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

JOHN P. OWENS

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INTERVIEW

Q: I wonder if you'd give me a bit about your background? Where and when you were born, and about your education.

OWENS: Yes, I was born in Washington, DC, one of these rarities. So the idea of a government career came rather naturally. I attended local universities, George Washington, American University, and Georgetown University.

Q: You almost touched all of them, except Catholic University ...

OWENS: Exactly. Actually, I got my B.A. from American, and my Masters degree in History from Georgetown. I decided early on that I wanted a career in the Foreign Service. However, before doing that I went to work for something called Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS, and served a two year tour overseas in the early 1950s, 1951 to 53. Served in Japan with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

Q: This is an integral part of the Foreign Affairs establishment. What was your impression of the FBIS operation in Japan?

OWENS: Well, it was a rather effective organization. As you know, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service was subsumed by the Central Intelligence Agency, and it was by the time I joined it. Our essential duties there were to listen to the foreign broadcasts from the communist transmitters in Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang, North Korea. We had translators who would translate the broadcasts and we would try to make sense out of them in terms of indicating what communist Soviet or Chinese intentions were. It was a relatively raw and undeveloped science, if one can call it that, at that time. I think the genesis of the program was the invasion of Korea by the Chinese army in 1950, after the US troops had approached the Yalu River, at which time the Chinese, Beijing forces entered the fray. In retrospect, it was felt that had the US been more closely following the signals from Beijing, it would have been understood that there was a very serious threat of Chinese communist intervention. So, the purpose of monitoring their broadcasts was to determine patterns, changes, and themes, and any indications that there were harbingers of developments to come. So while I was there, however, I took the Foreign Service examination in 1953 at the American Embassy in Tokyo. We, who were working in an organization such as FBIS were very envious of our State Department colleagues who were able to discuss what they were doing, lived in a seemingly open world of diplomacy in contrast to the more covert type of activities we were engaged in.

Q: It was a three and a half day exam?

OWENS: Exactly.

Q: I took the same one in Frankfurt. I was ...

OWENS: In '53 also?

Q: In '53 I was a GI in the Air Force as an enlisted man.

OWENS: In what year did you come in then?

Q: I came in in '55.

OWENS: That's what I did, actually. I had not realized that.

Q: Well, going back. You were in Washington, what was your family involved in. I was wondering, to give a feel for the ...

OWENS: Yes. My father was a government worker. He had worked for the Veterans Administration. Very traditional, an 8 to 5 job. He was an immigrant from Ireland, actually. He had come as a very young man to the United States, studied for the priesthood in Ireland, and washed out for whatever reason, and came over about 19, and worked various jobs for the government. He had a job as an escort officer for the Immigration and Naturalization, the equivalent of that time. One of his jobs was ferrying prisoners or people who were being expatriated back to their home countries, and studied at night, and so had a very ordinary immigrant history.

Q: Had you come in to any State Department contacts at all when you were in Washington?

OWENS: Not really, very little. I guess my greatest exposure was in Tokyo. This was during the American occupation of Japan. So it was still under military control. General MacArthur had just turned it over to General Ridgway by the time I arrived. But I was caught up socially with diplomats as well as with army people, so I became rather fascinated by the diplomatic service. I can't say that I knew very much about it before...

Q: You came in to the Foreign Service in '55. You came in with training...a junior officer class...?

OWENS: I was one of those who unfortunately did not join a class. There was a need for officers, junior officers in the refugee relief program which was going on at that time, and there was a clamor from Germany, from Italy, and from other places, for officers to come out and issue visas. So I was immediately dispatched. I had about a maximum of three weeks in the Department, just going through processing, then was immediately sent to Naples into the "visa factory."

Q: Could you explain a bit about what the refugee program was and the atmosphere of how you were dealing with it in Italy which was not a site of major escaping from other places?

OWENS: That's true. Italy, as you know, had suffered terribly during World War II. The US and German forces fought over Italy in 1944, and into 1945. I guess ‘43 was the invasion of Sicily, if I'm not mistaken. It seemed to us who were young American consular officers, that, if they could, the entire population of Italy would have moved to the United States. It seems strange to look back at it from the vantage point of 1992, it is a very prosperous country, very high standard of living, able to offer its citizens pretty much everything the United States can today. But at that point, Italy was still not completely recovered from the damage of war. The economy, although already starting to

improve significantly by the mid-nineteen fifties when I went there, was nevertheless still not completely over from the wartime sufferings. So that we were working with...actually there were thirty-five Vice Consuls assigned to Naples. I remember a friend of my family's who lived in France, came to Naples. My family was very proud that I'd become a Vice Consul in the US Foreign Service, and asked for the Vice Consul, thinking that there was a Vice Consul, a Consul, a Consul General...So the Italian receptionist looked at them and in a bored voice said: "Well, which one of the thirty-five do you mean, Sir?" which he related when he came into my office. And I say my office...we all had desks in large offices. We were not in the main consular building, which you later...

Q: I don't think it was even built at that time...

OWENS: Yes, I think it was, it was just about that time. We were up on Via Orazio at that time, in something called the visa annex, which was a several story building set up against the hills quite up the Via Orazio, and there we interviewed the Italians who were hoping to go to the United States...

Q: This was called the Refugee Relief Program, and I speak from the historian's viewpoint, because I was doing exactly the same work in Frankfurt at this time. It implies that these people were refugees from some place. How did you rationalize...you were in Italy and these were people who were refugees, and they were in Italy?

OWENS: That's true, and as was the case in Germany, so many homes had been destroyed that it was easy to get ... this was a requirement that you submit an affidavit that your home, or farm, or rooms, in which you lived had been destroyed during the war, and that you were not able to recover that property intact.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were taking a law which was designed essentially for refugees, really talking about people who were fleeing the Soviet behind the Iron Curtain, and were twisting it in order to meet the imperatives of political life in the United States, i.e. a Congressman who had Italian constituents and all that...

OWENS: I think in retrospect, yes. At the time, I was not particularly conscious of that. It just seemed that it was the job we were assigned to do and we wanted to carry it out in the most effective way possible. We all, I think, knew that we would not be in the program for too long because it had an expiration date, and as a matter of fact by 1956 most of the junior officers at the Consulate were transferred, as I was. By the end of ‘56 we all received orders to more normal Foreign Service assignments. But, at that time, I would say at least for myself, we weren't thinking in those broader foreign policy and domestic policy terms.

Q: Maybe it was more obvious, when I was in Frankfurt or maybe the spirit was, but I developed, it probably is not the right term, a certain, if not contempt for the law, at least a feeling, well there are laws and laws, and I thought we were doing good work, because I thought these were obviously people who needed to go somewhere, but at the same time

you didn't look too closely at the letter of the law and in a way it served me well later on, but you can always lead to trouble, if you...

OWENS: That's very true. But, as I say, at least I didn't think too much...

Q: Then you came to a more traditional place. Your next posting from 1956 to about 1958, was where?

OWENS: Maracaibo, Venezuela. That was a more traditional posting. I was the No.2 officer in a 2 or 3 officer post. A small consulate on Lake Maracaibo. There was much more protection and welfare, and American passport duties there. We had a large number of people working in the oil fields around Lake Maracaibo, very little visa issuance. There was another officer, he was a staff officer at the time, as a matter of fact, he was Walt Silva, that you may or may not have known.

Q: Oh yes, he was in Naples as well.

OWENS: He was taking the Foreign Service exam to become an FSO at the time. But he was doing the visa work, and I was doing welfare and protection, and American passports, and then we had a Consul who was in charge. But as luck would have it, after the third position was eventually abolished, and then the Consul went on home leave which was extended for a reason which I don' know, I was in charge of the post for a very long period of time. This would be in 1958, at which point a revolution occurred in Venezuela against the dictatorship of Perez Jimenez. So for the first time in my then three-year-old Foreign Service career, I had a chance of doing some political reporting. We were pretty well cut off from the Embassy in Caracas. It was a rather exciting time because the Perez Jimenez junta had established a curfew, a dawn to dusk curfew. It was rather an exciting time and I enjoyed it immensely.

Q: Tell me, here you are, a relatively junior officer, and you're in charge of a post, and all of a sudden you've got the thing that every Foreign Service Officer dreams of, a coup! I mean, we love coups. What were you doing and how did you operate at this time. What was the situation?

OWENS: Well, one of the problems was of course the large American community there. One of the first issues was to provide for their safety and welfare, which we were not in a particularly strong position to do. The oil companies themselves were very strong institutions. They had their own security forces, and their own infrastructure, but I did meet with the regional managers of the various oil companies to pass on what little I knew, which was not very much. In those days, we used a system of either couriers to take classified traffic up to Caracas, which was then sent up to Washington, or commercial telegrams. In any event, the Embassy was very interested in what was going on, so I sent a couple of reports to Caracas, the very first political reports I had done in my career. They seemed to like them, so I became more and more enthusiastic about that. That was the focus of my activities. I had to, in a number of cases, move at night during

the curfew and I was given an identity card, a free pass which enabled me to go through the lines of the troops. On a number of occasions I came across road blocks where the troops were either illiterate and couldn't read Spanish. I would explain--I spoke only fair Spanish--but I would explain that I had a free pass, etc.. I remember the time when I had the first inklings of danger when the troops who stopped me couldn't read and were eyeing me suspiciously and were fingering their rifles. Fortunately, on one occasion, an officer came on and looked at the pass and said: "Go on." These were heady times, and I enjoyed them.

Q: What was the result of this coup. Was Jimenez...?

OWENS: He was ousted, and an interim government came in, Admiral Larasabo, and later there were free elections, and Venezuela was launched on democracy. The previous American Ambassador, Dempster McIntosh, who had been a political appointee, I think he was the head of Westinghouse International, had gone to great lengths in previous years to embrace Jimenez, and say that he didn't see any evidence of corruption, or of despotic tendencies on the part of Jimenez, but Jimenez was very unpopular with the Venezuelan people. It was during that time, when I was in Maracaibo, when Vice President Nixon came to Venezuela and was mobbed and almost didn't make it in one of his motor vans. That did not directly impact us in Maracaibo, that was the far away capital. Road transportation was twelve hours away. Of course, those were the years of piston engine planes, there were no jets.

In any event, as exciting as it was from reading about it in the press, (the Nixon incident) it didn't have any impact on us.

Q: So, what type of protection work, and how did you solve those problems?

OWENS: We had American sailors, since it was a port, a number of the sailors would get into problems. We had to visit them in the jails, that was interesting, and make sure they were treated as a Venezuelan citizen would be, which in fact I would try to get a little better treatment than a citizen of Venezuela would be given, since there were very few civil rights under the dictatorship. In those times, maybe you still do, I don't know, we had to do the inventories of the possessions of people who died without family there. There were a number of Americans who would just sort of wash up on the shores and who lived there for a number of years, older men who were drinking heavily and who had Venezuelan girl friends. On a number of occasions, I remember, people in that category died.

Q: The oil companies would pretty well take care of their own?

OWENS: They did. They did. That was my first identification with our knowledge of the oil companies' operations. They, at that time, were trying to bring Venezuelans into the work force and into the executive work force. I think that was an early affirmative action

program. I think they saw the handwriting on the wall, and realized they would have to move to bring Venezuelans into the top management. That was going on at the time.

Q: Was there a problem with the cost of living? If I recall there was a terrible situation.

OWENS: Yes. It was terrible. As you know, from being a consular officer yourself, the Consulate always seemed to get the short end of the stick. Although we felt the cost of living in Maracaibo was higher because there was less choice than there was in Caracas, nevertheless, the per diem rates and the COLA, the cost of living allowance, were much higher in the capital than they were in the provinces. There were a couple of Consulates in Venezuela. There was one other, I should say, in the east, at Pugrito la Cruz. But I think that all of the Consular people felt that we were treated less favorably than the Embassy personnel. So, it was extremely expensive. The allowances were not sufficient, even for the hotels that were there. We were quite unhappy with the financial arrangements. In fact, that was one of the reasons I wanted to get out. I stayed only a year and a half. I was supposed to move to the ... Because I'd got to know the people, the Deputy Chief of Mission and the Political Councilor in Caracas at the time, I was supposed to move to the Political Section of the Embassy. But when I came back on home leave, I found that I'd been detailed to Greek training.

Q: That was a major focus of your career?

OWENS: That's right, Greece did. And I would say, even today, that was the high point of my career in the Foreign Service.

Q: Was this Greek training out of the blue?

