

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

THEODORE WILKINSON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: January 11, 1999
Copyright 2001 ADST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	
Born in Washington, DC	
Yale University; George Washington University	
U.S. Navy	
Entered Foreign Service - 1961	
Caracas, Venezuela - Political Officer	1962-1964
President Betancourt	
Ambassador Allen Stewart	
Environment	
Labor	
Oil	
Stockholm, Sweden - Rotation Officer	1964-1966
U.S. relations	
Social Democrats	
Consular issue	
State Department - Bureau of Intelligence and Research [INR]	1966
Vietnam	
Norfolk, Virginia - Armed Forces Staff College	1966-1968
Vietnam	
State Department - ACDA	1968-1970
SALT	
CCD	
NPT	
Brussels, Belgium - NATO	1970-1974
Arms control issues	
Force reduction issue	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBFR European Conference on Security Cooperation The French Soviets Donald Rumsfeld Larry Eagleburger Israel Kissinger Germans Cyprus 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pentagon CSCE [European Security Conference] Helsinki Final Act Geneva agreements Environment AWACS Shirley Temple Black Threshold Test Ban 	1974-1976
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Department - Tunisia Desk Officer Libya Bourguiba Algeria 	1976-1977
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Department - Morocco Desk Officer Polisario King Hassan 	1977-1978
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New York, New York - USUN - Political Officer Environment Andrew Young Don McHenry First Committee Sandinistas Arab-Israeli relations Soviets Space Disarmament Afghanistan Indian Ocean SALT Iran Zionism Delegations 	1978-1980

New York - Law of the Sea - Deputy Director Seabed mining Law of the Sea Treaty	1980-1981
State Department - Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science - Acting Director	1981
Mexico City, Mexico - Deputy Political Counselor Environment President Lopez Portillo Ambassador John Gavin Relations Salvador Foreign Office Contadora Group Refugees Press CIA Falklands Guatemala Political parties Democracy	1981-1984
Tegucigalpa, Honduras - Political Counselor Wife, Xenia - commercial officer Contras Oliver North Government President Cordova Nicaragua Vice President Bush visit President Azcona Economy Environment	1984-1986
State Department - Oceans, Environment, and Science Nuclear safety Foreign nuclear programs IAEA Richard Kennedy	1986-1989
AFSA - President Issues Ambassador appointments	1989-1991

Felix Block case	
Congressional funding	
Secretary of State Baker	
Shirley Temple	
Women's rights	
Gulf War	
April Glaspie	
Interim Recollections	
Paul Newman	
Ambassador John Gavin	
Mexico City, Mexico - Chief Political Officer	1991-1994
NAFTA	
Toricelli "Law"	
Elections	
Drug Enforcement Agency	
Drugs	
Police	
Relations	
Rosario Green	
Chiapas revolt	
Ramsey Clark	
Cuauhtémoc Cardenas	
Brasilia, Brazil - Political Counselor	1994-1996
President Cardoso	
Economy	
U.S. interests	
Relations	
FTAA	
Hillary Clinton visit	
Retirement	1996
Ecuador-Peru (1940s) problem	

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 11th of January, 1999. This is an interview with Theodore Wilkinson, and it's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you want to say something? I just want to check and see how this is coming through.

WILKINSON: I'm Theodore S. Wilkinson.

Q: Ted, could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family.

WILKINSON: Yes, of course. I was born in Washington.

Q: DC?

WILKINSON: In Washington, DC. My father was a career naval officer who died tragically in an automobile accident on a ferry at Norfolk in 1946. My mother remarried two years later. Her second husband was an Englishman, Admiral Henry Moore, and went to live in England in the late '40s, so I spent a fair amount of my adolescence commuting between the United States and England. I went to boarding school in the U.S.

Q: Well, I want to go back a bit. You were born when?

WILKINSON: I was born in 1934.

Q: Were you a good, solid navy brat, moving around a lot?

WILKINSON: Less than my older sisters, who were born earlier in my father's career, in the early '20s. But I did live with family in Honolulu just before World War II. During that time our house in Arlington was rented to a group of bachelors, including Phil Graham. Many became bright stars. Dean Acheson and Felix Franfurter visited. Katherine Graham writes about visits that she used to make to Hockley, as it was called then (it's now known as "The Cedars" and hosts the National Prayer Breakfasts), and she met her husband-

Q: The editor of The Washington Post.

WILKINSON: Phil Graham eventually became the editor of the Post. Katherine Meyer was the owner's daughter and she met Graham at Hockley. They had a romance that involved visiting this house in Arlington, which she describes in her autobiography as her vision of "Tara." Then we came back from Hawaii in 1941. The bachelors moved out and we lived there for a while during the war. But Hockley was too big a place for my mother to maintain with very little help. My father was out in the South Pacific, where he commanded amphibious operations. We moved into the District and lived in Georgetown, and I went to school here, living in Georgetown, towards the end of the war and after. I loved the rambling grounds of Hockley with forest smells and the big imposing plantation house (above Spout Run with a view down on Key Bridge) and always felt betrayed by my family for leaving it and eventually selling it.

Q: Where did you go to school in Washington?

WILKINSON: I went to St. Alban's School for five years. Many of my oldest friends are from that time.

Q: What particularly interested you when you were at St. Alban's? Any particular -

WILKINSON: I think like most boys I was interested in sports and liked mathematics and intellectual problems, and I liked the school spirit. I like to play tennis, sail, outdoor things.

Q: Well, then, back. When your father died, and your mother then remarried later on, and you went to boarding school. Where did you go to boarding school?

WILKINSON: I went away to St. Paul's School in New Hampshire.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

WILKINSON: 1948 to graduation in 1952.

Q: Talk about St. Paul's. How was the atmosphere, and what were your interests at that time?

WILKINSON: St. Paul's was a somewhat different place in the late '40s and early '50s from what it is now. The basic school curriculum was science, math, and humanities but sports were very important. Today I would judge there's more emphasis on the arts and less on sports. Some of my classmates were on a crew that eventually became an Olympic crew in 1956 and won the gold medal in Melbourne. We were trained to be tough outdoors people. I played a lot of ice hockey and rowed. But we also worked very hard, and I found that my preparation for college was pretty good. College was relatively easy after the strict academic atmosphere at that school. There wasn't much in the way of diversion. We were allowed to have record players only as juniors and seniors. We were not allowed to have radios at all, and no televisions. There were two or three proms a year. We saw girls pretty rarely. I didn't find it a very easy or congenial place, but it was probably a very good place to get a basic education.

Q: What did you like to read when you were there?

WILKINSON: Well, I think a lot of us were sort of captivated by books like *The Catcher in the Rye*, which told of a very different kind of adolescence from ours. We were being disciplined very strictly, and here was an author who was showing Holden Caulfield as a rebel whose values were different who wasn't cowed by authority, and we tended to idealize the rebels - like James Dean - although we accepted the discipline and lived by it.

Q: What about majors? Did you have anything that you particularly -

WILKINSON: In high school - no, really. As I said earlier, it was the math, science and

the humanities that we were drilled in, and we were pretty well educated in those subjects, probably better even than in most day schools because of the fact that we didn't have much in the way of diversions.

Q: I had four years at Kent.

WILKINSON: Oh, yes, so your experience was very similar, I'm sure.

Q: It was. What about the outside world as far as international events and all that? Did that intrude much?

WILKINSON: Well, it certainly did in my consciousness because my family was very close to people who were diplomatic. We were close to people like, for instance, the Achilles family, the Chapin family. Admiral (later Ambassador) Alan Kirk's author wife Lydia - Roger Kirk's mother - was my godmother and they were close family friends. I was never pushed but maybe sort of coaxed toward the diplomatic field by my family, relatives, and experience. So international consciousness was very present in my family. At home there was a lot of talk about international events. One of my first recollections at the age of 4 2 was the somber silence of the family group listening to radio reports of the German occupation of the Sudetenland in the spring of 1939.

Q: What about your mother being married to a British admiral? Did you go to Britain quite often?

WILKINSON: I did. I used to go there in the summers. At first we lived in a cavernous official residence with 27 enlisted staff - greenhouses, 3 tennis courts, etc. - while my stepfather was Commander-In-Chief of the "Nore" (Britain's naval deployment to the East of the Isles) Later after his retirement we lived in a town not far from London called Wateringbury in the County of Kent, and that was a very interesting place to live in the immediate postwar years because there was an aristocracy that lived the way it always had. They had their own grass tennis courts and held tea dances there often in big manor houses around the county seat of Kent, but always on a rather tight budget because even at that time in the early 1950s Britain was struggling to get through the period of austerity that followed World War II.

Q: When you graduated in '52, were you going to school or were you going to get caught in the military or what happened?

WILKINSON: I went to Yale, and I didn't seek a deferment through college. There was still a draft. But at the time, if you maintained your academic credentials there were very few people that were drafted out of college. And so I went through college in the expectation that I would serve later, as my father had, in the navy. I had thought about a navy career, but I have one eye that's not up to navy standards, so I wouldn't have been able to pass the physical for regular line navy service, eligible for command at sea. So I never really expected to be a career navy person.

Q: From the '52 to '56 period, what were you majoring in at Yale?

WILKINSON: I majored in political science, with a specialty in international relations, with a dual purpose. I was told I could get a Navy commission as an intelligence specialist to do my national service after I finished college, and political science would be good background. And I'd also given thought to applying for the Foreign Service later. I wasn't sure at that time, and there were other things that appealed to me. I liked journalism, and I did compete to be on the editorial board of *The Yale Daily News*, which was relatively demanding in terms of outside time at college. So I had a lot of outside interests, not the least of which was pursuing girls at all kinds of other colleges, which were not anywhere near New Haven, and how I managed to get through those four years at Yale and still pass I sometimes wonder in retrospect, because of the other things that I was doing at the same time.

Q: I traveled hitchhiking back and forth from Williams to all over the place.

WILKINSON: You too. Yes, I'm sure.

Q: Did the McCarthy period stir up anything at Yale at that time?

WILKINSON: It certainly did, and I found McCarthyism appalling, very difficult to understand, the way some of today's youth may find right-wing extremists' mindless attacks on the UN and IFIs hard to understand. When I was working for *The Yale Daily News*, I did an interview in Washington with the Secretary of the Army at the time, asking him why McCarthy's assistants-the famous Cohn and Schein duo - were being allowed to wreak such havoc with Army morale with their investigations to root out "subversives."

Q: It was Secretary Royal, was it?

WILKINSON: No, his name was Roger Stevens. I asked him if it wasn't important to defend the institutions of the army from what appeared to be either a politically inspired witch hunt or a bizarre personal vendetta of McCarthy's. Acheson had been a good friend of my family's, and defended himself and some of his people from McCarthyism, perhaps defended Alger Hiss too much. But it was a very strange phenomenon, and I always found it very difficult to accept as something natural in a country where democracy supposedly prevailed.

Q: Did Buckley's God and Man at Yale have any reverberance at the time you were there, or not?

WILKINSON: I personally found Buckley a bit of a demagogue. I don't think he really ever believed what he wrote in *God and Man at Yale* - it was too exaggerated. From what I recall, his thesis was that the New Haven community was beset with moral relativism. Yale people had forgotten their values and were unwilling to stand up for absolutes. They

were too namby-pamby. Indeed we, the youth of the 1950s, were being criticized as the “Silent Generation,” perhaps because we too much venerated our forebears, the heroes of World War II. Maybe we were hesitant to speak up for universal, absolute values and criticize what some of us might have seen as the social ills of America, too willing to accept the status quo - very differently from our successors from the generation of the ‘60s. But still I didn’t feel that Bill Buckley was a correct voice of dissent.

Q: I think the effect was more important than substance.

WILKINSON: The effect of Buckley?

Q: Not effect, but I mean how people looked at him and paid attention to him, rather than substance.

WILKINSON: Yes, I think Buckley was obviously, as he has proven on many, many occasions since then, a devil’s advocate, somebody who likes to stir up an argument just for the sake of argument. And for that, one can scarcely fault him. I always find what he writes provocative, but not necessarily the gospel.

Q: When you got out were you still looking at the Foreign Service, in ‘56?

WILKINSON: Interestingly, when I was a senior in college, we had a banquet at which James Reston came to speak.

Q: He was the preeminent columnist for The New York Times, wasn’t he?

WILKINSON: Right. Well, he was at that point working in the Washington office of *The New York Times*, as he had been for some years, and writing his column here in Washington. I met him, spoke for a few minutes with him, and several weeks later he called, and to my amazement and the amazement of my colleagues, offered me a job in Washington at *The New York Times*, which I would have jumped at, obviously - most people would have - but for the fact that I had already committed myself. He wanted somebody for a year, and I had committed myself to go into the Navy as a reserve intelligence officer in the fall. I asked him if I could do it for six months, and he said no. So somebody else got the job for a year. And I instead went to work at *The Washington Star*, where they were willing to take me for six months. And I spent six months, basically, as a copy boy running errands at the *Star*, but learning how a real newspaper functions. And intrigued as I have always been with the newspaper business I sort of found it appealing, but it didn’t seem to provide a clear career path, and I liked the idea of successive assignments in a career system - maybe because of my Navy background. So I kept my long-term idea of joining the Foreign Service, even after the Navy.

Q: Well, let’s talk about the Navy. You were in the Navy from when to when?

WILKINSON: 1956 to 1960.

Q: That's a good long stretch.

WILKINSON: Yes. Well, it was a little over three years. It was a three year commitment. I did four months of training at Newport, as one did, at Officer Candidate School, and then I served three full years as an intelligence specialist.

Q: Where did you serve?

WILKINSON: Mostly in Washington. I made some field trips and visits to sea from time to time, but I served here first at Arlington Hall - right here where NFATC [National Foreign Affairs Training Center] now is - when it was the headquarters of the Army Security Agency. I was here for a few months. Then my office, which was kind of a liaison office with all the intelligence community, was moved to Fort Meade, where we had access to all kinds of intelligence and to much more comfortable circumstances.

The job was very interesting. It concerned keeping track of the Soviet submarine fleet, and we were using all kinds of intelligence at the time, which was all very highly compartmented and protected (e.g. overhead photography), but it allowed us to identify the first ballistic missile submarine and the first nuclear submarine that the Soviets had, and to keep track of their movements and provide intelligence to the fleet.

Q: Did you seem to have a pretty good fix on the Soviet subs, at least the feeling at the time?

WILKINSON: At the time, we did, because using our system of tracking the low-frequency vibrations of their propulsion machinery, we were able to track them all around the world. I believe we continued to use this system until very recently, although newer models of submarines are much quieter and probably harder to detect.

Q: While you were in Washington, did you get married?

WILKINSON: I was married while living in Washington. I've been married twice. My first wife, Rosalie Ford, was a student whom I met on an exchange to Germany. After finishing my active duty tour in the Navy in 1960, I took a group of exchange students to Germany as the leader of a group in a program called the Experiment in International Living -

Q: Oh, yes.

WILKINSON: We spent a summer in Stuttgart. I had spent an earlier summer near Stuttgart also as a member of one of these groups. "Lee@ Ford was a student in another group going to Italy. She came to Washington to work after she came back, and we continued to go out together. We were married in 1961.

Q: You got out of the Navy in 1960, and then what?

WILKINSON: Then I worked at the same navy office as a civilian for a number of months until I could get into the Foreign Service.

Q: Had you taken the Foreign Service Exam?

WILKINSON: I had taken the Foreign Service Exam, that's right, but I had to wait to get in, as people often did, till the results of the security exam were in. And then I was admitted and joined the Foreign Service in July of '61.

Q: Do you remember any of the questions that were asked during the oral exam?

WILKINSON: I actually took the oral exam twice. I guess I took both exams twice, because the first time I failed the oral exam, and the reason I failed it was two-fold, I think. One was that I came in my navy uniform, and the examiners sort of looked at me a little quizzically as if it was odd to see somebody showing up for this civilian business dressed in a navy uniform, but that was the way I went to work every day, and I had to take time off from work to take the oral exam. But then the examiners asked me a question that wasn't that difficult, but it was how many states do you go through between Cleveland and Rochester if you're driving along the lake shore? And I was sitting there drawing a map on the tabletop trying to figure out if you went through anything other than Ohio and New York, and of course you do.

Q: Isn't it Pennsylvania?

WILKINSON: You go through a little bit of Pennsylvania where Erie is, but in the end I had either forgotten or didn't come up with that, and I think they found me a little bit incoherent because I struggled over that simple question instead of saying, "Well, I think two, but who cares?" I don't know. I wasn't very sure of myself. There may have been other reasons, but I didn't do well the first time I took the oral exam. Then I went back and took a number of courses toward a master's degree, attending at night.

Q: Where, at George Washington [GW], or-

WILKINSON: At GW.

Q: GW, yes.

WILKINSON: And I took a number of courses, regrouped, took the oral again, and passed it quite easily.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions then?

WILKINSON: I don't, really.

Q: Well, you came in in '61.

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: What was your A-100, your basic officer class, like?

WILKINSON: I thought it was a pretty good group of people. I guess the most successful member was Stephen Bosworth, who was the youngest at the time, but is now Ambassador in Korea. There were some other people who, like me, had been to prep schools and Ivy League colleges, but a number of others who were from different parts of the country without that kind of "elitist" background and all of whom I found very congenial. There were only two women, as I recall, out of a class of 38, which is a very low percentage, certainly by current standards, and even by then I think it was rather low. One of them died tragically in an auto accident a few years later in-

Q: Hannah Woods?

WILKINSON: Hannah Woods.

Q: Oh, I knew her.

WILKINSON: With the editor of Borba traveling through Yugoslavia.

Q: It was very sad. She was a very effective officer. She was a vice-consul in my consular section.

WILKINSON: You were senior to her?

Q: Yes, I was chief of the consular section when she was -

WILKINSON: So when did you actually join? You must have joined some years before that.

Q: I came in in '55.

WILKINSON: Much earlier. I didn't realize. I thought you were more contemporary with our FS group. And the other was Jodie Ballard. She married a guy named Bob McClellan - also from our class - who seemed stable, but went berserk a couple of years later while still in Washington, started shooting at people from his house in Rock Creek Park and eventually, I think, he killed himself when the police surrounded the house. [Editor's note: The incident referred to took place in 1972. McClellan fired shots inside the house but did not shoot at anyone.] So we were an ill-fated class, at least as far as the women were concerned. Another brilliant but notorious [officer] was Gary Studds, who soon resigned, eventually ran for Congress and stayed there for over 20 years, most of them as

a declared homosexual.

Q: You came in in '61. One of the questions I try to ask is, the election of 1960 sort of pushed a button for a lot of young people, with Kennedy's coming in, a sense of excitement, a sense of duty working for the government, and diplomacy was an honorable occupation and something to be desired. Did you capture any of that?

WILKINSON: I did, and I think all of us felt that there was certainly new impetus to diplomacy, to the creation of ACDA, the arms control agency, the regeneration of aid through the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, and many new initiatives of Kennedy's. I actually had a good friend from postgraduate days, a man that I had met in Washington who was a very good tennis player (he had gotten to the quarter-finals at Wimbledon) named Joe Blatchford. Joe eventually became the director of the Peace Corps, but at that time, he was trying to set up his own sort of people-to-people program called *Acción Internacional*. He had some high-level Republican connections, and he was angry because he thought the Peace Corps proposal had been stolen from his ideas. Still, he managed to get his concept off the ground as a privately financed program. It actually began it in Venezuela and Colombia as a grass-roots community development venture almost the same time as the Peace Corps was beginning there, and I believe that the *Acción* program is still active in Latin America.

I don't think I was quite as captivated by Kennedy the man as by some of the ideas that his administration brought in. I didn't know it at the time, but I learned later that my father had a lot to do with JFK's career. In 1941, my father was the director of Naval Intelligence, and had been told by J. Edgar Hoover that Kennedy was dating a spy.

Q: Yes, somebody in Florida, some-

WILKINSON: No, she was a... No, that's another story. That's the person he supposedly married and divorced over a weekend. But this was a woman named Inge... he used to call her Inge Binga - I don't remember her last name. She was a gorgeous Dane who had been a society reporter for *The Washington Post*, but she had been photographed earlier in Hitler's box at the Olympic Games in the mid-'30s. She was older than Kennedy. She was in her late '20s when he was in his early '20s. And here's this junior naval intelligence officer working for my father. My father is being told that he's going out with a spy. So he said to Kennedy, "You've got to get rid of this woman." And Kennedy said no, so Hoover's people came to my father and said, "You've got to fire him." And my father said something like, "I can't fire a Kennedy." Instead he had him transferred and the Navy sent him to Charleston. In Charleston they trained him in how to run a PT boat, and then they sent him out to the Pacific to command PT-109 where he became a war hero.

Q: Yes.

WILKINSON: So in a way, it seems that my father had a hand in the "making of the

President.”

Q: Well, in '61 the Cold War was in action, Africa was becoming independent, Southeast Asia was going. What was grabbing you when you were looking at the world, and at least you are allowed to make a request -

WILKINSON: As to where I wanted to serve on my first tour?

Q: Yes.

WILKINSON: Well, I spoke some Spanish and French, but I thought I was a German specialist. I actually had started studying German in college rather intensively because I was told that in order to be a good intelligence officer for the Navy I should learn an useful but more difficult language - like Chinese, Arabic, Russian - and they mentioned German. And I said, well, of those four, German sounds interesting and certainly the easiest, so I worked on German - I spent three summers in Germany - and I had hoped to go to Europe on my first assignment. I put down Buenos Aires and Santiago as second choices. When assignments were eventually handed out, they told me I was going to go to Lima. So I regrouped and got very excited about going to Lima, and then just at the last minute there was a coup in Lima. A long-time leftist, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre had been elected; the military didn't want him to become president, so they carried out a coup to prevent that, and the Ambassador said, "I need to keep the people I've got around me during this critical period. I don't want anybody new.@ In particular, the Ambassador wanted to extend the guy that I was supposed to replace. So they sent me to Caracas instead. I was a little disappointed, since I thought Peru had richer culture, but I was excited about going anywhere as an FSO, and Caracas sound pretty interesting, too.

Q: It is the 26th of January, 1999. Ted, you're off to Caracas. You were in Caracas from when to when?

WILKINSON: From the beginning of 1962 to roughly early 1964.

Q: What was the situation in Venezuela at that time?

WILKINSON: Troubled and unsettled. The military dictator, Pérez Jiménez had been in power for a decade until the late '50s, when democracy and constitutional rule were restored. Rómulo Betancourt, the elected president (1959-1964), was pretty far to the left - very close to being a Communist - and yet the U.S. Administration under both Eisenhower and Kennedy supported him strongly as a democratic alternative to Castro. Castro recognized this and had sponsored what was generally believed to have been an attempt against Betancourt's life - a bomb that exploded in 1960 and nearly killed him in a motorcade in Caracas itself. The U.S. Government was supporting Betancourt firmly, even though there was middle-class and conservative opposition to him, because he was

redistributing the oil resources of the country. In the 1950s, Pérez Jiménez, had always favored the elites and the urban centers of the country, and as a result had a lot of residual support from Venezuelan upper classes and from the U.S. oil companies. Betancourt, in contrast, was taking the oil wealth and spreading it around the country building infrastructure and roads that were far less visible in Caracas than the public works and monuments that Pérez Jiménez had built. For that reason, I found myself defending American policy in Venezuela against friends and associates who were sharply critical of this iconoclast and sympathetic to continuing insurgencies and/or coup attempts, from both right and left sides. Venezuela has stayed democratic and had regular elections, but there had been constant complaints about corruption and complaisance in all the traditional political parties, and right now the country is going through a challenging new phase with a military ex- rebel who's been elected and wants to rewrite the constitution.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

WILKINSON: Our ambassador was a man named Allen Stewart. Stewart had been DCM and chargé when Betancourt was elected president, and Betancourt interceded in Washington to ask that he be appointed ambassador an old political debt. Stewart, a former USIS person, had been serving in Venezuela in 1947, had helped Betancourt escape at the time of an earlier military coup. At the very least Stewart had saved his political life, and Betancourt owed a great debt of gratitude to him.

Stewart was a colorful character. I remember one meeting when he went off to see the oil minister, whose name was Pérez Alfonso, to deliver an angry *demarche* and came back and told us in the country team that Pérez Alfonso was “so scared that his eyes looked like two piss-holes in the snow,” which I thought was one of the best similes I'd heard in diplomacy. He also could be even more graphic, with metaphors that don't bear repeating here.

Q: How did he manage the embassy?

WILKINSON: With a loose hand. He had a strong DCM in John Calvin Hill, who really managed the embassy. Allen Stewart was more Olympian. I was asked to be staff aide for a year after I'd been there a few months, but I really worked for John Hill, who at the time was highly thought of and had gone through the Kennedy administration's first “high-level” counter-insurgency course. To counter Castro inspired guerilla movements in Latin America, embassies were to structure themselves to help governments counter insurgencies. This Kennedy-era approach lasted through the mid- '60s, until it became clear that we were intervening so transparently in domestic situations to counter Castro-inspired insurgencies that several rebel forces took direct aim at Americans. As in the case of Uruguay, where rebel Tupamaros kidnaped and killed a couple of American counter-insurgency police advisers. After that the U.S. Government abandoned the idea of training police. Congress even put a legal ban on it, which only recently has been eased. But at the time we were focusing on helping democratic governments defeat leftist insurgency, while Ché Guevara was trying to foment one in Bolivia; and John Hill was

our sort of counter-insurgency supervisor within the embassy and the core of the team that had been sort of prepared in Washington to make sure that the Betancourt government survived in Venezuela. Hill unfortunately was also drinking himself slowly to death, although many of us were not fully aware of that at the time. He died a few years later, probably still under 50.

Q: Your job, while you were in Caracas, 1962-64, was what?

WILKINSON: I was a junior officer. I served for a while in the Political Section, and then I was asked to be staff aide and stayed there for 13 or 14 months, and for a few months, at the end of my tour, I rotated to USIS and to Administration, to get an idea of those sections. We had a fairly active so-called rotation program in the embassy for junior officers at the time. Two of us were also allowed to attend the senior staff meetings in rotation, but on the condition that we served coffee. So we stood in the background at staff meetings and passed the coffee around and were allowed to enlighten ourselves with this high-level conversation.

Q: Well, did you get any feel for the political world there? You mentioned that you were having problems. It wasn't a problem that most of our contacts and people that you would run across would be on whatever paths were sort of on the right, but we were supporting a left government - was that part of the problem within Caracas and diplomatic society?

WILKINSON: Yes. The problem in Venezuela and in Caracas and in some of the other leading cities like Maracaibo was that Betancourt's support was rather thin, certainly among the economic leaders and to some extent the intellectual leaders of the country. And the country was politically polarized between people who would have been perfectly happy to see a military dictatorship continue or be reinstated and the left, who were more inclined to be Trotskyites or Castroites; and Betancourt had tried to find a middle course, which involved economic reform, but there was at the time a great deal of military distrust and resentment. There were several military efforts to overthrow the government: a revolt at Carúpano, in which a military garrison came very close to stimulating a successful military revolt. At the same time there was a leftist insurgency in the hills, a small one led by a guerrilla leader named Douglas Bravo, which persisted through the '60s and which was hard to stamp out. So this situation was far from settled. Policemen were being killed almost daily by city urban terrorist opponents of the government, and Carlos Andres Pérez, who subsequently became president twice, was the interior minister responsible for maintaining law and order, and we worked particularly closely with him at the time because we were dedicated to making this left-democratic government a success, as an alternative model to the Castro model in Cuba.

Q: What about the Cubans? Was this around the time, or was it earlier, that a big cache of arms was found in Venezuela and then- (end of tape)

WILKINSON: I frankly don't remember a large cache of arms being found that was

traced to Castro, and I must say, I'm always suspicious of caches of arms, because they're so easy to manufacture, so as to point a finger at the opposition. More than once in Latin American countries I've wondered whether so-called caches of arms that the opposition was supposedly amassing to prepare for a revolution were genuine or planted. I'm quite sure in a couple of cases in Central America later in the '80s, that the arms were planted. It may sound a bit cynical, but these finds were very convenient for a Reagan administration bent on proving foreign (e.g. Cuban or Soviet) assistance to the rebels.

I neglected to mention earlier that before going to Venezuela I was trained in Spanish in Rosslyn, where the Foreign Service Institute used to be, and my teacher for most of that short period of training in Spanish was Isabel Letelier, the young wife of an Inter-American Bank official, Orlando Letelier. She was one of the most charming instructors I have ever had, which made it very easy to learn Spanish. And of course no one knew at the time how tragic a figure she would become as the widow of Orlando Letelier, who during the Allende years in Chile was the Chilean foreign minister and then when Allende was overthrown was living in exile in Washington and was assassinated by a bomb planted by Pinochet's Chilean intelligence - many people believe with Pinochet's knowledge - that killed Orlando Letelier and an assistant, Ronnie Moffitt, as they passed Sheridan Circle on Massachusetts Avenue in 1975.

Q: Back in Caracas, were we involved with the labor movement there, because this was the height of the Kennedy administration and all that? I would have thought that labor would have been a big focus.

WILKINSON: Labor was a focus. Betancourt was a leader of the labor movement, of the petroleum workers and of the agricultural workers of the country, and it was on the basis of his strength in the labor movement that he was able to get himself elected. And of course, we were pressing, as we have throughout this century, the development of democratic labor unions in the hemisphere and attempting to offset Communist attempts to take over and use a labor movement for political purposes. We of course set up our network with rival labor confederations in the hemisphere and most labor movement in Venezuela belonged to the democratic labor confederation of Latin America [ORIT] or the Christian Democratic [CLAD] one.

Kennedy himself visited Venezuela before I arrived there, but amusingly enough, in light of subsequent developments, we had people coming into the embassy approximately nine months after Kennedy's visit, women coming in and claiming that their new children were American citizens because John Kennedy had spent a few blissful moments with them while he was in Caracas. This was an interesting ploy-

Q: But given the subsequent knowledge of how he operated -

WILKINSON: One wonders whether some of those stories might not have been true. But not likely in this case, after you saw the claimants.

Q: Good thing there weren't DNA tests.

WILKINSON: DNA tests, yes. It was a very sad moment in Caracas when Kennedy was killed, and one of the most moving experiences I've had as an American Foreign Service person was going to the National Cathedral for a memorial service for Kennedy with all the Venezuelan cabinet sitting on one side of the nave and all of the American embassy sitting on the other side face to face, and then at the end of the service we all passed in line and embraced, cabinet-level people in Venezuela embracing all the people in the embassy, and it was a genuinely moving moment, but also one of great solidarity and one of those moments when people come together regardless of political persuasion.

Q: How about with the oil companies? Did you see at least from your perch in the DCM's office how we were relating to the oil companies, or did they sort of go their own way? I'm talking about the American oil companies.

