

# LEON PICON

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographic Statement

Education Undergraduate

Development of Braille Library for blind students and teaching at Overbrook College for the blind

WWII: Army Service

Where previous Study of Languages and Cryptography put Picon into Military Intelligence

Post War: Army civilian employee 1949-1954

Department of State

Leading to completion of Ph. D. and later to two year London assignment

Recruitment into USIA

1954

Book Translation Officer: Tokyo

1955

Combating large scale communist literature in Japanese translation

Picon develops the low cost book program

Highly successful publication Beisho Daiyori – a journal of reviews of American

Books which were translated into Japanese

The Nagano Summer Seminar in American Literature

William Faulkner comes to Japan and the Nagano Seminar

“Impressions of Japan” – very successful

USIS film about Faulkner at the Nagano seminar

Faulkner’s Great Newspaper Piece:

“To The Youth of Japan”

Picon advances to position of book programs and exhibits officer

The “Thinkers and Doers”: reorganization of USIS by PAO George Hellyer

Picon becomes cultural programmer for USIS Tokyo

Reischauer comes to Tokyo as U.S. ambassador

1961

Picon becomes his close assistant in dealing with intellectual community

Picon comes into possession of Proposed Constitution of the About-to-be Right Wing Socialist Party as it broke away from Socialist Party’s more radical faction

By accident breaks the story at ambassador’s staff meeting

Too often USIA Leadership Downgrades

Importance of Personal relationships in favor of media activities

The need for USIA (USIS) to show high sensitivity in its dealings with the academic communities

Both in US and overseas

USIS (and Picon’s) role in 1960 celebration of 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the U.S.-Japan diplomatic relationship

Postscript on USIS book program in Japan

Cultural Bureau, Department of State 1965

American Specialist (AMSPEC) Program  
Partial misuse and congressional interference

Cultural Attaché, Turkey 1968  
Shifting emphasis of USIS Cultural Program to Performing Arts – the theater  
Only minor emphasis on Book Programs in Turkey  
Effort to neutralize the Marxist Oriented Book: “Turkey’s Future”  
Some differences of opinion between USIS and Binational Center Turkish-  
dominated Board of Director

Chief, Speakers Division USIA 1971  
Friction with CU over selection and funding of speakers to send abroad  
“American Speaker’s Program”  
Picon Succeeds in quieting much of USIA-CU friction  
Using PL 480 funds available through India, USIA unable to fund multiple visits  
to Asia of Moynihan’s “Star Speakers”

Value of keeping educational exchange per se somewhat separated from other exchanges  
and more directly informational USIA activities