OWENS: No, I think I had, in the April fool's list, as we used to call it, the April 1st's preference, you were asked to put down posts. I knew very little about Greece, but I'd read a number of accounts of the Greek civil war, which rather fascinated me. And I saw a Greek film at one of the oil companies in Venezuela while I was serving there, of modern Greece, and it looked to me to be a rather fascinating blending of east and west, at least what seemed to me then of east and west. So I became rather interested, and put down that as a preference. To my great surprise, because I came back, my effects were packed when I left Maracaibo for transshipment to Caracas. When I got back in Washington, I was told no, that assignment was canceled and I was going into Greek training.

Q: For your first job, you went to Thessaloniki, is that right?

OWENS: Yes. Now I went through two years. At that time, they were having Greek language and area training. The second year, my predecessor had decided that, rather than go off to a university, which was the program, he would like to stay and work in INR and on the desk, and get a year's experience as a trainee, rather than go on to a university. That happened for me as well. It seemed at the time and in retrospect, a lot of time spent in training, two years. Particularly since you didn't have, in my view, the advantage of a

university year which would have been a change. But spending two years in Washington as a trainee seemed a long time. As a result, though, my Greek was quite good when I went to Greece, because the advantage of the second year was that you were, half time, still a student at FSI. I was very pleased with the training program at FSI.

Q: Were there many others taking it with you, or just a couple?

OWENS: I think I was the only FSO. There were a couple of people from the Agency who were going to either Cyprus or Greece. At that time, it was a very small program. They were training really one FSO a year. I replaced someone in Thessaloniki who had moved on to Athens. The job was called Deputy Principal Officer and Political Officer. It was a fairly large Consulate General. Actually, it wasn't fairly large, it was five officers. Compared to Maracaibo, it seemed large.

Q: What was the situation in Thessaloniki. You were there from '60 to '62. What was the situation there?

OWENS: Well, at that time, it was the conservative government of Constantine Caramanlis that was in power. I would say it was a relatively, from a political point of view, for the first year or so, was a rather tranquil time. Greece was moving ahead economically. One could see the beginnings of prosperity compared to what I had understood to be the situation in Greece in the ‘50s and late part of the ‘40s. However, in October of 1961, there were elections which again were won by the conservative party, the ERE party. But the opposition which was led by George Papandreou charged that it was won by fraud and violence. That undermined the stability of Greek life, because the opposition refused to accept the validity of the elections, and they boycotted the...

Q: What was the official American impression of the elections?

OWENS: I think the official American impression was that there was no more fraud and violence than there had been in most Greek elections, in fact probably less. And even to this day, it's hard to say to what degree. I think actually, whatever the validity of the opposition's claim by hammering away at this theme for the next year and a half, they were able to undermine the stability of the government and its credibility. George Papandreou was a very determined man, very eager to become Prime Minister again before time ran out on him. He was in his late sixties at that time. I attended many of the rallies that were held in Thessaloniki and in northern Greece at the time, and there was no evidence then of any coercion. The opposition political leaders were able to move freely and to speak out against the government, and there were enthusiastic crowds. I think the general feeling in the Embassy and shared by us in the Consulate General was that the elections were a fair reflection of the feeling of the Greek public. As it turned out, the Conservatives got, I don't remember the exact figures, close to 50% of the vote and the opposition got 35%, which was an improvement over the 1955 elections, and the Communists, the EDA party got 15%. That seemed to us to be a fairly accurate reflection.

Q: The killing that resulted in the movie "Z", I don't remember the man's name, had that happened at that time?

OWENS: No. That happened when I went to Athens. That was Gregory Lambrakis.

Q: Yes, Lambrakis. Was northern Greece different than southern Greece, either politically or in their attitude...?

OWENS: I would say it was more conservative. The rural influence was heavier. It was also influenced by the number of Greeks who had fled from Turkey in 1922.

Q: The Smyrna exodus.

OWENS: Yes, that's right. They were pretty well integrated into Greek society, but it took a long time, and World War II, really, to do that. I would say, in general, it was more conservative than the rest of the country, except in the cities, such as Thessaloniki which did have a liberal opposition mayor. The governor of northern Greece who was appointed by the Athens government reflected the conservative party. It was a very interesting assignment. I was occupied pretty much full time with political work for the first time. I didn't do any consular work there, although the Consul General at the time went on home leave and then was assigned to selection board and was gone six months.

Q: Who was the Consul General?

OWENS: Robert Folsom was his name. So I enjoyed the assignment.

Q: What was the attitude towards the neighbors? You had Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and of course Turkey there.

OWENS: Yes. Well, at the point that I arrived, the Cyprus crisis was in one of those periodic quiet periods that it would go through for a year or two years. So the thrust was towards the north and the fear of the Slavs, particularly the Bulgars, who were ... And usually the Bulgarians would be mentioned as the greater potential threat as the enemy then. It was felt very strongly by the people in northern Greece, more so than by the people of the south because of the two Balkan wars and the legacy of World War II, when the Bulgarians were allied with the axis powers and had occupied parts of northern Greece. So there were feelings stronger against the Bulgarians than they were towards the Germans by this period in history.

Q: Was there any feeling there...I say this because in 1992 now we're having a flare-up of the so called Macedonian problem which is always around. Was there a feeling about Macedonia? I'm talking about the area that was under Yugoslav rule.

OWENS: I would say not. The border was very calm. That was 11 years after the end of the civil war in Greece and of course during that period the incursions from Yugoslavia

before Marshal Tito closed the border had been quite serious. The communists in 1947 had used that as a sanctuary to move freely between Greece and Yugoslavia. But I believe it was 1948 that Marshal Tito closed the border and as a result the communist guerillas moved into Bulgaria rather than Yugoslavia. So relations with Yugoslavia itself were good. There was this fear as I mentioned of the Bulgarians, but any kind of Yugoslav Macedonian minority was not an issue at the time.

Q: I often wondered whether this was almost a trumped up...this pan-Macedonian feeling, or whatever you want to call it, sort of trumped up from Athens, to keep the pot boiling rather than a local issue?

OWENS: Perhaps, a little paranoia on the part of the Greek government. Not being there today, it's hard to understand this excitement, and the refusal of the Greek government to accept that a state could have the name of Macedonia since there is a part of Greece called Macedonia. To me, it certainly seems like overreaction, as it does to the members of the European community, and the NATO alliance. How much of it is trumped up, how much of it is, what I would call, the Greek paranoia which can be strong at times, I don't know. I suspect it is a mixture of both. But it was not really an issue at that time.

Q: Something was (doubling) away there?

OWENS: No. It was not. There were complaints from the Turkish minority from time to time that they were discriminated against in Thrace rather than Macedonia, in the area closest to the Turkish border.

Q: Well then you moved to Athens, where you were from '62 to '66?

OWENS: Right. I replaced Monty Stearns who had been in the political section. I had done a lot of political reporting, as I mentioned, in Thessaloniki, and I got to know the people in Athens. So when that opening came up, they asked me if I would be interested, and I was, so I moved down there. Dan Zachary, whom you know, who had been in the economic section came up to replace me. And so for the next four years I was in Greece doing...

Q: During a very interesting time.

OWENS: During a very exciting time. I might mention generally that of course it was a wonderful time to be an American diplomat in Greece. The degree of our influence was great. The prestige of being an American diplomat was great. There was almost no or very little violence of any type in Greek political life, and certainly very little in the social life as well of the people. The occasional shootings by family members over land or over love affairs, but very little crime. Greece itself was prospering, and it was a good time to be there.

Q: You had two Ambassadors when you were there. First Henry Labouisse from '61 to '65.

OWENS: Yes. Actually, when I was in Thessaloniki, it was Ellis Briggs who was the Ambassador, whom I knew only slightly. I had gone to the Yugoslav border to meet him when he was coming back to his country of assignment. I visited him a couple of times in Athens, but it was Henry Labouisse and Phillips Talbot during the period that I was in Athens.

Q: Could you describe their style of operation, that you observed?

OWENS: Yes. Henry Labouisse was of course a high powered executive who was very interesting to work for, very intense person. His wife was the daughter of Marie Curie, a French scientist. She had been very active in the French resistance during World War II. A very impressive, very handsome woman. Henry Labouisse, though, had a style, I think he was from Louisiana originally, somewhat deceptive laid back southern style because he could be very tough and very sharp, and he was. I became eventually his interpreter when he would call on George Papandreou, who during our time there became Prime Minister. It was a good time to be there. One of the advantages, as you know of when you're a younger officer, often in an Embassy, the younger officers in the political session work on the opposition. For instance, I never got to know Caramanlis, I never was included in anything. And of course often the conservatives, the party in power, speak English and so the senior Embassy officers move with ease with them. When the opposition came into power, as it did during my time there, George Papandreou, we, particularly the Greek speakers, were at a premium. But more than that, the fact that we cultivated the opposition, and they were very eager when they were in the opposition to have contacts with the American Embassy, we really came into our own, because we had known them when they were out of power. I think that's true generally for Foreign Service Officers. I would say that's a rule applicable to most.

Q: When did George Papandreou come into power?

OWENS: Well, in the elections of '63, I believe it was either October or November of '63, he won a plurality, but not a majority. Somewhere in my files I have all of this, but he had a slightly greater number of votes in the Parliament. The Parliament was three hundred, and he had a slightly greater number of votes than did the conservative party. However he did not have enough to operate a government unless he accepted the support of the communist party. And he did a very clever thing, he insisted that first he should receive the mandate, since he had the most number of votes, and secondly that, although he should receive the mandate, that he wanted elections within sixty or ninety days because he felt that he didn't have a sufficient majority. So he received the mandate and at the same time his demand for elections was accepted, so he ran the country for let's say a hundred days, and he did a good job. It was generally said that one of the things he did was to approve the purchase of a new plane, airplane, for the royal family, which Caramanlis, for budgetary reasons had refused to approve when he was Prime Minister.

Caramanlis, after the King agreed to give the mandate to Papandreou, left the country and went to sulk in Paris.

Q: Where he stayed until 1970?

OWENS: That's right. He came back to lead the conservative party, ERE's election in April of 1964, which Papandreou and his Center Union Party won with a true majority over 50% of the vote.

Q: What was the Embassy impression of Labouisse and the reflections you get of George Papandreou, because he became a very important figure in later events?

OWENS: I think there was a skepticism about him. He had, I would say, before, even more than Ambassador Labouisse, the No. 2, Tapley Bennett viewed Papandreou with great skepticism. I do think that the management of the Embassy accepted too literally the evaluations which were coming from the upper levels of the conservative party, the evaluations of the political scene. I think they accepted the concept of Papandreou as being an excellent speaker, a great orator, but of no substance, a blowhard as a number of them referred to him. And it was clear to those of us who were doing the reporting that people at the top in the Embassy, and I don't mean only the Ambassador, were very strongly hoping that the conservatives would be returned, and had difficulty adjusting to the idea that the opposition was going to win, and did win. We even found that our reports which began to give a more favorable impression of the Center Union, or the likelihood that the opposition would win tended to be toned down to make it less likely than we, the drafting officers thought probable.

Q: Greece is an interesting example. I served there as Consul General from '70 to '74. At that time, I felt that there was really a pernicious influence, and that was of the US military, particularly the Greek Americans who were in the US military, and of the CIA, of having a very close to the conservative military side of things. Did you find that this was so?

OWENS: It was certainly very true of the military, and I guess I developed certain prejudices about the military, and the military attachés, and the military aid programs from those years, because I saw the ease with which, I felt, they were taken over, our military people, were taken over by the military brass in Greece. The CIA, it was a more complex situation, because, as you mentioned, they were mostly Greek Americans, some of them were conservative, which is more of an agency bias, you might say, but some of them were not. I did feel that it was unhealthy the degree to which the CIA officers were involved in the Greek scene. We used to joke among ourselves, in the political section, that the only difference between us was that we didn't pay for our information. We did have representational allowance and we could take Greek politicians to lunch, and our standing at the time in Greek society was such that it was prestigious to be invited by an American Embassy officer to lunch and to be seen. So we did have some resources. But I used to feel uncomfortable about the fact that my job was, when I went to the Embassy in

Athens, to cover domestic political affairs. A colleague of mine, John Day at the time, handled the foreign affairs, Cyprus, relations with Turkey. So I tried to delve as deeply as possible into Greek domestic politics. But I was about to say that going to parliament watching the session at night, which I did most evenings, because usually they would start about six, right after the Embassy closed, and I would go down there and spend a couple of hours, particularly at the more interesting times, as they did become during the time I was there.

Q: It seemed to be in later days, when the Embassies were known as aid Embassies, and other ones were known as oil agents, Embassies, this one was known as a CIA Embassy.

OWENS: I could see that. Now, I do think that the State Department made a very wise decision to develop a number of Greek speakers that it did. That happened after my time. We were still in a vast minority. Also, I would say at that time, that it was not something the most ambitious officers would have sought, to study Greek, and go to Greece. Later on, I think, it did become much more the case. But, again I think, I could say that I am an ethnic American myself, I don't believe it is a very wise policy, perhaps it is a reactionary viewpoint, to go back to your country of origin to work...

