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Prologue

New York Youth

I spent most of my early youth in a New York neighborhood populated mainly by immigrant families. Virtually all the adults I knew were born outside of the United States, including my own parents. My mother came from Latvia, my father from Lithuania. My classmates had parents who came from a variety of countries, including Romania, Hungary, Austria, Italy, and China. Hearing foreign languages and foreign accents gave me a strong interest in the world outside the United States.

In 1942, when I was ten years old, my older brother went into the United States Army at the start of the Second World War. I took a keen interest in his travels, from Louisiana, to Brazil, Ghana, Egypt, India, and Burma. Before he departed, he gave me his stamp collection, with issues from fifty-four countries. In elementary school, my teachers asked us to copy maps of Latin America and Africa.

In Thomas Jefferson High School, in the East New York Section of Brooklyn, I was fortunate to be selected for the honors program during my junior and senior years. That program provided for advanced research and oral presentations. My thesis topic was a comparison of economic planning in Brazil and India. During my oral presentation, I faced tough questioning from my fellow students.

At the City College of New York, I took an interest in journalism. I worked for the student newspaper, becoming the editor-in-chief in my junior year. With that experience, I decided that I wanted to become a foreign correspondent. During my required military service, the U.S. Army sent me to West Germany, which afforded me the opportunity to visit most of Western Europe. These experiences further whetted my appetite for all things foreign.

After my army service, I had a choice between two opportunities—pursuing a graduate degree at the Harvard School of Business or entering the Foreign Service. The State Department told me that I could delay my entry into the Foreign Service in order to do the Harvard degree. But I was impatient to start working and decided on immediate entry into the Foreign Service.

In 1955 during my first month in the Foreign Service, I took note of the fact that the British and French governments were preparing their African colonies for independence. I decided to try to get in on the ground floor of U.S. diplomacy in Africa. I remember inquiring about the Africa Bureau. I was informed that the "Africa Bureau" consisted of two Foreign Service officers, Jerry Lavalee and Fritz Picard, who were sharing an office in the Middle East Bureau. When I went to see them, they were delighted to welcome me to diplomacy in Africa.

In 1956, the State Department established an actual Africa Bureau to start organizing American embassies in thirty-five about-to-be-independent African nations. I decided at that point to become a specialist in African affairs.

My first foreign assignment was to Paris, where I was sent to improve my French language capability, since I had failed to pass the required examination. It was only after that assignment that I was able to set my sights on specializing in African affairs. In 1962, I was assigned to the East African nation of Uganda. My African specialization had begun.

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International Service Beckons

"Hank, have you considered taking the entrance examination for the Foreign Service?" The question was posed by Professor Bernard E. Brown at the City College of New York, where I earned my undergraduate degree.

It was the Fall semester of 1951 during which I had done the impossible. I took both of Professor Brown's courses in international relations in a single semester, and I received a grade of A in both. In addition to being known as a tough grader, Brown also assigned a heavy reading load, with a requirement for knowledgeable class discussion.

My response to Professor Brown was, "I have not given it any thought. Besides, it is well known that the Foreign Service is reserved for Ivy League graduates. But, since you raised the issue, I might give it a try."

I sat for the examination in the Fall of 1951. It was a three-day affair, mornings and afternoons, and included a combination of multiple-choice and essay questions. For each essay, we were instructed to write no more than a maximum number of words. At the end of the essay, we were required to indicate the number of words written. Needless to say, we were all exhausted at the end of the third day.

The results came in during the Spring of 1953. The passing grade was 70. I had earned a 72. I was told to be ready to be invited for the oral examination. Before I could do that, however, I would be required to spend two years in the U.S. military. I had participated in the full four-year Reserve Officers' Training Corps at City College and was therefore entitled to enter the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant.

I completed the basic officer course at the U.S. Army Infantry Training School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The army then assigned me to Germany as an infantry platoon leader in the 43rd Armored Infantry Battalion of the Second Armored Division, located near the town of Baumholder in the Rhine region. Since the post–World War II allied occupation of Germany was still in force in 1953, our division was officially a guest in the French zone.

