hand and with his other hand grabbed the tip of his tongue and pulled it out from his mouth. With the edge of the knife he began stroking his tongue, clearly cutting it so that blood started to drip off it into the glass tea cup. When he had collected a small pool of blood in the bottom of the cup, he stopped cutting and poured some tea into the cup. Swirling it to mix the two liquids (like the wine and water), he then, like the priest at Mass, drank it down in a sudden gulp.

Lt. Nhan then explained to me the theory of what was taking place, pointing out how the exorcist's voice had now subtly changed as he continued his string of chants or prayers. Nhan said that the voice he was now using was recognized by villagers as that of a man who had been the pharmacist in the village, but who had died a number of years ago. The spirit of that deceased individual had been in the jar, which, when it was uncovered, had been able to emerge and enter the body of the Exorcist through the process of his drinking the mixture of his blood and tea. That spirit of the dead man was now animating the body and the voice of the Exorcist [just as the spirit of Phat Thay Tay An had entered Huynh Phu So's body when he climbed Cam Mountain].

Lt. Nhan further described what was about to take place. It would be a confrontation between the "good spirit" inside the body of the exorcist and the "evil spirit" that was occupying the young woman sitting on the floor in front of us. While the power exercised by both spirits was intangible, the force needed to dislodge and expel the evil spirit would be visible and material.

The Exorcist then had the young woman covered in a thin blanket, which was draped over her head and face. Then, he filled the tea cup with the clear liquid from the bottle on

the table. Next he lit the cotton taper from the candle and held it in front of his face so it was close to the woman. Filling his mouth with the clear liquid, he then expelled it all through the flame, creating instantly a large ball of fire that enveloped the young woman's head. The clear liquid was rice wine, almost pure ethanol. The heat from the fire ball was so intense that it caused me, sitting right behind her, to recoil.

She, on the other hand, didn't move, perhaps oblivious to the heat because she was in a trance induced by her repetitive bowing and praying. Then, he did it again. The heat again repelled me, but she remained motionless. Now, with the evil spirit inside her hopefully dislodged by the heat and fire, the next step was to drive it out of her body.

After her head was uncovered, the Exorcist rose from the table and, picking up a long flat board, walked over and stood on her left side, while she remained seated on the floor. Standing right in front of me, gripping the board in both hands, he pulled it back and like a baseball player taking a home run swing, hit her flat on the back as hard as he could. With little physical movement, she let out a loud grunt with an audible expulsion of air. I was startled by force of the blow.

And then, he did it again. If the exorcism were successful, this would be the culminating moment, it was explained to me. But only the family would know the results as, over the next days and weeks, the young woman's personality would be observed and evaluated. If she improved, then it had worked.

As she was led out, a local mother with her child pushed up to the front to get the Exorcist to give some treatment to her son. I observed him spraying the boy's face with one of the fluids he had taken in his mouth, apparently in the belief of its prophylactic or healing capability.

As we were walking back to our compound, I marveled at what I had learned about the theory behind Eastern exorcisms and the belief in the reality of spirits and their power. Essentially, the nature of an exorcism was that it is a confrontation between a good spirit of someone from the past and an evil personality or force that possesses a person, place or thing. If the good spirit is more powerful, it will be able to drive out the pernicious evil spirit and restore the person or place to normal health.

Even more significantly, I now understood that whether it pertained to religious leaders like Huynh Phu So or exorcists, people here in rural Vietnam believed that spirits were real manifestations of totally different persons who had previously lived and whose personality survived and now could inhabit and animate the body of another person. I further understood that in the case of Huynh Phu So, his followers believed that when he went up on Cam Mountain, through some mystical process, the same spirit that had previously animated Phat Thay Tay An, 100 years earlier, now had been absorbed into his body. This is what "enlightenment" meant. When Huynh Phu So came down from the mountain, the words he would say that would lead to him being considered the "Venerable Teacher" were coming from this spirit, from this different personality which had become an integral part of him.

AN INSIGHT IN INDOCHINA INTO THE CATHOLIC TEACHING OF THREE PERSONS IN GOD

Suddenly, there in Indochina, so far from the Catholic schools and churches I had attended, I had an insight that might explain the conundrum that I (and most other Catholic school children) always experienced about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity--that there were three persons in God (God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Ghost.) but only one God. Whenever we would ask the nuns how this could be, the Sisters would usually reply that " We have to accept this on faith, children." After a while, we would get tired and stop asking.

But now, at last, I could theorize how followers of Jesus and early Catholic theologians might have thought about Jesus and his divinity, and how they would logically think that there were three persons in one God. In their view, I posited, there was God the creator of heaven and earth (God the Father), from whom emanated a spirit who inhabited the mountains (God the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit) and who could be manifested in the body of a human. In this case, this Holy Spirit which emanated from God the Creator and was just an extension of Him, was infused into Jesus of Nazareth into whose human body the Spirit of God had entered when Jesus (God the Son) ascended the mountain and was enlightened.

The story of Jesus, in my mind, was basically the same as the story of Duc Thay, the only difference being the nature and origin of the spirit that resided in the mountains and that would enter the body of a special designated person and imbue them with a charisma and unique powers. For the Hoa Hao followers of Huynh Phu So, the spirit that enlightened him and possessed miraculous powers, but was not considered to be the spirit of God who created the universe. It was, instead, the spirit of Phat Thay Tay An, a man just like Huynh Phu So, who had lived in 1849.

I felt that, how very improbably, I had finally come to understand the deepest mystery of the faith in which I was raised, not in a Catholic Church, but in this remote Buddhist village in Indochina.

MY FIRST MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

I was only in Vietnam a few months when I received my first marriage proposal. There were two Vietnamese young women who were employed as typists for the Duc Thanh District Advisory Team. One would eventually marry Sgt. Huyen, our ARVN interpreter. The other worked for the U.S. Army intelligence officer who was our advisor to the Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program, the goal of which was to identify and render ineffective the Communist political command structure. As such, I did not interact much with her. Her name, as best I can recall, was Loan, so she was addressed as Co Loan (Miss Loan). She was very pleasant but her English was actually quite limited as was her typing

ability, leading to questions about why she had been hired by the previous US Intel advisor.

In any event, one Friday she invited me to come to her home to have dinner with her family on Sunday afternoon. Having been trained at the Vietnam Training Center in Washington that hospitality and accepting invitations were very important, and not wanting to give offense, I accepted. She actually lived in Sa Dec City, so I drove there in the afternoon, and was greeted by her older brother who was an interpreter for the U.S. Advisory Team 60 which worked with the ARVN 9th Division. So he spoke English quite well.

Dinner consisted of just him and me sitting at the table (apparently their parents were no longer living), while Loan and other family members or maids brought the various dishes (including wonderful cha gio) to us along with multiple bottles of "33" beer.

As the meal was drawing to a close, since I needed to leave before darkness set in when the road would no longer be safe to drive back to Duc Thanh, he and I exchanged some final pleasantries, with me thanking him and Loan, with whom I had exchanged no more than a few cursory words all day, for a delicious meal. He then said something like the following:

"America and Vietnam are good friends," to which I said "Yes!"

Then he continued, "You and I have had a very good exchange and we are friends," which again elicited an emphatic, "Yes!" from me.

And, then, as if this sentence logically followed from the other two, he asked "Would you like to marry my sister?"

Miss Loan was standing half hidden in a doorway, but right over my shoulder with a smile on her face, no doubt eagerly hoping that I would deliver the third consecutive "Yes" and make her quest for a husband complete.

Trapped in a more insidious way than any Viet Cong ambush could have ever have accomplished, I was suddenly, desperately seeking the way out, but without giving offense. I remembered from our cultural training that you are never supposed to say NO directly in response to any request.

Perhaps that training on the booby trap trail at Fort Bragg had instilled some survival instinct in me, because I immediately began to jabber about the bad security on the road and how I had to leave before it was too late, which was especially true in terms of my relationship status. The adrenaline rush that accompanies any moment of sudden danger impelled me out the door and into my Scout and I was en route back to Duc Thanh in a flash. Even if we had absolutely confirmed intelligence that the road was 100% certain to be ambushed by the Viet Cong, I would have chanced it. It was a close call.

ADAPTING TO MILITARY CULTURE / THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF GIs IN VIETNAM

After I had been in Duc Thanh for about three months, Major Tabb was set to DEROS, which was the term all American military personnel used to indicate the date that they were leaving Vietnam and returning to the "land of the big PX," as way too many referred to the US. In fact, there was a ritual practiced especially by enlisted personnel and NCOs to track how many days you had left on your 365 day tour. "How short are you?" was usually one of the first things you were asked, and the response would be "under 100," or "I'm a single digit midget," or as you got close to your DEROS, it would be calculated as "four and a wake up," suggesting you would be leaving on that fifth day.

There was an informal understanding that as military personnel got close to finishing their tour, they would be exempted from going out on particularly dangerous missions. None of the Duc Thanh team members could fathom that I didn't know my DEROS or how many days I had left. Leaving Vietnam and leaving alive, was the unifying theme that ran throughout virtually all US military personnel. I remember reading the morbid graffiti written on the rest room walls on the Army bases, but it was never more apparent than at a small USO show held at the Navy Officers' Club in Sa Dec.

An Australian female singer was performing an array of 1960s hits for an appreciative all male gaggle of young Navy officers, who were enthralled just to see a western woman. Then it came time for her finale. When she broke into the Animals' "We've Got to Get out of This Place," the club suddenly exploded with every officer standing, dancing and singing with incredible exuberance, particularly the refrain "If It is the Last Thing We Ever Do." That song was the de facto "national anthem" of every soldier, sailor and airman in Vietnam, and even today it still stirs me every time I hear it. Interestingly, I would bring it out of retirement to be our Embassy theme song in Cambodia in 1998, when we were desperately trying to get out of our extremely vulnerable chancery.

Learning all of this military culture was important since I was now going to lead the Duc Thanh District advisory team upon Major Tabb's departure. This had, ironically, resulted from the arrival in the Delta of John Vann, the nemesis I had sought at all costs to avoid.

THE LEADERSHIP OF JOHN VANN / MY BECOMING A CIVILIAN DISTRICT SENIOR ADVISOR

As an Army officer, Vann had served in Vietnam very early in the U.S. engagement and had famously been involved in the battle of Ap Bac in Long An Province. It was that experience of being involved in combat at the local level that gave him his insights into the nature of the war and the capabilities and drawbacks of both the ARVN and the Viet Cong. He would eventually become the most famous American in the country, but now retired he was holding powerful, high ranking positions as a civilian USAID "direct hire" (non-career FSR just employed in Vietnam) that he could never have attained as a

military officer. Vann was now DEPCORDS for the entire Mekong Delta, in charge of the entire provincial political and military advisory effort and intent on shaping this endeavor and leaving his mark on it.

To this end, reflecting his desire to emphasize the importance of the development side of the Government of Vietnam (GVN) pacification effort, Vann was intent on having some language trained civilians become district senior advisors. As a result, I was appointed to be one of those new civilian DSAs in Duc Thanh beginning in June 1969. I would spend about a year as DSA, giving me a total of about 15 months in the district, which was made up of eight villages, several of which were located along the lower Mekong River. All were laced with small canals and tied together by an old French farm to market road that was in a state of extraordinary disrepair. The main crop grown everywhere was rice, often the floating rice variety because of its ability to prosper even during the annual rainy season when the river and canal banks overflowed and the rice fields flooded.

A FOOT SOLDIER IN THE GREEN REVOLUTION / THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ROADS AND RICE

It was in Duc Thanh District that I learned the substantive lesson of my life, the transformative power of rural roads and agricultural technology. In 1969, the United States provincial development program in Sa Dec was, quite by serendipity, doing two things at the same time in Duc Thanh. First, we were upgrading the old French farm to market road that ran through all eight villages. An American engineering advisor from provincial headquarters was coordinating the contract with the construction company that brought all the road graders and the rock and everything needed to rebuild this road, especially putting in culverts so it wouldn't wash away as water passed under the road.

At the same time, quite by coincidence, the agricultural advisors from the province were introducing a new variety of high yielding rice called IR-8. IR-8 rice had been developed at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines by a scientist from Nebraska named Hank Beachell, who had spent a career at USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and when he retired went to the Philippines to work on this project. IR-8 rice was a cross between several different varieties that brought together all of the significant properties, genes and traits that allowed the rice to be disease resistant, high-yielding and fast growing, ready to harvest in 90 days, half the time of traditional floating rice.

In effect, this was the beginning of the Green Revolution in East Asia, which would eventually spread all over Southeast Asia impacting over 200 million people a year. This was occurring at the same time that Iowa native Dr. Norman E. Borlaug was introducing his "miracle wheat" in India and Pakistan, which would be credited with saving hundreds of millions from famine and starvation and which led to his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970. Interestingly, in 1996, Beachell received the World Food Prize, the award which Borlaug created to be "the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture," from the foundation that I have headed since retiring from the State Department in 1999.

Before the introduction of IR-8, Vietnamese farmers in the Delta had traditionally planted what was called “floating rice,” which they just broadcast or scattered by hand to plant. It would take about six months to grow, so farmers only could harvest one crop a year with limited yield, so it was basically subsistence living for most families.

IR-8 rice, on the other hand, grew to maturity in about three months. It required irrigation and fertilizer, so farmers needed to build little irrigation channels to connect their land out to the nearest canal. In addition, it wasn't broadcast, but rather was first planted in seed beds and then had to be transplanted in the field. So it took a lot of back breaking work, but the results were truly miraculous. In fact, IR-8 rice was known both in English and Vietnamese as “miracle rice,” because it would grow in half the time with double or triple the yield. The farmers who grew it would suddenly see that they had a huge amount of surplus rice, which they now could sell generating additional disposal income, which was the way out of a subsistence agriculture life style and out of poverty.

Now, of course, like any new agricultural technology, it took some doing on the part of our agricultural advisor Bill Williamson and his Vietnamese extension worker counterparts to get farmers to try it, especially since it did require investment and hard work. But once a few farmers in a village tried it and had dramatic results, others would copy them. It quickly spread. This would produce an amazing transformation of life in the village in just a few months. Now that people had surplus income, with their extra money they could buy metal roofing sheets to put on their houses, or even construct an entirely new, sturdier dwelling. They now had more money with which to buy better clothes for their children, who now appeared better nourished. TV sets and TV antennas and motor bikes suddenly proliferated.

As I traveled around Duc Thanh District what became apparent, however, was that the new miracle rice was only used in villages where the road upgrade had been completed. Thus far, we had re-built the road only through four villages. What I noticed was that it was only when we re-built the road that people in a village started using the IR-8. It became clear that this new agricultural technology flowed down the improved road. The road was critical because extension workers could now get there to tell farmers about the seeds; trucks could now come down to buy the surplus crop right at the farm gate; and the needed amendments like fertilizer and pesticides could reach local brokers. The road conveyed a sense of progress and an improved atmosphere which encouraged farmers to make the investments needed to grow the new rice variety.

The road produced an additional array of social benefits. For example, child mortality went down because now with the new road, mothers with sick children could get their kids out to medical attention early enough so that it wasn't fatal. In addition, education flourished because there now were little intra-village taxis that would take students from one hamlet to another where the next level of school was located. Children stayed in school longer and, most noticeably, girls stayed in school.