Q: It doesn't work too well, there's a dynamic going on there that's not good. We've done this with Ambassadors, we continue to do this for domestic reasons and personal feelings.

OWENS: It seems so natural to Americans. "Oh, you were born in Italy. Well, you should go as an Ambassador to Italy." It seems so natural.

Q: It's considered sort of an insult to the other country. Here's somebody who's left, and then chooses to come back, and there's a tendency to feel they are lording it over the natives. It doesn't work too well. But also there is a tendency to get absorbed by the more conservative, the wealthier people.

OWENS: That's right. And there's a conflict of loyalties there. If you've been raised, let's say, you're Greek, and you're going to Greek Sunday school, and been inculcated with Greek culture, and so you have deep feelings toward your country. Whereas those of us who were not of that nationality were able to view it a little more dispassionately, and to love Greece, but at the same time realize that we were there as representatives of the American government, and our primary, only loyalty, really, was to the United States government.

Q: What was your impression of the role of the Greek press?

OWENS: Very irresponsible. In those days, I used to think of the American press, and to some extent the British press, as being models. I'm not so sure today, but certainly in comparison with the Greek press, with its sensationalism, the lack of reliance on fact, and appealing to some of the worst emotions. And that was one of the criticisms of George

Papandreou, that he, and as it was to be even more so I think, of his son, Andreas Papandreou, that it played on the worst emotions of the Greeks. Their nationalistic passions, rather than the more long term constructive values. And I think George Papandreou was not above playing that card from time to time himself, and under the influenced of his son. But that gets us into a whole different period of Greek history.

Q: We're talking about when Papandreou was there. Did you feel that there was more of a division in Greek political life, was this causing more of a polarization?

OWENS: Yes, I would have to say so. I should mention, I've written a chapter for a book on modern Greece, I think it was called: "PASOK in Power."

Q: PASOK being the party of...

OWENS: That was the party of Andreas Papandreou. But I did a psychological study of Andreas Papandreou for that book. The reason I mention that is one of my main themes was the entrance of Andreas Papandreou in the spring of 1964 in Greek political life, upped the stakes and intensified the polarization, which had always existed to some degree in Greek political life, in fact which had existed very strongly back in the '30s and '40s and earlier periods, but which had been somewhat dormant during the '50s and '60s. I think Andreas upped the stakes and made it either us or them. It turned it into a zero sum game, so that eventually, I think that by working that issue, he convinced the power structure that it was not possible for Greece to endure an eventual Andreas Papandreou government. George Papandreou always was felt as, well, many consider him superficial, but nevertheless there was a feeling that he was a man of ultimate moderation, that he was a politician of the old stripe, wanted to stay in power, and therefore he was not going to do extremely irresponsible things to upset the applecart.

Q: Now, here was Andreas Papandreou who'd been an American citizen, taught in American schools, etc...served in the American navy. We're trying to go back to the time. You were there when he turned into a Greek again.

OWENS: Yes. Exactly. I knew him well. He lived down the street. I lived on Odos Gizy out in Palio Psychiko, and he lived also on that street. Our children played together. I met him through Monty Stearns when I was still in Thessaloniki because Constantine Caramanlis, the leader of the conservative party, had brought him back in 1959, I believe, to head an economic research center, if I remember well. I think it was to Caramanlis's credit that he recognized the need for a scientific approach to improving the Greek economy, that he brought back the son of the opposition leader, George Papandreou. He brought back Andreas Papandreou. Of course, as you mentioned, Andreas, at that time, had a Ph.D. from Harvard, had served in the US Navy, had become a US citizen, taught at Northwestern University, and later became chairman of the Economics Department at Berkeley. No one knew that he might harbor any political ambitions, and I got to know him quite well when I took up the contact that Monty had had when I came down in '62. We became, I thought, rather good friends. He was an utterly charming man who

seemingly understood the American political scene, and also had a scepticism about Greek politics, and indicated that he would not get into it. However, when the situation changed, he didn't enter into the 1963 elections. He was smart enough, although his father had tried to persuade him to join the party, he declined to keep his position. However, after George Papandreou won a plurality, he decided to throw his hat in the ring in 1964. Of course, it was a sure thing because he ran in his father's old constituency of Patras and was elected overwhelmingly to the seat. So he became a member of Parliament, was immediately appointed to a senior position in his father's cabinet. I would say that's when the situation changed.

Q: You know later, in a way, he was the catalyst that caused the April 22, 1967 coup?

OWENS: I would have used that precise word.

Q: But, here was somebody who was basically, from what you're describing, only a couple of years before, a rather benign, disinterested observer. What happened? Again, we're trying to go back to the perspective of how you're perceiving this.

OWENS: In looking back, I think some of us, certainly I began to examine more closely his behavior in the United States, and one noticed that in 1948, rather than supporting Harry S. Truman, he supported Henry Wallace, which suggested a not just liberal politician.

Q: Henry Wallace was the...?

OWENS: Henry Wallace was the so-called progressive party who was identified, although not a communist himself, was considered...Papandreou had supported Henry Wallace, a leader of the then progressive party, who was against the Marshall Plan, aid to Greece and Turkey. Although later Andreas returned to the more traditional democratic fold and supported Adlai Stevenson in ‘52 and ‘56 against Dwight Eisenhower, and took an active part in those campaigns. But I think that Andreas's wife, Margaret, in her book which I believe is titled "Democracy at Gun Point," describes the fact that Andreas did have a dual personality. On one side, he was a dispassionate American scholar, and on the other hand he became a very emotional Greek, completely subjective, and a believer in the Greek reality. So, there was this war within him, and Andreas, as I mentioned, I'd been personally reasonably close to him, as had a number of other members of the Embassy staff, and shortly after he became a member of his father's government, he began to distance himself from us, so that by the summer of ‘64, he took an extreme position towards the then head of USIA, a gentleman by the name of Vincent Joyce, and claimed that Vince Joyce, when he had called on him in connection with the American broadcasting in Greece, had pounded on his table and said: "You will do certain things." All of which, we on the Embassy staff, thought to be very dubious. Joyce was in the United States at the time when these charges came out, but although the government of George Papandreou never did declare Vince Joyce persona non grata, they did indicate to us that...the Foreign Minister of the time told us that Vincent Joyce would not be

welcome back in Greece. He also had a Turkish wife, and the Cyprus question had erupted again. To make a long story short, he left Greece shortly thereafter, assigned to another post. This was Andreas's first ... He had been accused in the Greek press of being too pro-American. That was the accusations of his enemies, and I mean his enemies not just on the right, but his enemies within his father's party, the Center Union, as it was called at the time.

Q: Was this the time when we began to be concerned about him?

OWENS: Yes, beginning in 1964, that's correct. And not only the United States, but the power forces of Greece, by that I mean the army, the throne, the crown. Greek businessmen began to note that Andreas, more than others, tended to go for broke.

Q: He was very un-Greek, in a way, wasn't he? Not the compromising, maneuvering...

OWENS: That's right. He showed a certain stridency, inflexibility, rigidity, and soon divided his father's own party, and we soon learned there was a split which they tried to paper over between father and son. It's one of the modern traumas of Greek life, the split between George and Andreas Papandreou. Because the father felt that Andreas was beginning to undermine his government, and so by the time an actual split in the party did come in the summer of 1965, a large group of the party bolted from George Papandreou.

Q: How were you able to cover this? Here you were dealing with the opposition. George Papandreou who was trying to run backwards to keep away from the Americans.

OWENS: When you say "deal with the opposition", this was actually the government.

Q: Not the opposition, but the split in the ruling party.

OWENS: Well, the Greek were quite willing to talk with us. I knew, for example, George Papandreou's private secretary, a man, and we became very good friends. He disliked Andreas. And then, other members of the government disliked Andreas, so it was easy to get the anti-Andreas line, from within the party, of course. Then there was the opposition, the former conservative party, but they were outside the loop, you might say. Then, we were easily able to get the Andreas Papandreou line, not from him personally. He tended to avoid identification with the Americans. As I say, I think this is one of the factors that triggered this, the accusation that he was too closely identified, that he was more an American than a Greek. We felt, initially, that this was just an effort on his part to disprove that, but it turned out to be much deeper than that.

Q: What was the feeling about the communist party during this period and what was its influence?

OWENS: Well, the communist party was considered an agent of Moscow, and there was always the extreme right wing fear that there was a link between Andreas and the

communists, which was very nebulous. I mentioned earlier that we began to look at Andreas's background, earlier back, when we were trying to understand the reason for his behavior. He had been, as a young law student in Athens before World War II, very active in the campaign against the then dictator Metaxas, at one time, was arrested by the agents of the dictatorship, and reportedly tortured, and informed on a number of his colleagues. It was shortly after that that his father, because of the impending crisis in Europe and then the German invasion, wanted to send him to the United States to continue his education, as many other prominent Greeks did. They sent their children to the United States, particularly their sons for education to keep them out of the war. Andreas was the most prominent among the group that did return to Greece in the '50s and early '60s who had established, became professors, for instance in American universities.

Q: Well, what about the communists? Did we have any dealings with them at the time?

OWENS: We did not. Our policy was to, had been the policy all the time that I had been in Greece and remained that way for a long time, not to have any dealings with the communist party, not to treat them as a legitimate opposition party, and so they were never invited, we were discouraged from having any social contact with them. The only things we would get would be the CIA reports of third party, you would say, that various communist figures said this or that. So that was our knowledge, really of the communist party, that, plus reading the AVGI, which was the communist mouthpiece. But in a sense, that was pretty much left to the agency to follow. We dealt with what was considered the legitimate political parties.

Q: There might be an official feeling, but within the Embassy, within let's say the political section, what was the feeling? Where were the Greek communists. Some of the communist parties are very much a tool of the Soviets and other ones have a real root within their own country?

OWENS: Yes. You have to remember, in the '60s, most of the communist parties of Europe were still under the control of Moscow. The Euro-communist was something that, at least in my experience, didn't really appear until the late '60s or early '70s.

Q: The Italians were always a little bit...

OWENS: The Italians, that is true, and I had never closely followed politics in Italy, but I did know that, whereas as I think in France, they were closely...

Q: ...marching to the exact drumbeat of the...

OWENS: That's right. And I think that was the feeling about the Greek communists. Obviously there were factions within the party, and there were tensions with Moscow, but since we weren't able to follow them, really weren't very aware of those.

Q: Could we talk a bit about the Embassy, because I think the Embassy in Greece has always been a place, Greek politics being such I think they grab people in, and you become partisan one way or the other. Could you talk a bit about some of the personalities within this and how they played, because you were in an interesting position?

OWENS: I know all of the gossip of the time.

Q: Let's talk about it.

OWENS: Alright. You mentioned the attitude of the leadership, the Embassy management I should say towards the political scene. I think we, at the working level, if I may use that term, the middle level reporting officers, felt that our leadership, our Ambassador, the DCM, and even the political Counselor who was H. Daniel Brewster at that time, were much more sympathetic towards the then government in power of Caramanlis, and it got to the point that, when we were reporting on the elections and how things were going, we were constantly doing sort of wrapups of, "Well, this week it seems that ..." Greece at that time did not have opinion polls at least not reliable ones. You really had to go out and do your soundings and follow the press, and follow the debates in Parliament, and we would say: "It looks as though Papandreou has momentum." And so you would do a piece, and reporting that, and it might pass through the political counselor, then it would get to the DCM and he would say..."Well, let's say Papandreou used the `pie in the sky' approach..." And I remember this has stuck in my mind, "seems to be gaining some adherence." "Gee, this isn't an expression I would use." "Well, put that in." Then he'd go through the despatch or telegram and soften the criticism of the government and weaken any suggestion that maybe there were legitimate grievances that Papandreou was (exploiting). So, it was clear, and one of the things that always struck me, particularly on the social level, the Ambassador and the DCM were, so to speak, hobnobbing with the wealthy families in the society who, and almost always, not completely, but usually, were conservative and supported the Caramanlis government, which later became the opposition. Now I say there were some exceptions because some of the liberal families which supported the Center Union party also were quite monied, but they were the exceptions. Generally, the upper income businessmen, executives, top professionals, not all, but generally, also supported the conservatives. These were people who spoke English fluently, who did have the resources to entertain in their homes. Most, and this was interesting, most of the Center Union people tended to be much more likely to have come from humbler origin, either blue collar or rural, and who felt more comfortable with us on the lower level of the Embassy hierarchy as well, since we were not living in the grand houses that Embassy management was living in. But, the Ambassador, I think, felt quite, he became quite...

