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

J. BURKE WILKINSON

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is October 9, 1992. This is an interview with J. Burke Wilkinson concerning his career with the foreign affairs aspects of the Department of State which is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Before we get into your work, I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background--where, when you were born, your education, etc.?

WILKINSON: Surely. I was born in New York City, August 24, 1913 and educated at St. George's School and Harvard University. I held a studentship at Cambridge which carried with it a year in John Harvard's Rooms. So I was a Harvard student.

Q: What was your field at Harvard?

WILKINSON: English Literature. I got a magna cum laude and I was a Phi Beta.

Then I came back and worked as a copywriter...

Q: You came back from Cambridge when?

WILKINSON: 1936.

...copywriter for Lord and Thomas. Got a little bored with writing copy and wanted to get into book publishing.

Q: Lord and Thomas was what?

WILKINSON: It was the second biggest advertising company in the world. Now Foote, Cone & Belding.

Then I went to Reynal and Hitchcock, the publishers, and had two years there. That brings us to 1938 when I went to Little Brown & Co. in Boston as advertising manager.

I left to go into the Navy the fall of 1941, just before Pearl Harbor. I had four years in the Navy.

Q: What were you doing in the Navy?

WILKINSON: By great good fortune I discovered that I spoke a little English so I was sent to the British Admiralty as liaison officer on small submarines, torpedo boats and other sea craft. I stayed there until 1945. I took part in Normandy, had four ships doing harbor clearance and also taking precautions against these submarine attacks.

Q: Were the German submarines a major problem during the D-Day time?

WILKINSON: Again, by great good fortune we were so well patrolled that we didn't have to put in our submarine nets. The enemy never came close. There were small submarines working out of Le Havre--sneak craft--almost suicide craft. But these were caught and did no damage.

Q: As liaison were you involved at all in the very first years of the war, with the anti-submarine activities between the British and the Americans?

WILKINSON: No, I really came into it backwards. I was trained in harbor defense. I did a course. I just got interested in these small crafts. I had nothing to do with the major submarines, the responsibility what we called the Tenth Fleet. This all started when I went to England in August, 1943.

Q: At the end of the war what were you doing?

WILKINSON: I was asked to go back to Little Brown and I decided that I didn't want to. I very quickly wrote a war novel called, "Proceed At will", based on this small submarine. It was a national best seller and I sold a movie script which never got made. I then quickly did two more novels.

Q: Could you mention them so that we can have them in the record?

WILKINSON: The second one, "Run, Mongoose", a Jamaican story and the third was "Last Clear Chance", a Washington-based story. They were recently reissued as a trilogy--"The Adventures of Greffrey Mildmay". I had a man like Hannay, John Buchan's hero.

Q: Richard Hannay, yes.

WILKINSON: In the meantime, I was called back into the Navy in 1950, the Korean War, to replace Bill Lederer, who wrote "The Ugly American", as head of the Navy's magazine and Book Section with promotion to Commander, which appealed to me. I had a year and a half doing that. Thoroughly enjoyed it.

Q: What was Bill Lederer like? He was a figure of some import later because of the impact of his book, "The Ugly American" on the Foreign Service.

WILKINSON: Lederer was an absolute brilliant rebel. He had a perfectly good war record. He had a stammer which slightly inhibited him from the Navy point of view. He had a sad accident that hurt his career.

Q: Yes. He ran his battleship on...

WILKINSON: It was a cruiser. "All The Ships At Sea" tells it in some detail. Then he became a press officer. He went to the Pacific when he brought me in to take his place as head of the Magazine and Book Section. First class, but loved controversy, loved a little bit making fun of his senior officers, pulling their legs--it wasn't a very good thing. He finished up in the Navy, I would guess, in the mid-fifties. He also wrote "A Nation of Sheep," which is a non-fiction version of "The Ugly American."

Anyway, I did a lot of magazine work and a lot of book reviewing. I found that the effort needed with three successful novels a little more security seemed in order. Robinson McIlvaine, whom you have interviewed, was my classmate at Harvard, and begged me to come into the Department. He was working as the deputy to Carl McCardle, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. They had reached a point of no return.

Q: Who was McCardle?

WILKINSON: Carl Wesley McCardle was a long time Philadelphia Inquirer reporter, noted for his very clear style. He had become a confidant and friend of Mr. Acheson. Oddly enough he became the same to Mr. Dulles. Both of them found something in McCardle which I discovered too--an extraordinary sort of sixth sense of public affairs and what and the way the news was going to be played and the way things were going to happen. Dulles used this in a very intimate way and moved McCardle up to his old office so that he was the closest man to the Secretary.

Q: How did this work? How would Dulles use Mr. McCardle?

WILKINSON: Basically McCardle was a very shy man and he thought and read. He didn't even go to the morning meetings. For four years I represented the Secretary at the morning meetings so I had a good chance to observe him. If anything was off the track, I would shoot into McCardle and say, "Look, we have trouble," and he would shoot into

the Secretary. Dulles was buying his sixth sense. I will give some examples as we go along.

Q: All right. When did you come into the Department?

WILKINSON: I came into the Department in October, 1954, a time when things were settling in. The McCarthy thing was nearing an end. McIlvaine very shortly went into the Foreign Service and I succeeded him as deputy. I came in as special assistant to the Assistant Secretary and then was promoted to deputy. I had two years as special assistant and two years as deputy

Q: As this period progressed, what were you doing? What were your major involvements?

WILKINSON: I had the historical division; the news division; the public opinion division...we had a man who was testing the popularity of the Secretary; and the public services, which included the speakers bureau called SEV. I had four divisions to run. The other deputy, who was created at that time was Allan Lightner, a careerist who handled foreign policy. It worked very well.

Q: Could you go through some of the things you were doing? What was your impression of how Dulles operated?

WILKINSON: I put this in the article which I have given you, my confessions as a ghost writer. Part of my usefulness was drafting congressional statements, messages to foreign dignitaries, speeches for Mr. Dulles. Contrary to public opinion that was spread, he was an extremely good staff man. Watching him at the morning meetings for four years, the staff knew what to bring up and knew what not to bore him. He was impatient and rather difficult, but if you had something important he would go right to it..."See me afterwards" or listen very carefully.

As I observed it one by one great proconsuls, Livy Merchant, Loy Henderson, Doug MacArthur who was already an admirer, came around to realizing that we were in the presence of a very great Secretary. And Henderson says that at his...

Q: This is Loy Henderson. Yes. The names you mentioned were really the main stalwarts of running the Foreign Service and foreign policy up through the sixties.

WILKINSON: He gave them absolute trust. There were one or two others. There was Jernegan in the Near East and Rubottom in Latin America. These were absolutely first class men, as I saw them. It was a great pleasure to me to be able to say that I was impressed by the brilliance of his staff work.

One of his special favorites was Nolting. Fritz Nolting was then liaison to the foreign aid program. Dulles had a real admiration for Nolting. I did too, but that is another story.

Q: Well, let's talk about it.

WILKINSON: Nolting was our man in Vietnam before Lodge. The full story is beginning to come out. Nolting wrote a book, which I helped him with, called "From Trust To Tragedy," which tells the story. Bill Colby also tells it. The whole question of the jettisoning of Diem, the getting rid of the prime minister. These were the watershed moments of Vietnam.

Q: Were you in the State Department at that time?

WILKINSON: No, I left to go to SHAPE. I was Norstad's Public Affairs Adviser for the following four years.

Q: Back to the Dulles period, how did you observe the relationship, the formation of foreign policy and the carrying out of Dulles and Eisenhower?

WILKINSON: He was determined not to do Truman and Byrnes. I went on one or two of his trips. He always immediately checked in with the President and said always, "Mr. President, at your leisure with your permission I would like to report in person." The trust that Eisenhower gave Dulles was absolutely complete. I put them like Acheson and Truman, a much more celebrated relationship, but it was there, no question.