But what was especially dramatic, what was, in fact, truly revolutionary, was that in those villages connected by the newly upgraded road and planting the IR-8, the Viet Cong organization seemed to wither. Villages which had previously had a sustained VC guerrilla presence, and which required a heavy security escort if we traveled there, now became much, much safer. The new road seemed to provide a way for economic and social forces to come to the village that undermined the Viet Cong's ability to recruit young people as fighters, so that the insurgency seemingly evaporated. As the road improved, we could now go to those villages night and day. Previously, we would never go at night and if we went during the day it was with security. Now we could go at night and you could go during the day without security, but only to the four villages where the road had been upgraded.

But when I got to the end of the upgraded road, I would have to put my Scout onto a little ferry or drive it through a shallow part of the canal, because there were canals everywhere and no bridges. Only this way could I enter into the other four villages- - which were totally unaffected by the Green Revolution. As I drove slowly along the bumpy and almost unpassable road, with endless ruts and pot holes, it was clear that there was no transformation taking place. Those villages were unchanged from the way they existed a hundred or perhaps two hundred years before. The thatched dwellings were ramshackle and rickety. Children and adults were poorly clothed and looked thin and malnourished. There were few attending school, and child mortality was high and unchanged. Most importantly, the Viet Cong remained firmly planted in those hamlets, as we had not been able to completely dislodge them with bombs and boots on the ground.

The VC were sufficiently entrenched underground so that you could not get at them, except the road could do it, and the power of the road and rice became the lesson of my life. It was the lesson that I would take with me and it would come back again and again to me of how it was the lesson of America. It's the lesson of my home state of Iowa, of Illinois, of every place in the Midwest. What had transformed our country was building ubiquitous farm to market roads, with all of the same impact that I saw going on out in these remote Vietnamese villages. But, it was only when I was in Indochina that I could see it and understand how the improved infrastructure had affected my own country.

Q: You must have really felt tremendously satisfied with what you were up to.

As I reflected on the power of upgraded rural roads to change the situation so rapidly and dramatically, it occurred to me that this should have been the lesson that I took away from my upbringing in my home state of Iowa. For it was the construction of the grid of farm to market roads that crisscrossed the state – each one separated by just 1 mile-- that made Iowa look like a patchwork quilt when viewed from the air, that had transformed life during the early 20th century. It was those new roads that allowed extension workers from Iowa State University to take Henry Wallace's new hybrid corn out to farmers, while the same road permitted school buses to pick up their children and take them to high school.

I carried this lesson of roads with me through the rest of my diplomatic career, increasingly convinced that there was a correlation between hunger, poverty, political instability and terrorism and the absence of good roads. In 1990, when the United States returned to Cambodia, there were still 25,000 genocidal Khmer Rouge troops that controlled much of the countryside. The North Vietnamese Army force of 200,000 troops had failed to dislodge them. Now, somewhat like the U.S. in Vietnam, Hanoi was giving up and going home, as part of a new Paris Peace Agreement [that I helped negotiate with Assistant Secretary Dick Solomon].

Having returned from the Philippines in 1990, I was now the Deputy Assistant Secretary [DAS] for Indochina in the East Asia Bureau of the State Department, responsible for structuring a new aid program with only \$11 million in Economic Support Funds [ESF] available. My plan, which I scratched out on the back of a paper place mat at a hotel coffee shop in Tokyo with two USAID officers, was to rent as much road grading equipment as we could find in Thailand, bring it into Cambodia and begin de-mining and rebuilding the roads that had collapsed during the two decade-long Civil War.

As we re-built the roads, it was possible to see the “medicinal effect” somewhat akin to the roads being the bloodstream that carried the chemotherapy [new seeds and agricultural technology] to the cancerous tumor that was the Khmer Rouge. Nine years later, in March, 1999, I remember receiving the phone call from the Cambodian Prime Minister informing me that Ta Mok, the last Khmer Rouge [and the brutal Southwest Zone commander on whom I had submitted the first ever report in 1973], had just surrendered. We had gone from 25,000 Khmer Rouge terrorists in 1990 to zero just nine years later, using the strategy of upgraded rural roads and rice. It was one of the few times, if not the only time, the U.S. had completely eradicated a terrorist organization.

WHERE THE ROAD ENDS POVERTY AND HUNGER AND CONFLICT, INSURGENCY AND TERROR ALL BEGIN

A decade later in 2008, I was one of a dozen individuals working on global food security invited to meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. As I was telling them the story of Borlaug and my use of roads and rice in Vietnam and Cambodia to improve security, Secretary Gates stopped me and interjected that every one of his commanders in Afghanistan says the same thing: “where the road ends, the insurgency begins.”

In looking back in history, it has become clear to me that great societies and the economic and agricultural progress that they fostered, was due in large measure to the construction of roads and the movement of armies. Whether it was Darius' Royal Road in Persia, the Appian Way [and all the other roads that led to Rome in that empire], the roads that permeated the Inca empire under Pachacuti in the 1400s, or the U.S. Interstate Highway System built by President Eisenhower after World War II, -- all fostered the spread of technical advances leading to huge increases in agricultural production and to peaceful development.

In 2013, I was invited to address the U.N. World Food Day observance in New York, at which I proposed an analysis by laying first the UN World Hunger Map with its shaded areas of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. On top of it, I suggested place the map of global conflict and terrorism, which I contended would show that these areas would largely be co-terminus. Then, I averred, if you could put the global highway and rural road map on top of the other two, you would see that "where the road ends is where the poverty and hunger and political strife and terrorism all begin."

So that basic lesson learned on the dirt roads of rural Sa Dec about the transformative power of roads and seeds became the dominant analytical and policy approach of the rest of my career both in the Department and at the World Food Prize. That single experience would re-shape and re-orient my entire professional approach to every job I would hold.

I, of course, didn't come to this insight overnight in Duc Thanh. It was rather that I observed things one day at a time. But I could see progress being made. I had gone from being a person with a lot of doubts about what our country was doing in Vietnam, what the war was about, to seeing that the reach of our country and our programs could extend halfway around the globe into these remote villages with dramatic affect. With these tools that we had, these basic things that our country has always been about--building roads and growing food—I saw how incredibly transformative they could be. So, I was a young guy who didn't have a lot of experience in the world, but I was learning more about my country and my family and myself in Indochina than I ever did living in America.

Q: Well, had there been resistance to trying this new method, and -- or a bunch of farmers looking rather skeptically and --

QUINN: Of course, there was resistance. To put this in context, it was in 1968 in India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa that the Green Revolution led by Norman Borlaug was taking hold. Borlaug had a few years earlier brought his miracle wheat that he had developed in Mexico in the 1940s and 1950s to South Asia and inaugurated a period of food production and hunger reduction that was unprecedented in human history. Borlaug is called the "Father of the Green Revolution" because he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for developing his high yielding, disease resistant variety of wheat that saved India and Pakistan from imminent mass starvation, when hundreds of millions might have perished. It was an incredible, transformative process in those countries.

So what was taking place in Vietnam, although I certainly didn't know the full context at that time, was the Green Revolution in rice. I often think this chapter in my life could be called "A Foot Soldier in the Green Revolution," because I was out in the villages as that first "miracle rice" arrived, and I was there to witness the incredible impact it had.

Q: Well, were you getting skepticism from others in CORDS about this? I mean were you having to do a selling job?

QUINN: Well these were programs that were designed at the national level, by the senior agricultural advisors who were bringing the miracle rice to Vietnam. I don't think, however, that it was understood that there was such a critical relationship between the road upgrade and the introduction of new agricultural technology and their combined impact on degrading the Viet Cong. I only came to see that relationship later. I was seeing it, learning about it, observing it firsthand, but it takes time when you're a young officer, one raised in the city, to understand how these things work and relate to each other.

So, any skepticism that existed was on the part of conservative peasant farmers, as it always is. It was very tricky business to convince Vietnamese farmers that they should give up some of their land on which they could grow rice plants in order to build a series of irrigation canals to the rice paddies so that the water could be shared among many different farmers. That was something that farmers were not used to doing. But, that work of convincing the farmers was done by the agricultural advisors, and not by me convincing them.

CONFRONTING AND PREVENTING TORTURE: WE'RE AMERICANS. WE DON'T TORTURE PEOPLE

I never would have imagined that as a first tour junior officer in the State Department that I would be dealing directly with the issue of torture, but that was the case with my assignment as DSA in Duc Thanh when I was faced with a decision about how to react to the possible use of electric shock on a Viet Cong female prisoner.

By way of background, there were several organizations within the South Vietnamese government that dealt with gathering and acting on intelligence about the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Viet Cong, its military / political structure in the south. On a national level, the National Police Special Branch, was the lead GVN organization that focused on the VC infrastructure. The CIA, which had operating bases in selected provinces around the country, was the liaison organization that worked directly with the Special Branch, which had a reputation among CORDS advisors for harsh methods, including electric shock and an early form of induced drowning sensation [water boarding] using polluted canal water.

There were no Police Special Branch personnel or operations in Duc Thanh while I was assigned there, although there had previously been the Phoenix program which had US direction and which did interact with South Vietnamese [SVN] military units. Prior to my arrival, the U.S. reorganized the structure by which the South Vietnamese military at the provincial and district level were advised on intelligence operations. The Phoenix program was renamed Phung Hoang (fung wang) which was the Vietnamese word for Phoenix. This name change reflected that this was now a Vietnamese run program, with the SVN Army officers in charge.

At each district there was a District Intelligence and Operation Coordinating Center, which we all referred to as the DIOCC (dee ock), headed by a Vietnamese army lieutenant. On my district advisory team I had a U.S. Army lieutenant, Alan Heckman, who was the Phung Hoang advisor. The DIOCC served as a place where all information collected about the Viet Cong structure and operations could be collated and both open and covert intelligence gathering coordinated.

The center itself was just a few rooms in a very basic brick and cement, one story structure. There were no secret jails or prisons, but there was a room that could be used to conduct interrogations. There was a general suspicion that in some of these DIOCCs in the province that Vietnamese Phung Hoang personnel might use electric shock to force prisoners or suspects to reveal information. Several DSAs brought this subject up at one of our weekly meetings with the PSA, and asked for guidance. The informal feedback we received was that, while we could not ever be involved in or condone the use of torture, the best course might be to just leave this matter to the Vietnamese about how they treat their own citizens.

While torture may be a relatively easy subject on which to be principled in the abstract, in the reality of the combat situation, where lives are at stake, the choices become more complex. What binds soldiers together in a conflict zone is their commitment to each other, and to each other's survival. If you were to eschew using force or torture to extract information that might help save your comrades from being killed, would you betray that commitment?

This issue had not arisen in Duc Thanh, until a young woman was captured who had been identified as a part of the Viet Cong political infrastructure with access to the top VC leadership in our district. She was brought to the DIOCC, where there was considerable excitement about the intelligence she could reveal. Lt. Heckman, who was closely monitoring the situation, told me that she was sullen and resistant during questioning, and as a result the Vietnamese military personnel were about to use electric shock to extract her information.

Knowing Americans were not to be present when such interrogations took place, the Vietnamese officer – in-charge had just encouraged Heckman and his interpreter to leave. He had come right to me just two minutes later to fill me in. Listening to him with my other two officers standing there, I thought back to the guidance I had been given at the PSA meeting. No one would know if we did nothing, but I would know and that would be very hard to live with.

I immediately went to Major Diem the District Chief and demanded that no torture occur. He was taken aback by the forcefulness of my approach, particularly my telling him that if it occurred, I would formally report it to the province level and it would be brought to the Province Chief his boss. Realizing this could cause him significant problems and possible disciplinary measures, he immediately that he would stop the interrogation process and assured me that no torture would take place. I thanked him for his reaction,

but following the precept of trust but verify, I sent Lt. Heckman back to the DIOCC to have his presence serve as a reminder of our objection and a deterrent.

I am certain that in other places the South Vietnamese did use torture on suspects, but in this one instance, I had prevented the use of torture against this female prisoner. It made me resonate with pride as I recalled what one of my officers said at the time: "We're Americans. We don't torture people."

DEFEATING THE INSURGENCY- -UNDERSTANDING THE DECISIVE IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

Pacification and resettlement in Duc Thanh was a slow process, but the progress was discernible and was symbolized by the proliferation of PF platoons that were now operating out of newly constructed triangle shaped mud forts, that were positioned strategically along the canals. It was this government presence both night and day that made populations feel more secure and able to re-establish their homes that had been abandoned or destroyed during the TET offensive. I endeavoring to understand the differences in the operating capacity of both the enemy Viet Cong and our South Vietnamese allies, it became apparent to me that there was one overwhelming factor, that allowed the government to be so successful in reclaiming territory- - the upgrade in the military technology available to the South Vietnamese.

One of the key differences with the situation before TET was that the government's Popular Force and Regional Force units were now equipped with M-16 automatic rifles, the same weapon carried by U.S. military personnel. Before TET, southern units had been limited to WW- II era M-1 Garand rifles and M-2 single shot carbines. The Viet Cong had been provided AK-47 rifles which fired an entire clip of ammunition on an automatic basis. As a result, the VC could easily bring tremendous amounts of fire power onto a PF platoon or RF company, literally overwhelming them. This huge imbalance meant that the Viet Cong always had superiority on the battlefield, unless an American unit could provide artillery or helicopter support. Many of the government outposts were simply overrun with the personnel scattered. Disillusioned troops would then carry stories back to their home villages of Communist superiority, further depleting the morale of the southern forces and the population.

All of this changed with the introduction of the M-16 rifle and it being made available to the southern forces. Now the PF weapons were equal to or superior to the AK-47 equipped Viet Cong units. The PF and RF troops could now put out as much firepower as the Communist units, or even more. This increased capacity, when aided by American helicopters and other close in air support, led to dramatic increases in Government controlled hamlets and villages.

This lesson about the critical importance of technological superiority in military confrontations at the village and hamlet level, would stay with me all through my career and would be central to my 1975 analysis about the inevitable defeat of South Vietnam

that was praised in Time magazine in 2000 as the "grimmest and most accurate" within the U.S. government. At that time, it was not the capacity of the rifles used by both sides that was the decisive factor in deciding the outcome of the war, but rather the overwhelming advantage that the North had, once American air support was withdrawn, in terms of the superior range of its largest artillery pieces; the capacity of the North's SA-2 anti-aircraft brigades to defeat the tactical aircraft of south's air force and its ability to mass its forces without fear of US B-52 bombers

DEFEATING THE INSURGENCY, PART II- -TAKING BACK THE NIGHT

Night was when the Viet Cong could surreptitiously enter hamlets to collect taxes, recruit young men to join their cause and obtain supplies that were denied them in their base areas. The insurgency thus became a struggle for who controlled the night. This would lead John Vann to institute a policy that District Teams were to spend a certain number of nights sleeping in South Vietnamese outposts in villages and going on night ambushes to deter VC infiltration. But when I would stay overnight in an outpost, it became clear that the government authority which could spread throughout the hamlets during the day, would retract at night as the PF forces would stay buttoned up in the relative security of their barb wire encircled mud forts

Getting South Vietnamese units to operate at night, particularly at the village and hamlet level, was problematic. So many rank and file provincial recruits were drafted into the military and so were hesitant to be engaged in conflict with a significant chance of being killed (a problem, I was told by young U.S. Army officers, that afflicted main force U.S. units as well once the American military withdrawal began). At the province level, the issue was exacerbated by the tendency of South Vietnamese junior officers to lead from behind, i.e. to send their troops out to do the ambushes while they remained behind in the outpost. There was a deeply ingrained cultural reason they did so.