Q: This was Labouisse?

OWENS: Labouisse. I'm talking now about the period '63 to '65. Henry Labouisse became quite friendly with Caramanlis. He did become quite friendly with one opposition

leader who was not really of the left, and this was Spiros Markezinis, who led the small Progressive Party. And I remember now that we would all get together on election night, and follow the returns, usually at one of our houses, and the Ambassador would come, the Chief of Station would come, the DCM. I remember that Markezinis, when it became clear that night, not only did his party suffer badly that night, but he himself was not going to be reelected, that a wife of one of the officials present made a disparaging remark about Markezinis and the Ambassador stormed out furious. He was just angry that anyone would criticize his good friend. So, I think that there became a sense of personal involvement, which was as important as any ideological involvement. These were their friends, and they did not like to see them defeated.

Q: What about directions from Washington? We're talking about the desk which you later moved to and during this period before George Papandreou came into power? What was your feeling about the desk? You were in the Near-Eastern bureau at the time?

OWENS: We were in the Near Eastern bureau, and it was sort of the stepchild of the Near Eastern bureau. There was very little interest in Greece. Greece had had a certain sex appeal simply because it had been in the front lines of the struggles against communism back in the ‘40s. That was no longer the case. The US was gradually withdrawing its heavy AID package to Greece. We were still continuing military assistance, but it was felt that Greece had reached the take-off point, and like Taiwan, I guess Singapore at the time, it was felt that these were emerging countries that had passed the development stage.

Q: The take-off point was very much an In thing with Walter Rostow, wasn't it?

OWENS: That's right. Those were the buzz words of the early 1960s, and so that we no longer needed the paternal, the kind of direct economic grant aid that had characterized earlier periods. Greece was not in the forefront of Washington policy thinkers.

Q: So, really, the dynamics were coming, on policy, what there was, was really from the Embassy?

OWENS: Yes, you see, the desk pretty much monitored it, and the desk officers were usually middle level to lower senior level people, so you had much more... The dynamic was right at the Embassy itself, and so the Embassy pretty much set the policy. It was a case also where the State Department was together with the Agency, was running things, because you didn't have a great deal of White House interest, at that time.

Q: Also, I take it that Greece was not looked upon as an absolutely critical ally in a military sense, except for the fact that we had some bases that we wanted to keep.

OWENS: The bases were important, and it was important for the cohesiveness of the NATO alliance. But obviously Turkey always loomed a little larger in our calculation because of its much larger population and hence more significant defense capability. So, I think it was three times larger than that of Greece, as I recall.

Q: I know you've been doing some studies about how the Foreign Service should operate right now in 1992. But you, the dynamic, you're reporting about the more senior officers being sort of co-opted more into the conservative society because they speak English, and the junior officers were more likely to be language officers, being, you might say, more skeptical of conservative forces. This is not at all unique within Embassies, this is one that often goes on, isn't it?

OWENS: Oh yes, I think that's the case. I suspect that it pervades other aspects of American life. Probably your newspaper publisher is going to be more likely to be a golf playing friend of the big corporate executives, whereas the more junior journalist is going to be dealing with the radical... So it's quite a natural division of labor. In a sense, we were left the crumbs from the table, and they were generally the opposition. If we reported on the government in power during the pre-Center Union days, it was usually sort of a second hand from what the political counselor, or the Deputy Chief of Mission would come back from a dinner, and tell us.

Q: As a practical measure, from what you're saying, Washington really did not have a firm policy. This later became very much a point in a conspiracy theory of what we did later on. It sounds as though we're reporting, yes, but we're reporting almost to a vacuum back in Washington.

OWENS: Relatively little interest back in Washington. Greece had to be monitored because it was considered a volatile society, and since it was a member of NATO, something you had to keep your eye on, but it was not by any means on the front burner. It was not causing major problems until 1965, so that I would say for the first five years of my tour there, Greece was relatively tranquil. The State Department had pretty much its own way, and the Embassy in particular set pretty much the policy, essentially not to rock the boat.

Q: Also the Greek-American community was not as mobilized as it became really after 1970 on, in the United States, and its great power in Congress. You didn't feel it as much, did you?

OWENS: Absolutely. We met the AHEPA officials when they came out, but they were not a major focus of the Embassy. In other words, the Ambassador knew that he had to entertain them when the AHEPA, the American Hellenic Society in the United States came. Their leaders were of course given proper respect, but they were not a major force because they were not making themselves felt politically in the United States, to the extent they did later.

Q: There were no particular issue to galvanize them.

OWENS: Many Greeks continue to be split on the Greek political scene, although the Greek-American has been more partial, in general, towards the conservative government, and less partial towards the Papandreou, father and son.

Q: Do we talk now of the after '65 development, the development after the split? What was the George Papandreou party called?

OWENS: It was called the Enosis Kentro, which in English translates Center Union. The two parties were the ERE party of then Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, the successor to Caramanlis, because Caramanlis had sulked in Paris, and George Papandreou led Enosis Kentro. We want to talk also about the royal family and their role in this.

Today is Bastille day, July 14, 1992. This is the second interview with John Owens.

Q: As we mentioned at the end of the last tape, there are two things that we ought to talk about. One is the political events of 1965 and the other is the role of the monarchy. Which would you like to tackle first?

OWENS: I think you can intertwine them, because it was in '65 that the government of George Papandreou was forced out of office. Essentially it was the King who forced him out.

Q: This would have been ... Which king was this?

OWENS: Constantine. Constantine, was still very much influenced by his mother, Frederika who was the widow of the late King Paul who had died in 1964.

Q: What was the political section's analysis when the King died and the ascent of the new king Constantine who was still relatively young.

OWENS: I think it had been felt that he had been somewhat of a playboy, and he had never buckled down to serious issues, had not finished the university, was most known for his touring around town in a convertible and always with attractive women. However, he settled down after he ascended the throne. I think he was very devoted to his father and was deeply shocked by his death. As often happens in the Embassies, the royal family, while not off limits to those of us in the political section, was pretty much the province of the Ambassador and DCM, certainly not lower than DCM, and perhaps the Chief of Station. But whereas we felt very comfortable with the political figures of the day with whom we had excellent contacts, our knowledge of the royal family was filtered through what we got from the top and what our political contacts told us about the royal family. It was clear that the royal family was displeased with George Papandreou, not so much with George as by the antics of his son, Andreas.

The King was informed by the Minister of Defense, Garoufalias was his name, that there seemed to be a secret organization called "Aspida" within the Greek military, and that it

seemed to be loyal only to Andreas Papandreou. That it was a radical, or at least seemingly socialistic type of organization, made up apparently of only a few officers. Nevertheless, it was very disturbing to the royal family which considered itself to have a special relationship with the armed forces, and any tampering with the armed forces would be viewed with great alarm by the monarchy. So, in the summer of 1965, the King called for several private meetings between the King and George Papandreou. Papandreou in the summer of 1965 announced that he was resigning. Then the King attempted to establish a new government. Of course the Center Union had a majority in the Parliament, so there was no way he could get members of the conservative ERE party to form a government, since it wouldn't have enough seats, even if it combined with the communist party, which it would not do in any case.

So what happened was that efforts were made to obtain defectors from the Center Union. It was known that there was a large group within the Center Union which was dissatisfied with the policies of George Papandreou. Again, not so much with George Papandreou as with Andreas, and this was particularly the Minister of Finance, Constantinos Mitsotakis, who considered himself the heir apparent to George Papandreou, and who had been groomed as the next successor, the next Prime Minister, until Andreas entered the picture with his entry into Greek politics, in 1964. So that made Mitsotakis uncertain about his own future. He and Andreas, during ‘64 and ‘65 indulged in a rather public feud as to the future leadership of the party.

In any event, three efforts were made to form a government during the summer of 1965, first by Athanassiadis Novas, who had been speaker of the government and also a member of George Papandreou's party. Then another effort, later in the summer by Elias Tsirimokos, who had been a minister also and in Papandreou's party, and then finally by Stephen Stephanopoulos who was the Vice Premier, the Deputy Prime Minister, and he succeeded in forming a government based... There were some thirty-odd defectors, as they were called from the Center Union party, who formed a government with the support of the conservative ERE party which gave them a bare majority. I think there were 300 seats in the Parliament in those days, and the ERE party had approximately 120. So they were able to get a bare majority of 151, I think. 151 or 152. But the conservative government deputies did not actively participate in the government. So you had a government composed of the thirty-odd defectors of the Center Union and such people as Stephanopoulos, Mitsotakis, Tsirimokos, etc. Of course, Mitsotakis is today the Prime Minister.

It was said at the time that these people who had defected would never be accepted again by any party, that they would be permanently branded with the label of traitor because they had left Papandreou. But they were able to cloak under the guise, legitimate or not, of national salvation, that the country was in a terrible state. Although many of the people who participated in that government are deceased by now, are retired from politics, Mitsotakis is still very much in the picture. During that period of ‘65, it was a very exciting period for those of us in the Embassy, certainly for me covering the Greek domestic political scene, because Papandreou was determined that the new government

would not succeed, so each time that they would have a vote of confidence on these three successive tries over those months...in fact I can't recall what month it was finally voted in, I think it was late September. Each time Papandreou would have his followers outside the Parliament building in downtown Athens, chanting for Papandreou, denouncing the defectors as traitors, putting a lot of pressure on them. There were a number of violent street demonstrations during that time. The political tempers really heated up. I remember going to one rally which got out of hand and the police fired tear gas and I got a whiff of it, which I didn't like very much. So it was an interesting period, we would go back to the Embassy at night, and type up the cables, even if no one was paying much attention in Washington, it was very exciting for us.

Q: Wasn't there a feeling in the Embassy that this might move into civil insurrection?

OWENS: Yes, I think even dictatorship. We knew that the military was uneasy about the course of events. They felt that you were really in unchartered waters now. The king had forced a government out, and created a government that was not really a popularly elected government, even though these people had all on their own been elected, but under the Papandreou banner. Andreas Papandreou, of course, who was never reluctant to indulge in extreme rhetoric went even further and talked about the sinister forces, in which he would include the United States, the crown, the army, and far beyond what his own father wanted. In fact I remember that after the coup, Andreas Papandreou tells in his own book, that when he first saw his father, after they had both been arrested by the Junta, a couple of days after the coup d'etat, that the father accused him, "You brought this on us by your antics, by your extreme ways."

Q: Had we gotten any information/warning from the military, or the CIA, as it came to you about Andreas and his dealings with Aspida?

OWENS: Actually, very little. Well Aspida was investigated even during the time of the Stephanopoulos government which ruled throughout the rest of ‘65, and then throughout ‘66, but nothing conclusive ever came out of it. Even the Junta was unable to really prove these charges. There was something, and this is only a surmise on my part, that it was a loose association of like-minded, shall we say, progressive officers who looked to Andreas Papandreou for a new Greece, more modern type of government. So, it seemed to have been much to do about nothing. But beyond the specifics of Aspida, the king and the conservative establishment generally were disturbed by Andreas. George Papandreou after all was from old cut of typical politicians. Many conservative Greeks thought he was all talk and no action, a blowhard. He was an excellent orator and a very charming person, but certainly one who was not going to endanger the republic, the Kingdom I should say. Andreas Papandreou, though, with his American ways and his militancy which he had developed during the course of being in the civil rights movement and also he supported even within the American political spectrum, was far to the left, he supported Henry Wallace rather than Harry Truman in ‘48, which suggested that he was quite far to the left.

Q: Looking at the King again, realizing that this was not your contact, but in your reporting, what were you getting from the Ambassador and the DCM, as far as the King and his relations with his mother, on the political side?

OWENS: Well, I think two things. Certainly that the mother was very influential, that she paid a great deal of attention to Greek politics, probably too much, and that the King was somewhat unsure of himself, but had become convinced that the Papandreou were a threat, if not directly to the monarchy, certainly to the Greek conservative traditional establishment, let us say. Andreas, if he were to come to power, because his popularity increased dramatically after this, and there was a feeling that if elections were held that Andreas might...although it would still be led by his father, that the father might step down or in any case might die since he was I think at the time ‘77 or ‘78 when he was forced out. There was a general feeling that they could live with George Papandreou and with the rather traditionalist, if slightly more liberal members of the Center Union who were in the George Papandreou government. They could not live with an Andreas Papandreou type of government. I think this is the most important fact, that Andreas represented forces and ideas, possibilities, which the powers that be generally felt that they could not live with. But the monarchy itself...from the Ambassador, first it was Henry Labouisse, then later Phillips Talbots, were getting indications from their meetings with the royal family...and also we did have contacts further down the scale. Norb Anschutz, the deputy chief of mission, used to meet with Major Arnaoutis who was the Chef de Cabinet of the King, then a young army officer, who was a good contact, and Norb probably talked to you about that. So, then I think that Norb had a good feel for...