He was so angry when Dulles was ill. He turned it over to Herter, and went to play golf at Augusta. He introduced Herter to the press in a golf shop. He just simply couldn't face it that he was losing his right-hand man, two months before Dulles died.

Anyway it was very interesting...Dulles handled Eisenhower perfectly.

Q: Could you talk about this? Are there any examples you can think of? Who was guiding whom? How would a conversation go?

WILKINSON: This one little episode in that article I gave you is quite funny. We would send over this first draft...Ike, as we know, only wanted one piece of paper so it was quite a challenge. They were leaving for a summit meeting in Paris, at SHAPE. I think this was 1956. I drafted an arrival statement for Ike, but Ike sent over one from the White House, which was rather unusual. He took it with him in the plane and showed it to Foster. Foster said in his pleasant way, "Mr. President, that was quite a good statement, almost as good as the one we sent over. I wonder who wrote it?" Ike gave his marvelous Ike smile and said, "I did." That gives you a little clue of the relationship and how well they worked together.

Thinking back...obviously I lived through the Suez thing. There were many, many problems. If you want to go chronologically we might touch...

Q: Why don't we go chronologically. I think this is usually the best way.

WILKINSON: The first thing that happened when I came on board as assistant, Carl called me in and said, "The Secretary and I are leaving for the Far East in two days and I want you to go through John Paton Davies, Jr.' papers and tell me what to tell the Secretary." It was a question of whether to have another of those endless hearings.

Q: John Paton Davies, Jr. was being accused by McCarthy of selling China out.

WILKINSON: There was great pressure from the right wing, from the Senator Knowland and company, to try to pin the blame on who lost China. We now know that we did not lose China, the Communists took it. So I took this enormous mass of paper and read every report that Davies had sent back. I was slightly prejudice because I had known him and admired him. I was very impressed with his reporting. It was very harsh predicting the Communist takeover, obviously, but the point was that he was correct. So I did a very short memo to McCardle saying, "Please tell the Secretary not to press these hearings and to put Davies back on active duty. He is an arrogant, difficult, brilliant man, but we cannot afford to lose his judgment."

This is absolutely not known and we will have to confirm it later, but Carl McCardle told me after he came back that Dulles had not made the decision but just as he was still thinking about it his telephone rang and Davies asked to be allowed to retire. I think Davies, himself, has never said this. But it is interesting. In other words, he was exhausted by these hearings. He had a family in Peru...running a furniture business in Peru...and he simply, I think, was exhausted. It is nothing against Davies. Dulles had not made the decision. Whether he would have taken my recommendation I just don't know.

Q: You came in in 1954. The McCarthy period...we are talking about the China Lobby, etc., strong attacks from the right of the party...what was your impression of how Dulles was reacting to this? Was he buying it?

WILKINSON: I think he knew perfectly well that he had to be careful because of the pressure. Ike said, "I will not get down in the gutter, roll in the gutter with this guy McCarthy." I think Dulles took his guidance on this one from Ike. We certainly were very careful. He was lambasted for not standing up to McCarthy and he brought McLeod in who was one of that right wing element.

Q: This was Scott McLeod who came in as head of security.

WILKINSON: By the time I was on board we knew the thing was winnowing out, it was no longer a major issue. Dulles took a lot of flak on his refusal to repudiate in public, but I think he knew.

Q: Dwelling on this one, but I think the atmospherics are interesting, he obviously had the support of some of the great mandarins of the Foreign Service...

WILKINSON: Or one by one.

Q: But did you have a feeling that a majority of the Foreign Service was reserved about Dulles mainly because of his unwillingness to basically support them, or at least the feeling that he would not support them during the McCarthy period?

WILKINSON: The reason I say one by one was the terrible scene which I am afraid McCardle had inspired when he took over and asked for positive loyalty.

Q: You know in my interviews that statement...positive loyalty in the parking lot in back of the State Department...I never understood.

WILKINSON: I used to talk to these people. I said, "Don't you realize that this was simply his own plea. There was no McCarthyism, it was just bad language. He liked these strong phrases, you see, `positive loyalty.'"

Q: Could you explain the setting for this please?

WILKINSON: Of course I wasn't there. I picked it up the way you did, secondhand. Acheson had said goodbye the day before in the rain, a very moving farewell. This was almost too much and happened in a courtyard. I don't know which courtyard. It just went down very badly. But as I say, part of my continuing job was his relationship with the career. I put in a great deal of time on this. Every speech I wrote I paid a tribute to the careerists.

Q: We are talking about the career of the Foreign Service.

WILKINSON: Yes. "The shock troops of the Cold War," was one of my phrases. Another one was "links in the armor of the Free World." He would fight me a bit and usually take them out and put them back in again. I think the cumulative affect was quite good.

Q: Was he aware that in a way he got off on the wrong foot or not?

WILKINSON: I have never seen a man who I have ever worked for who cared less of what people thought of him. He just went straight ahead. This is obviously my job to flag the sensitivities, you see. But he just simply barreled through with what he thought was right.

Bob Murphy comes into the picture. Murphy was his political advisor and Murphy never quite came around to admire Dulles. Dulles never came quite around to trusting Murphy. So it was at the highest level. It was rather dangerous. The time was Suez. Dulles sent Murphy to London. He himself was at a funeral in Peru.

Q: Suez was in 1956.

WILKINSON: Murphy went over and there were conflicting views of his performance. This was at the time of the so-called Users Association. Dulles got over as quickly as he could and took Murphy's place. Some reports are that Murphy flapped very badly. You will have to check that. I wasn't there, but I did see Mr. Dulles before he went over. And then he threw in this thing, which was a "holding operation" the "Users Association" and confused everybody.

Q: It was a proposal to have the people who use the canal to run it instead of the Egyptians.

WILKINSON: Yes, that is right.

Q: Did you get any feel in watching Dulles and the people around him about how he felt about Nasser? This is one of the opinions that somehow there was such antipathy between Nasser and Dulles, a mutual antipathy, that in a way this precipitated part of the crisis?

WILKINSON: In January of 1956, Dulles passed the word to Nasser through the very amiable Egyptian Ambassador here, who we all got along with, that we would not tolerate Egypt buying arms from the Czechs. At that time we were trying to decide whether to help build the Aswan Dam. The warning was passed, by the friendly fashion with which we had dealt with this Egyptian...I saw the transcripts and I knew him slightly. This had simmered and then, what Nasser chose to call the brutal cutoff, we called the Ambassador back in again. And I saw the transcript. Dulles informed him that we had decided not to lend our support to the Aswan Dam because of their continuing to buy arms from the Czechs.

The Egyptian Ambassador, this is on the record, said, "We quite understand, you gave us fair warning." This lays the myth of the brutal cutoff. It was 5-6 months after the January warning. And Nasser in his brilliant way played this to the public as if there was no warning. As if we had suddenly pulled the rug out.

Q: But back to this relationship. I have heard from other people...somebody who was working I think as a very junior officer in your office, Julius Walker...that Dulles seemed to have taken a certain delight at that point in cutting Nasser off. Did you get any feel for this?

WILKINSON: I did not. I thought that he was working straight down the middle of the line. And then time passes because the public affairs officer is only in on certain parts. After Suez was over, one of my jobs was to take visiting newspapermen up to see the Secretary. He was very careful who he saw. This is actually in Henry Brandon's book, exactly as I told...

Q: Henry Brandon's book was what?

WILKINSON: His reminiscences. It came out last year. I told Brandon this and he put it exactly in the book. This interview was with the former editor of the Times of London, whose name is in that book. I can't remember. Dulles would sit on the sofa and jingle his keys. His opening question of the man from the Times, who was absolutely shaken by it...Dulles said, "Why did you stop?" This was Egypt. They had landed, had the thing in hand and suddenly they pulled the whole French-English expedition off. The former editor stammered...this I can vouch for...and said, "But Mr. Secretary, I thought you made us stop."