During my first year with the 43rd, I spent a lot of time on maneuvers. I had the impression that our heavy vehicles were ploughing up a lot of farmlands and destroying a lot of crops. When I expressed my dismay, I was informed that the farmers were receiving cash compensation.

After the first year, the army transferred me to division headquarters in the town of Bad Kreuznach, also in the French zone. In contrast to austere and colorless Baumholder, Bad Kreuznach was a delightful spa resort on the Nahe river, where people with aches and pains came to take the rich mineral waters. Why was I assigned there? The new division commander, a major general, found that, in the French zone, most of the officials he had to deal with were French, both civilian and military. He wanted someone near him who could interpret for him and who could deal directly with the French personnel.

During my first month in Bad Kreuznach, I decided one Friday evening to participate in a Jewish sabbath service at the base chapel. While there, I noted the presence of a Frenchman, who introduced himself as Pierre Engel, a French diplomat serving as governor of the district. Over the next few weeks, we became good friends, thereby considerably facilitating my responsibility for liaison with the French authorities on behalf of the commanding general.

During that second year in Germany, I took advantage of half-fare travel on the German railway system available to occupying forces. I traveled to France, the United Kingdom, Austria, and the Netherlands. This travel, as well as my time in Germany, heightened my interest in international relations. I began to relish the challenge of analyzing foreign cultures and their political systems. I decided to continue pursuing a career in international service of some sort, journalism, business, or the U.S. government.

I was reminded of my pending application for the U.S. Foreign

Service when I received an order to report to the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt for a security interview. Frankfurt was about an hour away from Bad Kreuznach by train.

I arrived at the Consulate General in full dress uniform, which resulted in the U.S. Marine guards' saluting and clicking their heels as I walked past them. It was great for my ego. The interview was routine. I was told that the oral interview part of the exam would take place as soon as I returned to Washington.

I was discharged from the military when I returned to the United States in April 1955. The next month, I traveled to Washington for the oral examination.

There I met with three retired Foreign Service officers, who, unlike today, had no prepared script. They looked at my biography and asked whatever questions came to mind. Their objective seemed to be to determine how "American" I was. I had questions about major league baseball and U.S. politics. They also asked questions about foreign governments.

For example, I was asked to compare the British Labour and Conservative parties. I discussed both for a few minutes and then said that the two parties were essentially the same, with one being in power and the other out of power. This caused an argument within the examining panel that continued for a few minutes while I watched. Fortunately, it all turned out fine, and they told me I had been accepted. I would be notified when to start the entering officers' course at the Foreign Service Institute. This was May1955, and I was sworn into the Foreign Service in July 1955.

One of the basic requirements for tenure in the U.S. Foreign Service is fluency in a foreign language. I had studied French in high school and college. To find my level, I took the State Department French examination. On a scale of 1 to 5, the passing grade is 3. My score was 2. Because I flunked, I was given intensive French training every afternoon, with training tapes for the evenings.

My first assignment was to the American Embassy in Paris as a visa-issuing officer. I took the French examination one more time before embarking for Paris and was still not successful, with a score of 2+. I arrived in Paris in October 1955 under probation. I needed to pass the French examination within one year or I would have to leave the Service.

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Growing a New Embassy in Kampala, Uganda

We stayed at the Imperial Hotel in downtown Kampala for a week while we awaited the cleaning and setting up of our assigned house on Kololo Hill, one of the upscale neighborhoods of the city.

During our first night, we were awakened at 5 a.m. by knocking at the door, followed by the entrance of a hotel staff person with a tray of tea and sandwiches. We expressed annoyance at being awakened so early.

The staffer said, "Sir, this is 'bed tea.' It comes automatically unless you cancel." We canceled.

In January 1962, the U.S. diplomatic presence in Uganda consisted of a consulate general. Since Uganda was still under British rule, we were not yet ready to establish an embassy. My job as administrative officer was, first, to make sure the consulate general had all the tools and personnel needed to carry out its mission. As the consular officer, I was in charge of supplying passport and protective services to all U.S. citizens in the consular district. I also took applications from persons not U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents for visas to travel to the United States.