WILKINSON: Yes. The oil companies in Venezuela at the time - I'm not sure of the history of the oil business in Venezuela subsequent to the early '60s - were private, not yet a state monopoly. Venezuela had led the OPEC group in demanding higher and higher royalties from foreign oil companies, principally American oil companies, but had at the same time desisted from nationalization, unlike the Mexicans who went the other route and nationalized all the oil companies in the '30s. The Venezuelans did not do that. Instead, however, they demanded royalties of about two-thirds of the well-head value of the oil. The oil companies were allowed to continue to make substantial mark-up profits as long as they paid their royalties. But the companies were basically retrogressive in their political attitudes. Traditionally, American oil "camps" were almost like citadels, lofty and isolated. Venezuelans did not come and go, and the Americans there mixed very little with the Venezuelan population. I ran into people who after 30 years in Venezuela didn't know more than a few words of Spanish. So it was sort of a strange situation with the involvement of oil companies in Venezuela. There was an uneasy - what's the best word for it? - *concordat* between the oil companies and the government to exist separately, but not a naturally comfortable arrangement.

Q: How did you find social life there?

WILKINSON: We had a wonderful social life. I was young, married - we had one baby - and there were a lot of other young expatriate couples, both American and European, plus some Venezuelans, in particular foreign-educated ones, who did lots of things together. We used to spend weekends together at isolated beaches with very little infrastructure, no hotels. We would go out and stay in huts and swim and snorkel and sing at night, and it was a glorious existence. Many fond memories of serving in Venezuela. I may sound like a diplomatic dilettante, but one of our diversions was catching rare butterflies. William Beebe and Vladimir Nabokov wrote about cloud forest butterflies, but even in our time there they weren't well catalogued. We went out with Bee and Brad Endicott, who subsequently wrote illustrated books about them. Once we were arrested with friends in the Avila hills above Caracas by a militia man with a rifle and a dog that still had its

mouth full of porcupine quills. He turned us over to the closest army garrison. All of the officers seemed to suspect that we were rich-family punks who had become guerrillas. At one point I wondered if they were going to shoot us after summary judgement. Eventually, we convinced one of them that we were diplomats and they let us go.

Q: Were there concerns about the economic progress both in Venezuela and also in the rest of Latin America that you were picking up? This is the time of the Alliance for Progress...

WILKINSON: Exactly. It was a time of course of innovation, a sense of movement, renewal in American policy, some of it well-based and genuine, some of it generated simply by the mystique of the “Camelot” years. But the Alliance for Progress was certainly an attractive concept. The Peace Corps, the establishment of OPIC to insure American investment in less developed countries, the Arms Control Agency, the reconstitution of AID - all of these new developments under Kennedy had a great appeal for Latin Americans and made the early Kennedy years appear to be benign ones for our relationship for Latin America. And of course, early in the Kennedy years, there was a wave when democracy appeared to be advancing in Latin America before the wave of reversions in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, when the experiments didn’t work very well and several countries - Peru, Chile, Brazil, Argentina - reverted to military dictatorship.

Q: When did you come to Caracas?

WILKINSON: In the beginning of ‘62, I remember two events in my first month there. A terrorist bomb next to the country team meeting room on the top floor, planted in a bathroom, blew out half the floor only minutes after a meeting. By great fortune no one was killed. About the same time there was a reception for the Diplomatic Corps at the Casa Amarilla - the Foreign Ministry - on the occasion of a visit by Prince Philip. It was “white tie” - the only “white tie” diplomatic event I’ve been to before or since. I was too new to get an invitation, but I did happen to own a white tie and tails. So someone gave me an invitation and I went and actually talked to Prince Philip. Lee had a pair of new shoes and admitted to the Ambassador at one point that they were killing her. “Take them off,” Stewart said, so she did. No one said anything, or, as far as I noticed, even looked askance.

Q: Okay, the reason I ask about training is, the Cuban Missile Crisis - how did that - what was-

WILKINSON: Yes, of course, that was October of ‘62, yes. I should certainly mention that. We watched that from a safe distance, being in Caracas, worried that somehow nuclear warfare could erupt in this crisis and greatly relieved that it didn’t. Certainly the official declared policy of the Venezuelan Government was total solidarity with us, and although there might have been some popular sentiment - some, but not extensive - supporting Cuba, I think the majority of Venezuelans were on our side. After all JFK had been in Caracas the year before. Khrushchev didn’t visit, nor was he invited.

Q: Well, you left Caracas in 1964, is that correct?

WILKINSON: Yes, in the spring of '64, I came back to Washington, and my wife was at that point pregnant with twins. We knew she was going to have twins. We preferred to do that in Washington. And our next assignment was Stockholm, where we were expected to arrive in mid-1964. We had a couple of months in between when I took, first of all, regular leave and then a month or two of leave without pay in order to finish my master's thesis. I spent a couple of months writing my master's thesis and got the MA degree before we went to Stockholm.

Q: Now what was your master's in?

WILKINSON: International relations.

Q: Any particular focus?

WILKINSON: Yes, the focus was on the United Nations' peacekeeping, a relatively young practice at the time.

Q: Well, then, you went to Stockholm from when to when?

WILKINSON: '64 to '66.

Q: What were you doing then?

WILKINSON: I did consular work the entire time. I was offered the option of doing a year of consular work and a year in the Trade Center as a commercial officer just to get varied experience, and although I didn't feel strongly about it, I opted to stay in the consulate because I thought it was better for the embassy for one person to know what was going on. You need a little time to understand how a section works, and if you have constant rotation you end up with very little management. So I stayed and was, in fact, the senior officer in the visa part of the embassy and found out - I know a lot of people did not particularly like consular work - that I enjoyed it. My predecessors there were Mike Yohn and the late Tom Enders. Enders of course had a very meteoric rise as soon as he left Stockholm, and he had spent as little time doing consular work as he could. He and Gaetana were - I was told - busy cultivating the royal family and other VIPs [very important persons] instead, using family money very liberally. Ironically, the Enders had entertained Swedish Army Colonel Stig Wennerstrom at their apartment the night before he was arrested for spying. Earlier Wennerstrom had spilled NATO secrets during a tour as attache in Washington. Back in Stockholm his spying was revealed by chance, when a maid came across his clandestine radio. (His was probably the most notorious spy case of the '60s).

Q: We'll come back to the consular work, but what was the situation, particularly vis-à-

vis the United States, in Sweden during the '64-'66 period?

WILKINSON: The Swedes were, as always, officially neutral, but in fact, very pro-Western - almost an undeclared member of the NATO alliance. Quietly, and in every conceivable way, they cooperated with the United States on defense matters, not only because their principal economic interests were in the West but because their political orientation was obviously democratic as opposed to communist. So the Swedes, relying heavily on their consummate diplomacy, were able to maintain a superficial neutrality, which in point of fact was not neutral at all. Now, this was somewhat affected, during my time in Sweden, by our involvement in Vietnam. The Swedes were distressed and ultimately became extremely critical of our involvement to the point where it soured their relationships with the U.S. I was the duty officer in the embassy for the first demonstration against Americans. Subsequently, after I left the country in '66, these demonstrations got very ugly. Eggs were thrown - I guess that's not ugly in today's terms, but in the terms of the '60s an egg-throwing demonstration in Sweden was like a bomb-throwing incident in another country. Swedes are normally very polite. In fact, when they demonstrated in front of the embassy when I was on duty, they had a petition, but they were very hesitant to come up to the gate and actually present it to us, and I had to kind of coax them to come up: "Come on, Guys, get it out."

Q: How much of this did you find was university-generated? I mean, so often in universities around the world, not probably as much in the United States, but to a certain extent, universities have sort of leftist-Marxist theoretical types, and it's a time to get out and show your stuff and have some fun demonstrating and feeling strongly about causes.

WILKINSON: Well, that certainly was the case in Latin America. It was the case in Venezuela, when I served there, that the university was a hotbed of leftist activism, with people having so-called - probably in this case true - arsenals of weapons, and protected by the Latin American university tradition, which dates back to the early 20th century, establishing total academic freedom to the point where you might call it "academic license." I don't think that was true so much in Sweden. I think that there's a deep popular pacifism in the country, a deep moral upsurge in favor of anti-violent movements wherever they are, and that there is very strong opinion in favor of pacific solutions to problems, so it is not just universities which foster sentiments like their opposition to the American involvement in Vietnam in the '60s.

Q: What type of government was there, and who was the prime minister, at least when you were there, or prime ministers?

WILKINSON: Well, the prime ministers were a mist procession of Social Democrats whose names I don't even remember now, leading up to the famous Olaf Palme, who was perhaps a more active and more radical Social Democrat than some of his predecessors and was ultimately assassinated in the street. At the time I was there, Palme was not yet prime minister but was perhaps the most strident voice in his party, and he was more vocally critical of U.S. intervention - even Santo Domingo in 1965 - than the more

traditional and more moderate elements of the party.

Q: Did you get involved at all in, you might say, the relations side and all the social life and everything else, or were you -

WILKINSON: The social life, yes. I mean, we had many Swedish friends - and I still do - but I wasn't deeply involved in bilateral relations between the two countries because, obviously, that was handled by other sections of the embassy. There were some interesting representational events even for a lowly vice consul. When Martin Luther King came to give a talk in Sweden, the Embassy sent me. I remember locking arms and singing "We Shall Overcome." The Yale Glee Club visited and the Ambassador Jeff Parsons - also a Yale man, and a fine Ambassador - couldn't go with them on a cruise in the archipelago. So I went in his place. They asked what I wanted them to sing, and I made them go through all of my many favorites - 'Neath the Elms, Mavourneen, Bandoleiro, etc. The December "Lucia" parties were wonderful. During one our four-year old son "T" was the "Jultomten" - the Christmas gnome - bringing up the rear of the procession with a lantern. For recreation we skied cross-country in idyllic countryside in Dalecarlia or explored the Stockholm archipelago by boat with our good friends Alan and June Tapsell. We also played a lot of squash and competed against the British and Canadian Embassies. On one memorable evening Political Counselor Jerry Holloway led us into sort of a gymkhana against the Brits that included a hilarious match of "high cockelorum" - swatting at each other with newspapers while lying on the floor blindfolded.

Q: Well, now talk about the consular work. It was mainly visas? Who was going to the United States, and were there any problems?

WILKINSON: Well, not serious problems. At the time we were reforming our immigration regulations to accord with a 1968 change in the immigration law. The law was intended to advance integration in our own society by promoting domestic U.S. minorities in the workforce, and so we were cutting down on immigration by unskilled laborers of any kind that might compete with minorities in the labor force. One upshot of that was that Americans couldn't import general laborers such as *au pair* girls to work as maids without getting certification from the Department of Labor that there was a scarcity of in that field. Of course with *au pairs* there never was, but one of their primary skills - a generally genteel upbringing - couldn't be defined in a legal way. Labor didn't want consuls to exercise discretion, but the policy was just too rigid. Asking people who wanted an *au pair* girl from Sweden to live in their families to replace her with an inner city high school dropout was not workable. So, I tried to find ways to outflank the Labor Department and to allow visas for people that I knew wanted to go to the States to live with families that wanted to have them. But that was the only really challenging aspect of visa work at the time. And every year or two for the next two decades I ran into one or another Swedish ex-*au pair* girl who had my signature in her passport, usually married and living in the U.S. with an American husband.

One splendid recollection of my Stockholm consular days was of a wonderful chief consular clerk - a man named Elmar Kuritar, an Estonian who insisted on working for the U.S. Government because we still recognized his own country and the other two Baltic states, which had been suppressed by the Soviet Union in 1939. At that time he had been an Estonian third secretary in Moscow, concurrently with George Kennan and Charles Thayer, both of whom he knew. For many years he had been working as a clerk in the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm, and everybody, including the ambassador, would sort of stand in awe of this person. He was very witty, urbane, spoke eight languages. And I remember once, when I asked this chief clerk, "How am I going to learn this difficult Swedish language?" And his reply was lovely. It was, "I don't know, but they say in French, *"Si vous voulez apprendre de l'amour, il faut coucher avec la grand mère."* And that was a very apt phrase in several senses; one had to watch one's behavior in Sweden because the women were so lovely. I had a consular staff that included eight or nine young ladies, all of whom could have easily doubled as models for some magazine. One of them was the statuesque daughter of Lars Lanheim, the movie producer of a renowned early Swedish "soft porn" epic called *One Summer of Happiness*. But this young lady was... She sat outside my office, and I sometimes had trouble focusing on my work.

Q: How about that au pair situation? Did you run across problems? You know, these young ladies going to the United States - I would assume that there would be ones who would come back who had had unhappy situations. Did you get involved in that at all?

WILKINSON: Rarely. But the question does remind me of one incident when a Hungarian-American named Seppi Di Bono, living in Cuba and Florida, came to sponsor an immigrant, a young lady who wanted to come and work in his household. And I said there didn't seem to be a problem, but one of my clerks came and said, "Look, I went to his 'household' last year, and *Playboy* was there photographing all the girls in the swimming pool." And I said, "My goodness, that doesn't sound like an *au pair* situation. It sounds a little different." And so I said he'd better come in for an interview, and he turned out to be quite a character. He showed me pictures of a Taj Mahal type residence in Miami, including a Viking ship bed. He was an artist who did movie star statues in gold. He'd done Anita Ekberg and Elizabeth Taylor and others in gold and silver statuettes for \$35,000, which was a lot of money in those days. And I have since run into Swedish diplomats, even last year, who were good friends with this guy. Evidently he kept going back to Sweden and bringing girls over to the United States as ornaments for his entourage. Others told me later that he married some of them, but the marriages lasted months more often than years.

Q: Did the Cold War intrude on your business at all? I'm thinking Soviet problems and all.

WILKINSON. I don't think I have any intelligent comment on that. In Sweden in the mid-'60's, as I mentioned earlier, Sweden was definitely pro-Western in all of its attitudes. The Cold War didn't seem to... There were no particular incidents while I was there, '64 to '66, of heightened Cold War tensions. Those were earlier in the '60s, the U-

2 downing and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and of course later in the '60s was the invasion of Czechoslovakia...

Q: '68, yes.

WILKINSON: '68.

Q: What about -

WILKINSON: - which did intrude on other things that I'll talk about later.

Q: What about the Soviet spies or people who were considered to be ineligible for visas? Did you have much of that, I mean, people who were identified as being bad actors?

WILKINSON: Yes. It's interesting that you mentioned that. It's a good question because I hadn't thought of that, but I did have ample archive of classified information about Swedes and alien residents in Sweden, who were ineligible for visas or who had for some reason been found to be ineligible for visas in years gone by. And I must say that I found a lot of that information to be spotty, unreliable, untested. And my tendency was to set it aside as hearsay unless somebody on the political side of the embassy would insist for me that I was dealing with a clearly ineligible person. I used to check any questionable cases with other people in the embassy, and when they told me that this was definitely an undesirable person with a current record of undesirable activities, then I would deny the visa, but I tended not to deny them. Now interestingly enough, at one point while I was in Sweden, somebody wrote an anonymous letter to the ambassador saying that "Mr. Wilkinsson" (spelled with two s's as a Swede would) was a Communist. That was it, one short, handwritten note. The author was evidently a Swede who for some reason had a grudge against me and why, I have no idea. He or she may have been denied a visa. But the curious thing was that the security people took this letter seriously. They sent people up from Copenhagen to do a full security investigation of me, and they spent hours in the embassy going around and talking to people to find out if I was really loyal, which I found sort of incredible, because it was based on one silly anonymous letter. But the Scott MacLeod attitude, that everybody's a security risk until proven otherwise, still prevailed.

Q: Scott MacLeod was in during the mid-'50s as head of security and consular affairs, and was an arch-McCarthyite. Well, you left Stockholm in '66. Whither?

WILKINSON: I came back to go to INR. I was assigned to be an assistant to the director for research in Intelligence and Research, in that bureau in the State Department. And the deputy director of research at that time had been for many years and continued to be a delightful, dedicated, urbane and witty man named Allen Evans. Allen Evans had been the acting director of INR when it was first created in 1947, when it was set up to have the operational policy-oriented intelligence function within the State Department, but to avoid duplicating what was being done in greater depth and detail by the CIA. As deputy director for research of INR, Evans was responsible for all the intelligence production in

State; i.e., for the work of nearly all the officers assigned there. There was a separate deputy director of INR, for coordination, who handled intelligence operations and coordination with other Agencies. But my job in INR was to help edit production of intelligence, which could then be sent on to consumers, principally to the Sixth and Seventh Floor, assistant secretaries and the Secretary.

Q: You were doing this from '66 to -

WILKINSON: I did it for a year and a half, from '66 to early '68, and then from January '68 until June '68 I was at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk for six months of political-military training.

Q: Well, in INR, was INR particularly concentrated at that time, did you sense it, on Vietnam?

WILKINSON: Yes. Vietnam was the key issue of INR. There was no question about it. And I guess I'd have to say it was a lack of sensitivity on my part. I did not perceive as much as many other people seemed to at the time how mistaken our policy in Vietnam was or how unresponsive to popular sentiment, how excessively moralistic, how misshapen it was. I had a civil servant boss between Allen Evans and me. He was the senior editor. I was a junior editor. The senior editor was "Hank" (Henry) Cushing. He railed against our policy in Vietnam, and I would tend to defend it by saying, "Hank, look, we're still involved in an ideological struggle, and we are fighting Communism here in Vietnam. It's not clear to me from what I've read whether the principal supporters of the North Vietnamese are the Communist Chinese or the Russians, and there is obviously some friction there between the chains of support with the North Vietnamese getting more support from Russia than they were from China." But whoever was behind North Vietnam, I could see a strategic value in defending the Asian mainland. Moreover, from a moral standpoint, we were supposedly supporting the freedom to choose their own religion for the South Vietnamese and our view that there would be a heavy loss of life among the free elements of South Vietnam, who were largely Catholic - that they were at risk of being slaughtered if the North Vietnamese invaded the South. Then there was our commitment to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. All these factors seemed to mitigate in favor of the policy that we were maintaining at the time, which was to promise military support while pressing for democratic reform of South Vietnam. And my boss, Henry Cushing, in our arguments - which were almost daily - would maintain that supporting the free South Vietnamese only perpetuated a corrupt, retrogressive, almost feudal social system and that we had no vital interests in maintaining the independence and freedom of South Vietnam. And what's more, that the intelligence we were getting - and this was the particular point that we would argue most about - the intelligence we were getting was distorted. He believed that we were getting and purveying false body counts and reporting success when success didn't happen, talking about the Tet Offensive as if it had been defeated, when in fact it was a very successful military operation against the U.S. and South Vietnam. And finally I reached the point in debating this daily with him where I said, "Hank, if you really feel this way, you don't belong in this job because

this is a job where we are working to implement a policy and to defend it, and if you feel that we should instead be attacking it from within, then you really ought to resign.” Well, he didn’t resign. He did an interesting thing instead. He volunteered to go to Vietnam and became a refugee director and spent his next 10 or 15 years out there as a coordinator for refugees in Vietnam, which I thought was an impressive thing to do, in a way a personal statement showing his moral commitment to an alternative policy.

So that was largely my experience in INR. I made many friends there, people who were working in all the branches of INR. They used to call me - I didn’t realize this at the time, but I was later told that I was known as either “Terrible Ted” or “Tinker Ted,” because I took my job seriously and sent a number of pieces back to the drawing board. Not surprisingly, I found the work of 100 or so drafters very uneven, a lot of it splendid, and some of it little more than rubbish.

Q: When you went to Norfolk, you were there as really what? ‘68 to -

WILKINSON: Beginning of ‘68 through the middle of ‘68.

Q: How did you find that? What was the idea of having a State Department officer going to that?

WILKINSON: Very similar to the idea of civilian State Department and other agencies going to the more senior war colleges, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the National War College. This is a junior version of the War College, sort of like Command and General Staff School, major to lieutenant colonel level as opposed to the equivalent to general level. And the caliber of the military people who were there was above average but not high. Many of them were back from Vietnam getting, I believe, their rest and recreation, in effect, and they mostly didn’t feel they had to work very hard. I found myself a little bit out of place. I had been a military officer for four years, from 1956 to 1960, and these were contemporaries of the people who had been my colleagues in the military, but eight years later we had gone in different directions. They were totally committed to Vietnam. Although as I mentioned earlier I had been defending our Vietnam policy, there in Norfolk I found it hard to even raise questions or discuss it. In fact, I think by mid-1968, I was beginning to have my own serious doubts about the wisdom of the policy. And I also found a sort of feeling that anybody who questioned our policy was disloyal, that it was impossible to discuss or debate Vietnam without somehow being disloyal to the flag, which was a terrible situation. And I was still in the Naval Reserves, and I used to go to Reserve Meetings in Washington, and I found the same thing on Thursday nights, when I would go and meet with other naval intelligence types at military reserve meetings. They were talking about going out to anti-Vietnam demonstrations and taking pictures of the people so they could identify them later and make sure that they never got government jobs or clearance and that kind of stuff, which didn’t seem to be at all justified to me. And then, of course, there was the question of napalm. I had colleagues at the War College who had done flying missions using napalm against villagers, and I had a couple of conversations with them and asked them how they felt about that. They didn’t feel

anything. They had been trained not to have feelings, which is tough.

Q: Was there much interest? One of the reasons why State Department officers are put there is, I mean, one is to let you intermix with the military, but since you'd already had the military experience that side wasn't probably too practical, but what about their using you as a resource for American policy? Was there much interest in American world policy and all?

WILKINSON: Yes, I think so. I mean, these were intelligent people who were selected as being above average military officers. They don't usually send the lower half of the military class to training. And I found that they were interested, and they were certainly interested in the State Department officers that came in to lecture. But there was a watershed somewhere along the line. We just had parted company, and a particular illustration was in, was it April 1968? Well, at any rate, in the spring of 1968, when Martin Luther King was killed, I drove back from Norfolk to Washington that Friday and drove into Washington and had an eerie feeling because there weren't any cars on the street. There was a curfew. I had driven from Norfolk to come home for a weekend and nobody is on the street. Couldn't figure out why. And of course, it became evident as soon as I got home and heard the news that there had already been riots and a curfew had been decreed. And when I went back to the college on Monday, I said something about how horrible this assassination was and how this is one more step after the Kennedy assassination towards a much tighter gun control regime in the States. When I said that at a table with five or six people sitting around it, there was dead silence, which I couldn't understand. It was either people who didn't disapprove of King being assassinated or simply disapproved of gun control, but seeing that they were silent, I almost got up from the table and left the room.

Q: Yes. Well, you came back then in mid-'68. Where did you go?

WILKINSON: Well, actually I had been preassigned to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency [ACDA] to work in the international relations division, which at that time was peopled largely by Foreign Service types and staffed our participation in international arms control negotiations - in particular the committee on disarmament in Geneva, which was as of 1968, our only ongoing arms control forum. Now after that came SALT and other specific negotiations that were separated from this multilateral forum in Geneva, but at the time the only arms control talks that we had were in Geneva at the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD).

Q: Well, you were doing this '68 to when?

WILKINSON: '68 to '70, two years.

Q: This is the time when, you were there during... Well, you started during almost at the same time as the very crucial election of '68, which brought the Nixon and Kissinger approach to foreign policy. How did that transition affect your office, I mean just when

you arrived?

WILKINSON: Well, I'm not sure. I have to begin with what had gone before and the election was in the fall of '68, and they took office in January of '69. Nixon and of course Bill Rogers as Secretary of State. And I didn't discern, I don't recall that there was an important watershed between LBJ and Nixon in terms of arms control negotiations, because as we discussed, the principal issue in foreign policy at the time was Vietnam. What was needed was some new approach to solving the Vietnam problem. The ongoing arms control efforts we had, we were trying to get SALT started. We wanted to have Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviets, and we already had projected, even under LBJ, that those talks would start, and I believed it was going to be in late August of '68. And it was just a few days before the projected beginning of the SALT talks that the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia, and we indefinitely postponed the beginning of those talks. They actually were delayed by two years.

Q: The two years, pretty much, that you were with ACDA.

WILKINSON: Right, the two years that I was with ACDA. We were active in arms control, and we had some interesting initiatives underway, but SALT was to be bilateral - not in the multilateral context of the CCD. There were people - the Mexicans, Alfonso García Robles, and the Swede, Alva Myrdal, for instance, two of the lions of disarmament that were subsequently recognized with Nobel prizes - who wanted to have SALT be carried out somehow within a multilateral context so the rest of the world could tell the Soviet Union and the United States how to disarm. And of course, neither the American Administration nor the Soviets at the time had any interest in having their bilateral negotiations supervised by the rest of the world and didn't accept that, and it's a good thing they didn't because it probably would never have been ratified by our Congress if they had. But what we were discussing at the time was continuing efforts to limit nuclear testing and more generally, the production and deployment of weapons of mass destruction. There was already in place a limited test ban treaty, which had been negotiated under Kennedy and signed in 1963, which precluded tests in the atmosphere or on the surface of the earth, anywhere but underground. There was also an outer space treaty, which precluded nuclear testing in space and the stationing of any weapons systems in outer space or on other terrestrial bodies. And we were at that point negotiating a treaty to ban weapons of mass destruction on the seabeds and a ban on biological weapons. Ultimately both were finished and turned into treaties in the early 1970s, discussions continued about a comprehensive test ban, which many countries wanted to have as soon as possible, and of course it took 25 more years to get - although a step in that direction, the so-called "Threshold Test Ban" was concluded in the mid-'70s.

Q: Well, who was in charge of ACDA at that time?

WILKINSON: The first director that I worked directly with was Adrian "Butch" Fisher. He was also our ambassador to the CCD. The characteristic pattern of talks followed by senior negotiators was to spend a good part of the year in Geneva, and then to go to the

United Nations in the fall to discuss the same issues so that all the members of the UN General Assembly could take part... so that the rest of the countries who were not members of the committee in Geneva would know what was going on. And in the First Committee of the United Nations, there was usually a month or six weeks of debate about disarmament issues. Then the negotiators would go back to Geneva in a more restricted framework, which started out as 10, then 18, then 26 and ultimately, now, I believe, there are something like 40 members of that committee. But that committee is supposed to be able to negotiate more intensively and more effectively because their numbers are somewhat restricted, and when they had nearly finished an agreement they would submit it for refinement to the UN.

Q: What were you doing?

WILKINSON: I was a junior officer in the delegation assigned to write position papers and to help the senior officers of the delegation do liaison with other delegations to influence, persuade, and mix with other delegations in these negotiations.

Q: I would have thought that there would have been a feeling of a certain isolation there for somebody like yourself. I mean, one, as a Foreign Service officer, ACDA is off to one side within the structure of the Department of State. At this particular time you had Henry Kissinger, who is playing his games of trying to tie up most elements of the State Department. He didn't want to do any real negotiating unless he was doing it, or at least this is how I see it. And then there's the fact that you're a regular Foreign Service officer, you'd have people who were more professional and knew a lot more about armaments and all than you would on a regular assignment. Did any of these intrude?

WILKINSON: That's interesting... That's a good question, and you mentioned actually three elements that might have made the job seem trivial or irrelevant. I didn't suffer from any of those intrusions, mainly perhaps, because I was so new to the business that I didn't realize - first of all, I don't think anybody knew at the time that Kissinger was actually running away with our policy and ignoring Bill Rogers, because we were talking about the first year of the Nixon, in fact the last six months of Johnson and the first year, year and a half of Nixon, when I was in the Arms Control Agency. And I don't think it was until Kissinger's secret meetings with the Chinese were revealed that people really recognized that Rogers was not in charge of our foreign policy. I think it became evident in two ways. Apart from the fact that Kissinger was very busy doing secret dealings that nobody knew about until later, those of us who watched Bill Rogers in action recognized that he wasn't all that sharp. He kept mixing up people and places, and he was a little bit like Ronald Reagan was later. As for policy, I don't think anybody, up to and including the President of the United States, is really capable of making a unilateral decision about what to do with nuclear weapons. As McNamara said, and I think this is one of the most telling one-liners of the nuclear age, "You cannot fashion a credible deterrent with an incredible weapon." And my attitude has always been that McNamara put his finger on it, that even though we did use nuclear weapons once under extreme circumstances, those circumstances are unlikely to repeat themselves in almost any foreseeable circumstances.

And therefore, our nuclear weapons are more a burden than an asset, and we should work as hard as we can to find ways to control them and use our economic and political and diplomatic strengths and skills in their place to make a better world order. To have to fall back on the threat of nuclear weapons is an awesome responsibility, to be avoided at all costs.

Q: Yes.

WILKINSON: So, translating that back to '68 and responding to your question as did I feel relevant or irrelevant, the answer is I thought we were relevant because we were dealing on a macro level with an issue that nobody is a total expert in. We were trying to find ways to broaden the scope of the disarmament commitments that we and other members of the world community had accepted and, little by little to expand them into the nuclear area so that this unspeakable weapons system could be confined, and the people who were doing this job in ACDA were almost all FSOs like me.

Q: From your perspective, how were we, as the United States, relating to other governments, because I would think, working in ACDA, you went in a multinational, multilateral forum, you'd find an awful lot of people giving lots of advice, but they weren't part of... They didn't have these things, they didn't have the responsibility and in a way what they were dealing or proposing was almost gratuitous. I mean, we had to settle this with the Soviet Union.

Q: That's right. It was gratuitous, and what one had to do as a diplomat was to find ways to use what they were saying for our own domestic policy purposes. If we wanted to... I wouldn't be so arrogant as to say that we the Americans who were working in ACDA at the time were going to be able to change a disarmament policy in any abrupt or major way, but we could work it slowly but surely in a direction that we saw was right, and we could then use the views of the rest of the world to buttress our case in domestic policy discussions. If you used it too liberally and without refining it, then you would be laughed out of court. In effect, you would be told, "Who cares what the Mexicans think or the Brazilians or the Indians?" But if you could present a consensus of the Mexican, the Brazilians, the Indians, and the Argentines in favor of a modification of a sensible change to the draft of an arms control agreements that would allow others to sign it when otherwise they wouldn't sign it, then of course, you had something that people might listen to.

Q: Well, now, were the Soviets-

WILKINSON: And I didn't mention before, the non-proliferation treaty, the NPT, which was the most important disarmament initiative of the '60s after the limited test ban, was negotiated and signed in '68 and went into force in 1970, and of course that was the linchpin of our disarmament policy then and remains so.

Q: It still is a very -

WILKINSON: It still is.

Q: Did you find, were the Soviets playing a different game? Because often in the nuclear field, we seem to be much more at one with the Soviets at certain points than anywhere else. I mean, mainly we didn't want other people monkeying around with these weapons. They're dangerous.

WILKINSON: The long and the short of it is, that's true.

Q: Your attitude - I'm talking about your delegation and the people you were working with - was that we and the Soviets were really walking on the same side of the street to a certain extent, in what you were trying to do?