Another lifelong lesson that I learned In South Vietnam is that societies can be defined by the sense of obligation that citizens feel toward others in their family, their hamlet or village or their larger community. In Iowa or Austria, I had seen that such obligations were felt toward a broad range of individuals that extended well beyond one's immediate family. In the US Army in Vietnam, the obligation in combat was to other Americans with whom you were in battle.

But for many Vietnamese in the South, the prime obligation and often the only obligation people felt was to their immediate family. A Vietnamese officer who would be killed in combat would be consigning his wife and children to a life of poverty and misery, thus the great reluctance of many to take significant personal risks. While I encountered a number of brave and daring young Vietnamese officers, the prevalence of this family orientation was a characteristic that seemingly permeated the ARVN and contributed to large desertions and defections, [especially during the last months of the war, when North Vietnamese long range artillery impacted families of soldiers living near the bases where their husbands were stationed].

To try to overcome this hesitancy, Vann and the MR 4 Commanding General Jack Cushman convinced the Vietnamese Corps Commander to issue an order to all province chiefs to require night operations including night ambushes. At the same time, Vann sent a directive that all district teams were required to spend a certain number of nights each month sleeping in villages and hamlets and accompanying RF and PF units on night maneuvers. Our job was to force the South Vietnamese officers to lead from the front.

Another approach to try to guide and lead Vietnamese units into effective small unit night operations was the creation of U.S. Mobile Advisory Teams or MAT Teams. These were five man units with two officers, two NCOs and a Spec. 4, RTO (radio operator) with an ARVN interpreter. The MAT Teams would typically spend 60 to 90 days training and operating with a local PF unit in a village, living in one of those ubiquitous triangular mud forts. These MAT Team personnel were drawn from U.S. Army units that were demobilizing to return home, so they often had individuals with some combat experience. Their job would be to help plan and accompany their PF counterparts on daily operations including night ambushes. MAT Teams were assigned to both Duc Thanh and Duc Ton Districts while I was the DSA, so I was their commander, responsible for their support and protection as well directing their operations.

The MAT Team leaders and I would together plan where they should seek to hold ambushes based on our intelligence about known VC infiltration routes, including from the multiple reconnaissance flights I made in Army O-1 single engine, two-seater aircraft flown by Cpt. Zak and other FACS as the forward air controllers were known. I had learned: how to "read" the canals in VC base areas for recent sampan traffic, by looking for disruptions in the lily pads that usually entirely covered the small streams that crisscrossed the VC base areas; how to discern where the VC would hide their sampans by sinking them underwater; and how to differentiate which footpaths and trails were being used. Most importantly, I knew where farmers lived and which fields they cultivated, and which areas were devoid of civilian non-combatants, so we could avoid casualties among civilians.

In addition, there was an emphasis given by MAT teams to training local Vietnamese units to use Claymore mines to booby trap pathways used by VC to enter villages at night. Claymore mines were insidious small, curved devices only about 18 inches wide, that could be set off by remote control and which dispensed a devastating and lethal high speed fusillade of small metal balls. This approach took away some of the danger to RF and PF personnel, while greatly deterring the VC who could not know when one of these pernicious devices might explode.

This is what had led John Vann to institute a policy that District Teams were to spend a certain number of nights each month sleeping in outposts in villages and going on night ambushes to deter VC infiltration. I spent several occasions laying out in ambush with the top PF unit in Duc Thanh operated by a very tough local fighter named Ba Thanh. One of my last actions in that district would be a night time operation into a hamlet to try to

capture a VC tax collector accompanied by my replacement as DSA, a very bright FSO named Ints Silins.

A MOTHER'S ANGUISHED PLEA: TO WHOM DO I HAVE AN OBLIGATION? INSPIRATION FROM THE PIETA

One of those night ambushes on which I did not participate, nonetheless brought me face to face with the profound question of to whom we have an obligation, especially where human life is at stake. It occurred in the little village town where our compound was located called Hoa Long. At night, the village center would be illuminated with kerosene lanterns from the market stalls and the little stores that were open. So it was a very traditional Asian village marketplace, a big open area where people would come in the morning, bring their basket of food to sell, then go home in the afternoon, and then return again at night. Along with the handful of more permanent stores like a little pharmacy, this made up the village market.

It was in this setting that I was confronted by the sight of a Vietnamese woman holding her badly wounded Viet Cong son in her arms, pleading for someone to help as life drained from his body. He had been shot by Ba Thanh's unit as he was trying to surreptitiously return to Hoa Long to visit his family or carry out some type of Viet Cong activity.

A crowd had gathered in the market place where he had been carried back and where his mother had found him. Local medical people had done what they could to help, but the wound was so serious that it was clear he needed to be taken to a hospital to have any chance to survive. That meant a 15 km trip down an unsecure road to Sa Dec City where the hospital was located.

None of the few local villagers with a vehicle felt any obligation to take a risk to help someone who was not a part of their own family. The South Vietnamese military officer present said his unit was not going to risk driving down the insecure road to Sa Dec at night for an enemy. A call I had directed be made to the U.S. Army medical evacuation center elicited a response that wounded Viet Cong were the lowest priority, and so no helicopter would be available to assist.

The crowd began to dissipate, with only a few people remaining around the woman sitting on the ground of the village marketplace, her son's head cradled in her arms and a look of incredible anguish on her face. All others had turned away because he was our enemy. I too started to walk away, but then I hesitated and turned back, as somehow her countenance reminded me of Michelangelo's Pietà - the statue of Mary holding the body of Jesus that is displayed in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in Rome. Some value, instilled in me during my Catholic education, told me that I could not turn my back - that I somehow had to try to help. So I said out loud that I would drive the boy to Sa Dec. I would take the risk to travel that stretch of road that was vulnerable to enemy interdiction.

Suddenly, volunteers sprang up now willing to help. The military members of my advisory team rushed to bring a jeep and volunteered to undertake the mission. Sadly, the boy died before reaching a hospital, but the lesson I came away with was clear: my obligation to others who are suffering could extend far beyond my family, my community or my nation's borders and even to those who have been my enemy.

I was back in Hoa Long in 2012 and went over and looked at the market place. Of course it had changed very dramatically and didn't look the same, but there was still the open area where the stalls would operate in the morning. I took a photo of myself standing there in about the spot where the woman would have been holding her son.

Almost 45 years after the incident, in May of 2015, following our unexpected meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican, my wife Le Son and I had the opportunity to visit St. Peter's Basilica where for the first time I was able to stand before the actual Pieta. As I gazed upon that radiant, almost-life like marble creation, my mind went back to that night when it was the memory of a photo of the statue that had motivated me.

Now, standing before the actual source of my inspiration on that distant occasion, I reflected on all that had happened since I made that decision. I realized that the moral values that had compelled me to act that night at Hoa Long village, were the same principles that had inspired me throughout my career and formed the basis of my commitment on behalf of refugees and in confronting hunger around the world.

A FRONT ROW SEAT AT A DEATH

As a Foreign Service Officer with aspirations to be a political reporting officer, I was interested in having any relevant experience that might serve me well when I finally would have a real diplomatic assignment after my 18 months in the remote Mekong Delta in Vietnam. So, I was excited one night in 1969, when I was suddenly invited to go with the Duc Thanh district chief to a village where he said we would be dealing with a sensitive “political” matter. Since I was his “political adviser” he wanted me to have the opportunity to accompany him.

As we drove down a dark road to the village, I learned that we were going to the home of a prominent Hoa Hao political leader who served as a national congressman. He was said to be ill so he had returned from Saigon. When we arrived at the politician's modest home, I thought we would probably find him propped up in bed, and that we would be there to have a conversation with a frail individual. I was, therefore, beyond startled when we were ushered into the main room where the politician, completely unconscious, was laid out in a suit on a wooden bed with a catheter attached to him.

The bed was surrounded by a bevy of onlookers who deferentially made room for us on the benches. We were given the best front row seats at the side of the bed where we could observe closely his labored breathing and, I now understood, watch him die.

His wife and children, who were seated on the edges of the bed itself, were attending to him by brushing flies and bugs away from his face. As we entered, they immediately stopped and, ignoring him, endeavored to make us comfortable and welcome by asking what we would have to drink. We were suddenly the center of attention, since we were showing such honor to the family by being there to share their difficulty. I distinctly recall asking for a café sua [coffee with milk], not being sure what was the correct beverage to request while you are waiting for the beloved member of a family to expire.

We were surrounded by other family members and village elders while children and other gawkers gathered outside, looking in through the windows. This was clearly the main event going on in the village. It was surreal to be sitting there watching this comatose man's chest rise and fall with his labored breathing. As I made small talk with the district chief, he informed me that the man was in fact a member of the national assembly elected from this area and thus a highly respected figure. It was important for the government's influence in the village and, indeed the entire district, for him to be there. I thought to myself, that the District Chief was probably earning extra points by being able to bring me, an American advisor, to the deathbed scene.

After we had been there about a half an hour or so, suddenly the unconscious representative took one long, extremely labored breath, gave off a gurgling sound, and then stopped breathing. It was as if the life force inside him had to make an extra effort to escape his body. I had never actually watched someone die before and so this was startling to see the actual moment of death.

Two things then happened simultaneously. The family members immediately began crying as if on cue. At the same time, many of the Vietnamese started calling out the time, endeavoring to pinpoint the exact minute when he had expired. There was actually a fair amount of variance in the times being called out, but the district chief, being the highest ranking figure present and therefore expected to have the most modern and accurate timepiece, had his time recorded by the family as the official moment of death.

While the watches were being reconciled, the family members, having apparently fulfilled the cultural requirement to cry and sob, stopped as abruptly as they had started. They then began the practical preparations of the body for burial. Some types of spices were placed in the mouth of the deceased, while the widow and children all donned white smocks and headbands, reflecting the color of mourning in Vietnam.

Having fulfilled our role of honoring the family by being present to witness the death of this important person, we were now free to express our condolences and take our leave for the drive back to our compound. It was one of the more unusual and almost unreal experiences for me, one that I had only by being located so deep in the rural Vietnamese culture. I probably would not have had anything similar or as memorable as a first tour junior officer in Europe, where I had hoped to be assigned.

A SECRET ADVENTURE LATE AT NIGHT ON THE PHONG HOA CANAL

Another "secret mission" came on another night in early 1970, when the Duc Thanh District Chief sent Lt. Nhan, one of his most trusted younger officers over to our compound, to seek me out. In whispered tones, he advised me that the District Chief was about to embark on a very sensitive mission and wanted me to accompany him. They were leaving right away.

Our normal rule was that if any American team members went out at night, we went in twos. But since this was a very hush-hush matter, I made an exception and immediately agreed to go alone. I joined the District Chief in his vehicle, so I was in his circle of protection, as we drove down the road toward the Mekong River and the dock where his boat was kept. I still had no idea where we were going or for what reason, but the trip seemed cloaked in secrecy as there were no village officials there to greet us (as was almost always the case). Everyone spoke in whispers and there were only a few flashlights to illuminate the path up to and onto the boat.

I was extremely excited about the likely prospect that whatever transpired, I was going to have material for a "knock their socks off" report that would get me noticed at the Political Section of the Embassy in Saigon. Many young FSOs in CORDS (and especially me) dreamed of "being discovered" and invited to come up out of the "field" and join those doing career enhancing "real State Department work." They even wore ties in the political section.

The suspense only grew as we made the trip down the river in the pitch black night, barely able to see anything. The District Chief had only a few of his bodyguards with him and this one other officer, his most trusted lieutenant. This was unusual since he would normally travel with a much larger contingent and would take other staff members. It made me think this had to be an especially sensitive matter. I began to think of titles and opening sentences for my report. "It was a dark and turbulent night on the Mekong..." or something equally grabbing.

I soon discovered that we were headed to Phong Hoa village, as we turned off the river and began making our way up the narrow canal that linked together the hamlets which had only recently been taken back from the Viet Cong. We passed through hamlet after hamlet, each one more sparsely populated than the last, until we reached the most extreme outer limits of the last hamlet where almost no people lived. We were now adjoining an area that had been a Viet Cong stronghold. What an incredible setting for what I was certain would be my extraordinary report.

This last government outpost was a triangle shaped dirt fort ringed by barbed wire that was occupied by the local Popular Force platoon. Only a single kerosene lantern illuminated the inside of the outpost, the walls of which were only about 60 feet long. As we stepped off the boat in this desolate place, I imagined that we were somehow going to meet a senior Vietcong leader who was giving up or wanted to have some negotiation with the District Chief.

Filled with anticipation as we walked into the mud fort, I noticed for the first time that the District Chief's bodyguards were carrying several brown paper bags. As we sat in the middle of these very basic living conditions with only a few crude benches and a table, the brown bags were quietly being carried out side to the back of the fort where there was a small cooking fire. It was then that the District Chief's aide whispered to me in Vietnamese, informing me about the nature of our secret mission: an thit cay. We had come here to eat dog.

By way of background, the District Chief and the officer he had sent to contact me were both northern Vietnamese Catholics, who had come to the south as political refugees when the Ho Chi Minh led Communists had taken over Hanoi and the northern half of the country in 1954. Northerners, and especially northern Catholics, were well known for eating dog, which was little consumed in the south and totally abhorrent in these heavily Buddhist areas of the Mekong Delta.

So, in order for the District Chief to be able to enjoy this northern delicacy that he longed for, the dog meat had to be obtained surreptitiously and then carried in secret to this most remote part of the district, where almost no one would be able to witness it and the few Popular Force soldiers who were present, I learned, were not local Buddhists and therefore unlikely to ever give away the secret.

The District Chief did not dare eat dog at the District headquarters because of the scandal it would create, undermining his ability to govern. If even rumors of it became known, it could lead to protests and calls for his removal. With my dreams of a riveting report about meeting a VC political leader that would get me noticed in the political section of the embassy in Saigon now dashed, I was left with no choice but to get what I could out of this cross cultural experience.

I learned a lot of "dog lore" that night including the belief that black dogs were the most delicious, that northern Catholics would traditionally want to have dog meat at their Christmas dinner, that dog could be served seven different ways [all of which we tried that evening] and that dog napping was a common problem particularly as you got close to the Christmas holiday season. I also picked up some "dog jokes" in Vietnamese including jocular references to the dog being served being so tough that it must be roadkill.

We stayed there all night enjoying roast dog, grilled dog and boiled dog. It was hard to take that first bite, but it was okay as it tasted like beef but a bit sweeter. I joined in sampling all of the dishes. I was flattered that the District Chief was confident enough to trust me with his secret, which if revealed, could destroy his reputation and effectiveness with all of the Buddhist village chiefs and elders throughout the district. In any event, it helped build a bond between us and he ended up taking me with him to a number of interesting events.

