

Graffy: Thank you very much. I'm Colleen Graffy, until this evening Deputy Assistant of Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy for Europe and Eurasia. I use two sides of the business card. And my association with Ben Franklin house goes back a ways because despite my accent I'm actually a Londoner. And I first came to know the Franklin House... How many of you have been to London? [Laughing] How many of you have been to the Ben Franklin House? Ohh, a very good number. And for the rest of you, let me tell you a treat is in store for you because a short walk from Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament just down from Buckingham Palace tucked around the corner from Trafalgar Square is Number 36 Craven Street, the home of Benjamin Franklin. But it wasn't always that way. I knew it when it was a dilapidated building under scaffolding and a controversy in London because they said, what is going to happen with this building. There was talk about it would be a private home, maybe one of those blue plaques, Ben Franklin was here or perhaps it would be sold off to some group. But instead next time I hear some group, Friends of Ben Franklin, and I thought friends of Ben Franklin, they must be pretty old. But they had gotten together to buy this building and to turn it into a memory of Ben Franklin and some sort of museum. They weren't quite sure what. The next time I was there I brought members of the American Community and Dan Reed from the U. S. embassy and others that are familiar with this. We brought American Community

there. At that time it still had scaffolding and support structure so at least it wouldn't fall apart, and we were sort of picking our way in high heels through timber that was potentially going to crash through and had a wonderful event and were told about this some sort of vision of this group to turn it into something. We were a bit skeptical. But the next I'm going there I'm escorting the president's favorite aunt who wants to see it. Vice President's wife who wants to visit it and it seems to be going by strength to strength. So as I'm there telling my niece and nephew who is living there at the moment that they need to be going to the Ben Franklin Museum. And I notice the key stars, the time out guide to London, a must do. And it has in there the recently restored home. And I think, recently restored home does not capture the trials and tribulations, the bureaucrats, the architects, the city hall, the financial headaches, all that was gone through to make this thing a potential reality. So tonight as we homage to the man, as we pay homage to his birthday coming up to his biographer, I would like to pay a bit of homage to those who could have walked away and said someone else will figure it out, but who didn't and who stopped and paused and realized that if they didn't step forward no one would. It is the only surviving house of Benjamin Franklin in the world. And it wouldn't have happened without the dedication, the perseverance and the dream and vision of these people. So I want to thank them and I also understand this is an interesting and dispirit group who all have

vision and dreams and I think that's what pulls everyone together. So thank you for being here this evening, thank you for sharing in this dream.