WILKINSON: I think that was true in Geneva. The Soviets, of course, tended more than we did to say, The hell with the rest of the world; we'll do whatever we want to do, not because they were stronger than we were but because they depended less, perhaps, on building a consensus in order to achieve their foreign policy goals than we traditionally did and still do. So what we would do with the Russians is attempt to coax them into more international sensitivity to achieve some kind of an arms control agreement, like the NPT, which was a triumph for American diplomacy more than for any other country. Certainly all the modifications and changes and clauses in the NPT were negotiated basically by Americans with UK help. But when the chips were down, the U.S., the UK, and the Soviets basically tended to act together in the face of pressure from the rest of the world for faster and more general disarmament. One of the big debates about the NPT was what commitments would be made by the superpowers in return for the commitment of the rest of the world to accept disarmament. And there's this article, Article 6 of the NPT, which binds us to pursue nuclear disarmament, and several specific articles in the preamble which talk about general and complete disarmament and about a comprehensive test ban and other aspects of arms control that we bound ourselves to seriously pursue in exchange for the NPT commitment. And what I find amazing is that that commitment has persisted and even broadened over 30 years with the accession of countries like South Africa, Argentina, and Brazil, which initially rejected the treaty; and even by France and China, which at the time stood aside and today have come on board to either sign or support the treaty 25 years later. It's been an extraordinary American foreign policy success.

Q: Well, at the time, again, '68 to '70, were there any delegations or individuals or other countries that were particular problems for us, I mean from your delegation, your outfit's view?

WILKINSON: Yes, they were the second tier of regional powers that didn't like the domination of the world by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the superpower condominium that they so often accused us of. In these and in other negotiations, but principally in disarmament negotiations. And they consisted of particularly almost the so-called

“threshold countries,” like India, that at the time that had pretensions to regional leadership who were being pushed aside by sheer bullying by the U.S. and the Soviet Union on the core issue, which is nuclear disarmament.

Q: Were the French giving particular problems at that time?

WILKINSON: No more no less than they did for the ensuing 25 or 30 years, but like China they are permanent members of the UN Security Council with vetoes and know they can't be browbeaten into submission by the U.S.

Q: What about the military on our delegations, our military?

WILKINSON: We had very low-level and weak military participation in Geneva, and I think it was because we really were dealing with issues where the military was not currently doing anything. If we'd been talking about taking away something the military had, like mines, we would have had 30 generals on our delegation. But we were talking about things like biological weapons, where the United States had a research facility at Fort Dietrich but wasn't engaged in the production of usable biological weapons - at least I hope we weren't. You never knew for sure what we were doing that you weren't told about, and of course, the more experience we had the less certain we were that we knew what our clandestine side was doing (e.g. with the Nixon administration and later with CIA Director Casey). But military participation was not meaningful in any of the arms control negotiations that I've taken part in. Now that changed when I went to NATO in 1970 and became part of our East-West military disengagement talks, which would have had a profound effect on the military, and of course the military were very involved in those talks.

Q: So in 1970 you were assigned, what, to NATO?

WILKINSON: In early 1970, I got a letter from a friend saying that he was leaving his assignment in the American delegation to NATO, and he wondered if I'd be interested in succeeding him in his job. And of course I immediately went into full-court press to try to get that job, and in the end, I don't know, I think there were some other people that were interested, but I was lucky enough to get it in the assignment process. That's the first time I really pushed for an assignment and was able to get it. Previously, my assignment requests didn't seem to have much relation to the assignments I got. Lee and I, our son "T" and the twin girls, Becky and Jenny were to go be transferred in mid-summer. I had been taking more graduate courses in the last four years and cleared the decks for Brussels by taking comprehensive field exams for a doctorate. Although I passed them all, I never found time afterwards to do the thesis.

Q: You were doing the NATO job from 1970 to when?

WILKINSON: '74.

Q: '74. Where were you stationed?

WILKINSON: Brussels.

Q: Brussels. Obviously, what you were doing was turning you into a political-military officer.

WILKINSON: That's right.

Q: Was there such a field at that time, or was it -

WILKINSON: Absolutely, absolutely. In fact, I think the field of political-military officers thrived particularly during the cold war. I'd sensed that since 1990 the embassies' political-military sections and the role of political-military officers has probably diminished from what it was in the days when almost everything we did was colored by optic of whether it had an equal and opposite effect on Soviet involvement in country X.

Q: Well, in NATO, you had four years there?

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: What was your particular responsibility?

WILKINSON: Well, at the time, our mission to NATO, our civilian mission to NATO, had a political and a political-military section. The Political Section did issues of policy coordination in what - for want of a better word - could be called our *Ostpolitik*, how one dealt with the countries of Eastern Europe and how one dealt with other political issues of concern to NATO, sometimes on a more cosmic level, such as the Middle East crisis and the Cyprus crisis. And the Political-Military section did issues of disarmament and related political-military problems that were more clearly defined in scope. Larry Eagleburger was the political counselor at the time, and my boss was a man named Vince Baker, and there couldn't have been two more different people, Larry Eagleburger being outgoing and, of course, at the beginning of a very illustrious further career, and Vince Baker being an older "Wristonized" person who really didn't ever want to go abroad and had never previously served outside of the United States, but was an expert on disarmament and political-military issues from the European Policy Bureau. So under Vince's supervision, I did arms control work, and there were three of us. The other person who was working with us at the time was Arthur Woodruff, who was senior to me and did whatever specific issues came up. But the general work on disarmament as it involved NATO was mine, and that included being assigned as the American member of a group which was just being formed to design mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe. So I had an interesting new job, which was to represent the U.S. in a working group of NATO to design a plan to reduce forces bilaterally in Europe, for the NATO side to be reduced and for the Warsaw Pact side to be reduced in a balanced way. At this point in 1970, there was no agreement to have such negotiations with the Warsaw Pact, but NATO hoped

there would be one.

Q: Well, when you arrived there, what was the attitude towards several elements, but about the mutual and balanced reduction of force in Europe? Was there a feeling that this could possible fly, or the Soviets were still sort of in our dog house as far as after Czechoslovakia went?

WILKINSON: That's right. The West basically, the United States in particular, was already feeling the economic pinch of supporting American forces in Europe. We wanted our allies to pick up more of the burden. We wanted them to share the burden, contribute more to their own defense, and for the U.S. to maintain fewer forces in Europe and spend less. But we didn't want to do this unilaterally because we felt it would be an invitation to Soviet meddling in Western Europe, that the withdrawal of American military, the winding down of American forces... As I recall there were something like 200,000 ground troops and maybe 100,000 others, navy and air force, in Western Europe, and the burden of supporting this large a contingent was pretty heavy.

Q: We were beginning to have balance-of-payment problems, I think. At this point they were beginning to become apparent.

WILKINSON: Yes, I think it was 1971, when we went off the gold standard, so that was driving us to look for ways to find a balanced reduction of forces in Europe. And the Germans had a sort of parallel interest in promoting a more peaceful, a more permanent situation in Europe. We were still living in an armed camp, which didn't seem necessary 25 years after World War II. It seemed like it was time to move on to a more permanent and peaceful, less tense, confrontation in Europe, so they were pursuing what they called the *Ostpolitik*, which was basically a policy of detente.

Q: Now this was Willy Brandt's-

WILKINSON: It was Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr and a German Social-Democratic policy basically, but one that was adopted and followed by the Christian Democrats as well. The Soviets, in turn, wanted reassurance that Germany basically would not seek revenge and change frontiers that had been established at Yalta and Potsdam, and what they sought was a conference that would ratify the new status quo - division of Germany in two parts, the Russian seizure of parts of eastern Poland and the eastern tip of Czechoslovakia, that these borders wouldn't be changed, or at least that there would be no attempt to change them by force, some reassurance that Germany would not once more attempt to impose its will on Russia. So they were seeking a so-called European Security Conference. And it was Kissinger who, in the early '70s, met with the Soviets and Western Europeans and put together the compromise that eventually prevailed, which was that both of these initiatives would go forward in parallel, the mutual and balanced force reductions to satisfy the West and the European Security Conference to satisfy the Russians. I don't remember the exact date - I believe it was in 1972 - that this compromise was first reached and formalized and publicized. And it was agreed that the

two conferences would begin in 1973, and in fact they did.

Q: This was the beginning of what became known as the Helsinki Accords.

WILKINSON: The beginning of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation - "Cooperation" was added because the West felt that it shouldn't be limited to just security issues and then in parallel, the Vienna talks on mutual and balanced force reductions. The CSCE, as it was called, actually met in preliminary sessions, all but the final session, in Geneva, and I ultimately was at the last round of that conference before the final act was signed in Helsinki in mid-1975.

Q: Well, could you talk a bit about the dynamics within Western Europe and the United States from your perspective on these Geneva talks, I mean, before and up through.

WILKINSON: Well, let me talk a little bit first about designing a position for going into these talks with the Soviet Union on mutual and balanced force reduction. Within the mission, really, the political-military side handled the preparations for mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR), and the political side that worked for Larry Eagleburger worked on the European Security Conference. Ultimately we were all amalgamated into one section under Larry later in my tenure in NATO. But MBFR was an effort to define a simple formula for force reductions in Central Europe that would leave the West protected against an overwhelming Soviet land power and at the same time satisfy the Soviets that their security was not diminished. Trying to find formulas that would do this was not easy. NATO's forces were positioned to block an invasion of Western Europe through the north European plains. In exchange for Soviet reductions in Eastern Europe, NATO would reduce forces in Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium. The French said, "We don't want to have anything to do with this; you're not going to reduce forces on our territory." Therefore, France was ruled out from the start. France had already departed from the integrated structure of NATO in 1965. They in effect said, "We're in NATO for political purposes and not for military purposes. Count us out when you're talking about NATO-Warsaw Pact, bloc-to-bloc disarmament and military initiatives. And on the Eastern side, we talked basically about reducing Soviet forces basically in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. And there were innumerable discussions about what the formula for reductions would be, what kinds of ceilings had to be put on air power to make sure that air power wasn't used to make up for what was reduced in terms of land forces, and we debated these issues among ourselves at NATO *ad nauseam* for the three years between 1970 and 1973 until we actually entered the negotiations in Vienna. When we did enter into negotiations, the allies also insisted for negotiating purposes, that Hungary be included on the Eastern side. And the Soviets said, "No, Hungary isn't part of Central Europe; Hungary's in Southern Europe." Strategically speaking they said, it's part of our "southern" group of forces. And we had a lovely argument about the geography of Hungary. Although I wasn't there, Vlad Lehovich told me that he found a Russian lexicon defining Hungary as "a country in Central Europe." But in the end it was agreed that Hungary would not be included in the area of reduction.

Q: How about within our delegation and as we worked on this? I would have thought that you would have found a rather sharp divide between our military members and our civilian members.

WILKINSON: Indeed. That's very perceptive. The military, of course, did not like the idea of either (1) reductions or (2)(even worse) post-reduction ceilings. Of course, if you're going to have reductions, it's meaningless if you can move forces back in the next day, so you have to have some kind of a ceiling that is agreed to for the period after reductions. And the military said, Well, that restricts our ability to reinforce when there's a political crisis and restricts our exercises and our maneuverability, and we don't like this. We don't want to have anything to do with it. But the motive for MBFR always was political and economic, to the extent that it was necessary, and in the end it proved scarcely necessary, because the Soviets were reducing faster than the agreement could decree. At the time it seemed that it would be necessary and that our military would just have to swallow it, but there might well have been ratification difficulties.

Q: What was the perception at that time, during the early '70s, of the Soviet military threat?

WILKINSON: Well, it was still the perception of the West that the Soviet army, which numbered in the millions, several million ground troops, was the overwhelming military reality of Europe, that the West, while much better equipped and technically more advanced, simply could not withstand the crushing numbers of the Soviet military if the Soviets had been motivated to roll through Northern Europe. And to the classic argument that the defender has an advantage that requires the offensive nation to invade or attack with a three-to-one or two-and-one-half-to-one advantage in order to win an engagement, came the obvious military reply; "Yes, but you can't be sure, and that's not a genuine formula because leadership matters, etc. So don't assume that we can defend Western Europe without keeping our forces at our current level unless you have very strong reductions on the Soviet side and very firm limitations afterwards" - and even the NATO military people don't like it because those limitations would also apply to us.

Q: Well, I would think that also, looming over the whole thing, would be the fact that the Soviets have a land border and they can step back a little ways, and we've got an ocean. It's pretty apparent when we come in, and they can sort of slip people in without making as many waves as we would.

WILKINSON: Absolutely right. That was always an element in any equation, that the costs and logistics for our reinforcements were vastly more difficult than theirs.

Q: Now we have this annual - what is it? - "Reforger" exercise of bringing troops from the United States. We did it every year to keep the sinews in exercise.

WILKINSON: Right, exactly.

Q: Was there implicit, when the people were talking about a war in Europe, that somewhere along the line somebody was going to use a nuclear weapon if it gets out of hand, one way or another?

WILKINSON: Well, there is even today a debate with the new German Government, which took office a few months ago, the Schröder Government, proposing that NATO adopt a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy to reduce further the risk of nuclear war in Europe. But in the past, it's usually been the Soviets who wanted such an agreement. NATO resisted it because nuclear retaliation was a major element of our "deterrent."

Lt's finish with these European disengagement action talks - which I worked at through mid-1973. When our delegation actually entered negotiations in Vienna we had a higher-level negotiator, Jock Dean, who came and became the chief negotiator for the Vienna force reduction talks. And the site of discussions moved from the preparatory stage to an actual negotiation on the site, where both sides were meeting in their separate seats, NATO in Brussels and the Soviets in the Warsaw Pact context. And so that was the end of the preparatory phase. And then we entered the phase where the security conference met in Geneva and the arms reduction talks were meeting in Vienna.

Q: All right, well, we'll pick that up, but first one question: was the Mansfield Amendment floating around at this time, which was to withdraw many of our forces.

WILKINSON: Absolutely, absolutely, and one of the principal efforts of the U.S. delegation in Brussels was to find ways to deflect the Mansfield Amendment, because we felt that any unilateral withdrawal, any kind of unilateral disarmament, would be destructive of our defense relationship and our basic security interests in Western Europe.

Q: Well, did the fact that you had this Mansfield Amendment, which every administration had opposed, but still, did this have the effect of making the Western European allies take our presence in Europe more seriously and realize that they'd better sort of shape up themselves?

WILKINSON: Absolutely, it had exactly that effect. It forced the pace for our allies, some of whom were more interested in MBFR than others. The Germans always were willing to go along with us on MBFR. Some of our other allies were very concerned about it, particularly the flank states, like Norway, and the southern flank, the Greeks and the Turks, felt that if we reduced forces in Central Europe, the Russians would station more forces on their borders and their security interests would suffer. So we had to wave the Mansfield Amendment flag all the time, on the one hand, to show our allies that we meant business when we talked about force reductions, and then go back to Washington and say the opposite, Defeat the Mansfield Amendment because it will break our alliance.

Q: One further question and then we'll stop. What about, was there a certain amount of disquiet within our representation about Brandt's Ostpolitik in Germany?

WILKINSON: I think the Republican Party never was quite sure. Certainly the more conservative elements in the Washington establishment were worried about the *Ostpolitik*. They thought it would lead to a *rapprochement* of Europe too fast and stimulate pacifism in Western Germany at a time when we were hoping that the West Germans would bear a greater defense burden, so it wasn't universally welcomed in Washington. I don't think Henry Kissinger saw it as necessarily a great policy, although he was clever enough to be able to work with it and manipulate it to our own satisfaction.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up the next time, really about 1973, and we've talked about what you were doing in NATO and on the mutual and balanced force reduction; but you said that in your last year you were doing something different. If you would just put it on tape, and then we'll know where to start.

WILKINSON: Right, let's talk the next time about how we handled the Middle East crisis, the Cyprus crisis, and some other issues of European defense cooperation that I got involved in in 1973, because I was frankly bored with MBFR and wanted to do something different.

Q: Okay, good.

Today is the 11th of February, 1999. Ted, so, we're in 1973, and let's talk about the Middle East and other things you were doing with NATO.

WILKINSON: Let's talk about NATO, and then, if we can, I'd like to go back and add few footnotes to some earlier stuff, because I could pick up some things we had missed before.

Q: Absolutely.

WILKINSON: And I was in Brussels at NATO for four years from 1970 to 1974, and during those four years, the post went through three ambassadors and a chargé. The ambassadors were Bob Ellsworth, a kind of interesting fellow who did all his work standing up, never sat down at a desk in his office (he would stand up and wrote a lot of his own speeches; he was a very independent kind of guy); then David Kennedy, who had been the Secretary of the Treasury and came to NATO and thought he would turn NATO into an economic cooperation organization and really never caught on as a political coordinator for our policies to Europe; then George Vest, who served as chargé until he was called back by Henry Kissinger to be his press spokesman - a great FSO, but not a success as a press spokesman. (Kissinger wanted him to tell lies, and he just never got the hang of it.) Don Rumsfeld, who saw working at NATO as a stepping stone to the presidency, I think. He was convinced of his place in history, one that he certainly legitimately occupied soon afterwards as Secretary of Defense, later as a Nixon-Ford Chief-of-Staff, and still a major political force. At the time Rumsfeld kept his personal

memoirs every day: oral history, so to speak, into a machine daily, which was a very smart thing to do. Interesting kind of guy to work for.

I mentioned these because each of the ambassadors sort of cast our participation in NATO in a different way.

You had also mentioned, what was it like working with Larry Eagleburger? Larry Eagleburger was the political counselor there, and working with him was kind of interesting. Larry was on the cusp of being a political person even then because his mother was a national committee woman.

Q: Republican, wasn't it?

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: With Melvin Laird...

WILKINSON: Eagleburger didn't like pretense. He rarely drafted anything. The only time I ever saw him write a telegram, he wrote a brilliant telegram in about 10 minutes - very short, but very to-the-point. And he had to deal with Ed Streater, who was the director of RPM and sort of his counterpart in Washington, whom he referred to as "Bubblehead." The two of them would yell at each other on the telephone for half an hour or an hour. I moved to Larry's section in 1973, and at that time I left what I had been doing before, which was mutual and balanced force reductions, as we mentioned, and started doing more political issues. Larry left at close to the same time, and I worked with Jim Goodby and Jerry Helman as the political counselor and deputy, with Rumsfeld and with Gene McAuliffe, who was the deputy chief of mission. And the reason I asked for the change of duties was that the scene of action for the MBFR negotiations had shifted to Vienna, where we had a delegation headed by Jock Dean and including Reggie Bartholomew as the Defense representative. They took over the policy-making aspect, wanted to do it their own way, and really didn't want to hear anything from NATO headquarters, particularly from our allies. Having listened to our allies and trying to accommodate their interests for 3 years and then seeing them almost completely disregarded by Washington was a little frustrating. So I was happy to get away from it, and to pick up another aspect of our participation in NATO, which was more broadly political, and in that time frame to see us, as we have frequently since, try to expand the role of NATO as a policy-coordinating body to extend beyond Europe. And the first example of that was our assistance to Israel during the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, when we were hoping to be able to send supplies. We were concerned that Israel might be forced to the wall and tempted to use nuclear weapons, and the ramifications of this would be serious for the whole stability of the Middle East. And in order to make sure that didn't happen, we wanted it to be supplied with military supplies, and we asked for overflight privileges and didn't get them from most of our NATO allies. Washington was not happy with our allies during that period. The others, I think, didn't feel that it was likely that Israel was going to be overrun.

Q: There was, of course, the threat that if Israel started to get overrun at that time, that they probably, we were pretty sure that they had nuclear weapons, I mean, maybe one or two, something like that, and if they were going to go down, they sure as hell would drag everybody else down.

WILKINSON: Yes, well, of course, I don't think the United States ever encouraged Israel to develop nuclear weapons. We had done our best to avoid that becoming an issue, and we'll get back to that when we talk about my role at the UN in the late '70s, but by the same token, the U.S. wouldn't want Israel to be overrun or to be forced into using nuclear weapons because of the ramifications of both eventualities.

Q: Were you at all involved in talking to people at different levels at this point on the Middle East, within NATO?

WILKINSON: Yes, but it really only became an issue for NATO during the 1973 autumn months when we were talking about resupply for Israel. There was an additional dichotomy because U.S. Forces in Europe, if they ever came into play, were NATO. We would have had to consult with NATO about using those forces in the Middle East in a mission that had nothing to do with the collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty area. But that issue didn't really arise then or as far as I know until Desert Storm 20 years later, and then of course some of our allies also sent European theater troops. This is not to say that others objected to being kept informed - and to some extent even "consulted" - about issues outside of NATO. NATO, at the time, and I think subsequently even more so with the expansion, first to include Spain (1982) and now Eastern Europeans, made a regular practice of discussing major foreign policy issues even if they aren't directly related to the NATO defense, bringing distinguished policy makers or others in. I remember, for instance, while I was there we had Geoffrey Jackson, who came and addressed the council on his experiences when held captive by the Tupamaros. The British ambassador was held for a year underground in Uruguay, and talked about what is it like to be held captive by a Communist or a Marxist insurgency in Latin America - nothing directly to do with NATO, but of broad interest to members. (I had met Jackson many years earlier in 1949, on one of the Queens, when he was en route to a post in Colombia and I was returning to school. We sat at the same table and exchanged letters for several years.) Similarly, we were briefed in the NATO Council [NAC] about Vietnam, not because we wanted to coordinate the council to take any particular collective action, but because it was in our interest to influence the member governments in ways that would help our policies. I don't think we were as expert at manipulating the Council as some of our smaller allied friends, to whom the NAC was perhaps the best way for them to pursue their national interests - Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Scandinavian allies, who really had no clout in capitals, but if they could make a big show in the NAC, they'd get it reported back to all the other allied capitals. And people did read our reports Washington. So the Belgian, André de Staercke, who had been there for many years, whom I got to know fairly well, admitted to me that he play acted when it suited his purposes. He was able to make his face get red by holding his breath, to make a

great show of anger. In fact, he had been an actor by profession earlier in his life, so he would pound the table and practically take off his shoe and behave like Khrushchev in the UN General Assembly. And then you'd see him five minutes later, and he was all smiles, so it was a complete act. As an example of the readership of our reports, Political-Military Counselor Ray Garthoff did a parody of a NAC meeting with such permanent representatives as Obfuscare (Portugal) and Da Folie (Italy) uttering standard national bromides. It was actually transmitted by mistake when the NAC Ministers were away, meeting in Ottawa. I was told that Rogers was shown a copy and was not amused. Once when Rogers was in Brussels at another NAC ministerial, the seats behind him - maybe 20 - were filled with his traveling court, the assistant secretaries and special assistants from the Department. Rogers wrote a note with a question about his meeting with the Danish Foreign Minister in Copenhagen the day before: something cryptic like "What did the Dane say?" The note passed through all the hangers-on and came to rest with me in the last seat, present as the supporting officer. I went out and called the chargé in Copenhagen. The next day there was a beautiful ample cable report from Embassy Copenhagen to USNATO slugged: "For Secretary Rogers and Ted Wilkinson."

Henry Kissinger used to come and also do a little play acting too in the NAC, but then when it was over he wanted verbatim reports, and I remember once when he briefed on SALT. He'd just come from consultations with the Soviets, and this was in effect his first recounting. Even people who had been with him didn't know what he had actually said in the one-on-one meetings that he had just finished until he reported about it in the NAC. And he talked for two and one-half hours. I was sitting behind him, and one other guy, as the note-takers, and at the end of it somebody came to me and said, "You've got to report this verbatim." And I said, "How the hell can I do that?" First of all, I could hardly understand the guy. I'm sitting directly behind him, hearing only every other word, spoken with that inimitable German accent. And second, I couldn't have transcribed it all even if I had been an expert stenographer. Well, I complained about this to Jack Maresca, who was the chef de cabinet with Luns - the secretary general's personal assistant - and he said, "Well, you know, it's against all policy to tape record a NAC meeting, but the Secretary General does it anyway for his personal use, and I'll let you review the tapes." So I was able to actually reconstruct everything Kissinger said and send back a verbatim report, and Washington was quite surprised and happy at the detail that we submitted about what Kissinger had accomplished in SALT bilaterals with the Soviets, because nobody else really knew.

Well, let's see, what else? One amusing recollection was when we were talking, as we often did in NATO, about the follow-up for the European security conference, the CSCE, when it would eventually take place; i.e. what kind of organizations would exist to implement CSCE decisions. For whatever mythological reason - I don't even remember particularly what the reasoning was - NATO did not want any permanent institutions to be established by the CSCE. So the Canadian, Ross Campbell, at one point ended up his peroration on the CSCE in the NAC by saying, "And furthermore, ladies and gentlemen, I do not believe it is fitting to leave this conference with a permanent standing organ." And there was silence. And then there was raucous laughter. And then Campbell compounded

it by turning bright red, realizing what he had said, and then looking around and seeing a couple of ladies, he said, "Excuse me, ladies."

Q: Did you find, when you were dealing with the political side of NATO... I would have thought that there couldn't have helped but be an overlapping and a certain amount of jostling and sharp elbows between NATO and the emerging European Community.

WILKINSON: Well, this was an issue that I was going to turn to, that I grappled with a good bit in that last year at NATO, because at that point I felt I'd been there long enough to understand some of the more underlying issues that we were struggling with dealing with Europeans, and of course the core issue for American security in Europe was how many troops do you have to keep there, what kinds of American forces do you need to buy for yourself in Europe to discourage any kind of renaissance of adventurism on the part of - who knows? - it doesn't have to be a German or a Russian; it could even be an Italian or a French or some other power, e.g. Greece vs. Turkey, who wants to regain its lost territory or put back its people that speak its language under its control from its capital. What kind of presence does the United States need to leave there, and how do we balance that with the constant cost-cutting pressures? There was balance-of-payment pressures first of all, which caused us to devalue and go off the gold standard in 1971, when we were just spending more on Vietnam and elsewhere abroad than we could afford and losing dollars every year and trying to find ways to cut back on expenses abroad; and second, our budget-cutting pressures. We were after the allies even then, as we continued to be for years and years and probably even today, to share more of the burden of defense in Europe. So the Europeans began to respond by saying that they would cooperate and they would buy the same kind of equipment. They would produce tanks in one country and airplanes of a special type in another country. They had one aircraft they were proposing to build called the "multi-role combat aircraft," abbreviated as MRCA and sardonically nicknamed the "Military Requirements Come After," because the politicians, as always, insisted on their own requirements first. And that was really the lesson that I ended up drawing from all of this debate, even in the '70s, and I don't think it has changed that much, that defense cooperation among the Europeans would come at the very bitter end of the political union process, and I don't think that they've arrived at that even today with monetary union in sight. The idea of specializing so that one country develops antiterrorism forces and another one does Green Berets and a third one does the Air Force and a fourth one builds this kind of ship. They're still too concerned about their individual security and too jealous of their individual prerogatives to be able to really cooperate, and certainly weren't able to do it then, and one wonders if they're even ready for it now.

Q: Well, you know, if you were to do a little ranking, which members, from what you gather, were the serious members in NATO, who really were working at it as an instrument as opposed to one just really in their own short-term national interests?

WILKINSON: The Germans certainly considered NATO to be the core of their national security. It was their way of keeping the United States engaged in Europe so that neither

Russian revanchism nor rivalries influences among the Europeans got out of bounds. Germany at that point was significant militarily, but was not in any way capable of withstanding a threat from the east. France, having left the militarily “integrated” part of the NATO alliance, did not participate in even military exercises or joint logistics planning, was interested in NATO more as a way to influence and coordinate others politically but not as a linchpin of its security policy, which was to be prepared for “tous azimuths.” The British tended to work very closely with us and with the Germans. And of course, interestingly enough, the flank countries, the northern flank, the Scandinavian countries, and the southern flank, Turkey and Greece and Italy, were reassured by the fact that because they were exposed geographically they could count on the security and military assistance from the United States and the rest of Western Europe. Now when key national interests diverged, as they did between Greece and Turkey in the Cyprus crisis, in the spring and summer of 1974, then you really tested their allegiance to NATO, whether they would or could suppress what they saw as this key national rivalry, particularly in Cyprus, and cooperate in NATO was a serious question. And what happened in July of 1974 was a coup and a decision by the Cypriot government to set in train the process of *enosis*, or union of Cyprus with Greece, that caused the Turks to say: “This can never happen. We will have to send military force and to invade or reinforce the Turkish part of Cyprus and declare its autonomy.” And this was one of the great failures of Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State because he was preoccupied with other issues, particularly in the Middle East, and simply ignored advisers who tried to get him to focus on the Cyprus crisis in the period when American intervention, in terms of interposing a military cordon or some action to prevent either the Greeks or the Turks from taking any precipitate action, might have prevented that step, which has embittered the Cyprus situation seriously and prevented any solution to this day. And there was a period when we reported daily from NATO that this was driving the two countries to the brink of war, but we got no action and no replies at all. Finally, Kissinger sent Joe Sisco, then under-secretary for political affairs, out to explore the situation, a week late. The Turks had already sent an occupation force into the Turkish sector and declared autonomy for it. Rumsfeld took me with him flying to London to meet with Sisco and to describe the situation in NATO as Sisco was on his way to Ankara and Athens to deal with the situation down there, but it was too late. The steps that we could have taken simply lapsed because Kissinger’s attention was not focused.

Q: You left when?

WILKINSON: The summer of ‘74, shortly after this.

Q: Shortly after that. Because that was on July 4th or something.

WILKINSON: I believe it was July.

Q: It was July; I just can’t remember, maybe it was July 14th.

WILKINSON: I think July 14th sounds more like it. I worked on that issue and then left,

maybe in late August or something like that.

Q: How did you find the Greek and Turkish representatives - not just this time but before this, as far as members of NATO?

WILKINSON: I found them very congenial but I didn't think that they were perhaps the top caliber diplomats of their countries one might expect. They were average to good, but not really good. I remember at the time in one of the early NAC debates there was an action in which a Greek ship was sunk, and it appeared at the time as a result of fire from Turks, and there was very angry exchange of charges in the NAC, with both permanent representatives calling each other names, and we practically had to intervene physically, until we learned some time after the council meeting - as is so often the case, the first report was wrong - and that the Greek ship was sunk by friendly fire.

Q: In the summer of '74, when you left NATO, where did you go?

WILKINSON: I went from there back to Washington. I had been lured into working at the Pentagon with the promise that - at that point I was an old FSO-4 - and I was told that I was going down to be a special assistant to the director of International Security Affairs (ISA) for Europe, into an FSO-2 job. That seemed to be a step toward promotion, and I accepted. Several people said, "Do you really want to go to the Pentagon to work there? It hasn't worked out very well for a lot of other people." And I said, "Well, I think I know what I'm getting into, and I think I want to do it." I was bitterly disappointed when I got there, and the people that told me that I shouldn't go there had proved to be right, at least at first, because the office that I had expected to occupy had been taken by somebody else and they had no place for me to sit, and they didn't have any portfolio for me. They hardly expected me at all, and didn't know what to do with me when I got there, so I had to create my own job. Of course, we all have to do that from time to time, and it ended up being quite an interesting assignment, but only because I looked around for things that weren't being done and took them up and started doing them.

Q: Well, you were over at the Pentagon from '74 to when?

WILKINSON: '74 to '76.

Q: What did you end up doing?