But, the most lasting impact of that night came years later when I was married and we had children. It was hard to look Cosmo, our Golden Retriever, in the eye, since I worried that he could sense what I had done on that dark night up the Phong Hoa Canal.

In the 1990s, when I journeyed to Hanoi for post war negotiations about POW / MIA issues, I marveled at all of the restaurants and shops openly advertising this cay- dog meat. As a result, in 1996, when it came time to move to Cambodia where I would be ambassador, I shipped Cosmo to my sister in Florida. There was a significant Vietnamese population in Phnom Penh, and I was worried that he might wander off just before Christmas and never come home. He became a therapy dog and lived to a ripe old age. I hope my protecting him from such an ominous fate made up for my indulging on this cay on that dark Mekong night.

AN UNUSUAL FOREIGN SERVICE INSPECTION IN THE COMBAT ZONE: "YOU BITE YOUR NAILS"

While I was in Duc Thanh in 1969, the State Department, worried about low FSO morale in Vietnam, took some steps to look into the situation of officers assigned as part of CORDS. One of those steps was to send Foreign Service inspectors to visit and inspect each officer at his place of assignment in the provinces.

Since there were several of us in Sa Dec, an Inspector, I wish I could recall his name, arrived and was brought out to Duc Thanh to spend time with me. The inspection consisted of an interview and his looking very, very thoroughly at: the common toilet and shower we all shared (which were very basic, especially the shower which was a gravity flow device using canal water that was heated by sunlight, so you only showered in the evening); the "mess area" where we collectively ate (a picnic table with benches); the trailer which I shared with two other officers; as well as some discussion with other members of the team who were all from the US Army and nonplussed by the entire process.

I wasn't sure what the Inspector was expecting to find in a war zone, but my impression was that he found me looking dusty and not very FSO-ish. I don't recall him asking me much about what I did or any of my unusual experiences. Still, he asked what I was looking for as a next assignment, and I told him of my desire to be posted to Western Europe. He made due note of my request.

My most lasting recollection, however, came during our personal one-on-one interview, sitting across from each other at the picnic table. Suddenly, he said "Show me your fingernails!" Never having gone through a Foreign Service inspection, I didn't know what to think, and whether this was a standard part of every inspection. Startled, I sat there, and he repeated his request, which sounded more like an order. "Show me your fingernails."

Nothing could have seemed more out of place, sitting in a military team house in a war zone, but I felt I had to comply. So, as he was sitting directly across from me, I started to extend my two hands, backs up, straight ahead toward him, so he could easily see the tops of my fingernails. But, as I started to do so, I had a flash back to my oral interview when I was going through the entry process for the Foreign Service, and my fear of psychological tricks that interviewers might play on you to see your reaction and to reveal something about yourself. In that same instant, I recalled a test someone had told me about that was based on how women and men looked at their fingernails differently. Women would hold their hands out straight in front of them with the back of the hand up and their fingers extended straight ahead. Women would look at the back of their hands to see their nails. Men, on the other hand, would turn their hands palm up, and bend their fingers at the knuckle back toward them, so that they could look at their nails from the front.

Suddenly, I feared that this was a trick test of my sexual orientation, which was a huge deal in those days, and that by showing him my hands with the back of my hands up and my fingers pointed straight ahead, I would be appearing feminine. All of this went through my mind in just a few nano-seconds. Then I quickly pulled back my hands which were almost right in front of him, and immediately went into the "male" pose with my palms up and my fingers bent back toward me. Of course, while I could now see my fingernails, he couldn't. So keeping my fingers bent in the appropriate "male position," I turned my torso (contorted it would be more accurate) almost 180 degrees so my back was now toward him. In that position, I held up my bent fingers and fingernails, so he could see them across the table.

He must have thought I was one of the strangest persons he had ever met, but all he said was "You bite your fingernails!" It was a harsh condemnation, which left me feeling that I had not measured up to expectations and wondering whether I had much future in the "real" Foreign Service.

However, a few months later, when my TM 1 (State Department assignment notification document) arrived with my transfer to educational training at Harvard on labor issues followed by a posting to an as yet unspecified Western European country as a labor reporting officer, just what I had asked for, I thought maybe the Inspection report he had filed had not been too bad. I could not have been happier.

(As a footnote to this story, in 2015 my Special Assistant Crystal Harris, upon reading this piece sent me an email that read, "You still bite your nails").

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE IN SAIGON / A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

In the guerrilla warfare of the Mekong Delta, it was common practice for the Viet Cong to carry out some type of offensive in the spring in order to either gain new ground or stymie the government military operations prior to the onset of the rainy season. The theory was that any area that could be taken and held before the heavy rains began, could

remain in the hands of that side until the end of the year, since it was difficult to retake any objectives once the rain started falling heavily in June.

In April 1970, while I was the DSA in Duc Thanh, I saw up close the results of such attacks on two occasions. First, at the Can Tho airfield in the Delta where a team of VC sappers had gained night time access to the airfield and then, running up and down the flight line, had thrown explosive charges onto helicopters and other aircraft, damaging or destroying them. It was a terrible but effective incident.

I saw this up close because I was traveling from Sa Dec to Saigon for some personal leave. To get there, I first had to fly to Can Tho, where I changed to a larger Air America plane for the trip to the capital city. As we landed and taxied to the terminal, I was able to see directly the impact of the Viet Cong attack which had just occurred the night before, as we rolled past many damaged aircraft still sitting in their revetments.

These type of attacks went on all across the country and were continuous in that they might occur night after night. Saigon city, which was by this time reasonably safe to move about on the streets, was still subject to rocket attacks, if enemy units could sneak up close enough to fire them. The U.S. had a strategy to deter such assaults which I saw on my first night there. I went up to the top of the Rex Hotel, which was a leased U. S. Army BOQ, where there was an outdoor officers' club restaurant operated by the US military. It had a commanding view of the city and especially the Saigon River.

At night, you could often sit on the open air veranda of the Rex enjoying a steak dinner while you watched an Air Force C-47 two engine aircraft fire on suspected Viet Cong targets on the large island just across from the Saigon water front. The C-47 referred to by all Americans as "Spooky" [which was the plane's tactical call sign] had been fitted with large caliber "gattling" or machine guns, which were fired while the plane flew tight circles around the target.

It was quite dramatic to watch the succession of staccato red blips emanate from the plane and head toward the ground, which were actually the illuminated tracer rounds being fired from the aircraft to deter would be attackers seeking to launch rocket or mortar attacks on the city. The at-first silent stream of red dashes, would be followed a few seconds later by the delayed bang-bang-bang sound of the rounds as they were being fired. It was somewhat akin to watching fireworks as diners would halt cutting into their steaks to watch the display.

A few nights later, I had a date with an Air Vietnam stewardess (what they were called back then), named Lien, whom I had met on the flight from Bangkok back to Saigon following my short vacation or R and R (rest and recreation or recuperation) as everyone called it. She had found my ability to speak Vietnamese intriguing and thus accepted my invitation. We agreed to meet in the central part of the city that night.

Since it was not possible to bring outsiders into US military clubs, we went out to a local Vietnamese restaurant and then I suggested we have a late evening drink in the quiet and

intimate setting of the bar at the top of the Majestic Hotel, which was located right on the waterfront of Saigon just a few blocks from a large Vietnamese Navy facility. The Majestic was an old French hotel with tons of architectural charm, and being away from the center of the city had the benefit of not attracting many patrons and almost no U.S. military personnel. It was a perfect place for a quiet romantic conversation.

We were sitting there chatting with the lovely view of the riverfront out the window when out of nowhere a huge explosion followed by a second rocked the building, shattering the glass windows and bringing the collapsing roof down on top of us. What had happened was that the NVA, undeterred by the C-47 strikes, had fired several 122 mm rockets toward the Navy base. Being notoriously difficult to aim, the rockets had exploded outside in the streets near the hotel. There were a large number of civilians killed by these rockets which had landed among civilians and caused significant damage to the structures they hit. If it had struck the hotel directly, the casualty toll would have been even higher.

As the explosion went off, some instinct inside of me took hold as I grabbed Miss Lien and pushed her to the floor and covered her with my body, so that I took the brunt of the metal and glass that came tumbling down upon us. When the smoke cleared, the lounge was in a state of shambles, with other patrons and staff struggling to get up. Miss Lien was shaken and fearful, as were almost all of the other patrons. I grabbed her and pulled her with me to the elevator or stairs to make our way out of the building.

There was a great deal of chaos outside especially near where the rockets had hit, with many dead and wounded. Wanting to get out of the attack zone and not having a vehicle, I held her hand as we rushed over a block or two until we found a taxi. She did not want me to go with her to her home (I doubt she had told her parents she was going out with a foreigner, which was frowned on in many families), so I gave some money to the driver and watched the cab speed off.

Only then did I look down and was startled to find blood on my pants which had a number of shredded tears in them. I therefore took another taxi to the US Army 3rd Field Hospital clinic which was on Tran Huong Dao Boulevard, the large street that connected Saigon to its sister city Cho Lon in the Chinese quarter. I was taken into the emergency room where the doctors and nurses went over my leg which had been peppered with glass in the incident. They were able to clean out the glass shards and treat the wounds and then send me on my way that same night. For some years, I used to get a carbuncle (growth) on this area, but could never be sure if it was related to some small pieces of glass or metal still in my leg.

I got up early the next morning and made my way to the Air America terminal at Tan Son Nhut Airport for my flight back to Can Tho and then to Sa Dec. I never saw Miss Lien again as I had no way to contact her, and after how our date ended, I doubted that she would be interested in seeing me again. The irony of all this was that despite the many times I was shot at or near impacting mortar rounds while in the combat zone, the one time I sustained a wound was while sitting in the lounge of the Majestic Hotel in Saigon.

Almost 40 years later when my wife and I visited Ho Chi Minh City, I took a nostalgic detour to up to the bar at the Majestic. The ambience seemed less elegant to me but the view is still lovely and you can see the economic development all over the island where the NVA artillery men would infiltrate to fire on Saigon. We happened to ride on the elevator up to the roof with two American women tourists. I was telling them about the wonderful view that was available and then added that the last time I had visited there had been an explosion which nearly destroyed the place. They were suddenly apprehensive and thinking they were making a mistake until I told them that it was four decades earlier.

DINNER WITH THE AMBASSADOR / NOT WANTING TO HEAR BAD NEWS

During my first two years in Vietnam when I served as a District Senior Advisor in Sa Đéc Province, at one point, a few officers from the “field,” including me, were asked to come to the embassy in Saigon to have dinner with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. It was organized by Charlie Hill a smart and thoughtful FSO who was serving as Mission Coordinator (and with whom I would later serve when he was Executive Assistant to Secretary George Shultz). Charlie was endeavoring to get some different voices in front of the Ambassador. It was a rare opportunity for a junior officer like me to interact with someone at such a high level. I remember the Ambassador’s Residence seemed so elegant compared to how I was living in a military team house. This was the first real diplomatic dinner I ever attended, and I still remember how delicious the Gazpacho soup was.

It was a small group, only five or six of us around the table. Over dinner, the Ambassador asked for assessments of how things were going in the countryside and one-by-one the other more senior officers gave a relatively upbeat accounting. As the most junior person, I was the last to speak and I could feel the compulsion within me to repeat that same mantra of success which the Ambassador so clearly wanted to hear. I even started to say something similar, but I stopped myself mid-sentence and instead told him of the significant corruption that pervaded the South Vietnamese government and military hierarchy where I was working and how it was undercutting our efforts to defeat the insurgent Vietcong. The Ambassador reacted abruptly with a look that let me know he was unhappy to hear what I had to say, adding some words about “...that’s not what I hear from others.”

I had a similar experience about two years later at a luncheon Ambassador Bunker presided over in Nha Trang for the Director General of the Foreign Service, Richard Hall, who was touring the country and observing the role FSOs were playing in the war. It was an impressive aggregation of significant responsibility. All of the FSOs who were serving as Province Senior Advisors and Deputy PSAs in MR 2 were gathered around a long luncheon table. They were all mid-career or senior officers.

Since I was the FSO escort fromCORDS headquarters in Saigon for Ambassador Hall, I was included in the lunch but seated way at the far end of the table. Toward the end, there

was discussion about the recent ARVN operation into Laos called Lam Son 719, in which ARVN divisions and tanks had driven far into Laos reaching Tchepone, a significant objective. That it had been accomplished without any US ground support had been ballyhooed in the press as a significant victory. At the end, however, there had been a strong NVA counter attack that resulted in a hasty ARVN retreat, casting doubt on just how much of a victory it really was.

The Ambassador asked each provincial FSO leader to give an overall assessment of the South Vietnamese military performance in the operation and each in turn gave an upbeat report, saying such things as it was a "B+" or "mostly successful," or "high marks from the public." After about 10 of those consistently positive comments, they got to me at the far end of the table. I interjected that from what I had read and heard, the operation was being viewed much more negatively both by U.S. military advisors and the Vietnamese public. While the operation had started well, it had ended very badly.

I received a number of startled looks from some of the other FSOs, either indicating their unhappiness that I was not concurring in their judgments or an incredulousness that I would dare to say something so contrary to what was expected. After the luncheon ended, however, several of the PSAs and DPSAs said very quietly to me that they were glad I had made the comments I did.

Then, the Deputy Ambassador, Sam Berger, privately pulled me aside and told me how pleased he was about what I said and how important it was for the Ambassador to hear such comments. He then pulled me over and sat me next to Ambassador Bunker as we had coffee.

Such was the tension and the struggle within the Embassy about what message was sought from FSOs. The reluctance by the Ambassador's office to accept or report bad news was reflected by many other officers in Vietnam who had considerable difficulty getting their reporting telegrams approved and sent from the political section. The disbanding of the Embassy Provincial Reporting Unit, which prepared cables reflecting the views of young officers in the field, sent the message very clearly about the kind of analysis that was not welcome.

This added to a widespread sense of frustration and deep disappointment, particularly among many State Department officers. I remember one evening walking down an alley in Saigon with another junior officer who was in tears because his vision of an honest, open Foreign Service reporting system had proven to an illusion and he was considering resignation.

THE VIET CONG AND THE HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM

Q: Well Ken, during this first time in this province. What were the Vietcong like? What was the situation on the ground?

QUINN: Well, in the Delta the Viet Cong were invisible guerillas. I recall the first time I flew in a small Army spotter aircraft, a single engine, two-seater, over the VC base area in Sa Dec. I had expected I would see their compounds and forts and assembled troops, and was stunned when I saw nothing. They were hidden underground in the base areas, which were essentially enemy secured zones that ordinary people didn't live in; or they were areas where people did live and essentially the Vietcong was the only presence in them.