Q: Eisenhower was saying we wouldn't support this...

WILKINSON: And Dulles in effect said, "You have to remember this in context. The Hungarian Revolt. They had to go up to the U.N. inscribe our horror of the action of the Russians in Hungary and at the same time the English and French were, without our permission, without our clearance, doing the same." He said, "Don't you understand that we had to? Either that or we sacrifice our whole position in the U.N."

Q: It is very interesting. Did you get any feel from watching Dulles or the people around him about how they felt about Nasser?

WILKINSON: I honestly and truly thought that we were watching very, very carefully. Obviously he was anathema to most people. But whether it affected what had to be done, I just don't know. I was not in on the policy planning. This is the whole question of what public affairs should be included in. I fought endlessly to be included in substantive meetings. Policy planning would come into this. As you know Dulles used Bob Bowie, you may have interviewed him.

Q: I have.

WILKINSON: Dulles had the greatest respect for Bowie. We called him the dart boy. Dulles would fire darts at Bowie for reactions. He was a one-man policy planner. Dulles did not use Policy Planning the way Acheson and Kennan did. It was not really a substantive outfit, but using him...

Q: As an idea man.

WILKINSON: Yes. He would fly ideas past Bowie and Bowie was absolutely first class.

Q: Can you think of any of the ideas he would bounce off of Bowie?

WILKINSON: This would be in the morning meetings. I will have to think back, I did make a few notes. Obviously Suez was one of the tremendous moments. Then there was something in the Gulf of Aqaba after Suez.

Q: The Egyptians were talking about closing off the Gulf of Aqaba.

WILKINSON: I will give you one more example because there again I get back to how public affairs got into it. Mr. Dulles loved backgrounders, in deep secrecy, usually Sunday afternoon. He would get restless over the weekend if he wasn't at Duck Island.

Q: Duck Island being in upstate New York where he went into seclusion.

WILKINSON: Very happily. He did his own cooking. But if he was home he would call me up and say, "Don't you think we ought to get the boys together?" There was a little group that Phil Graham had which was Ernest Lindley, Maggie Higgins, Mark Childs...this was a top group.

Q: Each of these people were top grade newspaper correspondents.

WILKINSON: There were several groups. But the one that we called the Lindley group was absolutely first class if he wanted to get something out quietly. So I would say, "Yes, Mr. Secretary." We would meet at Phil Graham's house.

Q: He was the Washington Post.

WILKINSON: And not much longer for this world. I would remind them of the ground rules..."Don't admit that it ever happened. You could not admit that it ever happened. It was totally off the record." Now this was the occasion of the Gulf of Aqaba event. And Mr. Dulles reaching into his vast knowledge said, "We may have to invoke the right of innocent passage." A beautiful phrase. This was kicked around and discussed. This was a well-known legal term. Any lawyer knows the right of innocent passage. Maggie Higgins batted her eyes at the Secretary, who was not completely immune, and said, "Mr. Secretary this is so fascinating. Could we go on the record?" I tried to signal him to remember our ground rules. Looking back I guess I was a little slow on my reaction and he was flattered by Maggie's attention...

Q: She was a very attractive lady. She was killed in Vietnam, wasn't she?

WILKINSON: She was in Vietnam, but she wasn't killed. She made a great name for courage. She married an Air Force Colonel later. I think she died very recently.

Anyway, we went on the record, and I was wrong. I should have banged the table as I had earlier in laying down the rules. The following morning his phrase blossomed in print and it was a six-day wonder. Everybody knew immediately that it had been a backgrounder. But we survived it.

Q: What was Dulles'...you mentioned that he saw what he should do and went straight ahead and here you are in public affairs. Again and again it is so evident that if you want to have a successful foreign policy you really have got to keep in mind the mood of the

American people or change the mood of the American people. Do you think Dulles was very sensitive to this or not?

WILKINSON: I think he knew when there was a moment that he had to make a major speech to form opinion and he worked so hard on those speeches. I would do a first draft. He would go to Duck Island for the weekend and scribble on long yellow sheets and come back rested and happy. We would read my draft and he would slap it down and say, "I don't like this." I learned to take that even though it upset me. He could be very rude, but if he had a point that he wanted to make I would have to think hard...

There was a major speech in Texas to the American Legion, for instance, which is one of the landmarks. He used the speech if an opinion needed to be helped and formed. This was what McCardle was for, you see...spotting shifts in the public affairs thinking. Basically I would say he was...I take back saying that he went straight ahead...he certainly had a healthy awareness of the importance of moving the public forward, preferably in his own direction, obviously. But I think that was a strong part of it. I will think of an example.

Q: Tell me. Here you are the public affairs advisor. He is going to make a major speech to the American Legion. After all, somebody makes a major speech to the American Legion and the Legionnaires go away and don't even know they have heard a major speech. What did you do to make sure that that speech informed the American people?

WILKINSON: This would be what I call building a platform. If he felt a major speech coming on we would look at the various invitations...which he did about one out of a hundred...and we would build a platform. We would let them know that there was a major speech in the offering.

Q: You would be letting the media know?

WILKINSON: Sure. And they would be pleased to have the information. But basically...I would have to check that American Legion, I can't remember what the subject was...the technique was very good at having the regional bureaus each put up their part of it.
Q: We are talking about the European Bureau of the State Department, the Near Eastern Bureau, etc.

WILKINSON: Policy Planning would also always have a chance to put in their input. Then my job was to pull these things together, which might run a little long, and put together for him a coherent speech for him to work from. He really put his mark on it, heavy, but effective. "Agonizing reappraisal" was one of the classic phrases. What I call the shotgun phrases. "Right of innocent passage," and what was the other famous one?

Q: Brinkmanship.

WILKINSON: Brinkmanship.

Q: Secretary Dulles came out with phrases like no other Secretary did. Were these his phrases? Brinkmanship, Agonizing reappraisal?

WILKINSON: Absolutely.

Q: It was "To the brink." It wasn't called brinkmanship then.

WILKINSON: Let me very quickly tell how this got into the language. This was an interview with Shepley of Life-Time. I again was called in to make the rules before it ever appeared in print they were submitted. Charlie Murphy was with Shepley. I did not sit in on the actual interview. I am not sure whether McCardle did or not. But then Time-Life promised to send the tape, the transcript. His actual words, again "the necessary art," which is a beautiful phrase itself...the necessary art is getting to the verge and not falling over, not falling into the abyss. He did not use the word "brink" himself. The next voice we heard...they just went ahead with the article and on the front cover of Life magazine was "Three times to the brink without falling in." Brinkmanship took an instant step into the language. Dulles called Mr. Luce up, I was with him when he called, and said...

Q: It was Henry Luce who was the publisher of Time-Life.

WILKINSON: Yes, and Dulles said, "We take great, great exception to what you have done." What was interesting, they played back the tape and discovered...this was in early days of tape recording...that the machine at the time of these key phrases had broken down and all we had were the notes of Shepley and the memory of whomever had been there. But we do know that brinkmanship was not his word. I don't have any feeling except that it was quite effective and true.

Q: Yes, in a way it made the situation very vivid. We were getting very close to a major confrontation or war.

WILKINSON: The idea that Dulles was playing Russian roulette with bombs is what frightened people. I think "the necessary art" is quite a wonderful phrase. I haven't really thought the whole thing through, but this article of mine will give you quite a feel for the situation.

Q: We will include the article. Going back again to the very important relationship that came apart on the Suez, what was your impression of chemistry between Dulles and Anthony Eden, at that time the British Prime Minister?

WILKINSON: Of course what we have to remember is that Dulles went up to the U.N. to inscribe our horror over Hungary and he was ill. He had his first attack coming back on the plane.

Q: This was cancer.

WILKINSON: He simply was...he was missing for quite a time. Herbert Hoover had to take over, the Under Secretary...

Q: This is Herbert Hoover, Jr.