WILKINSON: Well, during the first year, I ended up picking up responsibility for the Department of Defense participation in the European security conference, the CSCE, which at that point was already started and was going on in Geneva as a conference that ultimately produced what we now know as the Helsinki Final Act. (That was only because the signature took place in Helsinki; all the preparatory negotiations that led to the writing of the Final Act took place in Geneva.) So I worked at first on writing instructions to the delegation, which was working on several different types of issues, which for convenience were divided into "baskets." There was a basket for, political and

legal issues, and there was another basket and for economic and social issues, and a third basket, which was military-security issues. I covered the military-security issues, and then actually went out to Geneva for the last six months of the conference to represent the U.S. on the committee that was doing the final draft of the military security part of the Helsinki Final Act. And of course, the basic bargain in the Final Act of Helsinki is to grant to the Soviet Union at the time the assurance that the West, in particular West Germany, recognized as legitimate the post-World War II boundaries as they had been drawn in allied summit meetings in 1944 and 1945; in return the Soviets would agree to pay more respect to human rights and allow more freedom of movement, of people, and of ideas.

And the West, by mid-1975, had basically achieved those goals, and had a document which was ready to be signed, but there were some issues that still hadn't been resolved. One of them was, to what extent the West could also achieve more openness in the military exercise schedule, the military operations of the East, so that smaller nations would not feel threatened by large exercises and maneuvers when they took place in Eastern Europe. Then there would be less risk of big military operations being used, as they were just before World War I, to bully or threaten smaller countries for some diplomatic reason. What I worked on at the time was getting an agreement by the Russians to announce all their military maneuvers and exercises over a certain threshold well in advance of when they were to take place. When more than ten thousand troops were going to be out on the field on an exercise, the USSR (and all other signatories of the Act) would announce it 30 days in advance, so that other countries would not feel as threatened as they might if the exercises were scheduled at the last minute in apparent efforts to exercise political pressure. In addition all would accept observers at these military maneuvers. The neutral countries wanted far more expansive measures. They wanted naval maneuvers to be announced, amphibious and air maneuvers too; and of course, the U.S., with bases outside of the European Continent, needed to preserve mobility, and didn't want to have our options restricted with regard to air and naval maneuvers. So we resisted that, and the bargain that came out in the end deals principally with ground forces. Now this really can get very technical, and I've written some articles in great detail about the discussions that took place at that time, and I don't think I need to go into those details, but that was the issue, to at least achieve some greater transparency in the military operations of Eastern Europe, so Western Europe would feel that its security was enhanced. Now of course, the people who were working in Vienna at this time on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions tended to pooh-pooh everything that was happening in Geneva. They said, these are not legal agreements, they don't have the status of treaties, you don't have to do it, it's really no more than an exhortation, and therefore we here in Vienna are doing the real work. Yours is political dressing. I didn't agree with that, and I still don't agree with it. I think the political commitments that were drafted in Geneva and signed by chiefs-of-state in Helsinki were perhaps as important, or even more important, than the rather detailed and complex treaty negotiations on balance of forces, which, of course, at the time appeared very important and still were important throughout the '80s, but now in the '90s are virtually meaningless because the Russians are so broke that they can't even maintain the force levels that they drew down to, and they took their forces out of Eastern Europe long before the agreements went into force

under which they were supposed to withdraw forces.

Q: Well, did you see the fine hand of Henry Kissinger there, sort of undercutting the Helsinki accords? I mean, I've gotten some of this in an interview I did with George Vest and all when he was-

WILKINSON: Have you done George Vest?

Q: - yes - working on this, and others, that Kissinger, he also liked to be identified with whatever, where he felt that the action was, and he thought that the MBFR was where the action was, and this other was sort of not as important. Did you feel that?

WILKINSON: Well, certainly, Henry Kissinger could hardly have acted otherwise, because he was the one who achieved the agreement in 1972, through his own personal efforts, to get the Soviets to agree to go to MBFR, which we wanted in exchange for having the CSCE, which they wanted. You see, we wanted to draw down forces in Western Europe to save us money, that was cold hard cash in a till; and the CSCE was a political document to legitimize the Soviet role in Eastern Europe. Well, in the end, the political document proved to be far more significant than the MBFR negotiations because of what happened subsequently. The Helsinki Act is still important. It created a Europe-wide organization; maybe you don't want to call it a "permanent standing organ," but it did create something which is active right now in Bosnia and which has had a civil and political role in a number of situations in Europe where NATO has a different role or none at all.

So there's no question that Henry Kissinger at the time saw that the CSCE was a "gift" to the Soviets. Interestingly, when it came close to the time to finish up the CSCE at Helsinki, our military security issue was still holding things up, and I was busy trying to craft a compromise that actually would have accepted prior announcement of some amphibious maneuvers on our part, along with announcing ground force maneuvers. This would have meant we'd have to announce maneuvers where U.S. Marines were involved, and I ran into tremendous resistance in Washington to this, even though we would have set the threshold at a strength level that we had never exceeded and were highly unlikely ever to exceed in any future operation. Nevertheless, the idea of limiting amphibious forces, including marines, in any kind of commitment was anathema to Washington, and although in the end it went into the Act, I think it cost me when people, not at Kissinger level, but close to the Kissinger level, would say, What the heck is that guy Wilkinson doing out there?

Q: Tell me, you were the IS-

WILKINSON: I was the ISA (Pentagon) representative in Geneva and the U.S. spokesman in the committee that was doing military security. And so I was reporting in separate channels to ACDA and to State and to ISA, to try to keep them all copacetic with careful explanations to soothe the concerns of each agency.

Q: Was Richard Perle in on this yet, or was he -

WILKINSON: No, Richard Perle really I don't think got into this particular set of negotiations. Richard Perle focused more on cosmic issues of arms control in the nuclear area... I guess he was in the Pentagon in the policy part of ISA at the time, and he was already known as a difficult doctrinaire ideologue on security issues, but not as I recall a player in the CSCE context.

Q: Well, how did you feel as a State Department person seconded to the Pentagon? Did you feel that you were on the same team, or did you find yourself sort of uncomfortable at times?

WILKINSON: Not in this context, certainly not being in Geneva because I felt that I had a very understanding and sympathetic audience back in the Pentagon. I had a good director, a general who understood that I was running for him, and Harry Bergold, a very bright and sophisticated guy - was the deputy assistant secretary for Europe.

Don Rumsfeld, my ex-boss at NATO, was the Secretary, so I didn't feel in the least bit uncomfortable with this particular phase of working in the Pentagon. Now when I came back and spent another year there working on another issue completely, and during that time, I must say, I found it very frustrating to work in this sort of Pentagon milieu because nobody seemed to give any thought or care about the substance of what you wrote, as long as you got the papers in on time and in the right format. You know, it was as if people at the working level in the Pentagon weren't expected to think. They were zombies. Again, I had to carve out my own job and I found that the biggest issue for us after the Helsinki Act in Western Europe was selling the Airborne Warning and Control System [AWACS]. We had a couple of air force people who specialized in AWACS, who understood the system technically and a couple of other people who knew about the military structure of NATO, but nobody who knew about political consultations to get joint decisions in NATO. So I sort of picked up the role of coordinating our effort to sell AWACS aircraft at the political level to Western Europeans, and that was kind of fun. I mean, you'd get to go out on sales trips to Western Europe and to consult with high-level Allied people about AWACS sales. I spoke for the first and only time to the NAC in Brussels about the political aspects; then a colleague gave a technical briefing about what the system would actually do. It was quite an impressive airplane, not only in the military sense, but also in anti-narcotics efforts because it can see aircraft hundreds of miles away moving below it against the background of land, a "look-down" capability which earlier ordinary radar equipment didn't have.

Q: I wouldn't think that there would be any particular political consequences with AWACS as far as Western Europe goes. Obviously there are tremendous ones as far as Saudi Arabia and Egypt might be concerned.

WILKINSON: Well, that's certainly... The idea at the time was to find a way to convince

the Europeans to buy more AWACS, to buy AWACS at all. I don't think any of them had contracted to buy them yet, but the U.S. Air Force was anxious to order more of them for itself. They didn't have the money to do it. They needed to have some advance sale promises from others in order to convince Congress to give them the money to fund another run. They wanted to run 20 or 40 more AWACS, but they needed foreign participation in the purchase in order to get the money. So we were not only trying to sell it to - well, anybody who was considered a safe ally. I think the NATO countries were first. This was in 1976, and it wasn't until later in the '70s that we sold it to others. But we did in my day there, in the year that I worked on this, we hadn't actually concluded any sales yet, but we laid the groundwork for sales that subsequently did take place.

Q: Well, I would have wondered what's in it, say, for the Dutch or somebody to do it. The Americans were running these planes anyway, and why not let them continue to do this? What's in it for the Belgians or the Dutch or something?

WILKINSON: Well, I'm trying to remember. I believe that we specifically targeted Germany, Norway, and Italy. As a general matter, we were trying to get our allies to upgrade their own conventional defense capabilities. I don't think that we tried to sell to France or the UK, who may have been working on their own AWACS versions. And the reason that we argued with others that they needed it was because you could see airplanes 400 miles away to the east, and if you wanted to defend your country against an air attack, you could distinguish airplanes a lot further over the horizon with the radar capability that AWACS has than you could with any other radar. And also, of course, they would and subsequently did serve as combat centers controlling and directing other aircraft in the air because they have the entire air picture on the screen. Now our arrangements with selling AWACS to different countries varied, and this is 20 years ago, my expertise was not technical even then. But I know we have different arrangements with different countries for how much control and data they have in using AWACS. I believe Americans are usually aboard. With some countries, Americans control and even limit access to the actual technical side of AWACS - the combat information center - and with others I believe we don't.

Q: Well, you left the Pentagon in '76?

WILKINSON: In '76.

Q: And whither?

WILKINSON: I'm sorry?

Q: Then where did you go?

WILKINSON: Then I went - this was the second time, in '76, that I was lucky enough to have a friend leaving a job that seemed attractive. The first time was the NATO job that I was lucky enough to get in 1970 because a friend had been leaving it and had told me

about it and suggested I apply. The same thing happened in 1976. I actually wanted to try to find a job in EUR, in the European branch of the State Department, and nothing seemed to come up as I was leaving the Pentagon, so I was told by a friend that he was going to Tunis and that his job as the Desk officer for Tunisia was coming open. And I asked for that job and got it. I could speak fairly good French, which was certainly one qualification; I didn't have any "area experience" for the job, but I guess Tunisia wasn't the number one desk job in the State Department, and I had never been a desk officer or even served in a geographic bureau at State, so I thought this was the kind of traditional thing the State Department did, and that it would be valuable to do. So I moved over in '76 to do that.

Now if you'll permit me, I'd like to go back before we go to Tunis to say a couple of things I wanted to say about the years of '68 to 1970, when I was working on arms control for the first time. We talked in our last session about the substance of what I did at the Arms Control Agency pretty much, but we didn't really talk much about the process. And I guess the first time I had an experience with going out and doing multilateral diplomacy was being sent out to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva in '68 and '69. That was my first taste of working in a multilateral atmosphere, and I wasn't very adept at it. One of the things that junior officers were expected to do in that context was to report about meetings of the conference on disarmament when people like Alfonso García Robles, the Mexican Nobel laureate, would speak about, quoting himself from the year before and repeating his long diatribes about how the superpowers were consuming the world's resources and failing to heed the calls of the rest of the world - to report about these. And I had to learn, unfortunately, to dictate to a secretary. I can remember seeing a secretary sitting opposite me drumming her fingers on the tabletop and looking extremely bored as she waited for me to try to formulate another sentence and trying to summarize what these people had said in the Committee on Disarmament. Their texts went unread, and I'm sure my reports went unread as well. It's kind of sad that all of us learned in that era to be good at dictation, and then, of course, we had to unlearn it in the '90s, when using secretaries for dictation became a costly luxury and computers multiplied our productivity almost overnight.

Working in Geneva had an appealing atmosphere; a lot of us went skiing whenever we could. There were receptions nightly, or very often, and I remember meeting other delegations' working-level officers like Manuel Tello, who became the foreign minister of Mexico, and Luís Felipe Lampreia, who became the foreign minister of Brazil and was, in fact, the foreign minister when I was last there in the last couple of years. Being in this context in Geneva was a big job for a Third-World diplomat, and many of the Third-World diplomats who achieved significance in their own foreign ministries went through that phase of working on the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. It's not that big a job for an American, but it seemed important for me.

And then, I also wanted to add a couple of footnotes about the UN, because again I had my first experience at the UN in the fall of '69 in the same job. People from ACDA also go to New York to the UN and report and work on the standard litany of disarmament

resolutions which are repeated almost every year and which fall on many deaf ears. But I did have the opportunity to work with Shirley Temple, who-

Q: Shirley Temple Black.

WILKINSON: Shirley Temple Black, who was for the first time being exposed to the diplomatic world. This was before she became ambassador to Ghana, chief of protocol, ambassador to Czechoslovakia. She at one point was at a big staff meeting at USUN with Ambassador Yost presiding, and Yost said, "Now, I'm going to have everybody tell you what we're doing to maintain the China situation." At this point we had not yet lost the Albanian Resolution on seating mainland China (and displacing the Kuomintang government in Taiwan at the UN), which was the first of two resolutions annually taken up at the General Assembly. The Albanian Resolution was a procedural resolution to ensure that the admission of Communist China would be an important question, which required a two-thirds vote. We had to win the Albanian Resolution by a majority vote, at which point the Beijing government could only be admitted if two-thirds of the members voted in favor. So Yost, at the staff meeting, went around the room, and regional pivot men would report on how all the UN members were thinking. The man covering the African Caucus, would say, for instance, I think we may lose Ghana this year. Nkrumah is flirting with the Eastern Bloc, and he used to be pro-Western, but we can't count on him any more. And we would go around the room, and every country would be analyzed. Somebody maybe will vote with us on the Albanian resolution but against us on the substantive resolution. Finally, Shirley Temple, after listening to all this, said, "This is absolutely fascinating, and now I understand *how* we're keeping China out of the United Nations. Would somebody please tell me *why* we're keeping China out of the United Nations?"

On another day, she was sitting in the U.S. delegation seats on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly with Yost. She was there as a public delegate. Each fall there are five public delegates as well as five regular appointed ambassadors, all of whom have the status of members of the delegation. The U.S. was about to be called to speak, and Yost, all of a sudden, was called away. Shirley Temple was the only other delegate left at the time who could be called upon to make the speech, and I was sitting next to her. And she said, "What are we going to do? I'm going to have to get up there and give a speech." She was wringing her hands. Her knuckles were white. And I deliberately bit my tongue about saying anything like, you know, "Practically every living person in the world has seen you acting in a movie. How could you be frightened of going up there and giving a speech in front of this little group of representatives of the UN?" And she eventually got over it, and Yost came back. She didn't give the speech, but I was amused that she was terrified about it.

Oh, a couple of other... Bill Rogers, our Secretary of State, came and went to a delegation meeting and described his travels and his meetings, and I must say, having listened to that, it didn't come as a surprise to me to find out that Henry Kissinger had been conducting secret diplomacy behind Bill Rogers' back, because Rogers was vague, even

confused about where he'd been or who he'd met with. He was affable and he was pleasant, but he did not seem very much on top of his job, even by the fall of '69.

And - still in 1969 - this was an era when multilateral arms control was at its heyday. We'd just negotiated the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Limited Test Ban Treaty, we were working on a treaty to ban weapons on the sea bed, a biological weapons treaty - and it looked, in the Kennedy-Johnson-early-Nixon era, that we would go on negotiating lots of disarmament treaties and hedge in the proliferation of arms around the rest of the world. I was, I recall, convinced that we were ready to negotiate something called a "threshold" test ban treaty, which would have banned tests not only in the atmosphere, but underground as well. All tests would be banned above a certain very small level. Below that there might be some ambiguity in distinguishing tests from natural events but above the threshold you could be certain of detecting them. Through all the intelligence we had, we knew when there was a nuclear explosion anywhere above a couple of kilotons. I couldn't see any downside to pursuing a "threshold test ban," but at my level in the disarmament world, I couldn't get anybody to listen to me. What to negotiate was a White House decision, and what we thought at our level didn't make much difference in the White House. So ironically, my papers on the advantages of a threshold Test ban never went forward. Three or four years later, after I had left ACDA, our political leaders decided that a threshold test ban would be a good idea and we were able to negotiate one rather quickly. The ultimate goal of a comprehensive test ban took 20 more years to negotiate.

Q: Did you feel that all the work you were doing at this time, that with the departure of Nixon when he resigned, that this took a lot of the power out of our efforts in world affairs, or was Kissinger sort of carrying on with the backing of President Ford?

WILKINSON: Well, yes. The couple of years when Ford succeeded Nixon, we were playing out a scenario that had been designed by Kissinger. And I think that Kissinger achieved, in his years as Secretary of State, basically '73 to '76, or if you give him the whole 8-year time frame that he was stage-managing our foreign affairs, more than any other Secretary of State since Acheson and any secretary that succeeded him, despite his Machiavellian or Metternichian kind of way of operating - secrecy and *realpolitik* - he was extremely effective. By 1976, however, we were ready for Cyrus Vance because Kissinger had been so cynical in his approach, that the idea of having a man who was palpably and demonstratively honest and open and straightforward was a welcome change in the eyes of many Americans, but neither Vance nor Muskie, any more than Carter himself, were as clever as architects of relationships and foreign policy as Kissinger was. So those are really the only footnotes that I wanted to add to what we talked about earlier.

Q: All right. Then you left -

WILKINSON: In '76.

Q: '76, where?

WILKINSON: I'm leaving the Pentagon, and I'm coming back to Mother State, as Gene McAuliffe as Rumsfeld's ISA chief used to call our "home" across the river. God, it's really a frightening place to go into these days. Hardly "mother"-like. I went in yesterday and parked my car in the basement of the State Department using my wife's parking pass, and then I tried to get into the building with my retired pass. Of course they put pass readers that you have to swipe your pass through, and you can't get in from the basement with a retired pass, so I had to go back to the C Street entrance to get in. Then, try to get back into the basement to get my car! I mean, "Mother" State is not a welcoming place any more.

Q: Well, you went to the Tunisian Desk, and you were on the Tunisian Desk from '76 until -

WILKINSON: Actually I served there for a year, and then I switched over to Morocco and became the deputy director for North African Affairs, so I really covered the North African region.

Q: This was NEA.

WILKINSON: This was in NEA, that's right. North Africa had been a part of the African Bureau earlier, and I was told that it was a flagship part of Africa and you could always get the attention of the Assistant Secretary of State when you were in that bureau, and then of course in NEA the North Africans were probably the bottom of the level of priorities, and Roy Atherton, who was the assistant secretary of State, and a nicer guy probably doesn't exist, but it was hard to get his attention on North African issues. Even the deputy assistant secretary who was supposed to cover nothing but North Africa was constantly getting sucked into the Middle East.

Q: Who was that?

WILKINSON: Nick Veliotis, who subsequently became ambassador to Cairo, and again, a very pleasant guy to work for as well as his successor, Pete Day, whom I had known earlier as an arms control person, and I enjoyed working with both of them, but I must say, I did not enjoy very much working with the staff aides, April Glaspie and Ed Walker, who thought that North African affairs weren't important enough to be dealt with at the assistant secretary level. They were only important when we were late for some deadline or other, and the rest of the time it was hard to get their attention.

Tunisia was a weak client state. It didn't have any oil or natural gas, in contrast with Libya and Algeria, who were at least important to our private sector - I guess also politically as irritants in our relationships with the Arabs; Libya because of Qadhafi and Algeria because of the state socialist government of Boumedienne and successors that were in power at the time. Of course, the Algerian situation has changed completely since then, but the Tunisians felt at the mercy of their bigger North African neighbors. They

were terrified of Libya. And domestically they were living in an enlightened despotism. Habib Bourguiba was the sort of George Washington of the free, independent Tunisia, and in the '70s dominated the country. Their hands needed to be held constantly. They needed economic aid, and when they didn't get enough aid, the best we could do was send in the Sixth Fleet to visit their ports to make sure that they understood that the United States was there behind them. Serving as the Desk officer was basically just a job of trying to reassure them that the United States was there to help them and to try to get the attention of people at a high enough level in the State Department to meet with them and reassure them.

Q: Did the Tunisian ambassador and the Tunisian Embassy know how to play the Washington game at all, because sometimes a small embassy like that can do a pretty good job by working on Congress and the media and not necessarily bypass the State Department but make their point in Washington? There are plenty of power centers. Did they seem to play that?

WILKINSON: Yes, they had a very good ambassador - Ali Hedda. He was young, attractive, and very dynamic. But he didn't have much staff. He had a DCM named Tekaia who was pleasant but not very outgoing and not very experienced, probably younger and less experienced than I was as the Desk officer. And so Tunisia did get its share of attention in Washington, probably more than it deserved, but they never could get enough.

I had a classmate from St. Paul's School who published an over-dramatized article that claimed that he and I together had avoided a war in the Mediterranean because he had been representing the Libyan national oil company and they had their ships in Tunisian waters, and the Tunisians were about to fire on them. The Libyans told him that there was a secret Libyan-Tunisian protocol that allowed them to drill in these waters, and he had passed this info on to me, so that the U.S. would not send the Sixth Fleet to support Tunisia. I don't recall the specifics, but the story was generally consistent with our operations on the Tunisian Desk, which was trying to manage incidents that could involve hostilities between Libya and Tunisia and reassuring the Tunisians that the United States stood behind them, even in the absence of any firm security commitment.

Q: Were the Libyans testing, crowding, doing things to the Tunisians?

WILKINSON: Not all the time. There were stories of assassination attempts and intelligence operations being mounted by one country against the other, particularly by the Libyans against the Tunisians. There were a lot of Libyan guest workers in Tunisia, because Tunisia, for all its poverty, had a big hotel industry and a lot of commerce. Libyans, basically, either worked in oil camps or drove camels. They would come across the border and work in Tunisia. But no, I don't think that they were seriously trying to bring down Bourguiba. There were more imagined incidents, more paranoia than there was cause for.

Q: Well, this is of course before the early '80s when the PLO moved over to Tunisia. Did Israel intrude much in all our relations with Tunisia?

WILKINSON: No. It was also before the famous PLO raid when they killed, I believe, was it Abu Nidal?

Q: Something like that, yes.

WILKINSON: After the PLO moved and after -

Q: This was in the early '80s.

WILKINSON: That's right. But our language school had already moved to Tunis from Beirut. Beirut had fallen apart to the extent that we couldn't keep the language school there, the Arabic school, and it moved to Tunis. Tunis was a very pleasant place. Ed Mulcahy was our ambassador there. Ed had been the deputy chief of mission in the '60s and had taken a couple of Peace Corps men out to a tract of land owned by the U.S. Government and said, "Look, you're architects. Design the most beautiful embassy you could imagine." And they did, and he sent the drawings back to Washington, and lo and behold, somebody in FBO must have said, Let's build that, and to his amazement, he was sent back to be ambassador and to occupy this manor that he had built. And as we stood on the balcony and he said, "There down below is Bourguiba's palace... This is in - what's the name of it, a suburb? It's Sidi Bou Said - it's a suburb north of Tunis."

Basically it's Carthage. Carthage was actually between this suburb and the city. Mulcahy went on: "But there at the left is the hill where Jason was told by Circe that he could have as much territory as he could cover with a bull's hide. That's the hill where he cut the bull's hide in a long strip and drew it around the hill. And, you know, I don't know how I could be so lucky as to wind up being ambassador." It's a lovely place.

Q: Well, what about Bourguiba during this time? Where was he?

WILKINSON: Bourguiba was already failing, old. At that time he was sort of like Boris Yeltsin today. He would intervene sporadically and dramatically, but unpredictably, in the day-to-day government to designate a new prime minister or to throw things into disarray. But his Destourian Socialist party, which he founded, was still a one-party state, and you did not get out of line in Tunisia or you - I don't know whether you disappeared completely or not, but you certainly disappeared politically.

Q: What about with Algeria? Were Algerian-Tunisian relations a concern of yours?

WILKINSON: It was not a problem, a serious problem. The problem that I dealt with in my second year in North African affairs, and the most consuming problem that we really had in North African Affairs, was between two states that were friendly to the U.S.; or semi-friendly, at least in Algeria's case, and very friendly in the case of Morocco. The

problem was the Western Sahara situation. The territory had been a Spanish colony that Spain decided to shed after Franco, and Morocco considered that it was rightfully part of the old Moroccan sultanate. King Hassan organized the famous Green March to have Moroccans march to this territory and assert their claim with their feet. But the Algerians had armed and supported a group of independence-oriented tribesmen in the area called the Polisario, and these two countries' rivalry over this territory came very close to erupting into direct hostilities from time to time. We were officially neutral on the issue of the Western Sahara, constantly in favor of some kind of negotiated solution, based on a plebiscite or some kind of equitable criterion that would lead to an amicable resolution. And that process is still being worked on even today with Jim Baker as a mediator. In my years there, we didn't want to alienate Hassan's government, in order to maintain our military cooperation and our intelligence-gathering facilities in Morocco, and because of its strategic location at the mouth of the Mediterranean, and because this was basically a friendly, Western-oriented government. We had provided F-5's to the King, and the F-5's, as in the case of all military assistance, are intended only for defensive purposes. And we discovered from aerial photography that they were actually deployed in the Western Sahara. Then we challenged the king on this, and he told us a bunch of lies about how they'd never been to the Western Sahara, which of course we knew better. And we found ourselves in big difficulties in our bilateral relationships as we have in other cases with this legal problem of misuse of our defense materiel assistance, but we eventually just looked the other way, as long as he didn't use them on strafing runs and shoot camels and riders in the Sahara.

Q: Well, when you came over to the Moroccan Desk, you were there from '77 to '78.

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: What did you inherit from your predecessors and the people who dealt with it? What was the evaluation that you got, when you first arrived in the change, of King Hassan?

WILKINSON: Hassan had not changed.

Q: I know, but I mean, when you arrived, you changed over, and you were sort of the new boy on the block, what was sort of the folk wisdom that was coming out of the Moroccan Desk about Hassan?

WILKINSON: I see. Well, Hassan has certainly had less publicity than Hussein, but the two were seen at that time as very similar Western-oriented and Western-educated monarchs who seemed to be running their countries with a light hand, not totally democratically, but with many of the trappings of democracy, with a parliament, with a prime minister who answered to the people as well as to the king, and a liberal policy towards Jews. Moroccan Jews never fled Morocco. A few of them went to Israel during the worst period of Arab nationalism, fearing that the same thing would happen in Morocco as in Libya or in the more radical Arab countries, but basically they've been extremely tolerant. They still have a big colony of Jewish people living in Morocco. So I

think people thought very highly of Hassan. He hasn't been in the news much recently, and he's been very ill for a long time, and I don't know what his health is like today.

Q: Well, tell me -

WILKINSON: I'm going to suggest that we stop now if I may, because I have to get to the airport to pick up my son. I don't want to be late for it..

Q: Okay, I'll just put on the end here, we're just about to finish up your time, '77 to '78, in Morocco.

WILKINSON: Yes, I said - let's finish that.

Q: All right, should we finish that now?

WILKINSON: Yes, I'm prepared.

Q: I have one question, and that is, with this Polisario movement, it's a little like Biafra and some others, in which you get some staff members in Congress who seize this as a cause. Did you run across this? I think there were a couple of influential members of some congressional staff who were pushing quite hard for the Polisarios.

WILKINSON: Yes, I'm trying to remember who they were. I think maybe the congressman from Maryland who chaired the Africa sub-committee and some other liberal sympathizers. The Algerians were, of course, promoting their cause, but there were many Africans - the majority of the African countries - who also supported the Polisario against Hassan, because they feel that it's a legitimate independence movement and that it shouldn't be suppressed. If the tribesmen are a separate group - they're as similar to Mauritians as they are to Moroccans, perhaps more so, more Tuareg than... Let me back up. They're more like the Mauritians than they are to the Northern Moroccans; I'm not sure which is more Tuareg than the other. And they had a lot of arguments on their behalf. The one strong argument that the king had was I guess similar to the ones that one would hear now in Belgrade, like it may be that there are many foreigners in this area, like Kosovo, but nevertheless, it's traditionally ours, and it belongs to us, and we don't want to give it up. And if you give it up, King Hassan, you'll probably lose your throne. So that certainly is the factor that one has to sympathize with and find a balanced solution that reflects the interests of all. So I don't think that the State Department, at least the Desk, ever was inclined to jump on the Algerian bandwagon and give unqualified support to the Polisario.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about?

WILKINSON: At the moment I don't think - I talked a lot. I'm beginning to lose my voice. You're always so kind and solicitous to listen to some stuff which might not be more interesting than other things, but after I left the Tunisian Desk, I went back to the

United Nations and worked at the UN for two years and then a third year as deputy director for Law of the Sea, so I was back and forth, moving a lot.

Q: Okay, so we'll pick it up the next time when you were moved from the Moroccan Desk to the United Nations.

WILKINSON: That's right.

Q: Okay, good.

We're now going to the United Nations. When did you start?

WILKINSON: This is in the summer of 1978.

Q: What was your job in the United Nations?

WILKINSON: I was a member of the Political Section, in which there were six or seven line or action officers, and my job was to handle the First Committee of the General Assembly, which was the so-called Political Committee that basically did mostly arms control, outer space, and the occasional political issue - only occasionally because important political issues were handled in the General Assembly.

Q: You were there and you were doing this from 1978 to when?

WILKINSON: 1980 - two years.

Q: Before we get into the guts of the matter, how did it work for you living in New York. New York is always supposed to be a very expensive place, you know.

WILKINSON: Over time we have had different arrangements for Foreign Service personnel in New York. At that time, we had a very benign one, which was that every individual was expected to spend 15 percent of his income on his own rent, and above that and up to, I think, 30 percent, the government would pay. And then if you decided to have some rental place that went over 30 percent, then you paid again the excess over 30 percent of your salary. So basically, it didn't pay to find a place that was anything less than 30 percent of your salary. You looked around for a place that was decent. And with that guidance, I went out. At that time I was a bachelor; I had been married and was separated. My wife decided she had enough of the Foreign Service in the mid-'70s and decided not to go with me to New York, so I went up there alone, and my children came up to visit me from time to time. So I was looking for a flat that was relatively close to the United Nations, a place that I could commute easily to knowing that the hours working in the U.S. mission to the United Nations happen to be very long. And I found a place on 74th Street, which was not too far away, and then went home to have all of my effects

transferred and came back a month later to be told by the real estate agent that the Mayor's niece had expressed an interest in the place and for that reason the contract lease with my signature had been lost somehow and - well, this is New York. So I was set back again to looking for a place, and I recall walking west on 43rd from First Avenue to Fifth Avenue and east on 45th Street, west on 46th, etc., back and forth on the East Side, all the way up to about 75th, just ringing doorbells, looking for a place to live. And it took me several weeks of pounding the pavement to find a place that was adequate. And when I ultimately did, I found a little duplex apartment with some help from the real estate agent who felt a little embarrassed about having withdrawn his offer and lost the previous contract. A duplex apartment on 51st and Second Avenue, which was a wonderful place to live because I got rid of my automobile and walked to work back and forth and practically never used a car for the two years that I was up there, except occasionally when I rented one for long distances on weekends. So it was easy. People who go up there with families have schooling problems, and they also have housing problems, but I was comfortably settled and, in fact, entertained a number of friends that I didn't know I had before 1978. "Ah, you have a duplex apartment on the East Side near the UN? Well, we'll be up to see you very soon."