Shortly after our arrival in Kampala, the State Department sent an instruction that we should prepare to change our status to an embassy as soon as Uganda became independent in October 1962. That included the assignment of ten additional officers and families from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and two additional cultural officers from the United States Information Agency (USIA). The State Department contingent was slated to increase by two persons, a United States ambassador and a full-time consular officer.

Thus, in addition to dealing with my regular duties, I had to start working on future requirements, which revolved around the search for staff housing and a new office to accommodate the new ambassador and his embassy staff.

The consul general had an elegant rental residence on Makerere Hill, on the north side of town. We decided to keep it for the future deputy chief of mission, and I was instructed to purchase it from the owner. I discovered that we were not eligible to purchase this property, because the land belonged to the kabaka of the Buganda ethnic nation. The kabaka was the equivalent of the king of England. Uganda was not designated as a British colony but as a British protectorate. The four separate monarchs in Uganda and their ethnic nations were under protective status and therefore enjoyed internal sovereignty. For that reason, we could sign a lease for the property, but we could not purchase it. We had to abide by the kabaka's rules.

The actual kabaka, at the time, was a young, very social Oxford-educated gentleman. He liked to be invited to receptions and dinners. We called him "King Freddy" when not addressing him as "Your Highness."

The search for an ambassadorial residence was difficult because all the other Western governments with diplomatic missions were doing the same thing. The competition was tough. I lost my first choice because the French government was able to complete the purchase very quickly, and they beat us to the deal.

The second residence, high on Kololo Hill, overlooking the city, was not as elegant but was the best we could do at the time. After Washington approved, I received a check for $75,000, a lot of money in 1962. We completed the purchase, and the State Department's Office of Foreign Buildings sent technical personnel to Kampala to prepare the residence according to our standards for health and security.

Two additional real estate challenges were for embassy office space and housing for the new staff. In this respect, we were lucky. The Ugandan government-in-waiting established a real estate development entity designed to make sure that housing would be available for the postindependence expanded international presence. We contracted with them for staff housing for twenty employ-

ees and a duplex embassy chancery in an office building reserved for foreign missions. We signed a lease for the top two floors, with an internal staircase that would create a single entity. We also signed a lease for staff housing, with a swimming pool for the secretaries and communication clerks and their families.

In July 1962, the new ambassador-designate, Olcott Deming, and his wife arrived to take charge of the mission, including preparations for our becoming an embassy. The work on the official residence was complete, so they were able to move in.

In the meantime, the Ugandan political system was gearing up to establish the nation's first independent postcolonial regime. Elections were held in August 1962 with the majority of votes going to the Uganda People's Congress, headed by Milton Obote, who was slated to be the nation's first president at independence.

In our own planning for independence ceremonies, we were informed that the U.S. delegation would be headed by the director of the United States Agency for International Development. This reflected the high priority overall U.S. policy toward Africa assigned to economic development.

We also believed that it would be advantageous for U.S.-Uganda relations if President Obote could be invited for an official visit with President Kennedy at an early date. We made this recommendation to the State Department as part of our overall package of post-independence proposals. The White House agreed to receive future President Obote for an official visit on October 22, 1962. Obote accepted with pleasure and made plans for travel.

The independence ceremony took place as scheduled a few minutes past midnight on October 9. The British representative who presided over the lowering of the British flag and the raising of the Ugandan flag was the Duchess of Kent.

Exactly one week later, the Cuban missile crisis erupted on October 16. The situation in Washington was quite tense. We were sure that President Obote's official visit would be postponed or even canceled. But to our surprise, the White House informed us that Obote should come ahead as planned. The visit took place, with Obote having lunch with President Kennedy, preceded by a meeting in the Cabinet room with advisers from both sides.