We ranked Viet Cong presence in and influence over villages by a process called "The Hamlet Evaluation System." So every district senior advisor each month had to evaluate all of his hamlets. Villages were subdivided into hamlets. A village might have four or five hamlets in it, and then a district might have eight or 10 villages. So we had to evaluate every hamlet, which could be graded anywhere from an A to B, C, D, or V for VC controlled. A hamlet in which there is no communist presence or influence, received an A, meaning it was totally secure. A grade of B meant the government was largely in charge, but there was still some marginal VC influence. If Communist forces were able to come in at night, tax people, influence people, sneak in, sneak out, this was a hamlet that's contested and got a grade of C. The government probably ran it during the day, but the Vietcong controlled it at night, with the government soldiers staying buttoned up in their outposts and letting the Viet Cong come and go at will. A grade of D was given if the government could enter the hamlet during the day, but only with a significant military presence, and the government had only a sporadic on and off presence, with the Viet Cong having the preponderance of influence and total control at night.

A V or VC grade meant that the government couldn't enter except with a huge military force and the Vietcong were in total control of the hamlet. So Duc Thanh District, when I came to it, had a bunch of VC hamlets in several different villages, and a number of D and then some C. By the time that I was getting set to leave, largely due to the road we were upgrading and our arming the PF with M-16 rifles, we had turned all of the Vs to at least Ds or Cs, and some Cs to Bs. So, wherever the road went the scores went way up.

Q: Well, I mean did you feel -- what was Vietcong doing with people like you these advisors who were changing things around? I think they'd kind of weed you out?

QUINN: Well, certainly we would stand out. If they had the opportunity, the Viet Cong, of course, would be glad to kill us. During Tet in 1968, they had made a lot of attacks on U.S. advisory compounds and they could easily target our compound in Duc Thanh as there were some former VC hamlets nearby. However, we began to operate into those hamlets and made them safer. But the VC still were around.

One of my experiences as District Senior Advisor was that I went out on ambushes at night, even though I was an FSO. I would also go out on daytime Vietnamese military operations. In either case, I would take one of the U.S. sergeants with me and we would walk along with the Vietnamese Army military officer and his platoon or company. We'd go through villages by day sort of showing the flag. I never wore the army green

uniforms because I wasn't a soldier, but I had some dyed black jungle fatigues that I wore on the ambushes and daytime operations.

I should emphasize that I was not required to do this. As the DSA, however, I was the de facto commander of the military personnel who worked for me. My view was that if I expected them to go out and risk their lives on military operations, then I needed to do them too. I couldn't tell people to do things that in fact I wouldn't do or hadn't done.

THE BOAT RIDE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Now, by the time it got toward the end of 1969, it was getting close to the date for me to leave. I had been about 14 months in Vietnam out of an 18-month tour, which was what all FSOs assigned to CORDS were required to do. There was a great deal of unhappiness in the Service about being assigned in Vietnam, with many officers resisting being sent there, and a lot of complaints from officers who were already there. As a result, the Department leadership endeavored to keep morale up by indicating that they were going to make very significant efforts to help State Department officers, who had been good and done their time, to get for their next assignment, a post they really wanted.

I had come to the Foreign Service with this deeply ingrained desire to serve in London or Paris or Vienna with those chandelier ballrooms that I always thought was where real diplomacy took place. So I expressed those interests, and the Department responded by giving me an assignment whereby I would first be sent to Harvard at the conclusion of my 18 months in Vietnam for a significant training program on labor issues. Following that, I would be assigned to an embassy somewhere in Western Europe at which I would be the labor reporting officer.

So I was pumped. For someone from Dubuque, Iowa who went to Loras College, the chance to go to Harvard was almost unbelievable. And then to be assigned to Europe, it was my fantasy about to become a reality. I was so happy because this was what I dreamed the Foreign Service was really going to be about.

And then one day, towards the end of 1969, the event occurred which radically transformed the direction of both my career and my life. A photo journalist from Time-Life magazine, who was doing a story about the American pacification and village development programs, came to visit. John Vann wanted to show off the successes in the advisory program and especially those places where civilians were serving as DSAs. So somewhere along the way some public affairs advisor told the journalist he should go to Sa Dec, where the provincial CORDS staff decided to send him out to my district. My job for the day was to take him out to villages and show him what was going on. The reporter's name was Dick Swanson and as I would learn years later, he had gotten his start in journalism at the Des Moines Register.

He had a woman with him who was his assistant and interpreter named Germaine who had been a paratrooper in the Vietnamese Military at one point (and who, after the war,

would operate the eponymous Vietnamese restaurant in Georgetown that became one of the town's hottest eateries). I decided to take them to Phong Hoa village, so we got in an Army jeep and drove down the upgraded road to the Mekong where we kept our team boat. We had a Boston Whaler, which is a small, flat-bottomed craft with an outboard motor that would hold only about six or seven people. It was like a fishing boat you might see one or two people sitting in on a lake in the US. It could navigate small canals and streams. It was the same type of boat on which John Kerry earned his first Purple Heart.

One of my sergeants came with me, Henry Randle, who operated the outboard motor. There were a couple of planks that you sat on across the boat. I sat up in the front on the right-hand side of the boat as you look ahead. Dick Swanson was behind me on the second plank on the opposite side of the boat.

It was a gray, overcast day as we set off down the Mekong, with the water spraying off the bow of the boat and hitting me on the cheek on the right side of my face. I was sitting turned sideways telling him what we were doing. It was a full and personal briefing as I told him about my role, speaking with villagers in their language and about how we had taken hamlets back from the Viet Cong. At one point he said to me, "Well, what are you going to do next?" With great enthusiasm, I told him that I was going to Harvard and then to Western Europe where I was going to report on labor issues.

I can still recall his reply as if I just heard it yesterday, "Well, here you are. You're in the middle of the epic event of your generation. You speak the language. You are able to step through the cultural veil. You're making a difference in what happens. Why would you want to go and do that? Why would you want to go and work in some embassy and write reports about labor that nobody in Washington will care about or probably read?"

I just sat there. It was like somebody had pushed the pause button. Of course there weren't any pause buttons in those days. His question had stopped me and it made me think in a way I had never done before. I don't know how long I thought. Finally, I turned and looked at him and said, "I don't know why I would want to do that." That night, after showing him around, I was back in our compound. I wrote to the Department and said, "I don't want to go to Harvard. I don't want to go to work in Western Europe. I don't want to study labor relations. I want to stay in Vietnam."

Now, when I tell this story to people I usually facetiously add that ordinarily in the State Department, as in any big organization, when there's such a clear sign of mental instability, the organization immediately brings you home from overseas. But in this case, they were desperate for anybody to stay in Vietnam, so my request was immediately granted and the extension of my assignment was accepted.

AFTER TAKING THE WRONG TURN, I HAD FOUND THE RIGHT ROAD

I ended up staying in Vietnam for almost six years, for four tours of 18 months each. During that time: I met my wife in Saigon; commended helicopter combat operations; my assignment along the Cambodian border gave me the opportunity to discover and report on the genocidal Khmer Rouge; and it led to my assignment at the NSC at the White House, and eventually to being Chief of Mission in Phnom Penh.

In retrospect, I can now see that what I thought had been the absolute “wrong turn” in my being sent to Vietnam, ended up with me finding the absolute “right road” for my career and my life.

The lessons and experiences from Sa Dec shaped all the rest of my career. I learned that my contributions to diplomacy would be made in remote villages of Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines and Lebanon, or in a place like Iowa, rather than the salons of Europe. It was that moment when my life changed forever as a result of that one question Dick Swanson asked me.

MEETING JOHN VANN: “I UNDERSTAND YOU CALLED ME A MAD DOG”

So this was all in Duc Thanh in 1969 / 1970. John Vann, the DEPCORDS, was someone who liked to drive around on a motorbike to show that it was safe. At other times, he would fly in unannounced on his helicopter. He would, on occasion, take senior American civilian officials from Saigon with him. In this instance it was Bill Colby, who was the Deputy COMUS MACV and who would later head the CIA. Colby was a wonderful, smart, decent and thoughtful person, who was in charge of the entire pacification advisory effort. I remember that Vann and Colby suddenly came driving into our compound unannounced one evening on motor scooters for a brief stop. Vann promised to come back. Not too long afterwards, Vann came back flying in on his helicopter again without telling anybody or giving any notice. The man was legendary among the Vietnamese. I’d never met him; I had never even spoken to him. But, I had been intimidated and at the same time repelled by him when I heard him lecture at the VTC in Washington.

But now he flies into my district and wants to go out for dinner. So my District Chief and I load up and we drive him into Sa Dec and we have dinner with John Vann and the PSA. We’re sitting there talking and the first thing Vann says to me is, “I understand you called me a mad dog.”

Stunned, I replied saying "What?"

Then Vann explained that there’s a woman who was a friend of his who ran a pizza restaurant in Saigon and that I had talked to her and told her that I thought John Vann was a mad dog. I’m sitting there with this man who is the MR 4 Senior Advisor, my ultimate boss, and suddenly I remembered.

Now, I have to back up and give you some background information to explain what I remembered. When I had first arrived in Saigon in November, 1968, that very first week, I had gone out alone in search of something to remind me of home and ended up at a place named The Pizza Restaurant. I sat at the bar and was practicing my Vietnamese talking to this attractive Vietnamese woman who was the manager. She brought up with me John Vann's name. I was kind of surprised that she knew that. Well we talked about delta six, Vann a little bit, with me conversing in my still very rough Vietnamese. She said that she understood that, "He's a very mean man." (Ong ay giu lam).

And I told her, "Yes, yes, that's right." She used this word, giu, in Vietnamese that can either refer to a person who's very mean and hardnosed and cruel -- but is usually reserved for describing a dog that's snarling and barking and biting: an out of control, rabid dog that you'd be afraid of. So I repeated the word and had this conversation with her over a pizza and a Coke. I then went off to the Delta the next day and for the next year and a half never thought again about that moment. It turns out that she was Vann's girlfriend, or more correctly, one of them. (Although I did not know it at the time, Vann had a number of girlfriends in Vietnam]. But sitting in an outdoor restaurant in Sa Dec, Vann, whom I had never met and about whom I knew nothing of his personal life, is telling me this story about what I said.

I then remembered the conversation with his girlfriend very clearly. Once again, I thought my short career was over. So, I'm scrambling and dissembling as fast as I can, saying things like, "Really?" and "I don't remember that." (laughs) It was unbelievable.

Q: Oh God, yes.

QUINN: So the conversation goes on and then Vann, out of the blue, asks me, "How many TV sets are there in your district?" John Vann loved to show people that he knew things about their province or their district that they didn't know. That he knew more about your district than you did. It was his way to encourage you to learn everything you could about your area of responsibility. I would later hear him say that if you could show your Vietnamese counterpart that you knew something he didn't know about his own area in his own country, that he would be more apt to listen to your advice on other matters. So Vann would ask a question about a subject that might never occur to you. He asked me how many TV sets there were in my district.

I replied that there were about 30.

And he said, "No, there are at least 60 television sets in your district," that is people who own a TV with an antenna. I said, "No, that can't be right." He said, "I'll bet you a dinner in Saigon that I'm right and you're wrong." What else could I say but "OK, it's a bet." So I drove around and counted TV antennas for the next several weeks. Turns out later that I'm right and he's wrong, and I told him about it. This rarely happened, so I think that it elevated me in his eyes.

The third thing that Vann said was to ask what I was going to do next? I said I didn't know but my tour was just about up. He said he wanted to keep officers like me working in the Delta and asked what it would take for me to extend. Suddenly, unexpectedly, there was an opportunity to shape my future.

There was another district in Sa Dec that had a very active military situation with the most combat and a big VC base area. It was named Duc Ton (duk tone). The district abutted the U.S. Army airfield at Vinh Long, which was in a different adjoining province. The Viet Cong, who had partially overrun the airfield during TET, were all located in Duc Ton. There were few Hoa Hao, so military operations were the predominant and almost exclusive activity of the American district advisory team.

I had thought it would be interesting to be the senior advisor there, but previously concluded that it was not a possibility. Suddenly, here was an unexpected opportunity to go for it. Still, I thought Vann would never agree to that since it always had been a U.S. military officer who was the district senior advisor. The current DSA was an experienced major. The district team carried out helicopter operations every day because most of the district was a Vietcong base area. We could hear them on the military radio every night. Duc Ton was where the action was, and I now wanted a chance to experience it.

The Duc Ton district advisory team had, over the past year, sustained 100 percent casualties, meaning everyone on the team had been either wounded or killed. Indeed, the situation had been so tough that units from an American division had recently operated there. But, fueled by the belief of my own immortality, a feeling that many young people shared, and thinking I had nothing to lose, I said to Vann, "I want to be the senior advisor in Duc Ton district," figuring he'd never agree.

And he said, "I'll approve that right now."

DELTA SIX- -DISTRICT SENIOR ADVISOR IN DUC TON

So in mid-1970, having been "in-country" almost two years, I packed up and moved across Sa Dec Province to Duc Ton District, where for the next seven months I would serve as the District Senior Advisor, or as all Americans referred to this position, the DSA.

It is probably safe to say that none of the U.S. military officers and most of the other civilian leadership in the entire Military Region 4 would have put a civilian in as District Senior Advisor in Duc Ton District, replacing an Army major in a heavily combat situation. But John Vann, the legendary former U.S. Army field grade officer and now civilian leader of the entire American pacification effort in MR 4, did. His vision of integrating all aspects of the U.S. counter-insurgency strategy came together around the Vietnamese speaking young civilian, Foreign Service Officers. As a result, he put me in that command position.

The challenges of the insurgency were dramatically different than what I had encountered in Duc Thanh District. The day to day situation was almost exclusively focused on conducting military operations to find and confront the Viet Cong (VC) insurgents who controlled 80% of the land area of the district.

Reflecting this military mission, in the previous 12 months the Duc Ton American advisory team had suffered 100 % casualties. It was this combat orientation of the team that made the decision to replace an Army major with me, a civilian Foreign Service Officer, as the leader of the MACV district advisory team, so improbable.

Duc Ton was comprised of seven villages, three of which were centered along National Route 8, a narrow, barely two lanes-wide black top “highway” that traversed the northernmost part of the district. That stretch of road, which ran parallel to the Mekong River, covered about 30 kilometers from Sa Dec City to Vinh Long City in the adjoining province. The Vietnamese district military and civilian government headquarters for Duc Ton, in which our U.S. advisory team compound was co-located, was situated in one of those villages about halfway between the two towns. It faced the road with the Mekong for our back door.

All three villages along the highway were contested villages. So you could go there during the day, but at night they were considered insecure and the highway too dangerous to travel. The other four villages, that were located along two major canals that extended south from the highway and which formed a huge letter Y on the military maps. These villages, which were totally controlled by the Vietcong, were referred to as the Y Base Area. They made up of about 80% of the total area of the district.

While the area had once been populated by rice farmers, there were almost no people living there, and most of the land lay fallow. The Viet Cong had occupied the area for years and used it as an operating base from which to attack the South Vietnamese presence along the highway and especially the U.S. Army airfield in Vinh Long which the enemy half overran during the TET offensive of February 1968.

In its post TET offensive strategy, the South Vietnamese government was beginning the process of reclaiming the Y Base Area back from the VC. There were a few outposts being established along parts of the two main canals, and plans had been made to extend the rural road network south off the main highway. But, the VC were still a strong force and many of the areas in the Y were heavily booby trapped with hand grenades and other insidious devices.