Q: Okay, so we're talking about '78 to -

WILKINSON: We're talking about the summer of '78, '78 to '80. I worked first under Andy Young. We were in the middle of the Carter Administration, and we were dealing with a very active foreign policy in promotion of human rights, of non-proliferation issues. The Carter Administration wanted to stress principled decisions and move away from the Machiavellianism or the realism of the previous administration, in particular of Henry Kissinger. So we were at that point following a considerably more, if you will, idealistic general foreign policy, and that transmitted itself into our activities in the United Nations. Now, Andy Young wasn't what I would call a Carter-type idealist. He was a very active politician, and I think he got a little tired of his work at the United Nations. He'd already been up there for a while when I got there, and eventually he started meeting with the PLO without authorization, and as history records, was fired for that. Personally, I think he got himself fired on purpose. I think he deliberately disobeyed orders and deliberately got fired because he wanted to go out with a bang, and on his own initiative, not just go out with a whimper.

And he was replaced by Don McHenry, who was an entirely different person - professional, low-keyed, who tended to take his cues much more from Washington than any of the others.

Q: Well, when you arrived in the summer of '78, dealing with the First Committee, what were the issues that you were particularly involved with at that time?

WILKINSON: Well, principally what one did in First Committee was to handle arms control and outer space issues. The United Nations, of course, was the coordinating organization for the community of nations' space activities. Naturally, the U.S. and the

Soviet Union were the principal space countries, but we went through the motions of debating and coordinating our space activities with the others. So that was one of the functions, and the other was to promote and sustain disarmament, to take the results of what went on in private negotiations like SALT and like the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva and generalize them and allow the world during the General Assembly to comment and make resolutions about what individual countries were doing in the area of disarmament.

Now sometimes we would get another issue in the First Committee referred to us by the Plenary of the General Assembly, and one of those that we had the first year I was there was the Nicaraguan revolution, the Sandinista revolution, of interest to the world community. The issue of foreign involvement or non-involvement was referred to the First Committee to come up with a resolution. And of course, at that time the United States was not very happy with the Sandinistas, even though it appeared that the Sandinista idea was to get rid of a rather corrupt dictatorship, the Somoza dynasty, and the Carter Administration shouldn't have been wedded to maintaining that kind of an image. Nevertheless, we were very hesitant to embrace the Sandinistas, and so we were resisting any endorsement of the Sandinistas or even any rejection of the Somoza government, and Sally Shelton, who at that point was a deputy assistant secretary in Inter-American Affairs came up, and we worked together on this issue in the first committee. But normally our business was more routine, and it was to do with disarmament and outer space. Now we had a couple of important issues during that time. One was being promoted by the Iraqis, to condemn alleged Israeli nuclear arms. This was of course before the discovery that the Iraqis were secretly trying to develop nuclear weapons and before the Israelis bombed their Osiris reactor and took it out of commission in 1981. During the late '70s the Iraqis were criticizing Israel for secretly developing nuclear weapons, and they were trying to promote a resolution in the UN General Assembly to condemn this, for which there was substantial support among the Third World countries. And our job, as friends of Israel, was to defeat this resolution, and one of the biggest efforts of the fall General Assembly, including all the public delegates and all the members of the mission, was to go around and collar people and try to defeat this resolution. And I was sort of the coordinator for those efforts, and in the end we did defeat it, but not without a lot of defections from friendly countries and a lot of diplomatic bloodshed.

Q: I would have thought this would have been rather difficult for you as a professional -

WILKINSON: Knowing full well that the Israelis were probably...

Q: And the fact that this was a political matter in the United States, with votes and money, political votes and money, that was keeping us from enforcing this on the Israelis.

WILKINSON: It's been a perpetual problem. I think, although we espouse the idea of limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we've never been able politically to make that stick with the Israelis, and I think it's always been an inconsistency in our foreign

policy that the rest of the world knows that we are going to have to pursue and they are going to live with it.

Q: All right, would you at a certain point sort of shrug your shoulders. I mean, you're talking one-on-one, and say, "Look, these are the political realities..." or would you try to talk in "Well, we don't know and there's no proof..." and go into what we call denial, as opposed to, say, this is the way things work? This is like when the mayor's niece wants your apartment, you know there's no point in fighting it.

WILKINSON: Yes, exactly. Very similar situation. Well, it was complicated by a nuclear test, very interesting phenomenon, that one of our so-called Vela satellites identified as a nuclear test off of South Africa in the fall of I believe it was '78, and nobody could clearly identify who could have been responsible for this test. And I to this day am not sure; I expect that our intelligence knows or learned, but at the time we thought it was probably Israeli, but it could have been a collaboration between Israeli and South Africa. And so of course that was one additional element. That became public, and we were asked to provide the results of our investigation to the United Nations. And we did. We informed everybody that we were sure it was a nuclear shot, but we weren't sure who did it or how. So it was very difficult. It was really brute political force that we used with friends and allies just to defeat a resolution which people knew was couched in... Of course, we were always assisted by the Iraqis and the Arabs in general, who tended to exaggerate and escalate everything to the point where it became such a radical effort to criticize Israel that many of Israel's friends or even impartial countries tended to resist, because it was calling not only for criticism of Israel but for sanctions and for action by the Security Council and, of course, the General Assembly is not empowered to dictate what the Security Council will do on security issues. So we argued against it partly on those legal grounds.

Q: Was there any sort of dissent within the ranks? I mean, was it a little hard to sort of get the troops lined up, or were they of such a mind that everybody knew what the realities were in the political system so you didn't have to go through that sort of business?

WILKINSON: Not within the U.S. mission. It don't think there was any dissent at all, because when you picked the resolution apart and analyzed each element, there were enough elements that you could attack, such as the legal side, so that nobody tried to say, Well, this is a misguided effort, let's let it ride. If we had let it ride, we would have been abandoning doctrinal points about how the United Nations is supposed to operate.

So there was that, and that was kind of a group effort by the entire mission, something that gave us an activity that we had to pursue the entire fall.

Q: Were you working on space matters? I know that in most nuclear matters, it's been true almost throughout the Cold War that the Soviet Union and the United States are essentially on the same side. They basically don't - -

WILKINSON: Condominium.

Q: It's a condominium. They just don't want other people in the club because it's dangerous, and we both know it's dangerous. How about in space? Was any of that working in -

WILKINSON: That was certainly true of almost everything relating to space in that era, before the Soviet Union fell apart and before current circumstances. The U.S. and the Soviet Union really did dominate space technology, but also we consulted about everything that we did together in larger bodies, the Space Science and Technology Committee, the Space Legal Committee, the Outer Space Committee (which had been handled originally by Kurt Waldheim). And normally we operated in very close consultations with them. Now there was an incident, even before my time in the UN, which I'd love to recount, about in the late '60s, when Waldheim was actually in the chair in the Outer Space Committee, when the U.S. was represented by Francis Plimpton - I remember the name though I wasn't there - and his assistant was Peter Thatcher, when the Soviets were saying, "There is no need for any liability for objects falling from outer space. Nobody needs to worry about it because everything burns up on its way down through space." And a policeman in northern Minnesota found a piece of steaming metal on the road one day and took it home and eventually turned it at headquarters, and it was identified as steel manufactured in Magnitogorsk in the Soviet Union. It was a piece of Soviet space junk that had fallen on the road in the States. So that was sent to New York, and Peter Thatcher carried it in his briefcase for the next time that the Soviets that would claim that nothing ever fell out of space, which they duly did, and he handed the briefcase to Plimpton, who opened it up and went *clunk* on the table: "Here is the nothing that falls out of space." So from time to time we would take the Soviets on in the Space Committee, but normally we didn't. I tried to understand these issues and get into them, and people who came from Washington said that that was not normal, that people at New York were supposed to simply take them to meetings and leave them and they would do their business. And I would try to stay abreast of their issues, even the technical ones, and they seemed to like that. And I enjoyed working with them. We had a number of people from NASA and from other agencies that would come up and do space issues.

Q: Did you -

WILKINSON: Yes, well, I was just going to go on to say that a couple of things came up that were B

Q: Is this on the space issue?

WILKINSON: Both space and disarmament. During this period, we had been negotiating in Geneva, a treaty called the Moon Treaty, and the Moon Treaty was a step beyond a 1960s treaty, which says, in effect, the world countries agree that we will not station weapons of mass destruction anywhere in space or on other celestial bodies. We won't

put nuclear weapons. And to amplify that, a treaty was developed - I think it was our own initiative - not to put any military bases of any kind - not just weapons of mass destruction - no bases, on the moon or other celestial bodies, and what's more, to recognize in principle that the moon is the common heritage of mankind. And this seemed to be a perfectly logical preambular statement for a treaty about the moon, but it transpired that a conservative upwelling in our Congress, which was beginning even in the later '70s and ultimately led to the Reagan revolution, looked at this treaty and, to my surprise, we had a couple of congressmen in our delegation in the fall of 1978 who said, "We don't like this treaty because it says that the moon is the common heritage of mankind, and we believe it's ours. We got there. Or maybe it's not ours yet, but it's ours to take if we want it. It is in legal terms *res nullius*, as opposed to what other legal experts call *res communis*. It's nobody's until the first guy gets it." So we had to set the moon treaty aside, and I'll get back to that when we talk about Law of the Sea, which I moved on to after I left the UN, because the same principle led to our difficulties with the Law of the Sea Treaty.

So there was that overlap between outer space and disarmament that came up in the UN. Then there was also, during the same time, we had a big satellite called Skylab, which decayed and ultimately fell, and for several weeks and months we were alerting people in New York that didn't know where this thing was going to fall, but you better be ready, because it is going to make a big dent in whatever it hits.

Q: There is a model of it at the Smithsonian as of today. It's big.

WILKINSON: It's big, and it is now luckily at the bottom of the ocean west of Australia, but it came very close to landing on Australia, and of course, we went to the UN again to tell everybody to watch out, you have to be prepared for this.

At one point I was asked to take the place of Jerome Wiesner, who was named as "wise man" to a committee of experts that was set up in New York to study the problems of disarmament and to come up with new solutions. This was one of these annual cosmetic resolutions of the United Nations to promote disarmament that the United States looks at with a jaundiced eye but tolerates because they are expressions of the will of the world community. A wise man's committee was formed, and it was to consist of experts serving in their personal capacities, but our expert, Jerome Wiesner, was at that time the head of MIT and couldn't come to most of the meetings, so I had to go and sit in them as the ersatz U.S. delegate, and I wasn't allowed to speak, because only the designated wise men were supposed to speak. So I had to sit there and listen to the likes of Agha Shahi, who was the Pakistani foreign minister, lecture the United States in front of all these other wise men about how evil and ugly we were to have accused "pure" Pakistan of doing anything like developing nuclear weapons, which of course they were very busily doing, and everybody knew they were doing it; and everybody knew that Agha Shahi was doing what he was told to do. I kept calling Washington and saying, "What do I do? This guy is lecturing us about our complaints to Pakistan about nuclear weapons, and I'm not allowed to say anything." The answer was, just sit there and let the Secretary of State handle it. So

much for space and disarmament.

Q: Well, did you find in the space treaty - it certainly occurred in the law of the sea, which we'll get to later on. Were the people who didn't have space, aspirations or potential at that time-were they watching, trying to find a way to get a piece of the action or making sure that we didn't do something that they thought might hurt their interest.

WILKINSON: I think that you could say that that's true of practically anything that happens at the UN. The smaller countries, with their one man and one vote in the General Assembly want to get a piece of the action, in space or in international development or you name it. They want principles to be established that naturally benefit them. But then one of the space aspects of that phenomenon, was the attempt by some equatorial countries, such as Ecuador, others in Africa, through which the equator passes, to claim that the geostationary orbit, which basically is over the equator but at 22,000 miles out, normally for geostationary satellites, was their territory, and you had to pay rent, because they owned the "air space" up above them.

Q: Nice try.

WILKINSON: Well, they stuck to this position for many years, and it took a lot of negotiating, finally, to get them off of it, but I think that they have now abandoned it. With the arguments that the benefits of space do belong to all mankind, you're getting them. You're getting direct broadcast satellite transmissions and you're getting worldwide communications just basically because of these satellites, and you didn't put them up there, but you are certainly benefitting from them. I think that logic has prevailed with them.

Q: Was disarmament sort of going on at a very slow pace?

WILKINSON: Disarmament was basically on the back burner throughout the '70s. Carter tried to promote it, and one of the issues that I kind of enjoyed while I was at the United Nations was the effort by the Indian Ocean countries, the riparian countries of the Indian Ocean like Sri Lanka, Madagascar, or Tanzania - less developed countries - to promote the concept that they had held dear for many years, to make the Indian Ocean a "Zone of Peace." And that meant reducing or limiting the military activities of the great powers and the regional powers in the Indian Ocean, in some way developing the regime either to preclude or limit the stationing of warships. Of course this was not an initiative the United States could buy on to, because among other things we had sought and achieved a base on Diego García, a base in the Indian Ocean which we wanted to use for strategic reasons. So we had simply boycotted the Indian Ocean Committee, which was set up by the Indian Ocean countries to pursue this idea. We said, Well, it's not a committee we want to take part in, thanks. And I argued - they came to me and to the principals of our delegation once again saying, "Well, why don't you reconsider this?" And in internal discussions at USUN and in Washington, I said, "Well, maybe we should reconsider, not because I think we're going to change our position, but because I think we ought to be

willing to talk about it, what the situation is in the Indian Ocean and why we don't think we should abandon our military presence there." And if we had accepted limitations, naturally, we would have been basically abandoning the countries of the Indian Ocean to the mercy of the Indians, because they would have been the dominant power in the region, and there would have been no balancing of them by the U.S., the British, or the French. So Don McHenry - Andy Young had left at that point - said, "Wes, I agree with you. Let us join this committee." So we argued with Washington, which was disinclined, and ultimately we got agreement from Washington to become members of this committee, just to observe and to answer the arguments of others about making the Indian Ocean a Sea of Peace with our own: Why do we not agree with this initiative? We'd be happy to talk about it. We should be happy to talk about anything.

And then, of course, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

Q: That means December of 1979.

WILKINSON: That's right, after we had decided to become members. And all of a sudden Washington became very enthusiastic about this committee, because we could use it as a venue to condemn the Soviet invasion. And the Soviets in turn became less than enthusiastic. They had originally been all for having both of us join the committee. And I went to the committee meetings as the U.S. representative and had to confront Ambassador Mendeleevich once again; I had dealt with him a lot in the European Security Conference, and he's a very clever and artful Soviet diplomat, and a Jewish person, which is interesting, because there were not very many Jews who had risen to his level in the USSR. He has now passed away.

Q: Was there any on this committee on the Indian Ocean - was this talk, talk, talk, or was there more to it than that?

WILKINSON: Oh, no, it was just talk, and I don't know what's happened to that. I don't follow it closely enough to know whether it exists and whether we still participate; but it was basically a prop, because there was no way that it was going to lead a treaty. I don't think even the Indians in the end could have accepted the idea of any kind of naval restrictions in the Indian Ocean if they bore on them as well as on the "great powers" that didn't border on it.

Q: Well I would have thought that you would have had some, in a way, natural allies - particularly I'm looking with Thailand, Indonesia, and Australia. That don't like having the Indians mucking around.

WILKINSON: Exactly. The real issue was not how you react to statements in the Indian Ocean Committee. It's whether you ignore them or whether you can deal with them and answer them. And my view was that the latter course was what the UN was supposed to be for.

Q: Because, you know, it's not as though the Indians are very popular with anybody, practically. I mean, they tend to be more argumentative.

WILKINSON: If there's one universal truth, it's that nobody really likes being moralized to by Indians.

Q: Yes.

WILKINSON: After they took Goa by force and swallowed Sikkim.

Q: There were two things that happened in November or December of '79. One was the occupation of our embassy by the Iranians, and the other was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Did that change our whole posture, I mean as far as what our mission was doing at that time?

WILKINSON: Well, it certainly killed SALT. We had been trying to get the second SALT agreement ratified by Congress at that point, and that put off indefinitely the ratification of SALT, the invasion of Afghanistan did. And it certainly made it more difficult to cooperate with the Soviets. It made condominium less comfortable than it had been. It's ironic, I remember, with regard to the hostages, I remember Muskie's farewell statement when he left the Department in December. He said, "I came here last March because of the Iraqi crisis, and I'm leaving now because of the--"

Q: The Iranian crisis.

WILKINSON: I mean the Iranian crisis - "...and I'm leaving now because of the Iranian crisis." I came and I'm leaving for the same reason. He thought that Carter had lost the election because of Iran and because for that reason his tenure as Secretary of State was going to be limited to eight months. Of course, New York was a good place for efforts to resolve the hostage crisis, and I imagine everybody at the UN got involved at one point or another. I did myself when the Sri Lankan ambassador whom I'd worked with in the Indian Ocean committee came and offered to use his good offices. His foreign minister was coming to New York, and then they flew to Teheran. And he was helpful at the time, as many of the New York diplomats were. There was a lot of efforts focused in New York on trying to find some way to talk to the Iranians and talk them out of violating the oldest and most respected rule of international law - respect for diplomats' immunity.

Q: You left in 1980. That's before the election. What was your impression of various pressure groups, both within Congress and otherwise on our policies there. You always have these people who have billboards, Get the United States out of the UN and the UN out of the United States. Were you feeling any of that, or was that just something to be lived with?

WILKINSON: I don't recall that the period when I was in New York was a particularly strong anti-UN period. There was the Zionism-equals-racism resolution of 1975, I think.

It was the mid-'70s, when the Arab group managed to organize the majority to have the UN resolve that Zionism equals racism and, in effect, to criticize all Israelis and anger all Jewish groups in the United States, which caused a lot of anti-UN sentiment among the Jews and among sympathizers in the States. But beyond that I don't think the UN had come in for the same kind of opprobrium that it eventually did, later, during the 1980s and 1990s. Anti-UN sentiment seemed to me to be stimulated and fomented by a Republican administration and more recently by a Republican majority in Congress, which frankly I found short-sighted, because the UN was created as an element of U.S. foreign policy and can only continue to serve as one if we support it. In the 1970s, we were trying to use it for peacekeeping operations, much less than we do today, but even then, and that was part of my job at the UN. I used to sit in the Committee of Thirty-Three, which was an almost dormant committee that was supposed to write rules for peacekeeping. This was not a very realistic exercise since each decision by the Security Council and each peacekeeping operation was, even then and has probably been ever since, an *ad hoc* decision made by the permanent members of the Security Council to serve the needs and the purpose of the moment. Writing rules and principles in a low-level committee is an exercise in futility, and I think most of the people who were in it were aware of that; so we would meet once month, something like that, and we would debate issues that had been there for years, and we'd go on for years about how to finance peacekeeping, since of course you can't put it as part of the regular UN budget. Special operations commissioned by the Security Council have to be divided in some special way, and the U.S. normally pays a little less than a third of the total. But the irony is, even today, that it is much better for the United States to divide the duties of maintaining the peace with other countries and to share the responsibility collectively when things aren't going well, rather than have to bear them unilaterally. Yet whenever it comes to paying the bill or accepting responsibility for participation in this organization, our administration runs into tremendous criticism from a not very-well-informed Congress - often lagging behind public opinion.

Q: Looking at your time in the UN, could you give me a sort of a personal ranking of the effectiveness of some of the delegations?

WILKINSON: I think that the level of the participation in the UN depends very much on the consciousness of UN in that country, how much the UN is respected. And for that reason the French, for instance, who don't think totally highly of the UN, don't send necessarily - oh, they had some good people - but not always the best. An exception was the young François Heisbourg, who went on later to be head of the IISS. He was an impressive intellect, but an exception. The British, on the other hand, always had superb representation. The Australians. The Canadians. The English-speaking countries were always brilliantly represented. Less developed countries: sometimes their representatives were there to pick up whatever they could get from the UN but didn't sound like they were willing to contribute very much, so I guess the representation of other countries was not so good.

Q: What about China and Japan?

WILKINSON: The Chinese had, as they often do for their diplomatic posts, bought a hotel on the West Side, so they could have a good dining room. Actually, they bought a motel. When they became members of the United Nations in the '70s, and were able to be represented, they bought a place where they could serve good Chinese food, and they did. But they were still very diffident about participating in debate, about making trade-offs, about negotiating. They still couldn't understand the process. Even the Japanese, in their inscrutable way, stood aside from the rough and tumble. But not so Sadako Ogata, who is now head of the World Refugee Organization, a wonderful woman who was at that point the vice-chief, the deputy head, of the Japanese delegation, and I remember her telling me that Japanese diplomats were the three s's: sleepy, silent, and smiling. They never disagreed with you in public. You always would be sure that the Japanese were on your side, and then they come around and tell you later that they didn't really agree but they didn't want to say so at the meeting. So the Orientals were not used to United Nations.

Q: Well, then in 1980 you moved to where?

WILKINSON: In 1980, I finished up at the United Nations and moved on to work, back and forth to and from New York as the deputy director of the office of the Law of the Sea.

Q: You were doing that from when to when?

WILKINSON: From 1980 to 81, just one year, and it was never seen as longer than a year's assignment, but it rapidly became even shorter because of the transition from the Carter to the Reagan Administration. It started out, the Law of the Sea was under the deputy secretary of State. It was one of those offices in State where either no bureau wanted it or the leadership decided that no bureau should have it - more likely the latter, that it should be an interdisciplinary function that was handled directly by the Seventh Floor, so it was an office directly under the deputy secretary of State. The office was headed when I first came there by Elliot Richardson, a special ambassador, with his deputy, George Aldrich. And we were very close to finishing a complete codification of the Law of the Sea, which had been underway for over a decade, since the '60s, in which international agreement had already been substantially achieved on rules of navigation, taking into account modern technology and modern warships and submarines, and on territorial waters, reconciling the positions of countries that claimed from anywhere from three miles, as has been our case, to 200 miles, as was the case of some Latin American countries. We reconciled all that with agreement on the 12-mile of territorial waters with an adjacent 200-mile fishing zone where states would have some jurisdiction but not sovereignty.

All that had been agreed. What had not yet been agreed was a regime for the more uncharted legal area, the newest element of this treaty, which was the resources of the seabed and the sea floor. How were we going to regulate those internationally? And the debate revolved around the *res communis/res nullius* argument that I mentioned earlier. Does the sea floor, like the moon, belong to everybody, or is it nobody's? And if it

belongs to everybody, how do you regulate it? Well, in the mid- '70s, this issue had already been identified, and Henry Kissinger, together with Elliot Richardson, had agreed on a Solomonic solution that half of the sea floor would belong to everybody, and the other half would be up for grabs. And the way you did that was that if you wanted to mine the sea floor, you would identify the area that you wanted to mine, and then you would set aside an equal and adjacent area next to it, which would belong to everybody. So if you had a mining claim, you would get half of it, and the other half would go to the international sea bed authority, who would control access to that part of the sea floor and would give licenses to people that would mine it on behalf of the international authority, and the income would go to everybody. That was the solution, and that was being written up in Chapter 3 of the Seabed Treaty, which was almost finished in late 1980 when I became the deputy director of this office. And it was to be finished and codified - finished at the next session of the seabed negotiations, which were to begin in March of 1981 and signed soon thereafter. Richardson left even before the November 1980 election, perhaps foreseeing the outcome of the election, but at any rate, he left as head of the delegation and turned it over to George Aldrich, his deputy, who became our chief negotiator for the Law of the Sea Treaty.

During the ensuing months up until March 1981, we were consulting about how we were going to finish off this treaty, and consultations with our principal friends and the Soviets and others, and then we all, all of us from that office, went up to New York in February of 1981 to get ready for the March meetings. And all of a sudden, one Saturday night, we were all told that we'd been fired. Some people called it the second Saturday Night Massacre, recalling Nixon's firing of Archibald Cox. It was apparent that the new Reagan Administration decided to get rid of us because they didn't like the compromise. They felt that this idea of splitting up the sea floor into half and half was not only impractical, which it may well have been, but also was not simply ideologically in line with the views of the new Administration, which felt much more strongly that the spoils of exploration should go to the explorer. Any other way was not how the West was won. You know, you go out there and you spend all that money to explore the sea floor, and you find something down there, it should be yours. So we were told that our role in the Law of the Sea negotiations, our personal role, was finished, and we would be replaced by a new team, which would be set up momentarily. And the new team was headed by Jim Malone, who was designated assistant secretary for oceans, environment, and science (OES) and specifically to be the head of the Law of the Sea delegation, and the whole Law of the Sea staff was transferred to OES, to the OES Bureau of State, from the deputy's office. Malone brought with him a reputedly devious negotiator called Lee Ratiner, who had been an anti-Richardson activist earlier in the '70s, a lawyer who proceeded to try to unwrite everything that had been written into this treaty, in a series of consultations in New York.

I stayed for a while after all. I stayed because they discovered, after firing me as a member of this team and firing one other member of the office who was working with me, that we were apolitical people, that we had no association with the previous negotiation, and that there was no particular reason to fire us. So they needed manpower, and they kept us, and

I became in effect the executive secretary of the delegation, replacing Alan James, a senior FSO who was considered *ancien regime*, closely tied to Richardson and company. But that didn't last very long because I started asking for memcons on what people were doing and saying and insisting on written records of what was going on with the new people who had come up in this new group from Washington, and neither Jim Malone nor Lee Ratiner liked that very much. After a month or six weeks of trying to keep a semblance of professionalism in what was being done there, I was politely asked to return to State. In effect, told that I wasn't really needed in New York any longer. So then I came back to Washington in the spring of 1981 and spent a couple of months going through the motions of running an office in OES as acting director. The director had been fired also. The director's name was George Taft, and he had been promoted to the directorship in the summer of 1980 and then "fired" in March 1981, moving on eventually to another Civil Service job in the Legal Division. Even back in Washington, I found it difficult to operate. It was clear that the new group in power did not want to do things the way you do it in the State Department, which is to keep records and to have position papers and to clear them with other agencies. That was not their style.

Q: I recall - I was in Washington and one of the jobs I interviewed for was sort of an executive secretary for OES, and I was told -

WILKINSON: When was this?

Q: Well, I guess the summer of '81.

WILKINSON: Right.

Q: And I was told that Jim Malone was absolutely impossible, the most disorganized person. You couldn't do anything with him, and everyone was sort of throwing up their hands because he wasn't any good. I don't know. Maybe this is wrong, but that's the impression I got.

WILKINSON: No. He was hired, in effect, to be a hatchet man. He had a reputation, a not very good reputation, of being a kind of political assassin who had done the same kind of work in ACDA in the mid-'70s to get rid of some "liberals," and I don't remember his personal history, but it was a shady one. And after he left the State Department in some disgrace because his dealings, with not only Lee Ratiner but with some others, came under legal scrutiny. Lee Ratiner was being paid more than U.S. Government consultants were allowed to get, and that was discovered, and Malone was told that he was operating on the edge of what was legal, if not beyond it. And he left and retired to teach. I think he went to the Southwest to teach in Arizona or New Mexico. I don't know the exact outcome. But he clearly was one of the least loved and desirable appointments of the Reagan Administration, in the State Department, at any rate. I take it you didn't-

Q: Oh, no.

WILKINSON: - accept that job, and wisely.

Q: No, I mean, I was really warned. Where did you go? By the spring of '81, you are essentially out of a job.

WILKINSON: Well, just to lay the Law of the Sea Treaty to rest, of course, the United States did decide not to sign the treaty. We were one of four countries. The other countries who had negotiated went ahead without us, having said, Well, you know, you were in so far that we're not going to change it to accommodate your new completely changed position. You either sign it or you don't. And we didn't. We were one of four countries, the others being Israel, Turkey, and Venezuela. The others all had basically parochial regional reasons not to sign the treaty.

Q: I assume Turkey was because of Greece.

WILKINSON: Turkey because of Greece, Venezuela because of Colombia - there was an argument about the waters off the Guajira Peninsula, I think - and Israel I don't recall why, frankly. It may have been the Gulf of Aqaba and Jordan, something about traditional limits on straits. We were concerned that our rights to remove minerals from the sea bed would be infringed, but what happened was that the price of minerals continued to fall afterwards and nobody wanted to mine the seabed, even for the famous manganese nodules. So in effect, we were arguing about a chimera that never came to pass, and in the '90s ultimately - and again, I don't know the details because I've left the issue - we were able to find a negotiated solution, and I think we either have or are very close to coming back to a revised arrangement that everybody can accept, and the sea bed is still out there for mining. When minerals prices start to rise again, no doubt they will be mined.

Q: Well, where did you go in '81 then?

WILKINSON: In '81, I was offered a position as the political counselor in Stockholm, and I thought I was going to go there, and thought that would be interesting. I hadn't been in Sweden for 15, 16 years, but I did speak Swedish and the assignment seemed to be a good one for me. And at the last minute, I was told that Director General Joan Clark couldn't find a place for Lannon Walker. Larry Eagleburger for unspecified reasons had asked Clark to find an opening for Walker who had been a policy planner and I believe previously a National Intelligence Officer at the CIA. Personnel had tried to place her in three or four embassies - Paris, Rome, and Mexico - as political counselor, and there was a lot of resistance from the Foreign Service people: understandably, because she had no overseas experience, but she wanted to go overseas and she wanted it to be in a Foreign Service job, so somebody said, Well, we'll get you one. And there was resistance everywhere they tried to put her, because she wasn't a professional. She didn't have the union card, in effect. But in the end, Joan Clark said, "Well, we've got to find some place for her. Let's send her to Stockholm." And they did. The Foreign Service Association AFSA complained bitterly that she couldn't speak Swedish and was over-grade, but Joan Clark "directed" the assignment, overriding the regular process. And then Personnel came

back to me and said, “Where would you like to go?”

Q: Sounds like you're up against the Mayor's niece again.

WILKINSON: Yes, that's right, very similar situation. And I was offered a couple of posts in the Far East for which I would have had to learn the language, and the deputy political counselor in Mexico. And so, I said, “Well, you know, Mexico has always been... I've never been to Mexico. You now, 20 years in the Foreign Service and I'd never been to a neighbor country, except across the border maybe once or twice to Tijuana when I was in the Navy, for no good purpose. And I incidentally had an ancestor named James Wilkinson, who died in Mexico City after conspiring with Aaron Burr to try to get Mexico away from-

Q: Oh, yes. He was commander in chief of the army or something like that.

WILKINSON: He was.

Q: The big Mississippi Conspiracy.

WILKINSON: That's right. He conspired with Aaron Burr, and sent Burr's letters to Jefferson. They were subpoenaed for Aaron Burr's treason trial, because he wrote to Jefferson in code, and Jefferson said, “I won't send them to you.” And Marshall sustained him, which was the beginning of the doctrine of executive privilege, so he has his place in history. But Wilkinson died much later in Mexico City after writing that he didn't know why he was wasting his time in this “filthy, idolatrous place.” Despite that, I decided that the Mexico assignment was the best of those offered to me, and I went there in the summer of '81.