When President Obote returned to Kampala, Ambassador Deming organized a dinner in his honor with the embassy's entire American staff. During the dessert, the ambassador asked President Obote to give us his impressions of the visit to Washington. Obote heaped praise on President Kennedy, saying he could not believe how relaxed and unhurried Kennedy was in the midst of the missile crisis. Later, we learned that the White House had decided to go ahead with the visit because Kennedy wanted to project an image of business as usual. Having an official visitor from Africa during the crisis helped serve that purpose.

Between October 1962 and the end of the year, the embassy received its full complement of new American staff members, soon installed in the prearranged housing.

In June 1963, Suzanne and I welcomed the arrival of our first child, a boy whom we named Marc Andrew. His middle name was inspired by the British governor Sir Andrew Cohen, who left Uganda just after our arrival. Sir Andrew went on to become the head of the U.K. Office of Economic Development, the British equivalent of USAID.

The maternity facility at Mulago Hospital in Kampala was excellent, with separate kitchens for European, African, and Asian patients. The Asian population in Uganda was relatively large. Kampala's architecture was largely inspired by the architecture of India. Several British doctors at the hospital had come to Uganda to escape the socialization of medicine in Britain.

My predecessor at the Embassy had a pet dog, an Irish terrier named Piglet. He was unable to take Piglet with him to his next assignment in Nairobi, Kenya, because of the lengthy quarantine requirement. So, my wife and I agreed to adopt him. When our nanny took the baby for a daily walk in his carriage, Piglet made a point of walking in front of the carriage to make sure nobody approached too closely.

Piglet liked to bark, especially when African visitors came to the house. Our male housekeeper called Piglet "a white man's dog" because he barked only at Africans, not at Europeans. Once, when Piglet was barking excessively, I complained to our housekeeper. His response, in Swahili, was very characteristic. "Bwana, that is the dog's job. He is just doing his job."

I found time to pay visits to the newly established African Labor College of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. There, I met Tom Mboya, the Kenyan labor leader who played a major role in his country's independence movement. Within the limits of my small entertainment allowance, I was able to invite Ugandan labor leaders to lunch from time to time. They provided valuable insights into the complex relations between the political parties and Uganda's four kingdoms, as well as the large Rwandan Tutsi refugee community, which was destined to play a major role in the genocide of April 1994.

Early in our stay in Kampala, we made friends with Martin and Camille Aliker, a Ugandan-American couple and their family. Martin was a Ugandan dentist trained at Northwestern University in Chicago, with a practice in Kampala. Camille was an African American from New Rochelle, New York, who met her husband at the university. When we dined at their home, we were struck by their silverware, which displayed the initials "J.D."

Mrs. Aliker explained that she was a direct descendent of Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. Her maternal ancestor had been a slave in Davis's home and inherited the silverware when Davis died. The silverware was passed down through several generations to Camille's mother.

With the arrival of a newly independent government, the embassy's relations with the political power system could not remain the same. A short time after independence, for example, the CIA station chief came to see me with a complaint: "I've lost my liaison." His easy relationship with the British intelligence service was not maintained with its Ugandan successor.

The administrative center of British East Africa was Nairobi, Kenya. Kampala was essentially a provincial town, while Nairobi was a major municipality. Because of this situation, international telephone communications shut down in Kampala at 8 p.m., essentially cutting us off from Washington for ten hours daily.

On November 22, 1963, as we dined at the CIA station chief's home, we knew something unusual had happened when the international telephone line suddenly opened at 10 p.m. We were informed then that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

The death of an American president requires a number of actions by all American embassies around the world. We took the first action the next morning when we opened a condolence book. Very early, there was a long line of Ugandans waiting to enter the Embassy to sign the book. We also sent the embassy's condolences to the Kennedy family in Washington. We wrote a formal diplomatic note to the foreign minister officially informing him of the event and that Vice President Lyndon Johnson had been sworn in as president. We also reassured the Ugandan government that we anticipated no change in the state of our relations.

Overall, we were off to a good start in our diplomatic relations with the new nation of Uganda. I was happy to have played a role in the preparations. With our one-year-old baby son in his basket, we took leave of Uganda in January 1964 to transfer to the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. I was designated to be the regional labor attaché, covering Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Malawi, all still British colonies when we arrived.