Our advisory team mission was to collaborate with the Vietnamese District Chief, an ARVN major named Tuan, and his team of highly motivated young officers, to devise and implement a strategy to drive the Viet Cong from the district and re-establish government control over the entire Y Base Area. Within this effort, the most significant responsibility we had was to coordinate the use of U.S. military assets that would support this plan. In addition, we would coordinate on a variety of programs, although initially

limited in scope, that were intended to enhance education, promote economic development and improve health for the population.

Beyond that, the Duc Ton Advisory team had a critical role in protecting the American helicopter units at the Vinh Long Army Airfield, since all of the communist forces threatening that U.S. facility were in Duc Ton. This meant my taking part in helicopter search operations every day, since no American military unit could operate in Duc Ton nor engage any Viet Cong unit there without the approval of the senior American officer—the Duc Ton DSA, whose tactical military call sign was Delta Six. I was now Delta Six. .

FROM “THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN MY CHAIN OF COMMAND” TO “I WILL FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE”

Q: Well, moving to this second assignment, how did the American soldiers react initially, and how did it change, to you as a civilian?

QUINN: Well, I think it's fair to say that military personnel often struggled with about how to react to civilians. For some it was personally quite difficult. I remember one Sergeant First Class, his name was Bobby Chase, a huge African American NCO, who, when I arrived in Duc Ton, said to me: “No disrespect, Sir, but there are no civilians in my chain of command.”

When I heard what he said, I realized even more that if I was going to be in charge, then I could not be sending people to do things that I didn't do myself. I realized that you can't be the leader, you can't be the commander, you can't be the District Senior Advisor and send people out to do things where they might be killed, if you don't do them yourself.

So I made the decision that I would accompany South Vietnamese troops when they conducted military operations. Two Americans from my ten member advisory team would go on every mission. So on the very first military operation in which I participated, I took Sergeant Chase with me. It was just him and me with the Vietnamese unit we were supporting, going deep into the Y Base Area.

For several hours we walked with the Vietnamese troops through the barren countryside which the NVA and VC controlled, slogging across wet rice paddies in the blazing Mekong sun, and then entering the often booby trapped tree lines, where the fortified Viet Cong bunkers could be located and an ambush could be waiting behind the thick jungle only five or 10 feet away. The operation went off without our making contact with the enemy, and we were lifted out and returned to Duc Ton, wet, mud covered and exhausted.

When we arrived back at our compound, Sgt. Chase said, “Sir, permission to say something?”

I replied, “Sure.”

And then he said, "Sir, You went where I went; You did what I did; You are my leader! I will follow you anywhere."

That statement indicated to me that I had earned his respect, and with it, the respect of the entire team. I followed this same approach on the helicopter operations too. I did everything that I ever asked any of the military team members to do, and, as a result, I was accepted and respected as their leader.

Leading the Duc Ton MACV District Advisory team was one of the great experiences of my career. I had three captains and seven sergeants and enlisted personnel. We became a highly motivated and effective unit.

MAKING LIFE AND DEATH DECISIONS ALONE IN THE COMMAND BUNKER

Shortly after taking over as the DSA in Duc Ton, I was faced with a potential life and death decision involving the U.S. Mobile Advisory Team (MAT Team) that was deployed in An Nhon, a populated village along the highway that ran through the district. That five man U.S. Army advisory team lived in the Popular Force outpost, a mud fort that was in the center of the village which had hundreds of civilians living in wooden and thatch houses all around it. While the road and the village were relatively secure during the day, at night the Viet Cong could approach without being detected.

On the night in question, sometime before midnight, the VC launched an all-out attack on the village. The call came in over the military radio to Delta Base, our location, from Captain Hart, the MAT Team commander, reporting with great urgency in his voice, that their position was under a surprise attack. They were receiving mortar fire, followed by approaching gunfire. The friendly PF forces out on patrol had engaged the enemy but we're falling back. The threat was real and serious. The outpost could be in danger of being overrun, if the enemy force was big enough.

I was on the radio, all alone in the sand-bagged bunker where we kept the communication equipment. I immediately contacted Black Hawk three zero, the command center for the 7/1st Air Cav helicopter battalion at Vinh Long, asking for urgent support with Americans in serious danger. The alert went from them to the helicopter reaction force with crews on alert for airfield protection. They were quickly air borne and headed toward the outpost.

At the same time, going through our Team 65 TOC (Tactical Operations Center), I requested that nearby US Navy Swift Boats on patrol be contacted. They quickly deployed toward the village, which backed on to the Mekong River channel. They were poised to evacuate the American team if they would be forced to abandon their outpost.

Then a set of Navy OV-10 Black Pony fixed wing aircraft came on our frequency offering help. We now had five different tactical units all on our radio network, all

responding to my direction. I was beginning to worry about the need to coordinate all of the aircraft and naval assets to avoid any mid-air collision.

I could tell from the stress and almost desperate apprehension in the voice of the MAT Team commander that the situation was coming to a head. He reported that the shooting was getting closer and wanted air strikes. He was trying to guide the helicopter pilots so they could know where their position was, but it was hard for the choppers to identify it amidst the flashes from so many guns.

The key decision was now mine- -whether and when to approve air strikes into the village center filled with civilians. I absolutely could not allow the Americans to be overrun and killed no matter the other cost, but wanted to structure any air strike to minimize the area of the impact and civilian casualties. So I had the helicopters move in closer over the village center to attempt to intimidate the VC, while having them hold off firing until the Viet Cong were close enough to possibly assault the outpost. I then had the Black Ponies fire a flare to illuminate the area, which also could make the VC feel threatened.

The minutes waiting for the next communication from the MAT commander were intense. How long could I hold off the air strikes but not let the Americans be killed. Were the Viet Cong now close to climbing the walls of the outpost? Then came the report. Intimidated by the show of force we had brought on station, the enemy was ending the attack and withdrawing. The MAT Team was safe and there were no innocent civilians killed or wounded as collateral damage from friendly fire. My approach had worked.

In my first intense, combat decision-making situation, I had successfully fine-tuned the response. I was drained when it was over, but so pleased with the outcome, which could have been very different. The next day when we drove to the village to inspect the aftermath of the attack, the MAT Team commander, Cpt. Pat Hart, thanked me profusely for keeping them safe.

I learned several lessons that night. The first was that when Americans were in danger, other Americans would respond without hesitation, even if they had no responsibility to do so.

Second, that making such an intense life and death decision was on me and only me. I felt the loneliness of command sitting all by myself in that bunker, with a need to make a critical decision with almost no time to think about it. Nothing in my Foreign Service training had prepared me for this moment, certainly not in my first tour as a 27 year old Foreign Service Officer.

But the experience would prepare me for decisions I would have make later: in Vietnam; in the Philippines during coup attempts; in Cambodia when my residence would be struck by a rocket and the embassy close to being overrun; and in Iowa during a prison riot when the inmates threatened to kill the guards they were holding hostage. It was a real time lesson in crisis decision making.

FLYING WITH SWAMP FOX

One of my first goals after arriving at Duc Ton was to learn first hand about the challenges we faced. Since you could not drive or even walk into any part of the Viet Cong controlled Y base area, I started flying over the District with Captain Zak, a U.S. Army pilot who regularly flew his single engine, two seater O-1 "Birddog" aircraft over Duc Ton. Zak was part of the Swamp Fox FACs [forward air controllers] stationed at the Vinh Long Army Airfield. His job was to detect movements in the Y Base Area during the day that might portend danger for the airfield at night.

Sitting behind Captain Zak, as we flew over the apparently empty villages, I began to learn from him about how to spot the tell-tale signs of recent Viet Cong activity, things like:

- had the ubiquitous lotus plants that covered every canal been disrupted by the recent movement of a sampan? The Viet Cong moved about their base areas at night using small boats or sampans, which would push apart these floating green plants. By assessing how wide the disruption was, it was possible to estimate how long ago the Viet Cong had been moving; and

- from which direction did the Viet Cong come, and where were they headed. By locating the place where the disruption in the plants began to occur, it could be possible to determine either the location of their main bunkers or staging locations. I would then mark each sign of activity with a grease pen on a the map I was carrying;

- most significantly, where were the Viet Cong coming together in order to stage an attack? I learned how you could find such areas by looking for where the VC "sank" their sampans under water to hide them during the day. If we flew early enough in the morning, we could possibly find the disruptions in the lotus plants on small side canals, where they often sought to hide them. The more sampans, the larger the force;

- tracking civilian movements were also important to note, since farmers could seek to return to some fringe areas of the Y Base Area. Detecting such activity could be done by observing the walking trails and footpaths to see if they showed signs of recent movement. Determining where the paths used by civilian farmers and villagers ended was important, because it denoted where the VC controlled and booby-trapped area began.

After a few flights, I came to see all of those indicators and more, which would assist us in planning where we would conduct our "Last Light" helicopter attack missions or insert South Vietnamese troops to try to confront or ambush the Viet Cong / NVA forces as they moved at night

LAST LIGHT, K-BARS AND EAGLE FLIGHTS / HELICOPTER COMBAT OPS

One of the most unusual Foreign Service experiences during my career was my direct involvement in helicopter combat operations in Duc Ton District.

Our district, part of Sa Dec Province, bordered Vinh Long Province, and in Vinh Long there was a U.S. Army airfield on which two U.S. Army helicopter units were based.

One of them was the 7/1 Air Cavalry, which was known by its tactical name and call sign -- Black Hawk. Our advisory team military radio at Duc Ton was linked to the command center of the 7/1st, whose radio call sign was Black Hawk 3-0, which was always said as Black Hawk "three- zero," and never as "thirty." They were our life line in an attack on our compound, and we were their indispensable partner in protecting the airfield.

The companies that composed the 7/1st were: A Company aka Apache; B Company- Dutch Master; C Company- Comanche; and E Company -Light Horse. There was also D Company, composed of U.S. Army infantry troops, whose call sign was Powder Valley. I got to know the company commanders of each company quite well, but especially Light Horse 6, Cpt. Jim Williams and Powder Valley 6, Cpt. Jim Lucas. They were indirectly responsible for my meeting my wife.

The other helicopter unit stationed at Vinh Long was the 214th Aviation Battalion. Both were totally American units with American pilots, American choppers, American crews, American everything. But the two units had a different array of helicopters. The 214th had two companies with which we would occasionally operate, known by their tactical call signs- -the Cowboys and the Outlaws. These units had UH-1 "Huey" utility helicopters as their lift capability, and also had "Huey" gunships.

"Hueys" were the ubiquitous work-horse helicopters most often seen in video footage of the Vietnam war. They had two pilots who sat next to each other in the front and two crew members, one on either side in the back. The doors on the side of the chopper would almost always be open. Hueys were sometimes referred to as "slicks," when they were used to transport troops into battle.

The Huey gunships would also have two pilots in front, but they would carry rockets and machine guns to fire at an enemy and protect friendly troops on the ground. They were like the escorts for the Huey helicopters carrying troops.

The other aviation unit, the 7/1 Air Cav (called "the Seventh to the First") had its antecedents and legacy from the history of the U.S. horse cavalry in the west. Their officers and personnel would often wear those 19th century style blue cavalry hats when they were not flying. They had a different set of helicopters and operating philosophy.

The 7/1st Air Cav companies also had the Huey helicopters or "slicks" that could carry troops. They had newer, narrow, sleek Cobra gunships, which were flown by two pilots sitting one behind the other, and no other crew. In addition, the 7/1st had a third type of

helicopter, the official name of which was Light Observation Helicopter, but which everyone called by its L-O-H acronym as a "loach."

While its non-combat capacity as an executive type helicopter for senior commanders was four passengers, in combat the crew of a LOH was just two- a pilot and one door gunner crew member sitting behind him. In this configuration, the doors would be off so the gunner could either throw hand grenades out or fire the M-60 machine gun from either side of the aircraft while they flew at tree top level searching for enemy fortifications%.

The day job of both the 214th Battalion and the 7/1 Air Cav was to fly out of Vinh Long every morning and support military operations by South Vietnamese forces in any of the 16 provinces all over the Mekong Delta. They might support an ARVN Division or provincial forces by picking up Vietnamese troops, ferrying them into the active war zone where they would try to militarily engage the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese Army [NVA] units that were now infiltrating into the south in 1970.

Late in the afternoon when they returned to Vinh Long, whichever company of the 7/1st arrived back first drew the assignment to fly Last Light which was designed to protect the airfield from a night time attack.

To this end, the Last Light operation involved flying for an hour or an hour and a half, and using the remaining daylight available try to find any Vietcong or North Vietnamese Army units that might be massing together to prepare to attack the airfield once it was dark. The threat was real as the Vinh Long airfield was almost completely overrun during TET. Moreover, while I was in the Delta I saw first hand the devastating results of such an attack at the nearby Can Tho airfield. The base had been penetrated the night before by sappers who infiltrated under the cover of darkness and ran down the flight line throwing explosives on to one helicopter after another. It was stunning to see so many destroyed helicopters.

The Vietcong forces which might similarly attack Vinh Long were all in the Y base area in Duc Ton District. The 7/1st Air Cav was assigned the job of finding any enemy force that might be planning to attack, and assaulting it to deter it.

To accomplish that objective, at the end of the afternoon, one of the companies and one set of helicopters from the 7/1st would be assigned to fly what was known as the Last Light mission.

The command helicopter would be a Huey which would fly out to our compound at around 5pm or so to pick up me or one of my deputies along with one of our Vietnamese counterparts, since only we could authorize any U.S. military operation in our area of responsibility.

My place would be in the back of the C and C helicopter with my Vietnamese counterpart next to me, who would bring his radio so he could communicate with all the friendly troops on the ground. I was connected to all of the helicopters and back to our base at

Duc Ton through the on board radio system. It was from there that I would make the decisions on where to search and whom to engage.

As we climbed in the back on the left side of the chopper, I would probably seem out of place in my usual civilian “uniform,” polo shirt, khaki slacks and combat boots. My counterpart and I sat on these little canvas seats that were bolted to the floor. Most of the time, we didn't buckle the seat belts. We conversed in Vietnamese and some English, but communication was difficult because of the noise of the rotor blades.

Since we had the most recent intelligence about Viet Cong movements and locations, I would hand the pilot a copy of a map of the district with the areas marked out where we were going to search, where our best information indicated the Vietcong might be. We had a short hand to describe areas on the map, such as “the base of the Y” to denote where the two main canals converged, and “De Gaulle’s nose” for a long circular tree line that jutted out from a major canal.

After reviewing the map, the aircraft commander said “Coming Up!” The two crew members in the back would respond “Clear right” and “Clear Left,” after which the rotors started turning more rapidly and the Huey slowly rose up off the deck. Once we were about ten feet in the air, the pilot swung the nose 180 degrees and increasing the thrust pushed the helicopter forward. The choppers would slightly dip as they picked up speed rushing at rice top level away from our base. Then once clear of that area, the Huey would rise up gaining altitude and heading toward the first search zone we had identified.

Our C and C helicopter would be 50 to 100 feet off the ground circling the area to be searched, with the Cobra gun ships hovering above and the light observation helicopters, the “loaches,” just 10 feet the ground, buzzing around trying to find and flush out any Viet Cong who might be hiding in foxholes or hidden under trees .