Q: And you were there till when?

WILKINSON: Till '84.

Q: You were deputy political officer?

WILKINSON: Deputy political counselor.

Q: Counselor.

WILKINSON: Yes, it's the deputy chief of the Political Section. And at that point I was freshly remarried. My divorce from Lee Ford was final in early '81. We had been separated for several years. And I married another Foreign Service officer, Xenia Vunovic, and she had to decide between going to Cairo as the peace negotiations officer which she was tentatively assigned to, or going to Mexico with me, and learning Spanish, with no Foreign Service job right away. She agonized over that but eventually decided to cast her lot with me. I called Bill Pryce, who was the acting DCM. He was political

counselor, but he was acting as DCM at the time - and said, "When do we need to be there?" And he said August 3rd. So we had a five-day honeymoon that consisted of driving, being married on July 29th and driving five straight days to get to Mexico City by August 3rd, and my wife subsequently has asked herself a number of times whether she really made the right decision, because it was not fun doing a forced march for your honeymoon. Then we got there on August 2, and I came in duly the next morning and reported for duty, and Bill Price said, "Oh, you're here. Why are you here so early?" At which point I had to ask whether this was the profession that I wanted to be in.

But it was a fascinating three years. I very much enjoyed work in Mexico, and I did it twice, in fact. I went back again in 1991. I served from 1981 to '84 and again from '91 to '94. We'll come back to that later.

Q: Well, now, could you talk about first the embassy and the atmosphere of the embassy and all and talk about what your job was?

WILKINSON: Sure, well, my first impression, not only was I not overjoyed coming to the embassy and find that I really didn't need to get there as fast as all that, but driving in to Mexico City late the previous day and running into an interminable traffic jam. Life in Mexico City is one set of traffic jams after another in which you are probably inhaling enough pollution to shorten your life considerably. Then going into the embassy's temporary quarters, which are pretty primitive - all of these things are not a great first impression. But I love Mexico, and I soon got over those. My wife took a little bit longer. She didn't know any Spanish, and she spent her first year in Mexico going to Spanish language training instead of working. Then at the end of the first year she got a job, because the ambassador liked her and prevailed on USIA to give her a job as the exchanges officer. But Mexico City then and even now is kind of a nightmare from the standpoint of urban problems. People who served there in the '60s say it was the most wonderful place in the world, and I can believe it because that was before it got overgrown and overpopulated and over-polluted.

I came at the time of the Presidency of José López Portillo (JLP), who was probably the last "dinosaur." *Dinosaurs* is what they call the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) old-timers who grew up in the tradition where the PRI really ran the country and there wasn't any opposition, and elections were window-dressing. The PRI candidate always won, and López Portillo was certainly one of those types. When Reagan was elected, for instance, JLP found a white stallion to give him as an election present. Reagan found a way to accept it, and they both seemed to understand each other very well. López Portillo lived that way. He built himself a gigantic estate on a hill over Mexico to which he retired, and his police chief had a similar estate in the south part of Mexico City, with a dog track and a race track and guest quarters for two or three hundred people, and houses all around the country. So corruption was - maybe it should be called seigneurial privilege - it was just understood that part of the income of the state was for leaders' private maintenance accounts. It was a different era in Mexico from what it is today.

Q: Who was the ambassador, and how did he operate the embassy?

WILKINSON: The ambassador was John Gavin. John Gavin had gotten there a few months before I did and was still feeling his way. As an ambassador, he was an amateur, fluent in Spanish, criticized by some of the Mexicans for having been doing rum commercials in Spanish in Mexico shortly before he became ambassador. The Mexicans are critical of anybody you name as ambassador. They're very fussy about their Americans. They don't like having Mexican-American *Chicanos*, and the previous ambassador had been a *Chicano*. Gavin wasn't a *Chicano*. His mother had Mexican and Spanish blood, and he spent his summers on a ranch in Sonora and learned the most... He could swear in Spanish better than anybody. His Spanish was very good, although the Spanish teachers in the embassy told me that he wasn't a 5/5 because he couldn't use the subjunctive. He didn't like that. He thought he was a 5/5. He was very vain.

I got along very well with him. I guess I fit his image of what a Foreign Service officer ought to be, because I could speak pretty good Spanish and I kind of liked to do things in a stylish way also, but you had to be very careful, because he took offense at the least slight. He was very protocol-conscious. And in the end... Well, he had a wonderful sense of humor too. For instance, when he was testifying about his nomination, somebody said, "You're a movie actor. How can you expect to go and be an ambassador?" And he said, "Well, I've got 70,000 feet of movie tape, and I can't find anything in that tape that shows that I'm a particularly good actor." So he says, "Maybe I can be a better ambassador." And that got him a lot of points there. They liked that. Actually I think his best movie is one in Spanish called *Pedro Páramo*, and I think he is good in *Pedro Páramo*, which is a sort of magical realism Mexican epic.

Q: Did you run across or were there any repercussions because if I recall he went through a series of DCM's and had what is known in the corridors as "temple guards."

WILKINSON: Palace dogs? Yes. Temple dogs.

Q: Temple dogs.

WILKINSON: Yes, he did. You spoke to a lot of people. Well, he had a guy named Don Lyman that nobody liked, who had been an FSO a bit, led him through the confirmation process, was working on the Desk, and he liked Lyman because Lyman was good at flattering his ego, and also at playing on his paranoia, which was immense. And so he told Lyman, you know, "Quit the Foreign Service. I'll get you a double promotion and come down as an FSR. You're an FSO-5 now. You can come down and work as my staff aide. I'll make you an FSR-3." I think that's the way it was. So he did, Lyman did that, and became the staff aide. Now, John Ferch was his deputy chief of mission, who stayed for a year and left amicably, went on to be chargé in Cuba. And then George High came up from being DCM in Brazil and was there for a year, and he did not get along terribly well with Gavin, so he left after a little over a year and went back to be country director for Mexico, and that was pretty acceptable.

But the man who really suffered at Gavin's hands was Frank Crigler, who was the previous director of Mexican affairs, and Crigler and he just simply did not get along. I remember going with... Crigler came down and we made a trip together to southern Mexico, and then we came back, and he went in to debrief the ambassador and (I gather, I wasn't in the meeting) started giving Gavin some suggestions on administration. And Gavin did not think that country directors in Washington told ambassadors how to run their embassies. He had this misguided feeling that he was the President's personal emissary. Incidentally, he was there from '81 to '86. He served five years. After three years, I was told that he got a call from someone in the White House, maybe the chief of staff, who called him and said, "Jack, your three years are up. It's time to leave." And he said, "Fine, just ask Ron to call me and tell me, and I'll leave." And of course, Reagan didn't do that, so he stayed two more years. That was his style, and he tried to operate that way with the Mexicans. He could be very, very arrogant. He was a great friend at first of Bernardo Sepúlveda's, the foreign minister. They got along beautifully. I had met Sepúlveda, and he was my contact at first, because this was before Miguel de la Madrid became president and Sepúlveda was his foreign affairs guy; but he wasn't cabinet level, so I was introduced to him by Gabriel Guerra, who was there before me (and who later became ambassador in Chile), who knew Sepúlveda. Then Miguel de la Madrid became the "destapado," nominee of the PRI for the presidency in 1981 or early '82, and the ambassador immediately said, "Well, this Sepúlveda is going to be the foreign minister, so he becomes my contact." Which is perfectly normal and natural. But later the relationship between these two very sensitive and arrogant people broke down, and after a couple of years, they just didn't talk to each other, the Mexican foreign minister and our ambassador. And Gavin had difficulty with a lot of people because he tended to... He was charming and disarming and very good at telling stories, very good in small groups, but he did not like to work behind the scenes. When something wasn't going right - or even when it was going right and he wanted to make a record of it - he would go public. And that just... The Mexican press is barbaric, and would try to hack him to death. Anyway, if there was a disagreement, he would immediately start talking about it and the press would pick it up. Instead of trying to smooth it over and solve it, it usually got exacerbated when Gavin got his hands on it. That was a problem.

Q: Well, did you have a particular slice?

WILKINSON: I did, but let me go back to the palace dogs with Don Lyman. Eventually, after George High left, before his assignment was soon to be finished, there was a year before a new DCM would come, and it was proposed to have Perry Shankle, who was the political counselor, become the DCM, and I would become - Gavin told me - the political counselor. And something went sour during the summer of 1983. I don't know what, but Perry Shankle didn't get the job as the DCM, and it was in fact left vacant for a while, and then Don Lyman moved into it, first *de facto*, and then by name. He was actually designated as the acting DCM until a new DCM would arrive in the summer of 1984. It was Roger Gamble, who eventually arrived a year later. And I think during that time Don Lyman - of course Perry was disappointed; I was disappointed; but practically everybody

else in the embassy was angry, because Lyman was such a conniving, devious person. You couldn't trust him to tell the ambassador what was going on. He would give the ambassador a different version of what was actually happening, which would pander to either his vanity or, as I mentioned earlier, his paranoia. And so it was a very unhappy period.

Q: Hoo boy. Well, did you find that the embassy -

WILKINSON: After Gavin left, of course, Lyman disappeared and when to work for IBM in Florida and has never come close to the State Department since.

Q: Well, did you find when you have a situation like this, a bureaucracy often adjusts and you start moving around, in a way you're kind of doing the same thing except you're almost - it sounds bad, but I don't mean it that way - almost unplugging the ambassador and his DCM, but you go ahead and carry on the business of the embassy?

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: Or did things just stop?

WILKINSON: No. No, life went on. The embassy didn't cease to function to a certain degree. Well, let's leave that and talk about substance, which really... I don't think it had a great deal of effect on the external face of the embassy, except, as I mentioned earlier, Gavin's relationship with the Mexicans was not good. During that whole period the U.S. bilateral relationship with Mexico suffered as a result. We had a habit, I discovered, and I've seen it repeatedly in Mexico but since then in Brazil and other countries, that we're always at the peak of our relationship bilaterally and last year wasn't perfect, but it's for that reason, although last year we were supposedly also at the peak. During those years I don't think we were even saying we were at the peak. And one of the principal reasons for our difficulties with Mexico was the Central American situation. Almost immediately after I got to Mexico in the summer of '81 - in fact on August 28th, three weeks later - the Mexicans completely surprised us with a joint declaration, developed with the new Mitterrand Government in France, new since the spring of 1981, that the rebels in Salvador were - they were declaring them to be - a legitimate political force, and in fact, recognizing a state of insurgency in legal terms in Salvador, giving political and legal recognition to the rebellion, which, of course, was totally in contrast to the American position. Even at the end of the Carter Administration we were not very sympathetic to either the political or the military elements of the insurgency in Salvador, and of course, *a fortiori*, during the Reagan Administration we were totally aligned with what was at that point an increasingly conservative military junta. Well, Duarte plus were a military government. And so the Mexicans were, in effect, in full knowledge, taking a different position from the United States, facing us down, and seeking the support of the French. We found out later that, in fact, it was Jorge Castañeda, Jr., the son of Lopez Portillo's foreign minister, who had drafted that declaration during a visit to Paris in the spring - the Castañeda who is now a well known author about Latin American affairs, a professor at

Princeton. And so it started in the fall of 1981. Mexico was, in effect, telling us we were wrong about Central American, telling us that the rebels knew what they were doing and that they were trying to get rid of corruption, and that they were not proxies for the Cubans or the Russians, that they were independent. They were casting serious doubt on the argument which was being made by John Glassman, my predecessor in my job in Mexico, who had gone down to Salvador on leaving Mexico and found documents which he claimed, in a white paper which was published by the State Department, showed that Cuba was supporting the revolution in Salvador. This white paper was subsequently shown to be not very well put together, and Glassman was, in fact, named as the subject of a weeklong series of Doonesbury cartoons, in which he's questioned about his sources for the paper and Trudeau mocks his answers. Anyway, whatever the truth of the matter may have been about the extent of Cuban support for the revolution in Salvador, it was a big issue between us and Mexico and continued to be a big issue throughout my few years in Mexico at this time. And with your permission, I would like to come back to that.

Q: All right. Let me put it here. We're in the midst of talking about your time 1981-84 as a deputy political counselor in Mexico. We've talked about the Gavin rule and the problems with Ambassador Gavin, and we've just started talking about the political situation in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and we'll continue that. Of that, you've talked about the joint French and Mexican recognition of the rebel movement there, and so when we pick this up, we'll continue to talk about that. One question I would like to ask at this time, which we'll answer when we get together again, is how did you find the Mexican Foreign Ministry as a foreign office? What did they call it?

WILKINSON: The Chancellery, the Mexican Foreign Ministry, sometimes by its location - Tlaltelolco.

Q: Foreign Ministry - because I've heard again and again that whereas basic relations with the United States and Mexico are going rather nicely, in foreign affairs it used to be the place where you could really show that you were sticking it to the colossus to the north.

WILKINSON: It's funny, you know, I just underlined in my notes here what I'd like to talk about next, and it was exactly that.

Q: Today is the 26th of February, 1999. Ted, if I recall, the last thing I mentioned was how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Foreign Ministry or whatever they called it - what did they?

WILKINSON: Well, they often call it Tlaltelolco, because that's where it sits in the middle of Mexico City in what was the old center of Tenochtitlan, the lake where the Aztec civilization centered.

Q: Well, anyway, it's the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

WILKINSON: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Q: About dealing with them.

WILKINSON: It's not hard to see why there were differences between our outlooks because most of the people in the Mexican Foreign Ministry tend to be aristocrats of long Mexican heritage. Many of them have parents and grandparents who have been foreign ministers, so it's very much of an elite group that runs the Foreign Ministry, and they get very angry at being lectured by Americans because they think they're better educated. And not only that, they're educated in the tradition that goes back to post-revolutionaries Vasconcelos and Lázaro Cárdenas, who was heavily influenced by socialists in the '20s and '30s, and certainly the Marxist element in Mexican education has always been highly influential, at least until quite recently. Things are changing in Mexico, not only with NAFTA but before NAFTA. So a major part of my job in Mexico was trying to interpret the Mexican attitudes, to show logical ways to take the emotionalism out of it, why they differed with us and how, if necessary or if possible, we could accommodate these differences. Where Mexicans, I think, differed with us particularly was on Central American policy in the early '80s because, as I mentioned last time, they did not believe that the revolution in Salvador was being supplied principally by Cuba and the Soviet Union. They thought it was more home-grown. They also took strong exception to what was becoming increasingly public in the early '80s, which was our assistance to the *Contras* - first of all, Argentine assistance and then eventually American assistance in the early '80s to the *Contras* to overthrow the Sandinistas. And they thought they knew more about Central America than we did. In fact, I don't think the Mexicans knew very much about Central America at all. When I served there later, I never saw a Mexican come to visit. There were thousands of Americans who came through Central America to try to find out what was going on, and Mexicans assumed they knew it *a priori* from the fact that they were fellow Latin Americans, but they never came down to doing the on-the-ground research - with possibly one exception, and that was a man that I think highly of named Adolfo Aguilar, who is now a maverick opposition senator in the Mexican Senate but at that time was a young research director at the Third World Institute, which was run by Luis Echeverría in Mexico City and whom I often talked to and visited with.

Q: In the first place, you were in Mexico from when to when? I just-

WILKINSON: Oh, I'm sorry. I went there in the summer of '81 and I stayed there till 1984, and then later I came back and served another three years in the early '90s, but we'll come back to that.

Q: Well, in '81-84, was there a feeling at this time in the Political Section of trying to separate, you might say, the Foreign Ministry attitude and maybe the attitude of the elite from the middle class or other areas, doing polls or something, about where things stood vis-à-vis the United States? Or did you feel that (1) it wasn't important what, you might

say, the middle class or the low class felt, or (2) really they were all in line?

WILKINSON: Well, I think it certainly was important to try to capture public sentiment in Mexico and separate it from elite opinion with regard to bilateral issues between the U.S. and Mexico, such as the decision of Carlos Salinas later to negotiate a free trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada. It was a courageous departure from traditional Mexican elite thinking, which was, basically, Mexico needs to survive alone because otherwise you'll get swallowed by the U.S.

But Mexico's foreign policy was normally designed and run by the elite, and the polls really never showed any deviation in popular opinion with what their leaders were telling them, because that's what the public line was and they accepted it. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying, would you-

WILKINSON: Yes, I was talking a little bit about Mexican attitudes toward Central America, the domination by the elite of Mexican foreign policy, how it differed from ours, our attitudes. As Adolfo Aguilar used to put it, Mexico is dominated by the U.S. from the north and has a long frontier, which can be crossed any time by American forces, but it's never been surrounded by Americans. If the U.S. were to become directly involved militarily in Central America, Mexico would have American military on both sides of it and would feel even more vulnerable and weak, and for that reason Mexico didn't want to see any greater U.S. involvement, certainly not any military involvement by the United States in Central America, regardless of the reasons of the uprisings from both the left and the right. At any rate, this was clearly the underlying rationale of Mexican foreign policy for the entire period that I was there, and what began with an effort to line up support from other countries in the declaration that Mexico made with France in 1991, recognizing the legitimacy of the insurgency in Salvador, evolved into what was called the Contadora Group. The Contadora Group lasted for some years. It was an attempt to consolidate the mainstream of Latin American thinking, to seek to conciliate, and in many respects to provide a counterweight with what Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and eventually others thought was an overbearing and perhaps misguided American policy in Central America.

Q: Again, going back to this '81-84 period, how influential did we see Mexico in the Latin American sphere. Again, I've never served there, but I've sort of had the feeling that Mexico was considered sort of "North American" by a lot of the rest of the continent, in a way sort of overbearing and really not a player by the Southern Hemisphere.

WILKINSON: No, I don't really think that's true. I think even today there is a persistent Latin American identity which resists American attempts to unify the hemisphere and produce common positions which we've been pursuing in the Clinton Administration summit meetings; and the Latins have their own - what used to be the Contadora Group has now become the Rio Group - and even today the Mexican influence within that group

is quite important, and Mexicans are recognized as perhaps elitist but also as very skilled and adept diplomats. And so I don't think Mexico's influence is discounted. Now, of course, Mexico doesn't carry quite the same weight as Brazil.

At any rate, Mexicans then certainly had a considerable diplomatic influence in the Latin American groups and they tried to leverage it to make it greater. They almost desperately cast around for support in resisting American intervention.

Q: Well, how did you view our dealing with the Foreign Ministry? Was it sort of a dialogue with the deaf when you were involved there?

WILKINSON: Well, since I did most of the foreign affairs business for the Political Section, most of the bilateral business, I saw my role as interpreting to Washington why there was a logic to Mexican points of view, and the Washington attitude, particularly during the Reagan Administration - it exists even now - was the Mexicans are only useful when they're on our side and when they understand the rightness of the American position, and the rest of the time they're crazy and irrelevant. I tried to show why the Mexicans were neither crazy nor irrelevant, to the point where I was told that I was getting a reputation as an advocate for the Mexican point of view, whatever it was. We at this point were paying lip service to the efforts of the Contadora Group and eventually also the Central American presidents, in a series of meetings that they had beginning at Esquipulas in the mid-'80s, to solve the Central American problems themselves, and to develop a Latin American solution that would basically conciliate both sides, whereas Washington saw the only right course as an absolute rejection of communism in the hemisphere and defeat of the rebels in Salvador and victory by *Contra* insurgents in Nicaragua. So in order to deal with this situation, the administration appointed a series of special ambassadors; Dick Stone, Harry Shlaudeman, and Phil Habib served in turn as special American ambassadors for Central America, and they came through and attempted to woo the individual Foreign Ministries, including Mexicans, away from these solidarity expressions of the Contadora Group - with very little success. Our position was somewhat... I may have mentioned last time that our own argument that these regimes and rebels in Central America were being fueled and encouraged by the Communists was somewhat undermined by faulty intelligence, which was eventually discredited, claiming that we had proof that large arms shipments were coming in from Cuba. The intelligence just wasn't very good and wasn't sustainable.

Q: Well, talking about intelligence, a question I often ask, did you find as you were going sort of what was coming out of the CIA, particularly in dealing with Central America, was this of any use, or how did you all feel about what was...?

WILKINSON: Neither the CIA nor my predecessor, John Glassman, who was in Central America, nor any other document that I ever saw produced strong evidence that there was significant Soviet or Cuban involvement in Central America. So from the intelligence standpoint, we really weren't able to document this convincingly, but of course the Reagan Administration, Reagan himself, said we must beware of the situation where we

had what he called “feet people” - not boat people, but feet people - arriving in the United States being driven out by political instability caused by Communist leftist insurgencies. So it was more a political issue than an intelligence question that we were debating with the Mexicans. And in the end, 10 years after all of this passed, one has to wonder to what extent both sides exaggerated the importance of the issues, and what real national interests of either the U.S. or Mexico were involved.

Q: Were there problems within Mexico, or ones we were concerned about, by being that “feet people,” people leaving Nicaragua or El Salvador and coming up into Mexico to get away from the fighting, or not? Was this causing any problem there?

WILKINSON: Not really in Mexico, because they tended to go right through Mexico as fast as they could. There were a few people that stayed in Mexico, and of course the Mexicans don’t like refugees. Nobody wants a bunch of refugees, but they were willing to accept a limited number of Central Americans who wanted to stay in Mexico but not very willingly. The UNHCR had an office there, and there were tensions between it and Gobernación, the Interior Ministry that handled internal security.

Q: Well, did we have any feel for were the Mexicans sort of saying, “Be our guest, and there’s the way to the north,” and just sort of opening up, or was it a problem?

WILKINSON: We could never prove that they pushed Central Americans out of Mexico and into the United States. We did debate from time to time whether they couldn’t control better the northward flows of Mexicans, who constitute a far greater influx - a hundred Mexicans for any one Central American cross our southern frontier illegally - and the Mexicans would always tell you that their constitution precludes any controls on movements by Mexicans leaving the country, which is from a legal standpoint certainly correct. Politically, whether they could have done anything more, it’s debatable, but of course any attempt to discourage emigration to the United States, which provides a major source of income to Mexicans then and now and takes pressure off unemployment, would be politically disastrous, so understandably no Mexican leader has ever accepted that kind of proposal. And we haven’t, to be fair, pushed them to do something that would be so difficult, at least not in my days there.

Q: Yes. Coming back to reporting you were doing, and this was a time of high ideology, particularly in the early part of the Reagan Administration and with John Gavin as ambassador, did you feel any constraints, or maybe your colleagues, about what you could report about political positions of the Mexicans, or was this not a problem?

WILKINSON: Never, never. To the credit of John Gavin and all others who... I never felt any constraints, and I always felt that John Gavin understood and supported what I was doing. I did have an interesting series of interviews with the former chief of state of El Salvador, a man, an army colonel named Adolfo Majano, who had been the head of a *junta* that took power along with Duarte in late ‘80. In 1981, Majano had to flee the country for his life because there were conservative elements in the military who were

concerned that he was too liberal, too willing to talk to the political wing of the guerrillas, so one night there was an assassination attempt, and he was told that if he didn't get out of the country he would be dead. But he came to Mexico and wanted to talk to the embassy, and I spent four or five long evenings with him similar to the kinds of conversations we're having, going through his history and what his attitudes were about what was going on in Salvador. I took a lot of notes and reported them - which caused angry cable comments from Dean Hinton's people in San Salvador, saying that Majano was telling lies, that none of the stories I reported from him was true. The embassy in Salvador was super-protective of the reputations of these people, the military, who were controlling Duarte in El Salvador at the time. And Majano, for instance, would talk about the "nun's case" as a travesty that the Salvadoran military should be ashamed of.

Q: These are nuns who were raped and killed and buried.

WILKINSON: Talk about things like that and you might want an independent accounting of this kind of incident in Salvadoran history. The embassy in Salvador was very upset that this kind of information was filtering in from another place and might be used to raise questions about our absolute support for the governing *junta*.

Q: Of course. I mean, this is of course the problem, the political atmosphere in the United States being what it is, if you do report that, it will reach parties who will be opposed to whatever we're doing, and you're caught in a dilemma. How much do you report? I mean, there's always selective reporting in the post, because they can't report overly on corruption and things; otherwise, you might lose complete support, and so when a post from outside comes in with a perfectly valid independent report, it becomes a tool of the opposition, in a way. I'm not saying it's a good thing to be concerned about this, but it's a fact of political life.

WILKINSON: Well, that's right, and the question, I think, was... The legitimate question is, How much reporting about what's going on in one country should one be doing from another post? I was reporting about an issue of current importance in Washington, but from their perspective, it wasn't necessarily welcome, either in Salvador or perhaps also in ARA.

I guess I achieved a certain amount of notoriety in Mexico in 1981 and 1982 because in 1983 Excelsior, at that point the largest and most widely read Mexican newspaper, a columnist named Manuel Buendía one day surprisingly put a front page article in about me as the head of the CIA operations, not only in Mexico but throughout Central America. He had pulled together all kinds of evidence to support this, including the fact that I often went visiting other ministries, and not just the Foreign Ministry, where I ought to be, and how I pretended not to speak Spanish as well as I actually did, and how I lived in the south and had a big house with lots of parties - which of course wasn't true - at least, I didn't live in the south, etc. And this caused quite a stir, and the ambassador after that arranged that our house have 24-hour police protection. And later that day, I guess, Steve Solarz was coming, and I called the ex-president's office, López Portillo had left

office, I called his office to make an arrangement for a meeting with Congressman Solarz, and when I called back later in the day, López Portillo's spokesman said the ex-president said I shouldn't worry about what was in the press about me because the same thing had happened to him in the Mexican press, and you see, any good person could be excoriated by the Mexican press, including me, just like him. That made me feel good.

Q: Usually, these articles don't just happen. It sounds like there's something behind it, either to discredit, disinformation, or - did you ever try to figure out what was behind this?

WILKINSON: Well, it's a funny story, sort of tragic in the end because Buendía was murdered a year later, a few weeks before we left Mexico for good. Some friends even made bad jokes like: you had to get out, didn't you? Buendía was murdered by a short man on a motorcycle, and probably because of a story that he was supposedly about to print about high-level corruption. However, one of his pet subjects was the CIA, and he also had from time to time in the past exposed other people who were allegedly involved with the CIA, so I wasn't the first, and he published a book called *The CIA in Mexico*, which has a series of articles about alleged CIA operations and operatives. I suspect that he got information about me from a friend named Luís Ortiz Monasterio, a Mexican diplomat serving temporarily in the Interior Ministry as director for refugees, who subsequently told me that he was a friend of Buendía's and he'd like me to meet the man. Buendía must have drawn the CIA connection himself. I believe Luís knew better. I saw a lot of Luís because he was the director for refugees in Mexico, and that brings me to another topic I'd like to talk a little bit about.

Q: Okay, but while we're still on the foreign affairs side, I can't remember the last time - did Grenada or the Malvinas, the Falklands, come up?

WILKINSON: Indeed, and it's very good that you mentioned them. Mexico was an interesting case in the Malvinas situation because Mexico and Argentina are opposite poles in the hemisphere. Argentina was still under military rule, obviously, very conservative and very suspicious of the Mexicans. The Mexicans, in turn, thought the Argentines were clumsy and stupid and that they had committed a gross stupidity in the Malvinas. They never said anything publicly, but privately they sympathized, I think, with the British. Mexico was certainly one country where Argentina didn't get much support. Similarly, to their credit, they didn't make a big fuss about our intervention in Grenada, which took place in close to the same time frame. They told us privately that they understood the situation, and they concurred that it was a case where the whole hemisphere might come down on our heads publicly, but the criticism would be insincere, pro forma stuff.

Q: Yes, well, then, moving on to this other side of things...

WILKINSON: Well, I was going to mention, actually it's another sort of foreign policy issue, where early in the time that I was in Mexico, the southern state of Chiapas, which

subsequently became notorious for the rebellion of the Zapatistas, but that was later. The state of Chiapas was invaded by hordes of Guatemalan refugees - *hordes* I say, I think at the peak there were 50,000 or more who had come to Mexico. There would have been a lot more except for the fact that they were all getting killed in Guatemala. And the true story of what happened in Guatemala in that period is just now becoming public. In fact, there's a story in today's *Washington Post* about the report of the truth commission, which was established by the peace agreement between the rebels and the government in Guatemala last year. And the truth commission report says that probably 200,000 people died, principally Mayan Indians that live in the highlands and were being systematically eliminated by the military government of Guatemala under a general named Ríos Montt, who set up a campaign called "Beans or Bullets," *Fusiles o Frijoles*. Either you joined the government forces and put your flag up in front of your village and created a local defense force which would go out and hunt the guerillas, or you would be exterminated. There was a pretty serious campaign, and so many, many Guatemalan refugees, bemused and bewildered by all of this, just took to the hills and eventually migrated to Mexico after wandering around homeless for weeks. And of course, American refugee policy, but more generally American foreign policy interests were involved in this, as they are in all diasporas like that, and so we followed the situation very closely, and I spent a lot of time with the refugee people, including the head of it, arranging for international visitors to go down and talk to these people and find out what was happening to them.

Q: Well, were you running across somewhat the same problem that you had with El Salvador, and that was that as one found out what was happening, we were supporting the military rule in Guatemala mainly because of our Central American policy there and they didn't want to hear what was going on.

WILKINSON: Yes, there was a distinction there, and it's an interesting one. The situation in Guatemala never became a domestic political issue in the United States to the extent that Salvador and Nicaragua did, and I think it was partly because the Guatemalans were so blatantly involved in repression and in ways that alienated Washington to the point where we had cut off military assistance, largely because of human rights issues. And there was still a lot of military-to-military liaison. I remember that our ambassador, Fred Chapin, complained bitterly that CINCSOUTH General Gorman had been pursuing military cooperation, even visiting Guatemala without his knowledge even after as a policy matter we had cut off military cooperation, so that the military links died last and died hardest. We had begun to distance ourselves already from the Guatemalan military, but it was never clear, even to the Mexicans in that era, exactly what was going on in the highlands. These Mayan Indians were incapable of communicating anything clear to anybody. Luís told me, I remember once, that when he asked them how long they had been wandering around in the hills, they couldn't tell you how many days they had been; it was how many moons they had been in the highlands. So they came illiterate, not speaking Spanish, only various obscure dialects of Mayan that made it very hard to communicate with them. I remember taking Doc Long, our congressman from Maryland. Some years back he was active on the State Appropriations Committee, a very important congressman, who wanted to visit, and I went down to Chiapas with him to see the

refugees. The Mexicans arranged for him to talk to a group of these Indians in a school house along the river border between Mexico and Guatemala. Old Doc Long begins by telling them in English a clever story, maybe appropriate for a League of Women Voters audience, which I had to translate into Spanish, and of course most of them didn't even understand the Spanish after I had translated it, and at the end I said in Spanish, "Now, for God's sake, please laugh." Or do something, show some animation, because the congressman has just told a story. And I could see that about five out of 50 understood even that! So the communication with these people in the forests of Chiapas was very difficult.