WILKINSON: ...at a key time. Hoover was a very limited and narrow man, with his bad hearing. He was good on oil and Iran, but absolutely at sea in many things. But basically, you are answering your question. I never heard Dulles on the subject of "Anthony," he couldn't say "Anthony." We know that Eden made no attempt to conceal his distaste. I don't think that Mr. Dulles reciprocated it. I don't think that was the kind of way he played the game. He may have had a personal dislike because Eden had been so close to Acheson, the Anglophile Acheson. Certainly the blood wasn't good, but I have nothing to report.

Q: What was your impression of how Dulles viewed our relations with the Soviet Union, and particularly Molotov, who was the Foreign Minister during this whole time?

WILKINSON: I think you would have to say that he was the consummate Cold War warrior. It was cold. That was the way he felt about it. It was our ultimate confrontation and challenge. Everything was motivated by that. There were no neutral countries. Being neutral was to be condemned.

Q: This, again, was one of the things that came across from...I can't think of the exact phrase, but "neutralism is not moral," which enraged the Indians and others.

WILKINSON: I think that was very unfortunate...this Presbyterian, card-holding Christian view was one of the things that put people off. In that article that I mentioned, taking the word "moral" out of his...he always sent me the speeches in final form even though they were very different from what I had first written. In one the word moral was in nine times. I took it out and he put it back in. That is in the article.

But basically it was quite interesting to come in in the shadow of Acheson with his great relationship with Truman. I think it had considerable affect on Dulles and Ike. I think Dulles was aware of how well that had worked. He did say to me once, which I find extremely interesting, "I wish I could get through to Dean Acheson more." Acheson went out of his way to make unfortunate remarks about Dulles, as you know. Again it was antipathy, simply a human reaction to somebody he disliked. And Dulles was very dignified about Acheson. I found that rather touching. Has this come up before?

Q: No, not really. Not that relationship. I find that quite interesting.

WILKINSON: See, even in the book that Acheson wrote..."Present At The Creation"...and also the one on the glorious mornings, I forget...in several of them he addresses himself to Dulles. He said that there is no question that his work under me, the

Japanese Treaty, was magnificent. Then he quickly qualifies it by saying, "But, of course, he had a small staff and his administrative abilities were not called into question." (We know that Dulles did a great job on the Japanese Treaty.)

Q: He negotiated it under the Truman Administration. It was considered a major treaty.

WILKINSON: We had a little lunch group with Acheson...the Oxford Cambridge Dinner Committee. I was working for Dulles and Joseph C. Harsh and Lindley loved teasing me about Dulles for Acheson's pleasure. And Acheson would respond to this. I will give you this example. After the signing of the Vienna Treaty, which you may remember was the first backward step...

Q: Oh yes. This was in 1955.

WILKINSON: The great mystery. We never knew why they did it, but they took a backward step. Dulles went to the signing, the great cathedral bells rang out. Joseph C. Harsh piped up, for my benefit, "Dean, isn't it true that you received a telegram from Foster thanking him for your part in making the Viennese Treaty possible?" Acheson in that lovely feathered voice said, "Joe, I am glad you asked me that. It is true that I had a telegram from Foster thanking me for my part." A pause and then he said, "My part was Sam Reber, who sat in on the original planning, who Foster fired." This is an example. He was our Minister in Berlin at the time, I think, and was actually a victim of McCarthy.

Q: Did you get any feel for Dulles and what he thought of Molotov?

WILKINSON: I just don't know. You see, I was a deputy and did the business that had to be done. He was very, very good with me in a business way. I was enormously impressed with his staff work. And, of course, anything to do with the historical division was rather tricky because he had a great sense of history.

Q: Can we talk a bit about the history section because the Foreign Relations Series has always been its jewel. How was the history section used when you were there?

WILKINSON: It is a point that we should think about because Bernard Noble was the historian. Noble got a Distinguished Service Cross in World War I, state Senator from the state of Washington, just a man of great dignity, and a longtime holdover, so a lot of right wingers were sniping at him. They thought that he was holding back material on Yalta and the China Paper. So there was great pressure. As I remember there was a 20-year rule.

Q: There is now a 30-year time limit, but I think it was 20 years.

WILKINSON: So as we came near these watersheds, Yalta was a particularly important one...1940-1960, you see.

Q: Yalta was 1945. The Yalta Papers came out for some reason about 1955.

WILKINSON: We will have to check that because the decision was made to cut a corner. I was sent down to distribute them to the key people on the Foreign Relations Committee, several of whom refused to accept them. I can't remember why, they were looking for trouble, you see.

Q: The so-called Yalta Agreements referred to a meeting at Yalta of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill. The idea was that somehow we had sold out Eastern Europe. This was the extreme right wing ideology that if it hadn't been for traitorous action on the part of the State Department...

WILKINSON: When the decision was made to release these early...and the role of Bohlen comes into this...

Q: Charles Bohlen.

WILKINSON: ...the first thing that Dulles had to do when he came on board was to go down and testify in Bohlen's favor as Ambassador to Moscow, which he did with great restraint. There was real sharp dislike of Bohlen.

Q: I understand from somebody that when he came back he said, "I never want to be put into that position again." Of having to defend somebody.

WILKINSON: And he did it because Ike wanted him to. Later Bohlen was brought home and made Ambassador to the Philippines. I helped Chip, who was a friend of mine, draft the press release. He knew that he was being relegated. We made it appear...they were both class 1 posts, there was no demotion.

Q: But still everybody knew...there is no secret about the fact that if you take your leading Soviet expert and put him in the Philippines...he sort of sat there for a while wearing a white suit...

WILKINSON: I briefed the press and said, "Of course you have to realize...off the record...that the Philippines are a great listening post for China and Russia..." and they bought it completely.

Q: You must have almost bitten off your tongue.

WILKINSON: Bohlen, who actually was a very colorful and hot-tempered figure...You could tell even in a room with Dulles that blood was bad.

Q: In connection with the historian's office, did you find that people sort of came at you scrounging around looking for dirt about the Roosevelt-Truman years?

WILKINSON: Well, we would have to check a little bit about his staff. In other words, it was a cross section. There may have been people who were feeding material to the Hill, that is where the pressure came from. I remember taking some of the Far East material down to Senator Knowland. He was looking for real trouble. I can see him flipping through these galleys looking for Davies, Service, Chubb...you remember these names?

Q: Yes, these were the China hands who were attacked so strongly by Knowland, who was sometimes known as the Senator from Formosa, although he was Senator from California. He was very much in the hands of what was called in those days, the China Lobby.

WILKINSON: And he was extremely disappointed that he couldn't find materials that they were looking for. And also there was Walter Robertson, who was a very charming man personally. He was the Assistant Secretary for the Far East. For all those years he was absolutely as thick as thieves with that Lobby.

Q: I have heard it said that Walter Robertson, who everybody said was a gentleman of the old southern school, was somehow the rare meat that was tossed to the right wing of the Republican Party. And that Dulles and Eisenhower recognized this and felt this was the concession that they had to make. Did you have that feeling?

WILKINSON: Absolutely correct. We called him the little cavalier. He had enormous charm. I knew that I disagreed with him and had to draft some of his speeches although I technically didn't have to do the Assistant Secretaries, I had four speech writers on my staff but he would say, "Oh, Burke I want you to write that speech for me yourself." And he was hard to resist. The entire time that I was there, four years, Walter Robertson had that...

Q: Did you get the feeling that Walter Robertson was not quite on the team or was there a pussy footing around him?

WILKINSON: I don't think so. I think we all knew where he stood and we all took it because Walter had such a persuasive way about him. He held the line whether we agreed with it or not.

Q: How about Dulles and China? We are talking about a period when the Chinese civil war is over; the Korean War was over; Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists were on Formosa and in the minds of most people who knew about it, thoroughly discredited; there was a new Communist regime in with whom we had no relations; but at the same time there it was representing a quarter of the world's population.