The LOHs would be used as bait to try to draw enemy fire. Flying at treetop level, they were looking for enemy bunkers or hiding positions, trying to scare the VC and draw fire. When that happened, the Cobra gunship helicopters would dive in and attack. Flying in LOHs was the most dangerous part of the entire Air Cavalry helicopter strategy, and usually the pilots were very young Warrant Officers.

We would try to identify where the Viet Cong had hidden their sampans along the myriad canals, since that meant they would be nearby. Over time by flying with the Swamp Fox FACs , I became acquainted with how to “read” the signs of where the Vietcong had been moving and how long ago they had been there.

Now flying at very low altitudes, I could see clearly how their small boats would cause a break in the lotus leaves that tended to completely cover the small canals. My Vietnamese counterparts and I could try to track them following these impressions and then find the places where they would sink their sampans to hide them.

Once I gave the go-ahead to search an area or tree line, if the LOHs drew fire, they of course could fire right back and the Cobras could engage immediately. But if we encountered a situation where the pilots wanted to fire on suspicious individuals, I would have to give permission before they could do so.

For example, from time to time we would come across people dressed in black out in open fields or moving on canals near populated areas. They would not appear to be armed, but it would be difficult to know for sure since a rifle could easily be hidden in a rice paddy or in the bottom of a sampan.

Most of these people were likely farmers or fishermen who were trying to eke out a living in these mostly deserted, marginalized lands in which no one was living permanently. We knew the area well, so my counterpart and I could usually discern who was threatening and who wasn't. But the pilots, who didn't operate in our district very often, would see these individuals moving and would say to me something like "since they are wearing black, they must be Vietcong," and would want to fire on them.

If I thought they were farmers, I would say no. And sometimes the pilots would get mad at me for not letting them fire freely. One time a pilot said, "If you're so sure they're not VC, then let's go down and check," likely thinking I would be afraid to do so. Then I replied something like, "All right, let's go down." So the pilot landed. If the individual had been a Vietcong, he could have easily shot us and killed us sitting there completely exposed.

But my counterpart and I got out of the helicopter and found out that the man was just a farmer, but one who didn't have his government ID card with him. So we put him on the helicopter and took him back to the district compound. The poor guy probably had a hard time getting back home that night, but he was alive because I refused to let the pilots shoot him.

I make the point to emphasize that never once was there what people now refer to as "collateral damage," - casualties or deaths of innocent non-combatant civilians on any mission I commanded or my team implemented. This could happen by just firing indiscriminately so that you would kill innocent people, but we never allowed that. I felt very proud of that accomplishment.

I spent hundreds of hours of doing helicopter operations, involving over 120 separate missions. And there were times we would make contact with the enemy and be shot at. Hearing the LOH pilots suddenly shout "Taking fire" sent Adrenalin racing through your system and riveted your attention as the gun ships strained to see the enemy location and dive in. The C and C would then fly tighter circles over the incident striving to see other enemy and to guide the gun ships and the LOHs. When this happened, the Huey would tilt dramatically to one side. With the door wide open, it felt like we could easily fall out, but we never did. It was then that shots could come toward our Huey and I can recall the co-pilot saying the aircraft had taken hits.

Indeed, on one occasion, a reporter from a Maine newspaper flew along with me and wrote a feature story about the “Last Light Shoot Up” he experienced. There was a saying in Vietnam that you never felt more alive than when you were shot at and missed. I can remember that feeling, that high that sense of elation and relief.

On a few other occasions, I would be involved in directing much more extended all day pre-planned helicopter assault operations called a K-Bar (which I learned was a big hunting knife). The idea was the operation was like a deadly swift knife- thrust from the air striking the VC. In this case, we would have all the helicopters from a company (either the Cowboys or the Outlaws) from the 214th Aviation Battalion participating in the operation.

We would use the “slicks” to pick up provincial level Regional Force (RF) troops and insert them deep in the Y Base Area so they could do a day-long search for the Vietcong. We would then circle above the operating area, prepared to call in the gun ships if contact with the enemy were made. Usually, two of my Duc Ton District Team Army advisors would accompany the unit being inserted. When we did this same type of mission with the 7/1st, it was called an Eagle Flight.

There was one particular K-Bar operation when provincial RF troops came to operate in Duc Ton. We had inserted them by helicopter into an area we identified as a likely base. It worked as almost immediately our troops confronted a large Viet Cong force. A significant engagement and firefight ensued that lasted for a full day. It was the biggest firefight in the Delta that day and the IV Corps commanding general, BG Jack Cushman, assigned the Corps reserve gunships to support us, so we would have constant coverage when the gunships from 214th had to return to Vinh Long to re-fuel.

In an effort to surround the VC force, we called the slicks back and lifted the South Vietnamese troops and re-inserted them on the other side of a canal. With this flanking movement, which was extremely complicated to coordinate and execute from the back of the C and C chopper, we appeared to have the main Viet Cong force in the District trapped.

All of our work that long day had put us in the position to deal a knock out blow to the Viet Cong. As night came, however, the South Vietnamese officers on the ground from the provincial level, who made all the operational decisions about the deployment of their troops, broke off the contact, allowing the VC unit to escape when night fell. It was an incredibly disappointing outcome after we had spent the day trapping them, but one that revealed some fundamental issues in the South Vietnamese command structure.

DUST OFF: NIGHT FLIGHT INTO AN OUTPOST OVERRUN BY THE VIET CONG

I was also involved in a night helicopter medical evacuation which everyone in Vietnam called "medevacs." These medevac helicopters call sign was Dust Off followed by a number, for example Dust Off Four Four. Dust Off, in fact, became a verb among US

military personnel in Vietnam. If you were "dusted off" it meant you were wounded or hurt and picked up and flown to a medical facility. In fact, I was "dusted off" a few years later while serving in Chau Doc Province and recall flying for about 45 minutes to the Third Field Hospital in Saigon with my toes sticking out the door. But that is another story.

In this particular instance in Duc Ton, an outpost of Vietnamese PF troops had been overrun by the Vietcong in a remote part of the Y Base Area. The District Vietnamese command center had lost radio contact, which meant that there were many killed and wounded. Based on this information we requested an urgent U.S. military evacuation helicopter from a unit whose sole mission was flying into any situation to pick up wounded soldiers and carrying them to a hospital, sort of like MASH in Korea.

The Dust Off helicopter arrived ready to go in and try to get all those wounded Vietnamese troops out. Usually, the medevac helicopters could fly directly to the site of the incident, but they could only do so if there was radio contact with the friendly troops on the ground. Working through our counterparts, we could contact the unit on the ground and tell them to send out some type of signal (such as a flare at night) which could guide the American pilot to the scene where he could land, pick up the wounded, and then take off for the field hospital.

But in this case, there wasn't any radio contact. We just knew there had been terrible casualties. Without radio contact, there was no way to guide the helicopter pilot, who didn't know where the outpost was, in to the landing zone. Indeed, there might not even be a secure landing zone. The situation was totally unclear and the pilot had no way to locate the outpost.

But I knew where it was, since I had just been there a few days earlier during daylight. So when the pilot said, "What can we do?" I replied, "Come and land here at our District helipad, and pick me up. I can guide you there."

So I got on the Dust Off helicopter -- this is at night, it's very dark, with only some slight moon light to illuminate things. Flying at night was very different than during the day, in that you don't have any visual landmarks to guide and orient you. You can just barely see some moonlight reflecting off the water of the canals.

I directed the pilot to fly down the main canal but at a very low level with our running lights off, at treetop level so not to be an easy target for the Vietcong. After a few kilometers, I told him "Coming up there will be a break in the trees, so turn left and go through that opening," and the outpost will be directly ahead. It was so dark that if I had not previously flown this route, we could never have found this narrow entry way.

I was able to guide him toward the outpost, but now the moment of truth came. We didn't know for sure whether the enemy was gone or not, whether it would be a contested landing zone -- a "hot LZ" -- with the Viet Cong still in the vicinity and able to shoot at

us. But we still came in and landed. The scene was a chaotic disaster illuminated by fires burning and with bodies strewn about.

As we landed, the surviving personnel rushed up and put the wounded soldiers into the Huey helicopter. There were more than we could carry, so we flew out and took the first load to the nearby military hospital. And then we came back and did it again, as I guided the pilots back into the outpost a second time down that same dark route.

We probably took out a total of about 30 wounded, all of whom were badly hurt. There were a large number killed and their bodies were still on the ground at the outpost. We were able to rescue all those troops only because I was willing to board the helicopter and able to guide the Dust Off pilot to that overrun outpost.

Thirty years later, I would receive the State Department Award for Heroism and Valor at a ceremony as I was retiring, reflecting my action in this incident and the other life saving rescues I had carried out in Vietnam and Cambodia. The medal was pinned on by Ambassador Tom Pickering, one of the most distinguished career Foreign Service Officers at a ceremony on the Seventh Floor of the Department. I am enormously proud of those actions.

BLACK PONIES, SWIFT BOATS, PBRs AND JOHN KERRY--WORKING WITH THE NAVY IN THE DELTA

The U.S. Navy had a varied and important presence in the Mekong Delta, particularly along the two branches of the Mekong River. There was a Navy dock in the Sa Dec City harbor with a Naval Support Facility where I often ate when in town. I later learned that I was there at the same time as a young navy officer named John Kerry, who was also assigned to a brown-water navy PBR, a small lightly armored "patrol boat riverine" that could ply the narrow and relatively shallow canals. I don't know if our paths actually crossed, but I had enormous respect for all of PBR and Fast Boat commanders and personnel who took incredible risks plying the narrow brown water canals.

(Decades later, this common experience in Sa Dec served as bond between us, first when he was Senator Kerry chairing the Senate Select Committee on POW /MIA accounting when I was Chair of the Inter-Agency Working Group; and later when we held World Food Prize events on the Eighth Floor of the Department at which Secretary of State John Kerry would preside. In September 2018, Kerry did a book signing at the Guardian newspaper in London. My daughter Kelly, an event manager at the paper introduced herself and mentioned my name. She said Kerry responded with surprise by saying "You're Ken Quinn's daughter? He's my hero!").

The Navy PBRs were available to us in an emergency but generally operated interdiction missions on their own on the main Delta waterways. In addition to the smaller PBRs, there were larger Swift boats operating both on the upper Mekong and its lower branch called the Bassac. There was also a Navy support operation in Binh Thuy (near Can Tho)

from which Navy fixed wing two engine OV-10 planes operated, which went by the call sign Black Pony.

At Duc Ton, we developed a special connection with the Black Pony pilots who very often when returning to their base at night after not having made any contact with the enemy would be looking for areas where they could fire off their armaments rather than land with them. The Black Ponies were often looking for work and we made a concerted effort to engage them as part of our strategy to constantly harass the Viet Cong units.

Given the large unoccupied territory in the Y Base Area that had only enemy forces and no civilians, in conjunction with our Vietnamese counterparts, we would identify "free fire zones" where the Black Pony pilots could come in unexpectedly and deploy their rockets and bombs. Of course, they had to have our permission to fire, but we were always ready with targets. This had two purposes: keeping the Viet Cong off guard at night when they moved around the most; and protecting the nearby South Vietnamese outposts.

We came to have such good relations with the Black Ponies that we arranged to have helicopters from the 7/1st Air Cav fly down to Binh Thuy and pick up the pilots and transport them to our team house in Duc Ton where we would meet them face-to-face for usually the one and only time. Previously, we only knew them by their call signs, like Black Pony two six, and they just knew us as Delta Base.

We treated them to steak dinners to thank them. We did this especially because our district MAT teams were so badly exposed in the small outposts in the Y base area and the Black Ponies always responded if and when the MAT teams would be brought under fire, as I had seen in An Nhon. This was the way we protected our most exposed American personnel and our Vietnamese allies.

On other occasions, we had the Swamp Fox FACS, Black Hawk pilots and Navy boat commanders out for a similar informal steak fry. On major holidays such as Thanksgiving, we would invite helicopter unit commanders from Vinh Long and senior officers from Sa Dec to join us at our dinner table for a traditional turkey dinner. All of them lived in much more comfortable and protected situations, that they developed enormous respect for how our small team operated so effectively in much more difficult circumstances. Given the mutual respect and the great sense of American camaraderie that prevailed, It would be difficult to overstate how high morale was on both sides during events like this.

A NAVAL ASSAULT ON VIET CONG ISLAND: "THE TRACERS LOOK LIKE THEY ARE COMING RIGHT AT YOU"

I was involved in another action that involved Swift Boats located at the U.S. Navy support station at the mouth of the Bassac River 30 to 40 kilometers away from Duc Ton. This came when a female Viet Cong cadre came into the Duc Ton Chieu Hoi center,

which welcomed VC fighters back to the government side. There was good reason to be suspicious about such individuals as they might be double agents sent just to gather intelligence or mislead the government. In this case, I interviewed her personally in Vietnamese and became convinced that the woman had information about a Viet Cong base area in Ba Xuyen province far from our headquarters.

Believing the woman had genuine intelligence which should be exploited; I drove with her to the Vinh Long Airfield, where I convinced a senior U.S. Army officer to initiate the planning needed to join together both Vietnamese and American assets. I had to do a sales job, but he went for it.

Soon she and I and a Vietnamese officer from Duc Ton were on a Huey flying to the mouth of the Bassac. There we connected with a Swift Boat unit that was returning to the U.S. the next day. On their last operation, they loaded us and a local RF company onto the boats and began the journey down the river to assault what was referred to as VC Island, since it had no government presence and was known as a VC secure base area.

We were in the middle of the Bassac River when the Swift Boat drivers turned the noses toward the shore and moved at high speed to assault it. With the island fast approaching, the machine gunners began to fire at the tree line along the shore. The fire was returned. I had never been in a situation where you could see the tracer bullets coming right at you. Every red tracer round looked like it was coming straight toward me. And, on a Swift Boat or a PBR, there was no place to hide or take cover.

When we got to the shore, the RF force started moving inland following the map that the female Chieu Hoi had drawn for us. She was there to guide the troops toward what was reportedly a Viet Cong regional headquarters. Several VC guards were engaged. We didn't get very far when casualties began to be taken due to land mines and explosives. Remembering my training on the "booby trap trail" at Fort Bragg, I still vividly recall making certain that every step I took was exactly in the footprint of the Vietnamese soldier walking in front of me.

By the time our force reached the location of the VC headquarters, all of the enemy had fled. An ammunition factory and storage center was destroyed and significant documents discovered. Several VC fighters were reported killed. It had been an extraordinary experience, especially to share the danger that Swift Boat and PBR crews faced.

IN INDOCHINA, I LEARNED WHAT IT MEANT TO BE AN AMERICAN / THE BOND IN COMBAT

There was a bond that existed among Americans in combat. I would see this time and again. After the war, I wrote about the phenomenon that even though you might never had met the pilots or people in other units who were supporting you, that if you heard on the radio that a "Uniform Sierra" --because that was how Americans or U.S. troops were always referred to on the radio--that a "Uniform Sierra" was injured or hurt or needed

help, that was all you needed to know. You automatically went to assist them. You went and did everything you could, even though you had never met them, you didn't know who they were, you didn't know their names, you didn't know their race. All you needed to know was that they were Americans, and you went. You went because you knew that they would do the same thing for you.