Q: Well, now. When you were dealing with Mexico, I realize you were dealing with external affairs. Now you were in the Political Section. At this time, '81-84, was there any feeling about two elements that seemed to be in place, and that is, the problem of Chiapas and some of the poor southern areas and a feeling of disconnect with the central government, and also the northern tier of Mexican states, where they almost are looking more north than south. Were we looking at that?

WILKINSON: Sure, really there are three Mexicos: the northern, what is sometimes called *Borderlandia*, where Tex-Mex food prevails on both sides of the frontier, and people's main source of income is in the States and their place of residence is in Mexico, where they either cross daily or they cross for a couple of months and then come back in the winter as long as they can do it legally and, as often as not, illegally; and then there's the sort of Central Highlands, which is the heart of the old Aztec kingdom of Mexico, which is still very different from the United States, with an aristocracy that is very fiercely proud, educated, sophisticated, with some landowners (although large estates are prohibited); and then there's the poor, largely rural, Indian south. And so every time you talk about Mexico, you really have to look at it in the context of what region you're talking about. Regionalism is more prevalent in a large country like the United States than in a small one, but in Mexico it's even more prevalent because of the isolation of some parts of the country, which have never been exposed to centralized government in the sense that we know it.

Q: What about your contact with the PRI? What was our feeling, that this was the way Mexico is and always will be and we deal with it as the permanent revolutionary party, or were we looking for other parties, the PAN or what have you, that might give a different cast to our relations?

WILKINSON: In the elections in the '80s and even through the early '90s the most important, the most significant party of the opposition was the PAN in national elections, a conservative party, a little bit to the right of the PRI, very nationalist, but from an economic standpoint less Marxist, and traditionally got 15 to 20 percent of the vote. And parties of the left collectively got 10 percent. And so, if you were looking at the possibility of an eventual bipolarization of Mexican politics, it looked as if the PRI would become the more liberal, probably more to the left, and the PAN would become the more conservative party. That's not necessarily true any more with the opposition on the left

apparently gaining significantly. It now holds the mayorship of Mexico and it has won a couple of governorships. But in the early '80s, the PRI was still very dominant, and its dominance was, I would guess, 80 percent, simply because it was a monolithic party that had learned how to coopt leaders and retain their loyalty and obtain the loyalty of the people. Let's speculate that the other 20 percent of the PRI's election victories came from ballot box-stuffing and other election distortions. Sure there was some of that, particularly to make sure they never lost a gubernatorial election, but I don't think they ever, in fact, came close to losing a national election, even if the elections had been 100 percent squeaky clean, until perhaps 1988. But even in the early '80s, there were people who wanted to modernize the PRI and make it a genuinely democratic party and not just an institution. It's called the Revolutionary Institutional Party, but today it is much more institutional than revolutionary. There are people that want to make it a grassroots organization instead of one which depends on controlling labor from the top and working in cooperation with business. Because they can't afford to alienate the party in power, the biggest businessmen have tended to cooperate with the PRI. One PRI leader, the international affairs secretary of the party - he was another HHH like Hubert Humphrey: Humberto Hernández Haddad - asked me for all the information about our absentee voting so that Mexicans in the United States and elsewhere could vote in an election, since the Mexicans don't have absentee voting. Eventually when he talked with the rest of the PRI, to the so-called dinosaurs, the old people in the PRI, the conservative traditionalists, they said, "No, because more of the absentees would vote for the opposition. We don't want that, God forbid. They left Mexico because they don't like the PRI. So if they don't like it here, they'll vote for the opposition." So there was always a struggle within the PRI between those who wanted to modernize the party and make it more responsive and those who believed that modernization would erode their own control and perhaps their livelihoods.

Q: Well, our policy over the years has been to promote democracy, and here you had this government which, at least, oh there were, you mentioned, other forces going there. You did have ballot box stuffing and controls. Was there any effort during this time or concern about reporting about how Mexico, the governing party controlled things and preaching democracy and more democracy, or not, or were we just sort of saying, Well, this is the way it is, and let's not rock the boat?

WILKINSON: Well, um, I think there was actually more of the preaching and more efforts to democratize the process in the '90s than there were in the '80s. Once the process had begun in Mexico, the United States jumped on the bandwagon and encouraged it to accelerate and encouraged all the people who were promoting it. To have done so in the '80s, certainly in the López Portillo Administration, and even in the one that followed it, de la Madrid, would have been taken by the Mexican press as domestic intervention, and that was verboten. Frankly, I think that the elections were democratic enough so that it would have been gilding the lily to go in and complain about local vote tampering - with the possible exception of 1988, and even that's not clear. Mexico was, after all, a slightly different state from ours, but there's no question that the people chose their government.

Q: Well, Ted, is there anything else we should discuss about Mexico before we move on?

WILKINSON: Well, I had a couple of other notes. I got to know ex-President Luís Echeverría a little bit, and subsequently, on my next tour, saw him from time to time. I think I've already talked about John Gavin. One other person who subsequently became notorious and ill-fated. That was Rick Ames, whom I knew quite well at the time. He worked, in name, under my supervision in the Political Section in Mexico. He was working under Political Section cover and actually had some regular assignments with us. He was in the process of a divorce. I had gotten to know his eventual second wife, Rosario, before he did, and I might have even introduced them to each other at one of the monthly diplomatic corps luncheons. I certainly knew them both and thought very highly of Rosario. She was the Colombian cultural attaché, and she was one of the few women diplomats from other Latin countries serving in Mexico, and certainly one of the most intelligent and articulate ones, and I thought it was a terrible tragedy that the two of them got involved in what they did get involved in after they married and came to the U.S.

Q: Could you explain to somebody who doesn't know about the Ames situation?

WILKINSON: Well, it's public knowledge, Ames, after leaving Mexico, allegedly became an agent or was being paid richly by the Soviets to expose information about CIA spies. He's now serving a life sentence. I remember once having gone out to dinner with him and Rosario and one other couple here in Washington in about 1988, to an expensive Mexican restaurant. Rick was being very expansive - more so than seemed necessary - and insisted on paying for all six of us. The incident seemed odd enough to me to come back to my recollection five years later when we learned that he'd been a spy. And needless to say that after this period in Mexico when we knew them well and were quite fond of them, we were upset that this happened.

Q: Well, then, you left Mexico in 1984.

WILKINSON: Right.

Q: Whither?

WILKINSON: I went to Tegucigalpa, Honduras. I had at one point hoped to get the job as political counselor in Buenos Aires, and that went to somebody else, and John Negroponte told me that his political counselorship was open and wanted me to come down and see him and talk about it. I think we knew each other from years gone by, not well, but he also knew my role in Mexico, and he wasn't quite sure if I was the right person to come and work for him in Tegucigalpa. So I went down, and actually Xenia went with me, and we spent a couple of days in Tegucigalpa sizing each other up, and I liked John very much and admired the way he operates. And I said, "I'd be happy to work for you, and as far as my political views, I'm apolitical. I'm a Foreign Service officer, and I'm not going to advocate a position either left or right of what my government is trying

to do. Although I do have my doubts about the wisdom of some of our policies, I'm not about to sabotage them." John had a reputation at that point as a proconsul. He had been so designated by *Newsweek* as somebody who was, in effect, dictating to client state Honduras and running the war against the Sandinistas with U.S. support of the *Contras* out of Tegucigalpa. This was an unfair label and false impression. There was an impression, I think, probably that, at least, among some of the opponents of the anti-Sandinista effort that we were giving Honduras substantial military assistance in return for them allowing the *Contras* to operate very freely out of Honduran territory. Several years later when the Iran-Contra scandal became public, Negroponte denied under oath when he was asked to testify about this, I believe, later that there was any discussion of linkage. The Hondurans may have adduced that in order to receive the levels of military and economic assistance they were receiving from the U.S., that they needed to cooperate with us in assisting the *Contras*. This was never a written understanding or anything that I was a party to.

At any rate, Negroponte handled the Hondurans with grace and did not behave like a proconsul, and I felt comfortable working with him in Honduras, and with his splendid, upright DCM, Shepard Lowman. Xenia was offered the post of commercial officer there, the same post that Larry Eagleburger started his diplomatic career doing, so nobody could say that it was a career dead end. There was some resistance from the Commerce Department who said, No, we want to send one of ours, and Negroponte said, All right, send me somebody who is as fluent in Spanish as Xenia is. They couldn't, so she got the job.

And the next couple of years I spent in Honduras watching a process which was very different from what went on in Mexico.

Q: Oh, can I have the years you were there, from 1984 to -

WILKINSON: Yes, from '84 to '86.

Q: Okay.

WILKINSON: A process that's very different from Mexico City, because here, obviously, we were dealing with, if you will, a client state. Mexico certainly is not a client state. We might be able to overwhelm Mexico economically, but we can't push them around, and the few occasions when we've tried to do that we've had to send troops in, and that's left a bitter legacy in Mexico. In Honduras on the other hand, we had a base. We don't call it a base; it was a "task force," from which we were able to conduct limited regional activities at least, like training, search and rescue, or civic action projects in not only Honduras but also in Central America. But also the "task force" was a very convenient way to show solidarity with friends in the region and discourage any meddling by others. The Hondurans were obviously out to attune their foreign policy very closely to our desires. And Negroponte handled them with great dignity and care. Once when Foreign Minister Paz Barnica was on a trip to Washington in search of aid, Negroponte had

planned to come up and be with him, but he couldn't for some reason, so he sent me up and asked me to organize a dinner for Paz Barnica, which I did, and made sure that all doors were open to him in Washington and that he was treated like a foreign minister of another sovereign state should be, rather than as somebody who was running errands for us. That part of his job he handled with great skill. I noticed that other people who came down from Washington tended to behave in a very patronizing way, and we constantly had to modify that and try to tape it over. I remember once when a White House person came down - actually it was a Foreign Service officer on detail at the White House - and was told certain things by the Foreign Ministry which weren't exactly the way the White House wanted them to be, so he simply sent a report in in which he said what he thought the White House wanted to hear and misquoted the foreign minister completely, and I was appalled. It could have easily been written as a footnote - okay, we'll talk to him again and straighten it out - but no, this is what he said. He distorted the record. There certainly was a lot of that, and one had to constantly attempt to modify and mollify Washington's high-handedness. And one also had to take account of what was going on behind our backs. I may be a little bit naive. I met Ollie North, and Ollie appeared in Honduras with regularity, and he'd go off and meet with the military, and we knew that he was helping orchestrate assistance to the Contras, but beyond that we did not know a great deal about his activities, so some of the things that were being done back in Washington by Ollie and the so-called Regional Interagency Group [RIG] and Elliott Abrams and Dewey Claridge were almost certainly being done without the knowledge of, I expect, even the ambassador.

Q: To begin with, could you tell me about the government of Honduras in this '84-86 period?

WILKINSON: Yes. Let me just add a footnote about relationships with the station during that period. I mentioned that I might have been a little bit naive about what they were doing and how they were doing it. I got a phone call in 1985 - actually I had been there for a year or so - from a tradesman in San Pedro Sula, which is the second city of Honduras in the north, saying that "Your boots are ready." And I said, "I'm sorry, I don't remember having ordered any boots." Maybe somebody had given me a pair, why didn't he just send them up by mail. And he asked, "Seven thousand pairs?" And I said, "Oh, thank you very much," as it suddenly occurred to me that somebody had used my name to order boots for the Contras.

It was an interesting period in Honduras. Like so many other Latin American republics, it had gone through a period of military rule. The military dictator, a general named Policarpo Paz, turned the government over to an elected successor in 1981, and that elected successor was Roberto Suazo Córdova, a liberal politician who was about as much of a small-town country hick president as I've ever run into, admittedly so. He kept his 15-year-old mistress at hand whenever he wanted her, and he had a grotesquely overweight first lady who ran the nation's charities, as they do, but he didn't have much to do with her. But he had a tremendous grasp of the politics of the country. He told Negroponte once that the people of his small country were like his fingertips. He could

feel anything that was happening in Honduras, and I suspect that's partly true, because it's such a small country. He used to call our public affairs officer, Chris Arcos, up from time to time and just chat, and when Arcos left, he called me up once or twice, just to talk. It was kind of odd to be sitting there watching television and all of a sudden the telephone rings and it's the president, not through a secretary. It's *el presidente* on the line when you pick up the phone. He had a unique vocabulary. He called the Communists *Ñangaras*, which is a Spanish word that doesn't mean anything to anybody but to him, but we all after a while started referring to *Ñangaras* as the forces of evil of the left in the country. When he was on his way out, having been succeeded democratically by another elected president, he had a sort of exit meeting with Vice President Bush, who came down for the inauguration of his successor, and I noted that even Stephanie Von Reigersburg, who was our Spanish language head translator and very expert person, was baffled by President Suazo Córdova. She couldn't figure out what he was saying. Once he started talking about *Aguacate*, which in this case referred to a military base from which the *Contras* had been resupplied, and there was a marvelous dialogue of the deaf which ensued because Von Reigersburg translated *Aguacate* as 'avocado,' which is as it should be. She said something about "the soldiers out there in avocado." And Bush said, "Oh, you mean they're all dressed in green. Like the tanks." And Von Reigersburg translated that back in to Spanish, and the president said, "Wes, yes." And the conversation just became totally unintelligible for a while. So anyway, he was running the country. Everybody looked forward to the day when Honduras would have a slightly more dignified president, but while he was there, he was our guy.

The military had given up power formally, but behind the scenes, before I got there, from '81 to '84, roughly, there was a general named Álvarez, who ran the military and the police, in effect, national security and internal security, with a very firm hand, and there were a lot of allegations of human rights violations, to the point where we - the United States - were accused of being associated with these forces of repression in Honduras because we were training the Honduran military and allegedly training even the people that were in the special forces battalions that went out and picked up suspected political deviants and insurgents and interrogated them in unpleasant ways. First of all, when I was serving in Honduras, the military commander-in-chief had been succeeded by the air force commander, whose name was Walter López and who, in my estimation, was very enlightened and honest, a straightforward general who wouldn't tolerate that kind of activity and probably didn't, unless it was being done behind his back by the army. Once when we were talking about drug trafficking, I remember somebody brought up the question of Noriega: "You know, General Noriega is involved in drugs in Panama." And López said, "Wes, I know that Noriega, and he is involved in drugs, but I'm not, and we're not, and I'm clean." And I think people tended to believe that, that López was a clean and honest armed forces commander in chief in Honduras. So I didn't have the feeling that human rights violations were going on behind our back. Heaven knows, there probably were some isolated cases, but we had enough information in the embassy to know there was no "pattern" while I was there.

Q: Were we having any of the problems that certainly were occurring in El Salvador

about the military going out and not only raping and killing nuns and doing other dastardly things - I mean, was this going on?

WILKINSON: Certainly not. There was no insurgency to speak of in Honduras. There were dissidents in the country, and there may have been a few small armed groups somewhere in the countryside. First of all, there was a relatively democratic government in the country, and second, it's a lot larger geographically than Salvador or perhaps even Guatemala, so it's harder to control a remote countryside, and it may well be that in addition to the Nicaraguan Contras there were other insurgents somewhere in the countryside in Honduras, but we never got any reports of violent repression of either dissidents or the existence of any significant armed insurgency anywhere in Honduras.

Q: Indians?

WILKINSON: There are some Miskito Indian populations along the coast.

Q: But I mean this wasn't a significant -

WILKINSON: No, it wasn't a problem. The only area in Honduras where there are really any ethnic minorities is along the Atlantic coast, on the east side, where the Miskitos live (as they do as well in Nicaragua). They are pretty primitive but seemed to have enough autonomy to be satisfied in Honduras. Honduras also has four or five very attractive tourist resort bay islands, which are big enough to sustain substantial populations. And out there, there are a lot of redheads descended from British pirates, and their language is English, and they're also ethnically distinct. They like to be left alone, and central governments in Honduras have usually done that, with the result, of course, that they're hotbeds of smuggling and all kinds of probably illegal activities. But at least when I was there the drug trade had not yet become a major problem in the Bay Islands. We used to go out to the islands quite a bit. Xenia had commercial contacts there - lobster exporters, hotel owners, etc. - and I learned SCUBA there.

Q: How good were relations with Guatemala at the time?

WILKINSON: Relations between Honduras and Guatemala were perfectly amicable. The Hondurans would have liked to see peace in Central America. They were uncomfortable being seen in the role of a client state, if you will, of the United States. They would have much preferred to see the whole armed struggle in neighbor countries. To the point where they really looked at the *Contra* revolution as something that had nothing to do with them. It was a matter between the Nicaraguans and their government and the United States to the extent that we were helping the *Contras*, but it was not something they wanted to get involved in, and there were no issues between Honduras and Guatemala.

Q: Or in Nicaragua? I mean, how about with Nicaragua?

WILKINSON: Well, with Nicaragua, the Nicaraguans, of course, argued that Honduras

shouldn't be allowing this insurgency to be pursued on their territory. I guess I neglected to mention the bases of the *Contras* that were in the southern "parrot's beak," if you will, of Honduras. There is a little outcropping of Honduran territory about in the middle of the southern frontier that extends southwards into Nicaragua, and it's from that area where the Nicaraguans were encamped, that they would launch operations in Nicaragua. Now at Easter time, in 1986, it was the Friday before Easter, the Nicaraguans retaliated in force. They'd made some incursions across the border from time to time in the past, but there was a major one then to try to destroy the Contra camps. At that point, John Ferch was the ambassador. Negroponte had left. Ferch was away, and Shepard Lowman was the deputy chief of mission. And I was I guess acting as the DCM. And so immediately... Washington knew about this incursion even before Honduras did, because we had intercepted communications that showed what was going on. So I'm arriving at the embassy Friday morning and I started getting phone calls from Washington saying, "What are the Hondurans going to do to repel this Nicaraguan invasion of their territory?" Calls from Elliott Abrams, no less; he was the assistant secretary at the time. And so John Ferch was in Washington and knew nothing of this. I called him up and told him about it, and Shep went in to try to reach the Honduran foreign minister, Carlos López Contreras, who said, well, you know, he'd get to it when he got to the office, but he wasn't going to be in the office that day. The newly elected president, José Azcona, had gone to the beach for the weekend. In fact, the whole country was asleep, and Washington wanted them to wake up and throw these Nicaraguans out who were attacking the poor, innocent *Contras* - throw them out of the country, or at least issue some public declarations about how their territory had been invaded. And the Honduran reaction was Ho-hum, this is not our business, as I mentioned before.

It got to the point where Abrams said, "I'm coming down on Easter Sunday, and on Monday I want to organize an effective Honduran resistance, and we'll give them a new aid package in order to get this operation started." There was linkage, at least in Abrams's proposals. And so Washington was going to send a plane down, and somebody was coming from the CIA and they would have somebody from the White House, and a whole team was going to go. And I said, "Well, the ambassador is in Washington. Put him on the plane." And they said, "No, we don't have space for him." That was the first clear sign that John Ferch was in trouble in the eyes of the home team, although there had been some other straws in the wind before then. But when they said we can't put him in the plane, or I think the words were, "it won't be necessary." I thought what a slap that was. The ambassador (who had a terrible case of the flu at the time) had to fly back commercially separately, and got there, I think, Monday night. And Washington was very disappointed with the reaction of the Hondurans, blamed it on Ferch and on the embassy, all of us, for not having mobilized the dramatic Honduran reaction that seemed to Abrams and company to be warranted. I mention all the rest because Ferch was dismissed from his job as ambassador a couple of months later.

Q: Why, do you know?

WILKINSON: I think for several reasons. One, because during the earlier visit, when

Vice President Bush, as I mentioned earlier, had come down for the inauguration of the new president, Azcona, several things took place that displeased the vice president and his principal national security advisor, Don Gregg (who subsequently became ambassador to Korea). Gregg told me later that out of 80 trips that the vice president had made abroad while he was vice president, there were only two bad ones, and Honduras was one of the bad ones. It was bad because the inauguration ceremonies ended early, and the vice president and U.S. delegation came up to the residence. There were 80 people standing on the patio. I was talking to Claiborne Pell, I remember, and all of a sudden we saw the vice president in the corner eating lunch. Nobody else was being offered lunch. And apparently, the ambassador had said, "Why don't you have a sandwich over here," and sat him down there. Bush thought everybody else was going to be fed lunch and they weren't, and he was embarrassed because he was being given lunch alone, and that's not Bush's style. John and Sue Ferch weren't very sensitive to his reactions.

On the other hand, it wasn't Ferch's fault. The White House advance had insisted that there be no lunch for anyone. All would be served on the plane. They hadn't reckoned on the inauguration ending early.

Beyond that, Ferch got into trouble with the White House even before this because he insisted that wives be invited to a dinner the night before with the vice president, who had come stag, but all the Central American presidents were going to have a dinner at the residence, and the Ferches thought it would be rude if their wives, who were also in town as guests, weren't invited, so John told the White House that the wives should be invited even though Bush would be alone. And they argued about it. This alone may seem petty, but after a series of incidents that happened over six months, the White House got progressively more annoyed with Ferch, and they finally just removed him.

Q: What happened to this invasion, so called?

WILKINSON: Well, the Nicaraguans came in; they shot up the *Contra* camps, and they left. And that was it. They didn't eliminate the *Contras*. The *Contras* resisted, and there were some casualties, but it wasn't the end of the war. But Washington wanted to play it for all it was worth, and they couldn't get enough propaganda blood out of it, so they were unhappy.

Q: Did you get the feeling that Honduras was sort of the playground of the NSC and the CIA? I mean, at least they were running rather roughshod dealing with it.

WILKINSON: Absolutely. Not as much at the time as I realize in retrospect what was going on, because activities were being organized through the CIA and even through Ollie North without the station in Honduras knowing what was going on and that the support to the *Contras* was coming by air through El Salvador and by sea from Miami in ways that the embassy wouldn't even know about. These were all attempts to evade the restrictions that had been imposed by Congress on assistance to the *Contras*.

Q: How did the Hondurans view the Sandinista government in Nicaragua?

WILKINSON: I don't think they saw them as representatives of the Evil Empire. I remember the late Harry Bergold was our ambassador in Managua and came over to Honduras once. Harry was an intelligent guy. I'd worked with him before in the Pentagon. We went out to lunch. And he started talking about the Communists in Managua. And I said, "What Communists?" He said, "I'm talking about the government." I said, "But when did they become Communists?" To me they were Sandinistas, not that I professed to know exactly what their political leanings were, but I hadn't recalled that they had been labeled as Communists. And Harry said, "Well, that's what we're calling them these days." That was the party line. The Hondurans did not see them in that same light. They saw them as Central Americans. They weren't ideologically attuned to the Sandinista revolution, but they didn't see it as an alien cancer in Central America the way the Reagan Administration did.

Now one thing I didn't talk about and that I wanted to talk about was the election of 1985, which led to the change in administration in Honduras and the departure of this man I mentioned earlier, Roberto Suazo Córdova. The Hondurans have a system, an interesting electoral system, which is almost *sui generis* - although the same system exists in Uruguay, they claim - whereby a party can have more than one presidential candidate. There were, in fact, two factions within the Liberal Party to succeed Suazo Córdova, and only one candidate on the part of the Nationalist Party. But at the end of the election, you count up all the ballots, and the winner of the election is not the one who has the most votes, but rather the party that has the most votes. So if within the Liberal Party there are two candidates, and they collectively have more votes than the Nationalist candidate, then the leading Liberal wins. And that's what happened. The vote actually went to José Azcona, who was a - I wouldn't want to call him a "maverick," but more of an idealist than his other party candidate within the Liberal Party, who got maybe a third of the votes cast and Azcona got two-thirds, but collectively they had about a million votes. And the candidate for the Nationalists, Rafael Caldera, had about 750,000 votes, so according to their system, Azcona was elected. Well, this led to a serious debate within our embassy, because the chargé at that time, Shep Lowman, thought that Azcona would not be particularly friendly to the *Contras* and his winning the election would cause problems for our policy in Honduras. And Shep, a veteran of Vietnam, was a Cold Warrior of the old school, a wonderful guy and a great friend, but I did not see eye to eye with him politically. I said, "Well, we have to respect this election. The system may be crazy, but it's their system, and the guy who won is Azcona, under their system." Lowman was in favor of somehow reinterpreting the electoral rules so that Caldera would be declared the winner and that we should attempt to influence the electoral commission to declare this alteration or that somehow the constitution had to be interpreted in such a way that Caldera would be declared the winner. I said, "We can't do this. There would be hemispheric reverberations if the United States got involved in trying to insert ourselves in this electoral process and come up with a different result." And we didn't. Shep's idea was put aside. Five years later Caldera was elected, and his government, which was in power from 1990 to 1995 turned out to be about as corrupt as anything even Honduras

had seen.

Q: Did Jesse Helms weigh in at all while you were there, because he had taken an interest in how Latin Americans were handling Central America, or not?

WILKINSON: Yes, but he was not as much of a problem in Honduras as he was in Salvador. In Salvador, he and his staff, in particular... Deborah De Moss.

Q: Through marriage.

WILKINSON: Yes, she eventually married a Honduran, a national guardsman, I believe. In those days, I actually got to know her a little bit, lent her a book or two that I hoped would help modify her extreme views. I didn't succeed. She and Helms' staff were intervening in El Salvador on behalf of D'Aubuisson and company, some of the anti-democratic right to a dangerous extent. They even were dealing with people that had been party to a plot to assassinate Tom Pickering when he was ambassador there. Helms and his staff were very troublesome in Salvador. In Honduras, I don't recall that we had any problems with Helms.

I'm going to have to break off.

Q: All right. We'll stop at this point. I have just one further question about Honduras before we move on, and that is about the economy, American interests, labor, whatever the economy was at that time, as we saw it in our... and then we'll move on.

WILKINSON: Okay.

Q: Okay, great.

Today is the 4th of March, 1999. Ted, as I mentioned before, why don't we talk about the economy of Honduras. I mean, one always thinks of bananas and the United Fruit, and all that, but what was the situation. By the way, what were the dates that you were there?

WILKINSON: I was there from 1984 to 1986, and what you think about when you think about Honduras - bananas - is about what there is in terms of the economy. The principal export products are fruit, and while I was there my wife served as the commercial attaché and was trying, through the Caribbean Basin Initiative, to encourage the Hondurans to develop more export products, more diversified products, so they would be less reliant on sugar, pineapple, and bananas. And they were beginning to get into what's sometimes called "primer" vegetables, vegetables that come out in the winter before our market is producing them, so that they can sell in the United States, but they hadn't yet had a great deal of success. A now, of course, Hurricane Mitch, which hit them in the fall of 1998 has taken them back 15 or 20 years, destroyed all the infrastructure that they had. So the little

that they had then was supplemented a little bit perhaps by American presence and by American aid. We were giving a great deal of military assistance, which I mentioned earlier related to but was never directly linked to their tolerance of the *Contras*. And a considerable amount of economic support, which totaled over \$100 million a year to Honduras. Of course, this has dried up substantially or had dried up before Mitch because of the decline of strategic interest in Honduras. Apart from humanitarian aid, there was and remains very little aid. These days, the region is no longer and perhaps never was a strategic threat, but is no longer perceived to be one.

Q: Well, what about U.S. commercial interests there and labor, and how was this all fitting together during the '84-86 period?

WILKINSON: The labor market is rather thin. Unemployment was not a great problem because so much of the economy is below the labor market. It's in the sort of informal sector, where the extended families are taken care of largely by one member that's earning wages, and maybe another two or three are selling products on the street, so that statistics on labor were never particularly realistic or indicative of the situation in the country. It was not an uplifting place to be. It may be the poorest country in Central America. I think it was the poorest in the Americas when I was there, except for Haiti. Now Nicaragua may have sunk to that level. But at any rate, it still remains extremely poor. Columbus, when he sailed away from Honduras, said, "*Gracias a dios que hemos dejado estas Honduras,*" meaning, "Thank God we've left these *Honduras*." Whatever he meant by *Honduras* was never clear. It may have been these hills and valleys, or these deeps off the coast, but he was glad to go, and nobody has been in a rush since then to settle there. It also has traditionally been a place where politics was a little cynical and a little bit corrupt. We had a very good friend named "Picho" Goldstein, who subsequently became the chief of staff for the Nationalist government from '90 to '95, and from reports that I heard had been making a great deal of money on concessions for imports and exports and building a mansion in the middle of town. What a pity - he had a great sense of humor and no need to raid the treasury.

Q: Were you feeling any influence of American commercial interests there to, say, keep the laborers down or keep labor unions from bothering us or something? Were they doing anything?

WILKINSON: I didn't get the sense that our... I think the Honduran Government and the Honduran establishment were well enough aware of the importance of Standard Fruit and the American commercial interests to cooperate in making sure that there were no outbreaks of serious labor unrest. The laborers on the banana plantations were pretty well paid. They were a relatively paternalistic system. People who got jobs there tended to be fairly satisfied, I think.

Now I mentioned the one aspect of corruption was after we left Honduras the airport at which we often travel in and out of had a terrible tragedy. A plane coming in and trying to land... You had to come over a mountain and then fly down over the slope of the far side

of the mountain in order to land the airplane. And one plane came in too low and simply ran into the mountain, killing one of the local employees who worked in my section. But this was because the airport... It had supposedly been going to move ten years earlier to a place outside of Tegucigalpa which was much safer, but knowing it was going to move, the Nationalist businessmen all bought up the land around it, figuring that they would sell it to the government; and then they lost the election. The liberals were elected, and they said No way are we going to buy back the land from these corrupt businessmen that speculated on the land, so the airport never moved. That was the kind of business that one ran into.

Q: Well, you left in 1986. Where did you go?

WILKINSON: We left Honduras in '86 and came back to Washington for five years.

Q: '86 to '91.

WILKINSON: '86 to '91, that's right.

Q: What were you initially doing? I guess you probably had a split tour, or were you doing the same thing?

WILKINSON: I had a split tour. I came back and worked for three years in Oceans, Environment, and Science as an office director, and then I was the president of AFSA for two years, which is a full-time job these days.

But before we leave Honduras, there were a couple of other things that I wanted to mention. Chris Arcos, who was the public affairs advisor and afterwards went back as ambassador called Honduras "a cesspool" because it dragged everybody down, and I must say that our moral lives when we were there - as I look back on it - I wonder. For instance, I remember flying out to the offshore islands - Honduras has wonderful bay islands, all kinds of deep sea diving and wonderful resorts - as a guest of one of Xenia's, of my wife's, commercial contacts, who was one of the big lobster fishing crew out there, but flying out on his plane and staying at a hotel (for which we paid, but we never paid for the transportation). And then another time going off to Guatemala and staying at the apartment of a big businessman who lent us a chauffeur, and we had a chauffeur for three or four days in Guatemala as his guests. And I really didn't think twice about it. Today, of course, you wouldn't be able to do that kind of thing, and you would probably either end up being taxed on it if you accepted it, or more likely than that, not being able to accept it at all. And in fact, in later times you had to be very careful about that sort of thing. But it was a place where we didn't worry a lot about security for the same reason that we didn't worry too much about labor unrest. We didn't worry too much about security, because behind the façade of civilian government, I think the military was still very much in control. It controlled the police, and we didn't worry about going out at night. We had security guards on our house. Once an intruder - I think a pair of intruders - tried to get in to our house once about the middle of our tour - in a nice secure area; the foreign minister

lived next door to us. One of them threw stones across the wall to attract attention, and then another one tried to climb over the wall in another part of the house. I was out, but the guard saw him and told him to stop. Instead of stopping, he fled, and the guard chased him and told him to stop again. He didn't stop, so the guard shot him dead. And the news came out on the local radio - once. It came out once, and then it absolutely disappeared. We didn't know why, but we had a feeling that the military said this is not appropriate news. But there was never more - thankfully - never any more news about it. Our guard was transferred but not prosecuted for having misused his weapon, and indeed, he had warned the guy twice to stop without running away.