Q: Norbert Anschutz was the DCM and came there...

OWENS: In ‘64, I would say end of ‘64.

Q: You had mentioned Tapley Bennett, that he took a more conservative line. How about with Anschutz, because this was your channel, we're talking about the...

OWENS: That's right. Anschutz was completely open and displayed no biases, we felt in the political section, he was very open and wanted to let the chips fall where they may.

Q: You felt that it was more open?

OWENS: Definitely. He was a very popular DCM, and I certainly admired him. I felt that he had an excellent sense of judgment, and wanted us simply to get the facts, unpleasant and unpalatable as they might be.

Q: You were in Athens into '66? How long were you there?

OWENS: I was there four years, and I'd been two years earlier in Thessaloniki. So I spent a total of 6 years. I was a Deputy Principal Officer up at Thessaloniki and Political Officer.

Q: When did you leave Athens?

OWENS: In July, August of '66.

Q: How did you see things shaking out?

OWENS: I thought they looked very ominous. I did do a paper and I think it was for Elizabeth Bracken. You mentioned Elizabeth Brown, so they've had two women Political Counselors in Athens. I had forgotten that. Anyway, Elizabeth Bracken succeeded Alfred Vigderman who had succeeded Dan Brewster as Political Counselor. I did a paper saying that my contacts...I had got to know a General Saicellariou who was Chief of Staff of the Army. I'd known him over the years because he had been in Thessaloniki while I was there, and he had been Deputy Commander of the 3rd Army. He was speaking rather ominously that he was concerned over the way things were going. My own feeling, and I think it was shared by many in the Embassy, was that there was a danger of a coup, but that it would come from the Generals. This was a belief I had...

Q: This was the standard, everything was predicated on this.

OWENS: That's right. That it would come from the very top of the army and not from the Colonel level which threw everyone off, of course, the agency... I then proceeded, I might say, to the desk, and I was on the desk at the time of the coup.

Q: You were on the desk from '67 to...

OWENS: No, from late '66.

Q: So, when you got to the desk, how did you see the situation shaping up?

OWENS: Very unstable. We were worried about what was going to happen. And indeed, the Stephanopoulos government finally fell. I believe it was in December '66, at which time it was replaced by a minority government headed by Panayiotis Kanellopoulos who had been the Deputy to Caramanlis and who had led the ERE party while Caramanlis sat in Paris. Caramanlis was still in self-imposed exile. And the King promised to take the country to elections, which as you know were scheduled within a month from the time the coup occurred.

Q: The coup was on April 22nd, 1967.

OWENS: That's right.

Q: It was emblazoned all over the hills and everything else.

OWENS: Oh, was it?

Q: Yes.

OWENS: It was April 21st for us, because Greece being six hours ahead. Let's see, that was April. 6 or 7 hours ahead. We got the word at about 8:30, 9 o'clock at night. I remember rushing back.

Q: Before we get to that...You had this peculiar thing of Greece being plunked down to the Near-East within the Washington bureaucracy. It was part of the Near-Eastern Bureau at that time and we've alluded to this before.

OWENS: We were outside the mainstream.

Q: Being in the Near-Eastern Bureau, you were sort of the unruly stepchild?

OWENS: That's correct. I would say that earlier when I came to the desk, it was then the Greek Country Directorate. However, the year before and for the previous many years, it had been an office called the Greece, Turkey, and Iran, the GTI, which also included Cyprus. We tended to be grouped then by a DAS who was in charge...

Q: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State?

OWENS: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State who was Stuart Rockwell, who had served in Iran, and I think also as Ambassador to Morocco. He knew the Islamic world quite well. He was less familiar with Greece, but was nevertheless a very astute individual. We were not in the mainstream.

Q: When you were talking, I assume when you were reporting on this, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you had interesting stories to tell, but there was no essential rapport there.

OWENS: That's right, and at the big staff meetings, the attention given Greece was minimal. Director H. Daniel Brewster generally attended, but sometimes it fell to me. I handled the political side. Milnar Dunn handled the economic side. When I went there, I noticed people would listen patiently and then ask few questions. The word was from Dunn to be brief, because they weren't terribly interested. Now, once, later, when the coup did occur, then interest suddenly peaked. It was quite intense. So you're absolutely correct. We were out of the mainstream and not of great interest to the Near-Eastern Bureau which was headed by Luke Battle, Lucius Battle who was the Assistant Secretary of State. They did what was necessary. If a prominent Greek came to town, the Foreign Minister, they would trot out and attend the luncheon that the Greeks would give. We would usually be able to get the Greek Foreign Minister. I remember going to see the Deputy Secretary who was called the Under Secretary, I think. Nicholas Katzenbach, with the then Foreign Minister. But generally there was minimal interest, a very limited interest in Greece in those days.

Q: You were looking at this coldly from Washington, were you not, with some distance? What was the feeling about... OK, if Andreas Papandreou, under the auspices of his father George, wins the elections, the PASOK, so what?

OWENS: Well, I thought that Andreas was taking an increasingly anti-American line. I did feel it would be inimical, disadvantageous to American interests if Andreas Papandreou were elected. Yes, I did, looking at it coldly from the point of view of US interests. US bases, Greek participation in NATO.

Q: Did you think really this would be at issue. In a way, Greece was in NATO with its bases for one reason and one alone really, and that was for Greek interests to balance off Turkey. If Greece opted out, we just moved in greater numbers to Turkey.

OWENS: Well, I think there were a couple of factors there, through. I agree it was definitely in Greece's interest to be in NATO, and later to be in the EEC. But Andreas, as I considered him a somewhat irresponsible leader, was certainly not beyond doing a disservice to Greek interests as well. I think states often do things that are opposed to their long term interests to satisfy the passions of the moment. But actually, the reason was a little deeper than that. It was the feeling that the Greek democracy was of some fragility and that it would probably not hold together if Andreas came to power, that maybe the right wing might move in a way as we talked earlier of a General's coup, that somehow autocratic forces would come, that you would have instability, and possibly a rightist takeover. So, it was not only the thought that if Andreas came into power, he would take Greece out of NATO. It was clear that the power forces of Greece would not permit that. That before he would succeed, he would probably be overthrown. So we saw that this was leading probably to chaos. So we hoped, if not a conservative moderate victory, at least a stalemate, so that Andreas would not be in power and checked. But I certainly felt that we should not support any extra-legal activities.

Q: Were there any within the State Department who were advocating doing this? This was after the Kennedy administration, but still the Johnson which was a ...

OWENS: At the State Department, no one advocated it, but some went along with it. I think they were persuaded that the ends justified the means. I don't think there was a lot of enthusiasm, but the agency people could be persuasive.

Q: How about the military, how did they feel?

OWENS: They were not involved, to the best of my knowledge.

Q: As a practical measure, I'm sure, knowing how the agency worked in those days, that they would have had a solid number of Greek politicians on the payroll.

OWENS: Yes, that was clear. I felt that all during the time I was there. We used to joke, and I'm sure it was said at other U.S. missions, that they paid for what we were getting free. But somehow, the fact that it would come in as from a confidential source, and you as political officer might get it directly, say from the Prime Minister's secretary or from a leading member of a party, didn't seem to have quite the same mystical appeal that the agency reports would from undisclosed sources.

Q: It's pernicious. I had the same thing when I was in Athens later. How did the coup impact then, what was the reaction as you were seeing it from the Embassy and from other sources?

OWENS: Well, I did a paper about fifteen years ago on the coup and on the perspective of what happened in Washington. I sent it to the Department about five years ago for clearance and it recently came back. Most of the juicy parts, including the exchange of cables with the Embassy during the first days, and so on, were all deleted. Much of this as you know is still classified.

Q: This is an unclassified interview, but what you can say...

OWENS: Well, I would say that the impact was one of shock. I remember being called down to the Op Center. Dan Brewster and I were both called down. I think Stuart Rockwell came in. Later on Luke Battle came wearing a black tie. He had been at a dinner party. So, we had gotten a curt message from the Ambassador saying that he had been unable to get to the Embassy and that there were troops in the street, etc. Later on during the night it was confirmed that there had been a coup. He had been able to talk with several people, several political leaders, and he learned that Kanellopoulos, the conservative prime minister had been arrested. That the colonels had gone out to see the King who had first told them to get lost, but eventually agreed to talk to them. It was a sleepless night in Athens, and also for us back in Washington. Then the question became one of what we should do, some of us advocating a tougher line, not giving any recognition to the junta, others saying the old justification of a dictatorship that at least we won't have Andreas, and things will get done efficiently. We decided on a cool, but correct policy. We drafted the message which was subsequently issued by the Secretary of State.

Q: Can we go back. "We decided on a cool, but correct policy." How was a policy decision like this...

OWENS: Well, it was hammered out. First we would meet, let us say, with Stuart Rockwell who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of our area. That is Dan Brewster, Milnar Dunn and myself, then we would be joined by the INR people, and then later we would go to further meetings with agency personnel. Then it would sort of leave that level and Rockwell would go up and discuss it with Battle, and it would go up to the Secretary. I think that State had initially the lead on this. Whatever State wanted to do at that time, in the early first couple of days probably would have prevailed.

Q: What was coming in from the Embassy? What role were they playing?

OWENS: Well, a tough role. Now, the King did seek our support, and there was some thought we could maybe even make a landing, bring in the marines to overthrow the junta. This was not formally proposed, but it would have been rejected out of hand. We had after all, the Dominican Republic fiasco, and it was the sense that we didn't want to go down that road again. But it certainly showed that the King initially, in fact throughout this time, disliked the junta, did not support it, and as you know, tried eventually to mount a counter-coup in December which failed, and he was forced to flee.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there might be a right wing coup by the generals?

OWENS: Yes, that had been feared. The King and our Ambassador had gone in before the coup, saying that he was hearing these rumblings. We wanted to make it clear that we would not support any kind of forcible overthrow of a democratic government. We weren't thinking that they would overthrow Kanellopoulos, the fear was that maybe just at the time of elections, or as soon as they saw the results, the right wing effort might be undertaken.

Q: Do you think our reaction might have been different, had this been generals rather than these sort of unknown colonels?

OWENS: You mean less strong?

Q: Less strong, yes.

OWENS: No, because I don't think it was that strong, from my own point of view. You know, our "cool, but correct" policy gradually mellowed. Once things were set in place, and it was clear that the junta was in power, then the pressures began to come from the military, and because we halted some shipments of military assistance which was going to go. And of course, the military were saying...

Q: You're talking about our military?

OWENS: Our military. US military shipments to the Greek government. The Department of Defense immediately took the line: "We're only hurting our friends if we do this, (take a tough line towards the junta) Greece will be weakened in NATO, who knows maybe Moscow might make points in Greece if we took a tough line..." The agency took that line too. Unfortunately, our leadership, I felt, was not strong in maintaining a demand for a tougher line. So, as often happens, State gradually caved. We agreed within a few weeks not to intercede with Litton Industries which was negotiating a major project, an agreement to construct a major project in the Peloponnese, Patras, I think. This was a coup for the Papadopoulos government because it showed that it was gaining respectability. And so gradually, the tough line eroded.

Now I left the desk by the fall. I was pretty disgusted. I felt that in any event, I'd spent seven years on Greece, either in Greece or... Well, really eight years, since I had spent a year studying the language. So I had involved eight years of my career in Greece and it was time to move on. But I was dissatisfied with... I felt, in those very early days, that we, even at the country directorate level, because of our knowledge, we were dealing with a situation where we knew Greece and most of our superiors did not. They were very dependent upon us. People acquired superficial expertise then very quickly in the months that followed. Suddenly there were a lot of instant Greek experts as interest in Greece intensified in the Congress as Papandreou supporters in the general American academic community, and to some extent in the Greek American community which began to get fired up and put pressure on Congress to do something, first of all about Andreas Papandreou, but also about the junta.

Q: Were you able to play the media off, at least as much as you could. This was very unpopular both in Congress and in the media. No matter what it is in the academic world, Greece and democracy go together, it is a Greek word? So this one hit close to home. Also within Europe too, you might say that the whole intellectual academic community and the media...