WILKINSON: It was such an absolutely frozen situation that I can't...except for the report of those old China hands...as you may remember Service was brought back on active duty. This is again a public relations ploy. Maggie Higgins, who I got along with very

well, was the only person to interview him in the Northwest area in a remote outlying building with one bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Q: He was in charge of furniture.

WILKINSON: The shipping of furniture. She wrote it up. Here is a man who is actually just as good as Davies in his reporting. A son of missionaries with a real China background. He was so dignified and handling a menial job. Anyway, we were so frozen on the Far East.

Q: There was a series of crises over the Formosa Straits and the offshore islands then.

WILKINSON: We used to brief the Secretary...McCardle did it mostly, but sometimes I was called in...before a press conference. One of the recurring subjects was the Formosa Straits. You may remember that Admiral Carney said, "On my honor we will be at war by the middle of April," and lost his job as CNO. It was very touch and go and the Secretary handled it so beautifully. And then press would come around and say, "Why won't he say what we are going to do if they invade the Pescadores?"

Q: These are those offshore islands. Quemoy and Matsu were the two major ones. But the Pescadores were in between, they are another set of islands.

WILKINSON: This was Quemoy and Matsu which were almost in sight...was it seven miles?

Q: Oh yes, sitting, bottling up the harbor.

WILKINSON: He said that he would handle this one. Linc White was our great spokesman. Linc and I would sit with the Secretary and go down this shopping list of the things that he was going to be asked. He would never say in advance what we would do. And it was brilliant. The English press, for instance, would be furious. They wanted to know why he wouldn't say. Of course the trick was they didn't know what would happen and we had some very good weapons, as you know, the SAM missile...

Q: The Sparrow missile.

WILKINSON: ...which was capable of shooting down planes by following the heat of the plane. We also had a lot of ships.

Q: Yes, the Seventh Fleet.

WILKINSON: Finally, you can check this in the transcript, long after the thing had subsided...and I used to explain to them in private, to the press, how brilliantly I felt he had handled this...but this touched a liberal nerve...why won't he say? How can he do that? It was quite brilliant.

Q: There are many times that ambiguity is the soul of diplomacy, but, of course, they want to get things spelled out.

WILKINSON: And six months after the thing had subsided, May Craig...

Q: She was a reporter on the White House beat for years.

WILKINSON: Absolutely marvelous. She said, "Mr. Secretary, may I ask a question? What do you really think the mainland Chinese thought we would do if they invaded?" And Mr. Dulles gave her a funny little smile and said, "I think they thought that we would fight." There it is you see. But I thought it was quite interesting. It was so long past, there were other problems. But, "I think they thought we would fight." I think that is worth remembering.

Q: What was your impression of the news media that you dealt with in those days?

WILKINSON: I think that basically they were edgy about Dulles in a way because he was so bright and he had so many slings and arrows to draw on. They found him very difficult to corner and they weren't quite up to cornering him. The AP was John Hightower, a very decent man. These fellows practically lived in the Department. They were good, honest reporters. The man from Time magazine, I can't remember his name, did a book on Dulles, was very pro Dulles. And there were some others who were pro, but basically the atmosphere was slightly hostile. I would talk to them and say, "Why don't you all stand up when the Secretary comes down?" They just didn't feel like it. They had done it with Acheson, a natural courtesy, but they never did for Dulles.

Then, sometimes when I had briefed him, I would sit below him...usually McCardle...it was an absolute sacred right to brief the Secretary by the Assistant Secretary. This was the key, you see. McCardle was not terribly well and sometimes he would ask me to brief the Secretary. But basically Linc White would know what the boys wanted to know from sharing, so the advance briefing was mostly what White would produce. But I think they basically had been under the spell of Acheson for so long that there was grudging respect, so grudging they couldn't stand up when he came in. And yet, a curious feeling after he became ill. I heard this, I was in Paris by then. And the British, who really disliked Dulles, you know. There was a cartoon strip..."We trembled at his brinkmanship, we shuddered over Quemoy and Matsu"...and the final little panel said...and there was an empty podium..."we will miss him now that he is gone." That summed up America as well as Britain. Extraordinary power.

And one more little episode before I forget it. I was very close to Norstad.

Q: This is General Lauris Norstad.

WILKINSON: He hired me. His theory was that public affairs should be included in every step of deliberations because there is that ten percent. This was not true in the Department, as you can easily see. But Norstad said that "I want you as Public Affairs Advisor to be in on every meeting, all the planning because of the importance of public opinion." And this appealed to me and I thought maybe four years was enough. So I left.

Q: I would like to go back to one other thing before we move to the NATO bit. Part of your empire included polling, you said.

WILKINSON: They had a man, who has recently done a book, I will have to think of his name, who was quite a skillful opinion taker.

Q: Okay, you were getting opinion. Would that funnel through you?

WILKINSON: Schuvler Foster was his name.

Q: On the basis of polling would you say something like, "Mr. Secretary, our China policy is not going too well on the West Coast," or something like that?

WILKINSON: This was started by General Marshall and we called it a "How Am I Doing?" poll. It cost $40,000 a year. The Congressman from Norfolk, whose name escapes me, had it knocked out. I had to testify. Basically it was to ask questions exactly as you say, and it was very helpful. I think it was useful to Dulles. The poll would ask the key questions of the time. I am not very strong on polls, I think it is going to be very dangerous from here on in. And we know examples. I didn't feel that we were checking enough of the people...obviously they had sources. But it was a useful bell ringing, within reason. I don't know how much he used it. But he certainly used it enough to be interested.

Q: Sort of "I maybe should address this issue because there is disquiet about it," or something like that?

WILKINSON: He would ask Schuvler to include certain questions. It was quite good.

Q: Moving on from this fascinating look of the Dulles time, I would like to get a feel, because our program deals with foreign affairs and obviously NATO is certainly part of American foreign affairs...you served with NATO when?

WILKINSON: From 1958-62. Tremendous years at NATO.

Q: What type of meetings would you participate in? What were they doing?

WILKINSON: Norstad was brilliant and very bold. He became more and more Europe's man, rather than the US. He had two hats. He was the senior American commander in Europe and he was the NATO Supreme Allied Commander. He had a very close

relationship with the Council, which was then in Paris, with the 15 countries. There was a Public Affairs Advisor, and a POLAD, a Political Advisor and Doug MacArthur, who you mentioned, I think was the first. Ike created SHAPE. But in my day it was Walter Stoessel and George Vest and Ray Thurston. Thurston first, then Stoessel, and Vest was the deputy. In other words we had a very good link to the State Department, plus myself.

This job of Public Affairs Advisor was created by Norstad for me. There was a British Brigadier handling the press releases, who bitterly resented my coming on board. I had three stars equivalent rank, so I ranked the Brigadier, but it was very tricky.

Before we finish Dulles, I want to do one more glimpse. Norstad had never met Dulles and we talked about him a great deal. He wanted to know how I felt about Dulles. When Dulles became finally ill, his last month as Secretary of State, he came over to say goodby to Adenauer with whom he was very, very close.

Q: He was the Chancellor of Germany.

WILKINSON: On his way he stopped for a day in London. Dulles asked Norstad to come over, he wanted to be briefed before he saw Adenauer. There were some very important German-English matters quite recently in the military part of detente. So we went over and went to Jock Whitney's residence...

Q: He was Ambassador to Great Britain at that time.

WILKINSON: ...in deep secrecy, for some reason. It was totally off the record. Norstad and Dulles spent the entire day talking. I was with Brad Connors, who was the Public Affairs Advisor, in a room outside. Sometimes they would call us in on a question...in other words on a point...but basically they had a tremendous exchange.