I felt, that the bond among Americans in combat was something that overcame all of the other racial divisions which seemed to exist any time you were out of the line of fire. Wherever shooting was going on or people were injured, you would go and rescue other Americans or do whatever was needed to be done, with no questions asked.

I observed that phenomenon during a joint U.S. - Vietnamese night operation in Duc Ton. An entire platoon of American Army troops were brought from the Vinh Long air field and inserted into the Y Base Area along with elements of a Vietnamese district Regional Force company. The plan was to set an ambush along a canal to intercept a Viet Cong unit moving by sampan. The plan worked to an extent. The U.S. Troops opened fire on the first sampan, but then came under counter attack from the main part of the VC unit which had held back allowing the lead sampan draw fire.

In the enormous confusion that ensued, two of the lower ranking Americans became separated from their platoon. They were all alone in the jungle, unsure where to go and, from the sound of their voices over the military radio, increasingly desperate. Trapped, with apparently no hope, the radio traffic was suddenly interrupted by the voice of an American helicopter pilot offering assurances of assistance. He guided the two men on the ground to the edge of a tree line, and then, ignoring the threat posed by the nearby Viet Cong forces, landed and rescued those two stranded G.I.s. The pilot was white, the soldiers were Black. But no one ever asked. The pilot just went to the aid of fellow Americans who were in danger.

I had a similar experience when Sgt. Bobby Chase would come back to assist me during our first operation together. We had slogged all afternoon under a blazing sun through the wet rice paddies, which drained the energy out of you. With every step, my foot sank deeper into the muddy ground, and it took increasing energy to pull it out and take the next step. I was exhausted by the time we reached a mangrove swamp, which we would assault, thinking it likely contained VC fortified positions. It was the first time, a South Vietnamese unit had ever penetrated this far into this VC base area.

The swamp was actually a series of little mounds with large ponds of water in between them, all overgrown by jungle vegetation. You could only see for a few feet. Any section might be filled with Vietcong waiting in ambush. As we went through, up and down one mound after another, I was moving so slowly that I was now at the very back of our file of troops. As I slid down into one more pond with water up to my waist, I paused to gather the energy to keep moving, much less climb up the next mound. Sitting there, leaning against the mound, I realized I was suddenly all alone. All of the South Vietnamese troops had moved on, leaving me behind.

I felt vulnerable to whoever might be lurking behind the dense bushes just a few feet in front of me. I held up my M-16 rifle, determined to defend myself, but I couldn't have moved another step. Then, suddenly, a big black hand appeared above me and a voice said, "Give you a hand up, Sir?" Suddenly, I felt a surge of energy. My fellow American, Sgt. Chase, had come back to help me. It was a lesson about the bond that existed in combat that I would see again and again and which extended beyond any racial or ethnic gulf that might separate us back in the U.S.

I remember that night when our MAT Team in An Nhon Village was close to being overrun. When the Navy Black Pony aircraft and the helicopters from the 7 / 1st had succeeded in intimidating the attacking VC force causing it to withdraw and the incident was concluded, I gave the aircraft permission to return to their home bases. At that point strict radio protocol broke down. The MAT Team commander on the ground said to the aircraft something like " You really saved our tails tonight." The pilots, who had never met any of the MAT Team personnel would reply in a low key fashion: "just doing our job!" and "All in a night's work!" What their replies really meant was "We came because you are Americans!" and "We know you would come for us."

EARNING THE ARMY AIR MEDAL FOR FLYING HELICOPTER COMBAT MISSIONS

But even though I had flown a large number of military helicopter missions in Vietnam, things that very few other FSOs did, I never received the Army Air Medal, the award that all of the military officers on my district team had earned for flying these helicopter missions in combat. I had never even been nominated for the award because I was a civilian.

Q. Really?

QUINN: So I had a very extensive military experience and as a result, long after the war, the Defense Department awarded me the U.S. Army Air Medal, which you receive for flying in aircraft in combat.

The head of the Air Medal Association said that I am the only FSO, in fact the only civilian non-pilot that anyone knows of to ever have earned that award. I only received it because a Congressman from Iowa, Leonard Boswell, who himself was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, asked me if I had received the Air Medal. When I explained that I couldn't be nominated because I was a civilian, he made my receiving it a personal cause. He pressed the Defense Department which eventually conceded that a civilian could receive the award, but the necessary hours had to be well documented. Undeterred, Rep. Boswell then sent his Congressional staff to the national archives where they dug out our 37 year old Duc Ton District team log books and found all of the pages that contained notations that read "Mr. Quinn Last Light," which added up to the 100 hours needed to qualify.

Rep. Boswell's efforts over several years thus allowed me to be considered for that award. It was approved by the Department of the Army, and Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte pinned the Air Medal on me at a wonderful ceremony at the State Department in 2009. Senator Bob Dole, Representative Steve Solarz and Congressman Boswell all attended. I was incredibly honored.

Q: Oh yes.

FIVE LIFE SAVING RESCUES / THE DEPARTMENT AWARD FOR HEROISM AND VALOR

QUINN: In the six months I was in Duc Ton, I was involved in three lifesaving situations, in addition to the two previous ones that occurred in Duc Thanh and Sa Dec City.

One described above was my twice guiding that Dust Off medevac helicopter into the overrun South Vietnamese outpost at night evacuating close to 30 seriously wounded troops. Without my participation, the pilots could not have found the outpost and no rescue would have occurred.

On another night, there was a U.S. Army truck that had been engaged in a terrible accident on the highway that ran through our District. We received word through our Vietnamese counterparts that the Americans in the truck were badly hurt. We passed word to the Vinh Long Airfield to urge them to react, since the truck belonged to one of the units there. But the response that came back was that no units would go down that unsecured road at night. So faced with Americans in need of assistance, I said I would go. A couple of other members from my team volunteered to join me. So, we got in our jeep and drove down the road that no one else would venture on to assist those Americans who were reported to be injured and in significant danger.

When we got to An Nhon Village, we found that the Americans while shaken were thankfully not badly hurt. Rather, the worst injured persons were two Vietnamese civilians who were in a small car that had been crushed by the huge Army truck. One man was almost unconscious and seemed near death. So we put the two Vietnamese men in our Jeep, left one of my team members with the Army truck drivers and their vehicle, and raced back to our helicopter pad, as we called for an urgent helicopter medevac to come and rush these badly injured men to a field hospital.

The helicopter arrived and I didn't think any more about the incident until about a week later, when a Vietnamese man walked into our team house and came right up to me and putting both arms around me, hugged me so incredibly tight to thank me for saving his life. By driving down that road at night, I had been able to get him to the medical help he needed in order to survive. He had such a happy look on his face that day, because I, a stranger, had helped him even though, in his view, I had no obligation to do so.

Q: Well, what was the third incident?

QUINN: Another time in Duc Ton, a US Air Force Sergeant, who was a medic, was on a mission at a small civilian settlement in the "Y Base Area." We were endeavoring to repopulate the abandoned hamlets along one of the main canals that made up part of the Y. To do this, we were fixing the road and had built a few cement bridges over the main canal which was really like a small river. It was rainy season so the canal was pretty full, probably over 10 feet deep in the center.

We had a helicopter available so we used it to ferry Vietnamese and Americans in and out of these newly settled villages to show the government presence and provide services to those farmers returning to reclaim their land and rebuild their homes. I was there watching the USAF medical team at work giving free exams and passing out medicine.

When it came time for the helicopter to come to pick us up, one of the Air Force medics, Sgt. Davis, stood on top of the cement bridge to visually guide the helicopter pilot to land on the bank of the canal near the foot of the bridge, where there was just enough dry land on which he could set down the chopper. I was standing on the opposite side of the canal, so I had a clear view of what happened next.

As the helicopter descended and was near the ground, the helicopter rotor blades flared creating an extremely strong down draft that suddenly blew Sgt. Davis off the bridge and into the middle of the canal. Unable to swim and in water over his head, he was drowning. With his arms flailing and crying out for help, he began sinking under the water right in front of me. Acting on instinct, I plunged in, swam to him and pulled him out. He was shaken but okay. We got on the chopper and flew out. A week or so later, I went to an event at the Air Force team house in Sa Dec City. Sgt. Davis came up to me and said something like "Sir, I want to thank you. You saved my life."

So in Vietnam it seemed that lives were constantly at risk. In just two years in Sa Dec, I was involved in five rescues where I personally saved someone's life. In addition to these above three incidents, there was another instance (described earlier) where I came upon a young boy who had been shot in the stomach and had rushed him to a hospital in Sa Dec City. The doctors told me that my fast action had saved his life. His father had sought me out to hug me and treat me to a simple meal to express his gratitude.

Then there was the time in Duc Thanh (also described earlier) when the vehicle in which the Province Senior Advisor and I were riding, was driven off a bridge by an inebriated driver and became completely submerged. I pulled the stunned and immobile driver out of the only open window and up to the surface. He would likely have drowned otherwise.

When I was retiring in July 1999, I was presented the Department's Award for Heroism and Valor for those lifesaving rescues in Vietnam, and for my actions in Cambodia to protect American citizens at risk during fighting in Phnom Penh.

A LIFETIME LESSON: THE POWER OF HIGHLY MOTIVATED SMALL TEAMS TO ACCOMPLISH BIG GOALS

Another lesson I learned in Duc Ton, one that stayed with me all my professional life, was the power of highly motivated small teams. A small number of people can, if you have a clear sense of what you are doing and where you are going, accomplish a great deal, much more than what might be reasonably expected. What I had to do was impart my vision and my energy through my own leadership to every one who was part of my team. I had to be concerned for them. They had to know that I valued their knowledge and experience, and that each of them was playing an essential role in our accomplishments. Most importantly, they knew that I always would have their back, and if any of them were ever hurt or trapped or injured, I would / we all would, come and rescue them.

One of the absolutely critical aspects of small team cohesion and performance was having a strong, smart and loyal deputy. I saw that in Duc Ton and later at my Embassy in Phnom Penh and again at the World Food Prize in Des Moines. In Duc Ton, I was incredibly fortunate to have Captain Paul Kalowski as my Deputy District Senior Advisor--as Delta Five. Calm in a crisis, absolutely brave in the face of danger and extremely thoughtful, he was completely loyal, always there at my side and displayed firm leadership. He shared fully in our accomplishments.

Another extremely important lesson in team building that I learned was that recognition of individual accomplishments by team members and others outside our team who had provided essential support to us, was an essential element. In Duc Ton, I was constantly submitting award nominations for my military team members for Combat Infantryman Badges, Army Commendation Medals and, when appropriate, Bronze Star Medals. I was especially attentive to documenting when an individual had done something valorous so the award nomination could include a "V device" which would exponentially increase the meaning of the award.

I likewise endeavored to nominate individuals from outside our team. One particular example I recall occurred when our compound was hit at night by Viet Cong mortar rounds. Our radio call reporting the attack was heard at the Vinh Long Army Air Base by then Colonel (later General) Jack Woodmansee, the commanding officer of the 7th / 1st Air Cavalry unit. Woodmansee, who was doing an inspection on the flight line, grabbed another pilot and jumped into a helicopter and was airborne in a matter of minutes. When we heard on the radio that Black Hawk Six was on station prepared to provide suppressing fire and assess the need for additional support, our spirits soared. His rapid response deterred the Viet Cong that ended the mortar fire and withdrew from the area.

I conveyed our enormous appreciation to him on the radio that night for his personal leadership, and the next day wrote up a Bronze Star with V award submission reflecting his flying directly into a live fire zone without regard to his own safety. It was another demonstration about how Americans always responded when they heard that "Uniform Sierras" were in danger.

“WE’RE DOING THINGS HERE WE NEVER DID, EVEN IN SPECIAL FORCES”

The results of all of these efforts paid off in demonstrated improvements in the situation on the ground. One Sergeant on the team named Jackie Coppin, who had previously been in Special Forces, recounted how we were doing a broad array of things to take back the Y Base Area: We had started re-building the road that ran along the Y canal; While it still was not possible to drive all the way into the area, nor go by Boston Whaler, since it was too easy to be ambushed, we were flying with our Vietnamese counterparts into the deepest heart of the Base Area several times a week in U.S. "swing ship" helicopters that only we could provide; We were doing medical events with U.S. Air Force doctors and medics in really remote places with heavy Vietcong influence; We had military mobile advisory MAT teams that were set out in places where they had to walk through water up to their waist just to get to where they slept every night, but they were expanding security. We had really high, high morale because we did difficult things and did them together, we pulled together and you could see the results. Sgt. Coppin was heavily involved in all of this, and so, with enormous pride, he said to me, “Sir, we’re doing things here that we never did even in Special Forces.”

There could not be a higher compliment. So there was the sense that we were on the cutting edge of the pacification effort, of accomplishing things in terms of winning the allegiance of the local population, defeating the Vietcong in the jungle and taking back the territory for the South Vietnamese government.

Seven months later, when I was leaving, one of the Army captains, Pat Hart a MAT Team leader gave a toast. It may be something that military personnel do routinely, but he said “To Mr. Quinn, the best leader we ever had.” So I don't know if it was true, (laughs), but it was still a very nice thing to hear.

ROADS AND RICE /THE VC REACTION TO THE ROAD BUILDING STRATEGY

Q: I want to go back a bit.

QUINN: Yes.

Q: On your first post, where you have -- we’re repairing this road which is making quite a difference as far as the attitude of the Vietnamese farming community.

QUINN: Yes.

Q: This must have enraged the Vietcong, and what were they doing about --

QUINN: Well, yes, of course. I think it caught the Vietcong by surprise. They had endured bombings and there even was a period when there were significant either U.S. or

main force South Vietnamese troops on the ground in Duc Thanh and Duc Ton Districts. The VC had been able to withstand that and keep their underground network intact. But the roads and new miracle rice seemed to undercut them in a way that was unexpected by them or us.

As a result, they would endeavor to do interdict the roads with land mines and command detonated explosives along them by day and ambushes at night. They also would try to blow up sections of the roads, and especially the culverts and interdict the road that way. But the momentum of the agricultural development and the improved armaments provided to the South Vietnamese forces ---there were of course other factors, as well--- but the roads and the fact that the South Vietnamese were now armed with M16 rifles, so that they had equivalent fire power to the AK-47's that the Viet Cong had, combined to have a huge impact and was undercutting and devastating to the VC.

In response, what the North Vietnamese leadership endeavored to do was infiltrate North Vietnamese Army units down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and into the south, including at the very end of the Trail into the Mekong Delta. They were endeavoring to spread these NVA troops across the Delta and through the Viet Cong base areas. So this had been a very powerful response by the United States and the South Vietnamese government following the TET Offensive. So the Communist leaders were trying to reinforce the badly diminished Viet Cong guerrilla units with North Vietnamese troops. But, I don't think most Americans ever understood just how powerful that combination of roads and rice was. Even I didn't appreciate it totally overnight, but I came to see it as this incredibly effective weapon.

Maybe this is too much detail?

Q: No, no, the Vietnam experience is very important.

QUINN: Well it's a complicated, complicated story.