OWENS: Well, I thought it was a great opportunity lost. We would be on the side of the angels. The tough guys always seem to prevail in this kind of a situation. I went to a number of meetings... (end of side 1 of tape 2)
You didn't have to be particularly perceptive to realize that eventually the chickens would come home to roost and we would pay a price for this and that we would be blamed in Greece and I was thinking also, historically, blamed by the world if we supported the junta and therefore we should take a very tough line. They (the apologists for the junta) would answer, "well, the military and the agency have teamed up on this" and they would say: "well, all well and good" the implication was that an anti-junta line was rather Pollyanna-ish, that you're dealing in impractical idealistic terms, the point that Greece is a NATO ally, we need it, the Greeks have done it to themselves, it's not up to us to determine the justness of it, and it is in effect the government that's in power, and therefore we should go along with, work with it and we can influence them, supposedly, by working with them, that line... To me it was so clear that we would pay a price and that we had a chance. I feel that a great moment of opportunity was there, had we had strong leadership in the Department, I think it could have prevailed, because I think the top leadership, I mean the government leadership, the US government could have been persuaded to take a tougher line.

Q: You're talking...it sounds like the real decision making was the Department of State, the Pentagon, and the CIA.

OWENS: That's correct.

Q: And it wasn't the Johnson White House weighing in that particularly area.

OWENS: Not particularly. I certainly was not aware of that. There were Greek-Americans who were influential in the Johnson administration, but presumably some of them would have been against the coup as well. I think, generally, the Greek-American community was split, the majority disliking Andreas Papandreou, but with a minority supporting him. But in any case, the junta was not popular, particulary initially. So, I think the one thing that was anticipated, the Johnson administration would not support any enterprise which would involve military intervention. It was never tried, but I remember when this proposal came in, and I thought, "Hey, you know that's an interesting idea." It was shot down immediately by people at a much lower level saying that this would not fly, and we were told to draft a cable telling the Embassy to make sure that the King understands that there is no, repeat no possibility of military intervention, in case he was thinking of it.

Q: There was the experience of the British in 1944 getting caught between both sides.

OWENS: Yes, I'm not saying that there wasn't a valid intellectual argument for not doing that. But in any event, whether we might have done something less than military intervention but a much tougher line, it seems to me we would have protected our long term interest in Greece.

Q: I wonder if you could comment. It seems that there's two roles, there are different roles. One is, the State Department is supposed to look at the long term political implications. The military has a tendency to look at the very short term, and the CIA also tends to look at the short term. Was this your impression?

OWENS: Yes, I would say so. Their fear and perhaps a basic conservative bias on the part of the agency, and particularly the military. I think the dislike of Andreas and what he represented was much stronger there, inside the agency, and certainly among the military because they were getting this from an anti-Andreas line all the time from their counterparts in the Greek military. So, they considered it (the coup) unfortunate, but not that great a tragedy, and probably thought of it as the lesser of two evils that a right wing dictatorship took over.

Q: I arrived there in 1970 and there seemed by that time a rather close marriage with both our military officers, many of whom were of Greek extraction, and of the CIA, with the Papadopoulos regime. It was not a distant relationship. I'd say probably our Embassy was odd person out on that, in a way.

OWENS: That's right. But we had had, as I mentioned, we had excellent contact with the previous government, the Papandreou government, and also with the government of Stephanopoulos, because they had been the outs for so long that many of us had cultivated close relationships with their people, [and who were at the height of power when they were overthrown], whereas we didn't know the military at all. I had no military contacts, except this one general whom I knew, but that was unique.

Q: You just left Greek affairs, and the coup, and you went over to IO where you served from '68 to '69.

OWENS: That's correct.

Q: Tell me what you were doing there and some people involved.

OWENS: I was the senior staff assistant for the Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, who was at that time Joseph Sisco. Naturally, Joseph Sisco, being Joseph Sisco, had two staff assistants rather than just one. I was in that office for actually a year, almost precisely, yes. Pretty much as the chief paper shuffler, and making sure that the various branches of IO got their papers in correctly and on time to Joe Sisco and also to Arthur Goldberg who was our Ambassador to the UN at that time. It was an interesting year. Joe Sisco is not the easiest person to work for, but I found it interesting. I wouldn't have wanted to do it for more than a year. Joe Sisco is a very hard driving, very ambitious man. We never became close during the time we were there. Dave Popper was his deputy, whom I liked very much, later Ambassador to Cyprus, who was, quite in contrast to Joe, easy to work for, quite understanding.

Q: How did Sisco...what was his method of operation? I heard many Sisco stories. I was wondering whether you... He was very much the Washington operator.

OWENS: Yes. He was, as you know, a senior Foreign Service officer who had never served abroad. He had a rather autocratic style at early staff meetings, he was very hard driving and had an encyclopedic-type mind. Seldom smiled, drove the staff rather hard, but I thought, ran a crisp and efficient operation. He was very tough on bureaucrats, although he was a master bureaucrat himself. Actually, there are very few interesting stories that I can tell about Joe Sisco, except I was disillusioned my departure from the organization, because at the end of the year, after serving loyally, working ten, twelve hour days almost continuously during that time, he said one day to me the final week: "You know, we've got to have lunch and talk." So I said: "Fine, anytime it's convenient to you." So, finally the last day that I was to be there, he said: "OK, this is it, we're going out to lunch." And then he said: "Look, why don't we have lunch at my place instead of going out to a restaurant?" I said, "OK, fine." So we got over to his house in Westmoreland Hills, just outside the district, and it turns out that nothing's prepared and Joe began rummaging through the refrigerator and says: "Gee, I forgot to get anything," and finally he got a jar of peanut butter, and a couple of stale pieces of bread and then we sat down to have lunch, and after about fifteen minutes he said: "Gee, I promised my wife" (who as you may or may not know was a Vice President of Woodward & Lothrop's, a very successful career woman) "I promised her I'd take our dog to the vet." So, after a very brief lunch of peanut butter and bread, we went to the veterinarian. I waited outside while Joe took the dog in. That took about twenty minutes or so. So then we came back, and he said: "Well, we'd better get back to the office." That's probably the thing I remember most about my leaving the organization.

Q: Did you get any feel for Sisco and his relationship with Arthur Goldberg who was a political power up in the United Nations?

OWENS: Yes, I would say that Joe Sisco treated him with a degree of respect that he didn't accord most people. They seemed, at least on the surface, to have a pretty good relationship. As you say, Goldberg was a power in his own right. Although I was closely associated with him on a work basis, I never got to know the inner Joe Sisco, so I don't know. He never took me into his confidences. So, I never knew what he really thought of Goldberg, but he treated him with considerable respect and seemed to have an harmonious relationship.

Q: You went to Helsinki, didn't you, from '69 to '71.

OWENS: That's right. I opted for Finnish training, and from '68 to '69, I was in Finnish training, and then went as Political Counselor to Helsinki. The Ambassador had been Tyler Thompson, but by the time I arrived it was Val Peterson, former governor of Nebraska who had been in Eisenhower's cabinet. He was a very interesting and jovial politician whom I liked. I served there for two years. The government in power was a center party, primarily agriculturally based and the president was Urho Kekkonen. I served there two years and then went to Princeton for senior training.

Q: What were the American interests in Finland at the time?

OWENS: It was quite a contrast after serving in Greece, where we were so much in the picture and such a power behind the scenes. In Finland, you'd have to say that it was the Soviet Union that had considerable clout and was a power behind the scenes. It took some adjusting to realize that, although we were important symbolically for Finland, we didn't... Since Finland was not in NATO, Finland was a neutral country. It had a treaty of peace and friendship with the Soviet Union, and had to mind its p's and q's very much with the Soviets, their big neighbor to the south and east, so that it was an interesting experience to see the contrast. We were of course important for the Finns, not so much in trade, but as a kind of symbolic other force which served as a counterweight to the Soviets. The Finns themselves were not at all pro-Soviet, as one might expect, having had a number of wars with the Soviets, with Russia and later with the Soviet Union. Two times, they fought during the World War II period, a Winter War and then a Continuation of War which they lost, although I believe they were one defeated country during World War II which was not actually occupied. So, that was a great benefit to them. Although the Soviets did occupy a couple of bases, they did not occupy the country as a whole, and take over the government. In the years after the war Finland did a remarkable job of meeting the Soviet reparations requirements, which in term freed up the base areas that the Soviets occupied. So the Finns, in private, were extremely friendly and quite pro-American. It is interesting to note...I remember reading the statistics at the time, that of the numbers studying foreign languages, (other than Swedish which is not considered a

foreign language) that 85% studied English, another 5%, German, and 4%, French, and then less than about 1% studied Russian, which I think was an indication how people felt.

It was a rather uneventful tour. It gave me an inside into Scandinavian, specifically Finnish politics. It had none of the excitement of service in Greece. In fact, as I look back now, as we talk, I guess that the high point of my career was really serving as a junior officer in Greece.

Q: Well, I think that this is true for many of us. You take your peaks and lows where they come for the excitement level.

OWENS: Exactly.

Q: Did you get any flak from the Finns regarding the Vietnam War? The Swedes were adamant on this.

OWENS: Relatively little. As you probably know, I served subsequently in Sweden as political counselor, in Stockholm, so I was able later to make a contrast. No. In contrast to the Swedes who did not have a Soviet problem, the Finns had this problem of coping every day with the Soviet Union, trying to maintain their neutrality against Soviet pressure. Finland was not the rich country that Sweden was, to afford the kind of luxury of worrying about South Africa and Vietnam. We did have an occasional, listless type of demonstration outside the Embassy. It never got out of hand, never a major problem. And the Finns were very scrupulous at the United Nations, in sitting on their hands on every dispute between East and West. They would not vote with the Soviets. They generally abstained on East-West issues. They handled the Korean problem for example by not recognizing either regime when I was there. It was not until a Social Democratic government came in some years after I left that they eventually did recognize both Koreas. We had very little flak from the Vietnam War. I think most Finns wished us out of there primarily for our benefit and the world benefit of our being disengaged, but they were not critical of us, at least, not except from a pro forma basis. The Finnish diplomatic interest during that time was focused on convening a conference on security and cooperation in Europe, and that was something for which they pushed very hard, and which they eventually were to realize. The Foreign Minister, Ahti Karijalainen, was very keen on building up Helsinki as an international center. This was very important for them to make more legitimate their neutrality. They wanted to achieve the status of Geneva, or Vienna, for Helsinki, because they felt that their neutrality was...while they were firmly persuaded of it, committed to it, that the Soviets might not always respect it. They wanted to build up a kind of international acceptance of Finland's neutral role. I remember often presenting the Finnish case to our people in the European bureau. Although Finland was part of the European bureau, since it was not a part of NATO, it was really pretty much out of the center of action. My job was trying to persuade them to look benignly upon Finnish requests to enhance their neutrality. There wasn't a great deal of interest, particularly among people rather who took a very hard line and felt that anyone who

wasn't a hundred percent with us was against us. It was after I left Finnish, and the year of Senior Training at Princeton, that I became desk officer for Finland and Sweden.

Q: You were doing this from '72 and '74. What were the main issues you dealt with?

OWENS: Sweden was the main issue, again. It was during the period that we interrupted our relations with Sweden. We didn't actually break off relations with Sweden. In '72, during December 1972, the B-52s bombed Hanoi. Olaf Palme was then Prime Minister of Sweden, denounced this as an atrocity, worse than the massacre at Sharpeville.

Q: Which happened in South Africa?

OWENS: In South Africa, yes. I remember a Saturday afternoon in December being called in to the State Department, along with Scott George who was our Office Director of the Bureau of Northern European Affairs, and with U. Alexis Johnson, and we called in the Swedish Ambassador, De Beche, who was planning to leave in just a couple of weeks. We had to search all over for him. He turned out to have been at a shopping mall doing his Christmas shopping. That would show the exact date, I would say the 17th of December. He was to leave in two weeks. So the poor fellow was summoned in to the State Department and then Alexis Johnson, who was the Acting Secretary, read him the riot act and said that obviously Sweden did not value its relationship to the United States, judging from the intemperate remarks by Olaf Palme. Therefore, Johnson continued, the Ambassador who had already been named by the Swedish government, De Beche's successor, would not be welcome in Washington. Moreover, that our Charge who by chance happened to have left on leave, John Guthrie, would not be going back to Sweden which would leave the mission in the hands of the third man, the political counselor who would act as Charge. So, for the next year and a half, my work was primarily devoted to damage control in Washington, trying to prevent the administration, which was the administration of President Nixon, from completely putting our relationship with Sweden down the drain. The word from the White House was that no one above an office director level could see the Swedes. So lots of people the Swedes had been calling on suddenly closed their doors to the Swedish mission. So Scott George and I were the ones who dealt exclusively with the Swedes, with the Charge. His name was Leif Leifland, who later became Swedish ambassador to Great Britain. It reached absurd lengths during that year. Nixon, apparently, personally felt very strongly about this. Kissinger was his National Security Advisor, and William Rogers was the Secretary of State, and the word coming out of the White House was: "Be nasty to the bastards." So, Scott George and I drafted a paper, which proposed, and this was accepted, a "cool but correct" policy towards the Swedes, (reminiscent of our initial policy towards the Greek junta) and we would not disrupt any of our ongoing military relationships with the Swedes, but that no high level visitors could go to Sweden, that in Washington, no one higher than the Office Director would receive them, until such time as the Swedes showed that "they valued" their relationship with us.