Going back in the plane Norstad said how magnificent he thought Dulles was, even in his final illness. And in a rather typical Norstad remark that I thought was funny, he said, "But, you know, Burke, he thinks just like me," which in Norstad lexicon was the highest praise. They were both Cold War warriors, aware of the threat. Norstad, obviously when he first came there, the Russian threat...they thought the Channel ports were in danger of a push across the German plain. We forget that now.

Q: Well, this is what I would like to ask...you were talking about 1958-62...You were sitting in on meetings. Today, of course, there is no longer a Soviet Union, but at the time, what was the reason that we thought the Soviets would try to conquer Europe?

WILKINSON: It is a tremendous question, even today. I ask myself this question all the time. Was it true? Did we really think or were we doing this for our own military purposes? Did we really think that this was a danger? Norstad loved to in his speeches, mostly drafted by me, ...he wasn't the drafting officer Dulles was and relied a good deal on materials that we supplied...loved to say that he brought his wife and daughter when

he first arrived in 1955, which was the real Cold War. It was reassuring that he brought his family because the fear was so great of a Soviet drive across the plain.

I must confess to you that by the time that I got there...Germany came in in 1954 and the French were fighting it...one of the problems was that it created the European Defense Community, EDC. But there certainly was still a palpable feeling that this was a real threat.

Q: This is still during the time you were there--1958-62?

WILKINSON: I believe by the time...he loved to go back to that time...but as I saw it one of the problems was the slowness of the European countries to contribute their part. There was a famous scene after Ike had been there a year, they were still at the hotel in Paris, SHAPE had not come into physical being. Each of the countries reported on their preparedness. As Norstad described it, Ike's face got redder and redder, until he was nearly black with anger and he got up on his feet at the end of the briefing and said, "Gentlemen I expect better of you," and strolled off. It made a tremendous effect. They hadn't realized the black anger of Eisenhower. In other words, there was real hesitancy...awareness of the threat but also slowness in putting their house in order. Does that answer your question?

Q: Again, we are talking under Norstad. Were you always operating during this 1958-62 period more or less under the assumption that the Soviet Army was poised ready to let go, or was there the feeling that you had sort of settled into a feeling of status quo?

WILKINSON: Well, I think you would have to bring the atomic into this. They acquired the atom in 1954. This was the added threat of an incident escalating and Norstad...I am very glad to get this on the record because in the Kennedy campaign the theory that we were trigger-happy during the Eisenhower time was prevalent. And it simply wasn't true. Norstad's phrase for "raising the threshold" was "creating the pause if something happened, for sanity to step in." This is completely ignored now. The theory is that all Dulles did was rattle the bomb, with Ike's approval. And Ike having been the military man was able to exert the great power of the atom bomb. Thus Norstad labored endlessly to create the pause, which is the same as Max Taylor's "threshold" of the early sixties.

Q: Were you there during the Berlin Wall crisis?

WILKINSON: I was there through June, 1962.

Q: How did NATO react during that Wall crisis?

WILKINSON: Very interesting point that Berlin came under the Four Powers, not technically under SHAPE. But Norstad played a very, very active part in creating the pause. Because it really was touch and go, as you know. Norstad was in daily conversation with our man in Berlin who was flapping a bit, and was thinking of different

ways of slowing them. Of getting trains through without an incident. They were dropping tinsel from airplanes to prevent flights which was provocative.

Q: The tinsel was called window which blotted out radar.

WILKINSON: Norstad had counter-measures...this is totally unknown because he didn't want it known that we were taking a part in it, that we were cutting a corner. But he was so good. He played a considerable role in the cooling off of that very anxious crisis.

Q: What was your impression of the role of the French in NATO?

WILKINSON: Here we were the guest of the French government.

Q: Yes. France was still in there and de Gaulle was in command.

WILKINSON: And we had had three brilliant Supreme Commanders...one was Dougwell Suitertobe, Ridgeway was number two, more of a troop man...he was in and out within a year, and a wonderful man. Brenth succeeded Ridgeway and was subtle, brilliant, and tactful. Then Norstad.

Immediately when I reported in, Norstad said, "Part of your work is going to be working with the French." We had this problem with de Gaulle who would never come to the headquarters. He did not like having foreign troops on French soil. Somehow they diminished...even though they were very important for the security. And he didn't like having naval ships loaned by the US, including a carrier, to the French forces...the Belleau Wood. It just somehow got under his skin.

We knew that sooner or later there was going to be trouble. It didn't come until several years later...I think it was 1967 when we were kicked out of France. Crazy if you consider the advantage of having the pipelines and the bases. This was not the kind of thing that had any consideration with de Gaulle, you see. And people loved being in France. There were officers even when I was there who were on their sixth tour in France.

You asked how we worked? We had small staff meetings. Norstad didn't like a big group so there would be three or four at a time. At one of these meetings he started brooding over why de Gaulle would never come to SHAPE for one of our ceremonies. Adenauer, for instance, came often. Kennedy came. Norstad said, "I am going to the Elysée Palace tonight for dinner, and I am going to tackle him on this subject." As Public Affairs Advisor I said, "Supreme Commander, I respectfully suggest that you don't bring it up in a public place." And he said, "Yes, I am going to do it."

The next morning, Randolph Kidder, who was at the Embassy and a classmate and friend of mine, called and said, "I happened to be at the dinner and I think you ought to know what happened. Norstad was talking to de Gaulle in the most friendly fashion. They were walking up and down and suddenly de Gaulle turned red, turned on his heels and walked

away." I said, "Randy, thank you very much." Norstad never brought this up and I never brought it up. This is a good example of a public affairs advisor's role.

While we are on the subject, the man in Berlin during the Vienna crisis was Sam Reber.

Q: What was your impression of the British contribution to SHAPE?

WILKINSON: This was part of the brilliance of Norstad. We worked very, very closely with the British. Their cabinet would come over. It was a kind of a working formula. If anyone came out to SHAPE they would spend a day and Norstad would arrange the briefings and we would get to know them. Macmillan came and the opposition, Gaitskell came. The British went out of their way to cultivate Norstad and Norstad went out of his way. Field Marshal Montgomery, when I was first there, was the Deputy Supreme Commander and this they liked. There was very good vibrations with the British. I think they had two divisions in Germany, which Norstad went out of his way to be polite about, although their contribution was not very great.

The fleet was a special unit that reported directly to the NATO ministries. I can't remember now why. There was some tricky set up.

Q: What about the Germans? They were still rather new boys on the scene. Most of the people in SHAPE had fought against them.

WILKINSON: This is a very interesting point. The Germans, there were 66 officers at SHAPE, sent their absolutely first class men. Oddly enough, talking at lunch they were very much in evidence. They all had fought on the Russian front. If they had fought elsewhere they never mentioned it, it was always the Russian front. The Iron Cross was very much in evidence. They were absolutely first class. They were heart and soul for the Alliance.

Q: From what you are saying, you found the French problem really was at the top, but how was the relationship with the French military?

WILKINSON: You have to remember how the command worked. The central command was in Fontainebleau and there was a French commander...full awareness to French sensibilities. I would say that at the working level relations were pretty good with the military. There were many French divisions in Germany. I can't think of the French commander. It worked very well, and what is very important to remember is that Spaak...

Q: Paul Henri Spaak of Belgium.

WILKINSON: ...was the Secretary General of NATO and an absolutely brilliant man, rather aware of his prerogatives so that he was very careful polite with Norstad. Halfway through he was replaced by a Dutchman, also beginning with S [Stikker] who had an enormous admiration for Norstad. So the thing improved. I can't think who the French

representative was. All that I can remember is that it worked very well at the work level, under de Gaulle

Q: Is there anything you think we should cover? You left there in 1962.

WILKINSON: Yes. Another point was part of the Norstad mystique. He insisted that I spend part of my time in the field. He wanted to know what was happening. Part of my job was to move him around because he had to be very visible. If he was going on a trip, being Norwegian by descent he always wanted to go to Norway, and I had to say that he had 14 other countries. But he let me spend a month in Turkey, for instance, with the Turkish forces, or two weeks in Greece with the Greeks, in preparation for his trips. This, I think, was very good.