So that's how we went throughout most of 1973. Now, things began to change for a couple of reasons by the fall of 1973. Kissinger became Secretary of State, but before that during his questioning by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a couple of Senators said: "Hey, what about relations with Sweden. This isn't good for us to be having this so-called `cool but correct' relationship. We share a lot in common with Sweden, they're an important neutral, etc.." It was clear that the Swedes wanted a normalization of relations. Palme was uncharacteristically quiet during 1973. In addition, Kissinger met Liv Ullman, the Norwegian actress, but who played extensively in Ingmar Bergman films...

Q: Also, she was with the United Nations Children's Fund. So she was a major personality and an international figure, not just the movies.

OWENS: That's right. She met Kissinger at a dinner party in Los Angeles, or Hollywood, I guess it was, and came on very strongly for returning to normal relations with Sweden. But I think the pressure of Hubert Humphrey and Claiborne Pell who both had Swedish connections, Humphrey because of Minnesota, and Pell, I can't recall, but some family member came from Sweden, and he visited Sweden frequently. So, there was pressure on the Senate from the Democratic side, and the White House wanted to keep the Senators happy. We knew that eventually relations would be restored to normal.

Q: I think I heard a story to the effect that a Senator asked Kissinger at a hearing: "Why won't you see the Swedish Ambassador?" and he responded, sort of off the cuff: "Well, I'll see anybody. Of course, my door is open to anybody." And all of a sudden, relations had changed because he had committed himself.

OWENS: Well, he did. He assured the Senators in the hearing that he would look seriously into this question. I can't recall the specific statement you alluded to, but that would be along the lines that relations would be getting back to normal. As I mentioned, it reached ridiculous lengths. In 1973, the US held a competition for high school students throughout the world, to write "What the landing on the moon meant to me." Some students, one or two, I can't recall, from Sweden were among the winners, and the winners were to receive a piece of moon rock, which the astronauts had brought back from the moon. So, we sent a paper over on that, that the Swedes would also be receiving this, and we would send it to the high school in Sweden. The answer came back: "No, no moon rock for the Swedes," which was incredible how small the thinking was. These were the cronies...

Q: Ehrlichman, and the Nixon administration...

OWENS: But once Kissinger got on the bandwagon, and particularly once he became Secretary of State, it was inevitable that we would get back to normal relations. I do remember that when Hubert De Beche, the former Swedish Ambassador left, that Scott George and I were the only ones who went out to the airport to see him off. There was no one there from even Protocol. And during a cold winter day, he departed. Then by the spring of 1974, when we did agree to exchange ambassadors, Wilhelm Wachtmeister was

made Ambassador to Washington, and again Scott George and I went out there to meet him. I often thought, in later years, Wachtmeister became quite a social person in Washington. He eventually became dean of the corps, playing tennis with Bush and others. I still think of Scott George and myself, and then Wachtmeister invited my wife and me over the next day for lunch, then to see him twelve years later, the lion at social functions, because he stayed on then from 1974 until two years ago. He became dean of the corps. So then, after service on the desk, I went to Sweden as Political Counselor with Strausz-Hupé.

Q: I want to go back to the time you were on the Swedish/Finnish desk. You mentioned the military relationship with Sweden. The Swedes were vehemently neutral, and yet at the same time they were basically plugged in to NATO.

OWENS: That's right.

Q: Were you getting screams of anguish from either the CIA or the Pentagon? How were you dealing with this?

OWENS: Well, they were pretty well intimidated by the political heat from the White House, and they took a low profile. However, the military was able to continue. We did discourage high level military visits. They were also included in the ban, but the existing military commitments not otherwise spelled out were to go on. Now, as far as the Swedish military were concerned, they were very pro-US. They knew they were never afraid of ever having to defend against the United States. They knew who their potential adversary would be. It would be the Soviet Union. So, they depended upon us for research in their own weapons industry, particularly the aircraft industry. They had their own plane, the Viggen. Even though they depended in part on engine technology, Pratt Whitney and General Electric from the United States, they nevertheless competed with us for the sale, the major sales of the '70s, the weapons sales of the century was to sell to various countries, the fighter aircraft...

Q: The F16?

OWENS: The F16 which won, which beat a couple of American competitors out, as well as the Viggen, and the French plane.

In answer to your question, the CIA was of course active there. When I did eventually go to Sweden as Political Counselor, in a very large political section, a couple were State Department, and the rest were agency people whom I basically had very little dealings with.

Q: You went to Stockholm from '74 to '76.

OWENS: That's correct, the summer of '74 and that was when Robert Strausz-Hupé was appointed there, I think I mentioned that some years earlier, Strausz-Hupé was going to

Sri Lanka as Ambassador, and picked the Consul General in Athens, Peter Petersen, to go with him as DCM. Strausz-Hupé was a republican stalwart, conservative, and supported Barry Goldwater in his campaign. We were at loggerheads ideologically most of the time I was there. I still remember, when Nixon was forced out of office, that he insisted we cancel all social activities, to go into a kind of mourning. He thought this was a great tragedy for the American republic. Ironically, just to conclude that note, a few years later, when the Democrats came in in 1976, he actually wrote to Vice President Mondale saying that he would like to continue on as Ambassador to NATO, which he was. Rather ironic for someone who had been such an open partisan of the Republican Party.

Q: What was Strausz-Hupé's method of operation?

OWENS: Strausz-Hupé is physically a very tiny man. Have you met him? But with a massive ego and he had earlier been Ambassador to Brussels, to the kingdom of Belgium. I remember reading his cables when I was on the Scandinavian desk, in Washington, where he kept saying that Belgium had a unique role to play as a bridge between East and West, etc., and it seemed that wherever he went, he wanted to make it the center of action. So we used to all smile indulgently when we received these cables. So then, when he got to Sweden, he wanted to make Sweden the center, and developed a relationship with Olaf Palme. I used to generally go along with him to his meetings.

Q: How could these two people, conservative and Palme was sort of from the bleeding left?

OWENS: That's true. But Strausz-Hupé was nothing if not practical, pragmatic. He knew it was to his advantage to be able to say: "I spoke with Palme, today, and he confided to me the following..." I drafted all his cables, he didn't draft himself, but he would give the thrust of what he wanted to say, and he would obviously be in the center of the action. Palme, who was eager for a friendly hand from the US, because he was attacked from the center and right for having jeopardized Swedish relations with the United States. I think most Swedes felt unhappy at the fact. It did bother him a great deal that we had cut off relations. On the one hand, you have this moral fervor, the conscience of the world syndrome that the government had and which was shared by many Swedes, particularly of the left, at the same time, the awareness that whatever happens in the US, happens a few years later in Sweden, because everything from their popular music to their fashion, to their thinking, is completely western. Fortunately, they never imported the violence that we have in our society, unless it was by outsiders. So they felt very unhappy. Even Palme recognized that it was important for him to shore up his right, that the conservatives were very unhappy at this break with their natural ally. So they developed, I would say, a rather good relationship. It was a little difficult for Strausz-Hupé, and for us who were doing the drafting, because while he wanted to emphasize his intimacy with Palme, at the same time, he wanted to show that he was following the party line and being appropriately tough, and chiding the Swedes continuously, because their positions in the UN and elsewhere often differed from our own. He became very interested in Sweden's role in the socialists' internationale. The fact that Sweden and its social democrats were important

figures in the socialist movement, but not the communist socialist movement, we played on that a great deal. Strausz-Hupé had a massive ego. He was quite jealous of the contacts of his staff. We in the political section worked very hard to develop our contacts, but we had to be very careful, because Strausz-Hupé was very jealous that anyone of importance be his contact rather than anyone else's.

We had, during the time I was there, a visit from Kissinger. It was a major event. I recall that there was a plan of the left to demonstrate against Kissinger's coming, and we got a call from Oslo. Kissinger was traveling through some of the other capitals. It was a big event in Stockholm for Kissinger to come. It was, I believe, Bob Funseth who was traveling with him as one of his entourage. "Well, you know, we think we're not going to come to Stockholm, we've heard about these demonstrations that were planned." So we assured him that nothing would get out of hand, and they said they wanted assurances from the government to that effect. And, moreover, they wanted the Prime Minister out at the airport to meet them. So I relayed that to my Swedish colleagues who had no problem with giving assurances that the Swedish government would control the crowds, but were aghast at the idea of the Prime Minister going to the airport which violated international protocol. To me, it was rather symbolic of the Kissinger ego. So we said: "Gee, we'll do everything to assure there's no problem, but that Mr. Palme cannot go out to the airport. The Foreign Minister would go out there." Well, they finally agreed. But behind the scene, they were constantly making disparaging remarks about the Swedes, and about Palme. Nevertheless, the visit went rather successfully. It was a major coup for Palme and for the Social Democratic government of Sweden to have gotten Kissinger there. But it was really a non-event in terms of US foreign policy. There was no real rapport between Kissinger and Palme, because of the past. That's why I was quite surprised to see an article written by Kissinger after Palme's death, when he was assassinated, talking about their close relationship. This was a shock to me, after the nasty and mean things that had been said, at least during those years. Kissinger may have changed once he left State. I suspect he did after he went into business and these contacts became necessary for him. So those were the main events of my stay.

Q: What was, once you got away from these personality problems, your evaluation and impression of Olaf Palme? He played such a major role.

OWENS: Yes. Well, I think he was quite a brilliant man, ascetic, very austere type of personality. He lived quietly, and was a very shrewd politician and intellectual, really. I think he had a first class mind. I was impressed by him. I used to sit there and take notes, I didn't get to know him personally, but observing him and dealing with people who did know him intimately. He was hated by the conservatives in Sweden. He was born into a well-to-do family, and his wife was considered an aristocrat by Swedish standard. So he was like FDR, a traitor to his kind. I found it a little grating this "conscience of the world" syndrome, but it seemed to be in inverse ratio to the proximity to Sweden to the location of the issue. As some Swedes will remark today that what was going on in Romania, the horrible things there, was never discussed, whereas US bombing of Vietnam, what was

going on in South Africa, particularly South Africa, or Spain until Franco was overthrown. So it was a selection type of conscience.

Q: One final thing on the Stockholm base. What about the Swedish feelings about the Soviets? This was a period, wasn't it, when the Soviet subs were sneaking in and out all the time?

OWENS: It got much worse later, actually. But there was never, in neither Sweden, nor Finland was there ever any affinity for the Soviet Union. I think that the Finns, for example, were fearful of a Soviet invasion. In the case of Sweden, much less, because the Finns had experienced this twice in modern times. In the case of Sweden, there was not that direct fear, but there was very little sympathy for Russian communism. The communist party of Sweden never got more than a small percentage of the votes, 5% was usually its maximum. There were other issues, the Wallenberg case. Oh, that was one other issue that we did...that I worked on in Washington on the desk, to find out what we could about what happened to Raoul Wallenberg.

Q: Could you explain what that was?

OWENS: Yes. Raoul Wallenberg was in Budapest during World War II, heading the Swedish mission. He had been personally responsible for helping the flight of thousands of Hungarian Jews out of Hungary, and resisting the fascist government, as well as the Nazis, and taking some chances to assist the Jews in fleeing. When the Soviet troops came in to Hungary, they seized him, or rather took him into custody. He has never again been seen. The Swedes made repeated efforts--this was at the end of the war, and the years following--to locate him, and finally when Khrushchev came to power, he said that it turned out that Wallenberg had died in 1947 during one of the excesses of Stalin. They blamed it all on Stalin. Nevertheless, there were rumors by various defectors, people who had been in prison in the Soviet Union, who claimed to have seen a person answering Wallenberg's description. So the Swedes asked us after we began to improve relations, to give them what we could, and we'd check with our sources. At first the White House was reluctant. We had to get their OK. But the White House finally said: "OK, you can do it." We checked with the agency, and they had reports of people who had been in prison. One fellow who had said that he had been a cellmate, or rather a person in the next cell to his, and that one prisoner had indicated that he was a Swede, tapping on the wall to each other. He seemed to answer to Wallenberg's description. It was pretty vague, nothing very substantial. I personally felt that it was true that he had died if not in 1947, probably many years ago. You know there is a group of people in the United States, many of them American Jews, who have formed a committee to save Wallenberg, and are convinced he is still alive, all facts to the contrary, and have been constantly pressing to put pressure, first on the Gorbachev, and then on the Yeltsin government to release details on this, but I think it is a lost cause.