Q: What about the Greek-Turkish thing? How was that viewed?

WILKINSON: You had to be very careful. I went to both Greece and Turkey, separately. One trip was with the Deputy, the successor to Montgomery, who was a marvelous old general--Sir Richard Gale, who had fought at Gallipoli as a very junior officer. He asked the pilot, we were looking across into Bulgaria, flying, and he said, "Why don't we drop in on Constantinople or Ankara?" The pilot turned a little white and said, "I don't think we could, they will shoot. They wouldn't clear us." So we didn't go in. It was that bad. The only link that Greece and Turkey did share was NATO. The Turks were very, very proud of being part of NATO.

For the record, it came out in a new book on the missile crisis, they mention the fact that Norstad took exception to the withdrawing of our missiles as part of the Cuban deal. But I was no longer there, so I can't tell you whether he did. He made a point of going public on this. It sounded a little out of character.

Q: Yes, it does. Because I think the general feeling and what I gather was that Kennedy was annoyed as hell because the missiles were considered obsolete--these were Jupiter missiles in Turkey--and before the Cuban missile crisis started so the idea was to get them out but it was difficult because the Turks had the vehicles but we had the warheads. It just took too long.

WILKINSON: Very skillfully used by Kennedy to defuse the missile crisis. But I would have to check that.

Q: Well, you can add anything you like on this.

WILKINSON: I want to add we lived the beginnings of Vietnam...and of course I was very remote from SHAPE, but we used to talk about it greatly. A great deal in the morning meetings. After Norstad retired, and I wish you would make a note: Norstad's problem was that he was known throughout as an Eisenhower lieutenant.

Q: He was a major flyer during World War II.

WILKINSON: Yes, he was a box of brains. Ike created SHAPE and came back several times while we were there. I wrote a weekly newsletter to Ike about the Command, at his request. It was a source of his greatest pride, that he had created it. I wrote a letter for Norstad's signature telling him everything that was happening. We were very proud when he came back.

After Kennedy took over Norstad's role diminished. McNamara, Nitze and Art Sylvester, who was the press officer, came to Paris with Kennedy. And it was very difficult. Kennedy had been briefed to look out for Norstad...brilliant, possible political ambitions. Ike was recruited by Herter and Lodge to be President when he was still Supreme Commander. Norstad remembered that. He wondered if some whistle might blow because he did have political ambition. But it came to nothing because he never met Kennedy until he came. And Norstad, knowing that I was a great Kennedy admirer and had known him pleasantly...we stayed up practically all night talking about Kennedy before he came. Because of his handling of the Berlin Crisis, Kennedy added six months to his stewardship. When time ran out in early 1963, I think he came home in January, 1963, he went to work for Fiberglass.

The people who cared about him thought that he should have been "General Marshal" and Secretary of Defense after a decent interval. But nothing happened. And McNamara, the whiz kid, as you know, (and in my opinion unsuited to the job...he was much too quick on the figures, much too inexperienced on the strategy...this is my own opinion) took over.

But long after, I saw Norstad every year for seven years and we would talk, I finally asked him, "Supreme Commander, I want you to answer something from your heart. Would you have been bold enough and brave enough to keep us out of Vietnam, if you had been Secretary?" This was obviously a loaded question, but we were on such terms that he could answer this from his heart. He said, "I think about it all of the time. I believe I could have done it."

And this is a real tragedy. With his intellectual power and his boldness. Kennedy, we know, was slightly ambivalent. We know from Schlesinger and others that he was thinking about disengaging from Vietnam and getting rid of Rusk, who was the super hawk. But it is a little footnote that I find very sad.

Anyway, I think we have probably covered enough.

Q: Well, I think this is excellent.

WILKINSON: I would be glad to do more on my four years at SHAPE. I will think of other things.

Q: I will tell you what to do...

A Footnote to these reminiscences might clarify the question of the "bad blood" between McNamara and Norstad. This was of course partly because of the fact that they were of different political parties, and that Norstad was a favorite of President Eisenhower. (Deborah Shapley's recent book, "Promise and Power," the Life of McNamara, implies this.) There was another reason to which I can attest.

It goes back to Cornelius Ryan's book on D-Day in Normandy, "The Longest Day." Prior to the making of the film, to be produced by Darryl Zanuck, Norstad asked me to review the book to see if there was anything offensive to our various NATO allies in it--especially the Germans. And he added a typical Norstad insight: "Tell the scriptwriters to be sure to include the fact that the French capital ship Jeanne d'arc fired the first shot off the Normandy beaches."

I screened the script and cleared it. During the actual filming, NATO and SHAPE loaned some troops to Zanuck and there were a few scattered complaints about the cost to the public. (In actual fact, Zanuck paid all expenses.) Robert Mitchum, who played one of the key parts, had some alcoholic problems and at some point refused to wade ashore. An American mother cabled us: "I didn't send my boy abroad to die for Robert Mitchum."

In answer to a press query at the Pentagon, Arthur Sylvester explained the brouhaha over SHAPE aid to Zanuck by saying that Zanuck were close pals. Norstad came storming down to my office. "Dig up Zanuck's original letter to me," he said, "the one that began 'you don't know me but...'" Fortunately I was able to produce it quickly. Unfortunately Norstad, letter in hand, called the Pentagon from Paris and chewed out Sylvester in brutal fashion. And when later that same year, Sylvester turned up in Paris with McNamara, Nitze & Company, Norstad continued to be rude to Art. The Democratic Administration was never about to make a place for Norstad in any way, but this episode made it easier to ignore his vast talents and potential.

WILKINSON - ADDENDUM

Interviewer: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Date: December 7th, 1993

This is an addendum to an interview with Burke Wilkinson.

Q: Burke, you mentioned you had looked at what you had said and you had a few things you'd like to add. So I am going to turn it over to you.

WILKINSON: Well, looking at the interview I realize there's one point that I hadn't touched on at all, which is what I call the saga of the Brussel's World Fair, 1958. Come back with me for a minute in early 1957. I was Acting Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. This is before the word Culture had been born in the Eisenhower days. No one knew the word very well, and I was in the corridor outside the office, and my secretary

called me and said, "Get in your desk quickly. The Belgian ambassador is coming officially." And I slipped into my desk, and Baron Silvercruys, who was a very popular member of the diplomatic corps came rather formally to issue the invitation to take part in the fair. And he said, "Wilkie, I think you better get a move on because the Russians are beginning to dig." I realized we were a little late in the day.

The first problem was to find an architect, and there wasn't time to have a competition. So I went to Ned Purvis who was the secretary of the AIA, American Institute of Architects, and asked them to produce an architect in a month's notice. And he came back to me in two weeks and we picked our man. Saarinen got the British and the embassy in London so we picked the runner-up, Ed Stone, famous for his grills, and the Indian embassy. And Stone went quickly to work, and at the same time I formed a theme group to plan what we had in mind.

Q: Let me ask a question. Here you are doing this, but had money been appropriated?

WILKINSON: That's a very good question. We immediately went to work to go for some money, and that meant Mr. Rooney.

Q: Congressman Rooney from Brooklyn, who was renown for his cutting the Foreign Service down.

WILKINSON: That's right. There was a presidential appointment of Howard Cullman as the chairman of the fair, and I went down and testified with Rooney, and he gave us a very rough time. We asked for $15 million, which is a good deal more in those days, and we got $13, which wasn't too bad. And then I was told that I could nominate the deputy chairman because we needed some real professional help. They appointed a lady called Catherine Howard, who was a political lady from Massachusetts and that narrowed the field to a pro, and I got a friend of mine called James Plaut who had been the director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. And Plaut saved the day. He really carried the mold of planning the theme which was basically a gentler more cultural America. In other words, this was a time of confrontation as you remember, and it was for the European audience particularly to present us as not quite so uncultured.

Very quickly Stone came up with the building. That same summer we had drawings, say by August of '57, and I'll check these dates. We had a luncheon to celebrate their acceptance which was basically by me because no one in the Department was terribly interested. And we had a lunch at the American Institute of Architects, and I noticed that Mr. Stone had several gin and tonics. He had had a problem, and I sat next to him at lunch, and he said, "You know Mr. Wilkinson, I hadn't realized until today how big our building is going to be." And he paused a minute, and said, "It's as big as the Yale Bowl." I thought, heavens, the man who designed it, what are we in for?

Anyway, time passed and my wife and I went over for the grand opening which was in June, or probably late May, of '58. The night before there were some tables and terraces in

front of the building which are still there. The night before the grand opening suddenly the lights went on, and it had fountains in front, and it absolutely took our breath away. I called it the Golden Carrousel. It was round and it looked as if you could spin it. It was just stunning. There was a big auditorium, an amphitheater, there was an side building where we had a film of America--180 degree round-the-wall screening.

At the opening there was a little bit of fuss over another small pavilion which was called Unfinished Business, and some of the unfinished business included race riots, and I think there was a photograph of a lynching, certainly forest fires and preservation problems.

Under Secretary Herter came over, I think was sent by Dulles, because he heard there was a little brouhaha and Dulles never quite knew what to do with Herter anyway. And I took a little leave in England after the opening, I got a message through the embassy to get back to Brussels, that the Under Secretary wished me to be there to go around our pavilion with him. Herter was in a wheelchair so we pushed him around and we came to the Unfinished Business and the photographs were still being pasted and mounted and there was a very plain girl in jeans and long hair putting up one of these ghastly photographs and Herter blew his stack.

I got back shortly to the Department, and I reported to Bob Murphy's morning meeting that we had scored a tremendous success.

Let me go back. I flew with Herter to London after taking him around, and I had all the European press clippings and I showed them to him, and he was very, very cold. Some of his Belgian friends had particularly taken him aside, and said, "The American pavilion, which is dead opposite the Russian, and the Russians had the sputnik in simulation going around the top of a building." In other words they thought it was effeminate, and it was decadent. We had show girls from Paris in the latest modeling. A rather silly side exhibit was an edition of the New York Times complete to show the 300- odd pages in one room--that was a little silly.

Anyway, my clippings fell on dead ears. Back in the Department, I usually went to the morning meeting of Dulles', I told you before, but this day I missed it and I happened to go to Murphy's meeting, and I reported the astonishing success at Brussels. At the end of the meeting, Murphy who was very, very smooth, said, "Wilkie, you should know that Under Secretary Herter reported to Mr. Dulles that we had scored a disaster." And I said to Murphy, who I knew very well, "Mr. Herter is absolutely dead wrong." The upshot was the decision to send George Allen, who was head of USIA then, a very adroit and shrewd observer over to Brussels to decide how we really were doing. I went over and spent an hour with Allen, who was a friend of mine, before he left and told him the background. And Allen came back and said, "It's marvelous. We have scored a real hit." This is an interesting little glimpse of culture in the 1950's.

So, Herter never mentioned it to me again.

Q: Were you involved in the genesis of this Unfinished Business part?

WILKINSON: Well, obviously that had been included in the planning, but I had not continually been aware of how...I suppose we got marks for being frank. But it had gone a little far, they had gotten a little carried away. The pavilion is gone, but that lovely little amphitheater for the movies is still there in Brussels, and the movie itself is marvelous. So looking back pre-culture time, I feel that we did pretty well, and it was a great lesson. One of the Belgian friends, the Baroness Boel, whose husband was head of Solway, was the one who had told Herter that it was a disaster. And later in the summer I had a letter from her. She said, "I want you to know that I have fallen in love with your pavilion. I was wrong." Which is sort of the end of the story.

Q: You mentioned some other things you wanted to talk about, relations with Norstad.

WILKINSON: I think that I have pretty well covered Norstad. George Vest may have touched on this too. But since we last talked, he's a kind of a forgotten figure. He was so good in that job, and I don't think I made the point to you that this was a good time in Paris. There was Amory Houghton, as the ambassador to France, there was Randolph Burgess, as the ambassador to NATO. And they both were wonderful men, and they both realized the predominance of Norstad, and they were out at headquarters a great deal, and they all worked together absolutely beautifully. In 1961 there was a change in administration and Mr. Finletter replaced Burgess, and General Gavin replaced Houghton, and the thing came unstuck. Norstad was not congenial with either of them. For five years it had been a marvelous combination, particularly, and I mentioned this to you before, this was NATO at its finest including the handling of the building of the Berlin Wall.

Q: You're talking about the building of the Berlin wall, and the shock waves that set in.

WILKINSON: Of course. Kennedy called out, I think, a draft.

Q: It was the National Guard, a partial mobilization.

WILKINSON: There's a point we might remember, that Berlin did not come under NATO, it was a Four-Power responsibility. But Norstad, as I saw it, behind the scenes was very, very good at countering Russia, it was very tricky, access to Berlin. His role was never really recognized, partly because he couldn't move too prominently. But it's a sad story because...I put that in my original article, he probably would have been a magnificent Secretary of Defense, in the Marshall tradition. But I just wanted to put in a little more about Norstad in my memory.

And I think that pretty well covers it because the role of public affairs in these matters was just beginning to make its way. And I did mention Kennan. Did you do Kennan?
Q: No, no. He has written his books. He really hasn't been very interested in this program, at least initially.

WILKINSON: Well you know, he's a fascinating man, and a wonderful writer, and I have read everything of Kennan's. I was interested in how he described his exit from the State Department. As you remember, he was declared persona non grata by the Russians. When he arrived in Berlin he said how wonderful to be on free soil. And Dulles was puzzled of what to do about Kennan. It was in those days the 90 day rule--correct me if I'm wrong--if you didn't get another post, you died on the vine.

Q: I think there still is, it comes and goes. This is for an ambassador.

WILKINSON: In the '52 campaign Kennan made some speeches that were diametrically opposed to the Republican position. Dulles called him in--I want to be clear about this because McCardle told me this, so I was not involved, and you may not want to use it.

Q: No, put it in.

WILKINSON: McCardle, as you know, was very close to Dulles, and Dulles called McCardle in after a session...

Q: McCardle had what position?

WILKINSON: He was my immediate boss, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, but was very much in the confidence of Acheson, who used the same sensitivity of Carl's. And Dulles called Carl, and said, "I've just had a session with Kennan, and I showed him these speeches that he had made and asked him if they were his." And as Dulles told Carl, he was absolutely thrown by this, flabbergasted by being accused in this way. And Dulles, as Carl told me, very gently, said, "I think you must realize that there probably isn't room for you and me on the same team." And Kennan took it very hard, said, "My people (meaning the American public) will not stand for this." And Dulles again very kindly said, "I think we can work it out so the departure can be graceful." And he said to Kennan, "When we're ready to make the announcement, work it out with Carl McCardle." And Kennan said, "I don't think I need any help." On the 87th day Carl told me Kennan turned up at his desk, and they worked out the press release. And said "Kennan with all his shades of academic background, is going to do what he has long wished to do, go into the world of academia." And it went absolutely over with the public, and there was no trouble. It's a rather sad little story.

Q: It is a sad story.

WILKINSON: And obviously not one that Kennan would write himself. He always left it that he was rather brutally thrown out, but that's the story and I think it's worth...

Q: I do too.

WILKINSON: I see Kennan occasionally at Princeton, and he's grown old very mellow, and we talk pleasantly, and as I said with great admiration, nobody of his day wrote the language better. And those are the only points...I'm very pleased with the interview we did.

I had one more suggestion to you, that you interview Fisher Howe.

Q: I'll work on that.

WILKINSON: Head of the Secretariat under both Acheson and Dulles, so you've got a double take.

Q: I'll do that.

End of interview