Q: Then you sort of got out from under Strausz-Hupé. You went to Goteborg from '76 to '78 as Consul General?

OWENS: Yes. Actually, Strausz-Hupé, to give him his dues, was responsible for getting me that job. The US government decided that it should be opened. In fact, it was Hubert Humphrey who pressed for this. It had been closed in '69, and the Swedes lamented the closing, and also in political terms, it was a sign of the cooling relationship between Sweden and the United States. So Hubert Humphrey made it almost a personal mission to get it reopened. And over the Department's objections it was reopened, and I went down to reopen it with a big ceremony, with the Ambassador. By this time, Strausz-Hupé had left, and David Smith had been appointed by President Ford to be the Ambassador to Sweden. He came down. He was a distinguished Washington lawyer, very affable, very nice man. We both went down and reopened it, to much fanfare. It was a big event in Sweden. Hubert Humphrey was supposed to come, but didn't. A couple of his staffers came out, represented him. There was much excitement in the Swedish press, and so on. This sort of was the icing on the cake, symbolizing the return of full US-Swedish traditionally good relations. That was a fairly uneventful two years for me, however it was very pleasant there. Personally I missed the excitement of dealing directly with the Foreign Ministry. I realized more than I had before how much the action in Sweden was focused in Stockholm. Goteborg was going through a recession at the period. Ship construction was dominated by the shipbuilding of the Koreans and others, and shipyards were closing. Shipping generally was in a recession during this period, so it was rather a sad town. Of course, it is the headquarters of Volvo. I got to know people like Volvo chairman Gyllenhamer, etc. But I found that being a big fish in a small pond is not necessarily as rewarding as being a smaller fish in a much bigger pond.

Q: A more active pond?

OWENS: A more active pond. I enjoyed doing the reporting that I could, and the consular work, that we did, the excitement, for the first six months, of setting up a new post. Everything had to be reestablished. You start from scratch. But once that was accomplished, it became just a maintenance operation. So I felt that two years was sufficient. Then, we had a new Ambassador in Stockholm when Ford was defeated. Jimmy Carter appointed Rodney Kennedy-Minott, the California professor who had helped the Democratic Party in California. You know that the Democrats did not win California in '76. In any case, he had been co-chairman of the Carter campaign in California. So he became the Ambassador, we had very amicable relations. So it was a very uneventful two years.

Q: You left Goteborg in 1978, and you served with the BEX for four years, is that right?

OWENS: No, I served for two years, and then went to Bermuda as CG.

Q: What were you doing with the Board of Examiners?

OWENS: Well, I was what they call a Deputy Examiner, one of fifteen or so of us, who conducted examinations throughout the United States, Washington and the United States,

interviewing, presenting, giving all examinations to those who had passed the written examinations, and to minority candidates who had not passed the written examinations but who qualified.

Q: This continues to be a period of transition, of trying to get the best candidates, but at the same time, trying to make sure that women are well represented, that minorities, we're talking mainly of Hispanic and blacks, are represented. What was your impression of how the Foreign Service tried to reach this both to get an elite and, at the same time, to get a fully representative Foreign Service.

OWENS: It was a true dilemma. While trying to maintain the classic elite standards, at the same time to make the net as broad as possible to bring in people of different backgrounds, and particularly of different ethnic groups, primarily as you say blacks and Hispanics, because the percentage, particularly of blacks, but that's also true of Hispanics, who had passed the written exam was tiny. I think usually less than three percent of those who took it would pass it. So all kinds of devices were developed, to try to manipulate the system to bring minorities into the service. There was tremendous pressure. I was there first time during the Carter administration, and there was tremendous pressure from on high to bring in more minorities. We were constantly given pep talks about why we had to bring more minorities while at the same time we had to maintain standards. So something had to give, and it usually meant the standards gave. Did you serve on the board of examiners?

Q: Yes I did. A couple of years before when the pressure was heavy, but not as heavy as when you were there.

OWENS: Well, they tried various devices. One was something called near-passers. They would take those minority candidates who had scored, let's say that the passing score was seventy, those who had gotten sixty, and bring them forward. But, there weren't that many of them who had near passing scores. So eventually, I forget the word they used, but they created a hypothetical score for them in the written examination based on a look at their college records, and it got pretty basic. If you had a BA, and it was a BA in most any social science, economics, history, or political science, that would say give you a seventy-five or an eighty. So therefore that would be the number you'd take in to the final review panel for their score on the written. Now, the examiners, those who gave the oral examination, never knew who had passed the written and who had not. Quite properly, this information was not given. So that in the oral examination, which as you I'm sure know is no longer three on one.

Q: Actually I've done both. I came back for a short spell during the...

OWENS: So you know about the group exercise, the assessment center. So, even there though, the minority candidates did not do as well generally. So there was pressure there at that stage of the process perhaps to give the benefit of the doubt to those who were visible minorities, to perhaps decide in their favor in terms of passing them. Then of

course there would be a final effort when you went to the final review panel, in which you took the scores, where you had all the information including the security file. Sometimes for some minority candidates there would be incidents in their past which, if the candidate were not a minority, you would not consider him to be appropriate material to be...such as a conviction, etc. There would be pressure again to overlook these "childhood pranks." Often they were not childhood pranks, but there was pressure all along to bend the rules to bring in as many candidates as possible. As you know, the procedure today is to reduce the cut score down in order to get a total of, instead of the usual two thousand passers, they get four thousand passers. That way they have caught up a greater number of minorities but unfortunately not very many, very few minorities, at least black candidates, actually took the most recent examinations.

Q: It has brought in more women, but not...

OWENS: I think the woman issue is settled.

Q: I think so. I addressed a class of Foreign Service officers of thirty-two, and sixteen were women.

OWENS: Right, and I'm told that the most recent class of, I think it was forty-one, and twenty-one women, and twenty men. So, I think that issue is settled. Women, generally now, under the new examination, which gives greater weight to verbal skills, do just about as well as the men on the written, and I think do better in the assessments in the oral examinations. So I would think that you're going to have at least one fourth to one third of all appointments going to women which is probably disproportionate to the number of women who take political science, economics, and history, which are the natural studies in examinations.

Q: How did you all react to the pressures from the minorities? You're like a judiciary. At a certain point, there you are, and you come out with a skill that you find, you see what you would consider a marginal, if not a rather weak candidate but who is obviously a minority class. How does this seem to work?

OWENS: Well, speaking for myself, I certainly did not pass someone who I didn't feel was qualified. I thought we should be colorblind. Others did not. We would argue about this. I had other examiners say to me that they thought they felt they had a mandate to pass, but it was never spelled out that clearly to make it a mandate. It was always implicit, rather than explicit. But I think of several cases of a few examiners who told me that they would always bend over backwards to try to bring in minority candidates. I felt that that would be unfair to the non-minority candidates.

Q: Also, there is a problem of bringing in people who really were not up to speed, because in the long run the Service is going to spit out those people who are not...

OWENS: Spit out, but after long and torturous grievances. It's a painful process, as you know. Most do not go quietly.

Q: Into obscurity...

OWENS: That's right, they fight. You drag them out screaming and kicking. It means life is miserable for their superiors and colleagues while they are going through that period. I've had many officers on active duty say to me: "How could you people have passed this particular person?"

Q: Then you went to Hamilton for your last two years?

OWENS: That's right. From ‘80 to ‘82. It didn't turn out to be a full two years because, after I'd been there about a year and a half, a congressional delegation came down led by a White House functionary by the name of Max Friedersdorf, who was the White House liaison to Congress, and he had been very instrumental in getting the AWAC purchase, the aircraft sale to Saudi Arabia.

Q: It's the Early Warning Airborne military aircraft?

OWENS: That's right, for the Saudis, which was considered very important for the administration, and for our defense interests in the Middle East. I remember one of the Congressional staffer saying: "Pay attention to this man. He's very important." And so, as one does with Congressional Delegates, wined and dined them, and made everything very pleasant for them. Had parties with the Premier and others. In any event, some months later I suddenly got a call from Alan Holmes who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of EUR. "Oh, I've got some bad news. The White House has decided to politicize the Bermuda position and Max Friedersdorf wants it. The White House is going to announce it. "Well, how can that be? It's always been a career officer... I still have my tour to finish." "Well, sorry about that. We've argued against it, but the White House is adamant. We want to give you this advance notice, but we don't expect this imminently." Well, that afternoon I got a call from CBS saying: "What's your reaction? We heard that Max Friedersdorf is going to make this a political position." So I said: "Too painful to talk about. I don't want to talk about it." That evening on CBS, it stated that the present Consul General, John Owens, when told that he was leaving his fourteen acre estate, on the beach at Paget Bermuda, said that it was too painful to talk about. Someone in AFSA picked this up, and said, "How could you say this?" I certainly didn't say that it would be painful for me to be leaving this fourteen acre estate. I obviously did not want to dispute publicly the politicizing of that position. AFSA did make a weak protest, however. They were assured by the then Deputy Secretary that this was a one time affair because of the unique services that Max Friedersdorf had performed, that it would return to the career officer position in the future. Of course, that did not happen. As a matter of fact, the White House did a rather atrocious thing. After Friedersdorf had been there a year, he accepted a position as chief of international public relations for Pepsi Cola. But he said, "You know, this might not work out, so..." They kept the seat warm for him and sent a

succession of Acting Principal Officers, none of whom could be actually certified as Consul General. It would be the British Government which would grant that since Bermuda is still a colony. So eventually after about a year and a half, it didn't work out with Pepsi Cola, and Friedersdorf came back for another year or so. And then after he left, it was given to another semi-political appointee, Jim Medas who was a California lawyer who had helped in the Bush campaign. And now, it is held by another political appointee, Ebenezer Gaines, a golfing companion of Dan Quayle. So, I suspect, unless the administrations change, it will never go back to the career officer position.

Q: What, while you were there for that short time, were your principal concerns?

OWENS: Well, the principal concerns were...And I found being Consul General in Bermuda rather, I could even say exciting. We have had and still have, a Naval Air Station which was very important in tracking Soviet submarines in the south Atlantic. There was a movement for Bermudan independence. You know we occupy that base because of our 1940 agreement.

Q: Destroyers for bases?

OWENS: Destroyers for bases. The lend lease agreement. The US considers that agreement will run till 2039, ninety-nine years of that agreement, but the Bermudans who are pushing for independence said, "No, we would want to negotiate." So, this movement was of considerable interest to us, which made it from a political point of view, an interesting post. The racial makeup of the island, unlike the Caribbean islands, is only 60% black and 40% white, and traditionally the power lead which had been mostly white. That changed and the change accelerated during my time there. The Premier became a black and most of the cabinet became black as well, the key positions, like the chief of the Bermudan regiment, the chief of police, etc. all were black. It was a fairly harmonious relationship, fairly harmonious, more so I would say than in the United States' black-white relations. So I would consider it a relatively successful multi-racial society. The Bermudans used to speak of themselves as multi-racial, because they also have a large Portuguese colony there, from the Azores, who had originally come in as gardeners and then moved up the socio-economic ladder. It was an interesting make up. The base gave us a military defense aspect to our relationship in Bermuda. It was small enough, it's a small country of sixty-four thousand people. I enjoyed it.

Q: Did you have any problems with tourists?

OWENS: There were some assaults, some muggings, a few rapes. As you know, we have a pre-clearance, formal consular officer arrangement with the Bermudans, we had INS inspectors, and customs inspectors stationed in Bermuda, so we had a fairly large INS and Customs contingent. We had NASA stationed there. Bermuda, although nominally British, with a few British traditions, and a British legal system, is very American because something like 85% of the tourists who go there are Americans. The movement between the United States and Bermuda is tremendous. Most Bermudans spend some time in the

United States, many are educated there. Every once in a while you see, because they don't need visas, many of them come, stay for an indefinite amount of time, go to universities here, do not bother to get student visas, and since they speak English perfectly, have no trouble being absorbed into the local community. I noticed that a Bermudan woman recently gave birth to quintuplets, or quadruplets in a Washington hospital. The thought occurred to me, "I guess the US is paying for this." In any case, our relations were excellent. We would have probably had to sign some sort of agreement, defense agreement with the Bermudans. That's the way it looked when I left in ‘82. Of course the changes in the Soviet Union have lessened the importance of that air station there, the monitoring of the Soviet submarines.

Q: A whole sub-business there. People looking around for some way to keep the sub-people and the anti-sub-people employed.

OWENS: That's right.

Q: And then you retired?

OWENS: No, not then, a year later. I went back to work on the board of examiners, and served with a different group of people. The pressures that we talked about earlier for greater minority representation were even more intense.
Since then I've been working as a consultant in the Department in the MMPP area.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

OWENS: Thank you.

End of interview