Well, it was a very backward place. As an example of some of the things that we don't think twice about in our country, one is always told in Latin America not to drive after night. We traveled fairly often by car from Tegucigalpa to San Pedro Sula, which is on the north side of the country. Once we stopped for coffee on the trip from Tegucigalpa to San Pedro Sula by Lake Yohoa. We thought we had plenty of daylight left, but we were hit by a tremendous rainstorm, which slowed us up in a major way, and we were only able to drive at 10 to 15 miles an hour because the visibility was terrible. And darkness fell, and as we were continuing along the main road, the single headlight of a motorcycle appeared on the left side coming towards us on a side path or side road. I thought nothing of it, and continued to drive slowly along the main road in the downpour, but the motorcycle continued to approach us, and to my amazement failed to stop. And at the moment we passed just in front of this imagined motorcycle, I saw that its light was about six feet off the ground, and it wasn't a motorcycle at all. It was a *train*. No level crossing sign, no lights, nothing - just calmly crossing the road and missing us by a foot or two. Yet another reason not to drive at night.

Even Tegucigalpa was kind of a small town, a city of 500,000. My wife was in the airport one morning, as we often were. The airport was a kind of a social meeting place, because all the flights came and landed in the morning, and usually we were meeting somebody or seeing somebody off. And a lady came up to her and asked her to come into a private room next to the main room and have coffee with her, and she couldn't quite remember who this was, and the lady said, "Well, Mrs. Wilkinson, do come in. I'd like you to have some coffee with me." And eventually, after she'd been there for 10 minutes, she realized she'd been invited in by the first lady. She had met her only once before, but Mrs. Azcona remembered her from when we had met in our visit to the Negropontes before we were assigned there. So it was a funny place. But we left there with many friends. One was the current president, Carlos Flores, a bright and ambitious liberal leader at the time - like Menem of Lebanese descent. I've only been back once or twice since then, but it's a very pathetic country, very backward and of course now very beset with the terrible damage of this hurricane. So let's move on.

Q: All right. You were in Oceans, Environment, and Science, was it? Or what did it consist of?

WILKINSON: Yes, I was asked to come back and work in that area by John Negroponte,

who had left Honduras a year before and come back to be assistant secretary - and I think I probably would have preferred to go back to ARA, but there was no good assignment offered to me in ARA. I had hoped to be an office director, and I was offered an office in OES and in that fall, luckily, just by the skin of my teeth, was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service. I was at the end of my so-called "window," and was not at all sure that I would be promoted. I suspect that I was the last or the next to the last person on the list. But nevertheless, a promotion is a promotion, and after that nobody asks you. That was a very difficult year, so many, many good officers didn't get promoted and left the Service in 1986. Oceans, Environment, and Science consisted, as it does now, of many of the global issues that the State Department has to handle, increasingly important ones, particularly ones concerning preservation of the environment, but those were already taking a high profile in the late '80s. And I took over an office called Nuclear Technology and Safeguards. There were three nuclear offices within OES at that time (since moved to PM), one which did policy and one which did export controls and one which did all other things, and that was the one that I was assigned to. I replaced a fellow named Allan Sessoms, who was a nuclear physicist. What a role reversal: I was to become a nuclear expert to take his place, and he was to become a diplomat to take mine - not to take mine specifically but to go off to Paris as science attaché. John Negroponte had engineered his entry into the Senior Foreign Service by dark of night, I suspect, because Allan was, I think, perhaps the only person to be brought in to this Foreign Service at the MC level laterally, since the Foreign Service Act of 1980 - may still be. This happened around 1987; as far as I know his entry in the Foreign Service was never openly discussed, and somehow no protest was made, I think largely because he was African-American. If he had been white and been brought in laterally at that level, I think there would have been a tremendous controversy.

Q: Yes.

WILKINSON: He was, of course, qualified, but there were other people who qualified as scientists and as a science attaché. Our paths crossed once more later when he went off to Mexico to be political counselor, and I succeeded him then there once more. He had moved from the science cone to the political cone and eventually became a DCM. What was involved in the OES job that I was assigned to in 1986 was pretty technical. The office provided the sort of scientific input for peaceful nuclear exchange programs in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and there were people in the office who were experts in nuclear safety and nuclear fusion, efforts to create energy through fusion as opposed to fission, and in safeguards to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons. Other offices, as I mentioned, did policy and export controls. In effect, we all reported to a roving ambassador named Richard Kennedy. Kennedy had been under secretary for management earlier but had kind of a reputation as a tyrant and was gently moved into that less high-profile position, but he still was a very difficult and contentious kind of fellow, and wanted everything in his domain done in exactly his way. So he used that part of OES as his staff, and he effectively owned the deputy assistant secretary for nuclear affairs, whose name was Dick Stratford. Dick Stratford was the Kennedy man. Negroponte, I think, would have preferred to have somebody else in that job. In fact, he

once told me, even in Honduras, that he would like to have me as one of his deputy assistant secretaries. But that position was filled and Stratford was there doing what Kennedy wanted him to do.

Q: Talking about nuclear safety, the Three-Mile accident and the Chernobyl accident had already happened, hadn't they, by the time you took over?

WILKINSON: Three-Mile had happened I think in '79, and Chernobyl had happened in April of 1986, so yes, it had happened. So nuclear safety was one of the concerns that we had, and the anti-nuclear reaction had already set in, even before Chernobyl. By the early '80s people had stopped building nuclear power reactors, and even now, there have been very few commissioned since then.

Q: You say in the world?

WILKINSON: In the world. I think the only ones that have been commissioned since then are in China, Korea, and France. None have been *started* in the United States. We had at that point 105, and I think some have been taken out of commission now, so we're probably down to less than that now. So we basically in my job in that office, we had particularly close relationships with friendly countries that had nuclear programs that we wanted to watch. And I chaired bilateral commissions with Taiwan, with Egypt, with Indonesia, and with South Korea. And we also watched the Japanese program. These were countries that had declared that they didn't want nuclear weapons and that they would like to cooperate with us and share the benefits of the "peaceful atom" under Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program, which still persists in various forms today. And so through that office of Oceans, Environment, and Science, we were working very closely with these countries. I did not have a mandate to follow more visible countries like Israel, which never declared that it would not acquire nuclear weapons, or South Africa, which at that time was similar, or Pakistan or India, none of which have agreed not to acquire nuclear weapons - or for that matter several that had but were quietly trying to get them anyway, like Iraq, Libya, and Iran. Those were the more cosmic political problems, which were handled by our Intelligence Committee and all the agencies together. Our office just maintained the rather narrow relationships with countries that wanted the "peaceful atom" from us and had no registered weapons ambitions.

I also dealt with the North Korean issue. Of course we didn't actually have dialogue with North Korea, but our office dealt with South Korea and followed North Korea. We had discovered, as of 1986, that the North Koreans had built a test reactor which was capable of producing enough plutonium to fuel a nuclear weapon or more than one. Although North Korea was party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they had never implemented the required safeguards agreement under the NPT. They were not subjecting their spent fuel to the kind of supervision which would preclude their changing it into nuclear weapons. And so my office expert, Al Burkhardt, and I began to propose that Ambassador Kennedy and State Department principals discuss this with other countries, with the Russians, with the British, because it was a problem. And they wouldn't do it. They didn't want to hear

about another problem, and we had to push them constantly. Now, of course, eventually it was acknowledged and brought up as a problem. But I recall being told to bring it up myself in Vienna, where we met bilaterally with the Russians, every time we went, at every board meeting of the IAEA. There are three board meetings a year and one general conference. The board meets in February and June. Anyway, I was told to bring it up with the Russians, no one else would, and the Russians said, Ah, the phantom reactor, you keep telling us. Other colleagues had evidently done this before, and the Russians said, “We know nothing about it, and we can’t answer for the North Koreans. They won’t answer to us any more.” So at the time it was somewhat frustrating trying to get high-level attention. There was no political interest in the North Koreans’ surreptitious weapons program.

Q: I would have thought that dealing with the Soviets in this period, in a way, on nuclear matters, we were all on the same side, more or less.

WILKINSON: We were, very much. The Russians were not denying cooperation; they were just saying, Look, this is a problem: we don’t know anything about it and we can’t do anything about it. We’re talking about Gorbachev now. We were still in the Reagan Administration facing a changing Evil Empire. Our relations had begun to evolve, but they hadn’t completely evolved to one of friendly cooperation.

Q: Were you getting a lot of intelligence reports or were you sort of filtered out to on what the North Koreans were doing, or was it just that even intelligence wasn’t very good?

WILKINSON: Well, working in my office was the aforementioned Al Burkhardt, who was a former employee of the Agency and who had worked in this issue at Langley, so that when he came to State he was pretty well briefed. And we were getting intelligence to show that North Korea had a nascent weapons capability, though we knew next to nothing about their intentions. But North Korea was my office’s problem. Neither I nor my office tried to follow all the intelligence we had on Iraq, you know, where we knew where they too were in the reconstruction efforts after the Israeli bombing against their reactor, or where some of these other countries like India and Pakistan were going. We did have to deal, all of us within the nuclear part of the OES had to deal with the outstanding problem of proliferation, which was continual, and where Congress was trying to stiffen the spine of the State Department and in effect telling State, You’ve got to be stronger vis-à-vis the Pakistanis and you look the other way and just tell them, “Please be discreet about it. Just don’t tell the world.”

So the other country where we had some problems that I did deal with was Taiwan, and I don’t think any of the details are public even now, but the Taiwanese were surreptitiously working on developing a weapons capability also at the time, and we had to lay down the law fairly vehemently with them to stop it. And I was partly responsible for that. I did do the regular bilateral commissions, and then we’d send out some special teams to visit, in 1987 and 1988, to make sure that Taiwanese activities were under full control.

Then we used to travel quite a bit to the Soviet Union for bilateral meetings in between board meetings of the IAEA. I also had one particularly interesting trip when I went with the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who at that point was called Lando Zeck, a former navy admiral, and we were taken to Chernobyl. We were the first non-Russians to visit Chernobyl after the accident, and we also traveled to Novosibirsk and to Leningrad (at the time not yet renamed), and to Moscow, basically because we had offered to counsel them on nuclear safety, and secondly to set in motion some enhanced nuclear safety cooperation agreements and activities. Everywhere we went we were impressed and depressed by the lack of normal safety precautions in the Soviet Union compared to what we have here. I mean just to walk down the street and the manhole covers would be open, and construction sites would be unprotected. We had a private plane, and the stewardess would be sitting in the back row smoking with her seat belt unhooked when we took off. And then when we got to Chernobyl, they still had flammable trash in the hall. You could have a fire here. Nothing seemed to have been learned from two years earlier. And of course the accident itself was compounded by the fact that nobody knew what was going on, and the 33 people who were killed directly as a result of Chernobyl in early 1986 were all exposed to radiation after the accident, some of them because they took no precautions when they were flying over it in helicopters trying to dump sand on it, and were exposed to the radiation as it came out. Others were still in the facility trying to shut it down. So the USSR was, as so many people have said, in that respect, as well as in many others, a Third World country.

Q: What was your impression of the IAEA?

WILKINSON: Well, the IAEA has been run for the longest time by Hans Blix. I think he is still there - a former Swedish foreign minister, and a first-class international civil servant, probably a lot better than most of the other people that run international agencies these days. It's very much an American creation, and we watch it very closely. The second person after Blix, the deputy secretary general, who is responsible for the management operations, is almost always an American. Part of the budget is assessed at UN scale and part of it, the part that's safeguards and safeguards improvement, is voluntary contributions. Of these we pay a larger amount because we want to see the IAEA as the international institution carrying out what is basically an instrument of U.S. policy, the NPT, in a way that makes it transparent for all to see that safeguarded countries are not producing nuclear weapons.

And of course this has always been controversial. Some countries say, You have a competitive advantage because you don't have safeguards on your activities, so we now have safeguards on our peaceful nuclear activities too, just to balance us, even though we have the authorization and we do produce nuclear weapons in separate facilities, but those that are not engaged in it are safeguarded. So the IAEA has that role, and they failed in Iraq the second time, even after the Israeli destruction of the reactor, they failed to detect that the program was underway once again. So we've been working with the agency recently to try to enhance their system of safeguards.

Q: What about Brazil, Argentina? Were they on your radar at that point?

WILKINSON: Brazil, Argentina were not NPT parties, nor were they parties to the Latin American Nuclear Free Zone, which is a kind of poor-man's Non-Proliferation Treaty. It carries with it all the restrictions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, except that it doesn't call for IAEA safeguards. It calls for safeguards that can be developed in some other way through a Latin American system. So we never particularly liked it for that reason, and there were some other legal ambiguities about it that did not clearly rule out "peaceful" nuclear explosions. The U.S. view has always been that any "peaceful" nuclear explosion is indistinguishable from a weapons test. Even if you use one for peaceful purposes, it's still a weapon. So we didn't really press Latin America for many years to complete this Nuclear Free Zone, but Kennedy went off one year, in the fall of I think 1987-

Q: This is Richard Kennedy.

WILKINSON: Yes, Richard Kennedy, not any other Kennedy, to attempt to convince Brazil and Argentina to join the Latin American Nuclear Free Zone. I remember writing a memo at the time saying it was a waste of time. If they were willing to give up nuclear weapons, how much better it would be to get them on board for the NPT. But in the end, interestingly enough, they did first join the Latin American Nuclear Free Zone, as a way station to joining the NPT. So my advice was wrong. In 1992, President Collor of Brazil signed an agreement with Menem to set up their own safeguard system by treaty between the two of them. Then eventually they both decided that they might as well go ahead with the Non-Proliferation Treaty with regular IAEA safeguards, which they are now doing. But they did take the first step, which is politically the easier step perhaps, of joining this Latin American arrangement, which was a little bit less onerous, a little bit less - what is the English word for *prepotente*?... overweening on the part of the nuclear powers. The Latin American zone was a *sui generis* home-grown Latin American treaty.

Q: Well, did you find, with all the problems with Richard Kennedy wanting things the way he wanted them, that just the fact that he was known as a fairly rough character gave you some clout within the Department of State which you might... brought more attention or sometimes was more helpful in what you're doing, or not, or did this work?

WILKINSON: I think Kennedy was credible within the domain that he worked. He was laughed at a little bit, because he was such an arrogant fellow, by other countries, and he did tend to throw his weight around in the IAEA, and people got a little bit angry with him, and I didn't find that his cantankerousness increased his clout here in the State Department. Really, nuclear matters were, at that time at least, almost handled in the abstract separately from bilateral issues. Kennedy, I suppose, when he had to, could go to the Secretary, and certainly issues involving Pakistan and India and Israel and even South Africa would get high-level attention. Problems at other times, like as I mentioned North Korea, didn't get much attention outside of the Non-Proliferation community at that time, and Kennedy was not one to "rock the boat." So I didn't find him an asset at all. Now at

the end of Kennedy's tenure, and as I was leaving, the non-proliferation portfolio was combined with what we called the missile technology regime that we were attempting to promote with other countries that were capable of producing missiles. Our aim was to keep the export and production of missiles and missile technology down and to limit it to the countries that were friendly to us or that we considered responsible, and to avoid missiles falling into the hands of rogue states that were likely to use them in regional disputes in destabilizing ways. I didn't think that combining these two goals - non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and of missile technology - was a very good idea because the latter regime was much more controversial and much more political. Non-proliferation of weapons was established and was pretty well accepted and with growing acceptance, really, even from France and China. To try to overlay another area where we also wanted to dominate exports and restrict the club to members only would be to politicize the Non- Proliferation regime and make it less desirable. At any rate, the decision to combine the office was made, and we now handle all of those issues together. Of course, they will continue. They removed nuclear matters from the Oceans, Environment, and Science and assigned them to the Political Military Bureau, where they now handle it, and they will be handled by our new undersecretary for arms control, John Holum, in his new role as an under secretary of State.

Q: Well, what about some of the other powers? How about the role of France and Britain during your time there, '86- '88-ish?

WILKINSON: Well, the British, of course, have always collaborated very closely with us in the nuclear area. That's one area where we are and have been since the beginning co-authors of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, co-depository countries, and I can't recall any time in my experience in arms control, which goes back to 1968 and continues through a good part of the '70s as well, when we ever failed to coordinate on a major arms control policy questions with the British before we actually began consultations with even the Russians, and then of course the next step was to bring in the French if possible, and the Chinese, in that order, because they too were nuclear powers and we had to keep them in the first rank of consultations. Then, of course, after that the Germans and the Japanese. But the British were always trusted allies, and the French when they wanted to be. Of course the French position in virtually all arms control negotiations, with the possible exception of the Limited Test Ban, has been You'll have to convince me before I'm going to join this. And they've been rather late in coming aboard most arms controls, I think not because they oppose them in principle but just because the French are cynical realists who don't want to get into an agreement that rules out something that will ultimately be used anyway and will destroy the treaties. They want to be sure that it's something that is really going to happen before they sign it.

Q: Well, was there concern about our pressure on commercial interests? One at least has the feeling that the French wanted to sell nuclear manufacturing equipment wherever they could find a market for it, or something.

WILKINSON: That's very true. We ran into that in Korea, for instance. I remember when

our companies were competing with France to sell reactors, one report I heard was the French had said they would sell them the reactor at 10 percent less than the Americans. Whatever the Americans charged, that they would simply find a way to charge 10 percent less. They're very competitive. They have a different kind of reactor that they sell, and basically it has some advantages over American reactors, but ours - the Pressurized Light Water Reactor - is now the standard model for virtually all the American exports that have been sold around the world, certainly in Japan. The Canadians and, if I recall correctly, the French have heavy water variants that provide the principal competition to ours.

Q: The United States by this time and Britain and all had pretty much decided that nuclear power was not the way to go, mainly because I suppose the danger, and what do you do with the residue?

WILKINSON: Those are the reasons, and the psychological element - I don't want to call it "paranoia" but kind of not very well reasoned fear of the unknown - fear that somehow nuclear power is something that we didn't satisfactorily research before we plunged into it. We've created a Frankenstein which we're still not sure we can control.

Q: Well, you left the job in what year?

WILKINSON: I left that job in '89.

Q: '89, and you're saying you went to AFSA. Would you explain what was AFSA at that time and how you came to that job?

WILKINSON: I would have liked, I think, at that point, to have been going to the Executive Seminar, which I always wanted to do but I wasn't chosen for that. I had already been promoted several years earlier, and by the time I'd finished with OES, I guess I had passed out of the zone for that. And I was approached by the president of the American Foreign Service Association, which is our professional society and our union of American people who work in the State Department, AID, USIS, Agriculture, and Commerce - the Foreign Services of all of those departments. They are, incidentally, governed by a separate act of Congress, not by the act that controls the Civil Service, but under the Foreign Service Act, which, as amended as recently as 1980, regulates the employee circumstances and careers of members of the career Foreign Services, of the three foreign affairs agencies plus those in Agriculture. I think Commerce is not regulated the same way, but they nevertheless belong to AFSA.

That organization has been given the right to bargain collectively with State Department management, so one of the responsibilities of the AFSA organization is to negotiate everything but wages and promotions with management. All the aspects of our professional life are subject to negotiation. The other aspect is to promote a series of different professional activities, which I'll talk about in a minute.

So the outgoing president of AFSA approached me. He was my former boss in Mexico in the early '80s, and he asked me if I'd like to succeed him.

Q: Who was that?

WILKINSON: His name was Perry Shankle, the late Perry Shankle. He died very sadly of a brain tumor a couple of years ago. And he asked me actually in 1987 to help him in the organization. I became the secretary of AFSA, which is not a full-time job, but I worked at that in off-duty time for those two years. I went to board meetings and became familiar with the employees and how the organization works, so I was in a good position in 1989, I thought, to take over as president. It's an elected position, and so I had to run a campaign have public meetings and debate issues involving the Foreign Service with other candidates. And I did so. I had the advantage, however, of having what they call a slate, which was a group of nominees, some of whom had served on previous boards, so that they represented a certain level of continuity and also some very nice-sounding names of people who joined me on my slate, like Bruce Laingen. So we ended up winning that election - those of us who were on the slate - by a six- or seven-to-one majority. It was no contest, really. We didn't have any strong competition. There have been other elections in AFSA when the competition has been very acute, but this one wasn't. It was a pity: I was hoping I would have stronger - I didn't want to lose, but I wanted to have a slightly more challenging competition to get more airing of the issues.

So that covers the transition. This took place in July of 1989, and I served there for two years.

Q: What were the issues that you dealt with during this time?

WILKINSON: Well, a lot of issues - of course, all the professional issues that Foreign Service officers have, and there are always quite a number of them. They range from precepts for promotion - we couldn't negotiate who was promoted, but we could negotiate the standards by which people were promoted, whether they would have to have a certain mastery of languages to be promoted from one grade to the next, how many years minimum they would have to have served in the previous grade, what kinds of policies would apply to minorities, like women and ethnic minorities, and other questions such as these - so these were negotiated every year as precepts for promotion, and that's a standard job that AFSA does. But as so often happens when you move to a new job, you end up in the middle of some kind of crisis or other, and I ended up moving into the job just as the organization was preparing to sue the Department of State, and within two weeks of taking over as president, we did, in fact, sue the Department. We sued them because the Department refused to make public the nominations that it was sending to Congress of the political nominees as ambassadors, and we felt that there was no reasonable basis, except potential embarrassment, that should cause the Department not to make public these nominations. And the judge upheld us, so the Department was forced to deliver to us the nominations. We were stimulated somewhat by Senator Sarbanes, who had said in reading the nomination for Melvin Semler, who was

nominated for Australia by the new Bush Administration, and Joseph Zappala, who was nominated for Spain, he noticed that the language is exactly the same, and that these two fellows were being nominated for these two important jobs, and they couldn't even distinguish between how they were writing up the nominations. It turned out that both were real estate dealers from Florida with relatively few qualifications other than being major fund raisers for the Republican Party, so the people that handle Presidential nominations didn't bother to distinguish between them and just sent the same text up to nominate them. Sarbanes pointed this out and then went on to point out the lack of qualifications, particularly in Zappala for Spain, who didn't know any Spanish and who was going into a job in a country where the Spanish membership in NATO and the common market was being debated and where our relationships were very sensitive, where we had a number of U.S. bases; and he said, you know, Can we really afford to send as unqualified a candidate as this? So AFSA, and not just myself but other people in the organization, felt that we couldn't be silent on an issue like this, and we spoke out very much along the lines of what Sarbanes did and mounted a campaign to support him in his effort to block these nominations, and criticized some of the other nominations that had been made by the Bush Administration, apparently with very little regard... I had the feeling that George Bush himself, whom I've a great deal of respect for, must have paid very little attention and left this process in the hands of some of his aides. At any rate, the Foreign Relations Committee (at the time 10 Democrats and 9 Republicans), which has to pass judgment on each nominee, voted 10 to 9 after debate in favor of reporting out the nomination of Zappala. Only one Democrat defected from the party majority, and that was Robb of Virginia. Why he defected nobody knows, but the Democratic majority did support Sarbanes, all but one, and we lobbied extensively to get Zappala's nomination defeated on the floor. And in the end we failed miserably. The vote was 79 to 20 in favor. And it appeared that even the Democrats at that point were not opposed in principle. Some of them like Sam Nunn, who did vote against the nomination, said that they felt that the principle had been so badly violated that they had to vote no, but most of them said "Look, to the victor belong the spoils. When we get into office, we're going to nominate our political ambassadors; therefore, we're not going to vote against these not very highly qualified ones submitted by the Bush Administration." So the idea of being able to buy your embassy persisted into the '90s and probably isn't dead yet. It may even get worse after the next election, because it looks as though both candidates are trying to develop as large a war chest as they possibly can, and they're going to have to reward their contributors some way. So we may end up going on with this unhappy situation where we nominate people who really don't know what they're doing when they get to the post. Some of them may turn out to be good ambassadors; I know people that worked for Joe Zappala after he went to Spain and said that he was really quite a nice guy and effective. You sacrifice at least a year or a year and a half of effectiveness because it takes that long to get trained up to do something halfway decent. This process, however, did generate a fair amount of publicity for AFSA, and in some cases for me. I was asked to be on the *Today* show with Deborah Norville interviewing me, and did interviews for NBC with Wolf Blitzer and a national call-in show on one TV station, on this issue. Basically, on what the Foreign Service is and why it is that it's important that professionals represent in our sensitive missions abroad. We did succeed probably in defeating one

candidate- (end of tape)

Q: As you were saying, Joy Silverman?

WILKINSON: Joy Silverman was a New York socialite who had served on an advisory council of New York City to the mayor, and she had never done anything professionally. She had no *curriculum vitae*; she had no business experience and no special educational qualifications. She was just a friend of the senior Republicans in New York City. And so several people pointed this out, including me in some publications that I wrote. I wrote a piece for *Newsday* saying let's take the dollar signs off our embassies, that noted that Silverman was less qualified than about two-thirds of the officers in the Foreign Service; i.e., all those who had gotten tenure, because they at least had a couple of years of professional experience, which she had none. Well, eventually the White House withdrew her nomination, and she did not go. She also suffered not just for these reasons, but also blew it because she sent her husband down to take the measurements of the ambassador's residence before she actually even formally nominated so as to prepare for the renovations that they would eventually carry out, and that didn't sit well with the Foreign Relations Committee.

Q: Well, were you getting any telephone calls, pressure from the White House saying "lay off?"

WILKINSON: No, absolutely not, never. That would have not have been the Bush style, and nobody ever threatened. I had a sneaking suspicion that some of the people, certainly some of the senior State Department people around Jim Baker were not so unhappy that we were carrying on this campaign, because they too didn't like these nominees particularly, but they were being stuffed down their throats by the director of personnel in the White House. We did get the White House director of personnel, whose name was Chase Untermeyer, to come and speak to AFSA and defend these nominations. He did a reasonable job, but he said the predictable things, that these were responsible businessmen and they're from the mainstream of America and will represent us fairly and decently and they're good people, and all of that. Nobody was going to argue with that. The question was rather much more why did they have to be nominated in the first place?

Q: Did AFSA take a look at the selection for ambassadors from within the Foreign Service ranks? I mean it's always struck me that a disproportionate number of our ambassadors who are selected from our ranks come from those who serve as staff assistants or staff aides to the powers that be in the upper reaches of the Department. In other words, if you want to go somewhere, you want to carry somebody's briefcase. Was this ever an issue?

WILKINSON: That's interesting that you put it that way. I don't remember anybody ever coming to me and saying that should be, we should look at that criterion. You know, I have a feeling, Stuart, that that's true, of course, but you don't get to be a staff aide or a briefcase carrier for a senior officer unless you've been judged to be a pretty sharp

character. So to some extent the selection process is at work even in getting those positions, not necessarily always, but sometimes.

Q: My concern is not that these aren't bright people, but it denigrates geographic experience. I mean there's less of a balance because if you catch the eye of a secretary or deputy secretary you're often getting the job because you're very articulate, but maybe you don't know much about a country, and the thing we pride ourselves on, supposedly, is if you've got somebody who knows a hell of a lot about Brazil or the Balkans or what have you.

WILKINSON: Well, our selection process as ambassadors is a mystery to me. I've never taken part in it. I've never been sitting on the wall in committees that discuss the four or five candidates that are usually sent up to be discussed by the undersecretary for political affairs and the D Committee. So I don't know.

Q: You talk about the precepts. Was there any concern on the precepts that would seem to go between - I won't call them fads but, I mean, one thing usually seems to be, a key, we'll call it buzz-word or something: management seemed to be a very big factor in promotions during part of this time, particularly with the new Foreign Service Act, to the denigration of area expertise, language expertise, and all that, and it always struck me that you could have the best managed embassy in the world, but if the people don't know the country, it's worth nothing.

WILKINSON: Yes. That of course comes from the many reports that were written about the Foreign Service in the '60s, '70s, and '80s. Practically every study that's been done has criticized the State Department because it breeds brilliant intellectuals, like George Kennan, who are great analysts of our foreign policy but who - without denigration to Kennan - but who, when put in charge of an office, are incapable of writing efficiency reports because they're boring or who tend to become supercharged political officers and pay no attention to the consular or administrative functions of the embassy. I saw this kind of phenomenon later in Mexico, when the inspectors came, and they inspected John Negroponte and gave him a very bad report in 1993 in one respect because he, frankly, he and his DCM, who at that point was Allan Sessoms, never paid a great deal of attention to what was going on in the administrative side of the embassy, and there was some unaccountable missing property, and some other administrative problems. Negroponte complained that no one ever told him, but the real reason is that Sessoms never asked. It's a phenomenon that continues. The glamour and the events and the access and contacts are the work that's most rewarding. And the less appealing way to make sure the embassy is run right, checking the papers, checking the accounts, writing the efficiency reports, checking up on what people are actually doing to earn their pay is something you want to leave to somebody else if you can possibly avoid it. So I think that still is a need to have a well run post, and something that needs to be emphasized. On the other hand, "management" is such a loose word that practically anybody can be a good manager if he shows up at the airport on time to meet the President, he's managed his schedule well and you can give him a good mark in management. So I don't think that all this emphasis on

“management” is largely to get Congress and public critics off our backs. As you observe, the best FSOs are the knowledgeable ones, not the flashy ones.

Q: Were there debates within AFSA on what we wanted, how the Service should be run and all?

WILKINSON: There certainly were. Always. There were not many debates about the precepts, because they tended to be benign and less controversial, although they did and do continue to stress management.

I said I'd landed in time of crisis. Another crisis which happened almost immediately - I took office on July 15, 1989, and on July 22, Perry Shankle came back and told me, "I've just been to see Larry Eagleburger and an FSO named Eric Bloch, who's about to be indicted as a spy." And I said, "Perry, Eric Bloch is the head of the National Science Foundation." And he said, "Oh, I got his name wrong. I don't know, somebody named Bloch." And I said, "Well, I wonder if it could be Felix Bloch," whom I had served with in Venezuela but found hard to believe he was a spy. It turned out that, indeed, within several days, Felix Bloch was indicted as a spy and was fired from the Foreign Service, and claimed, throughout this process, that he was being railroaded, that he had never actually done any spying, that the charges against him were trumped up. Of course, we didn't have access to the file against him, but there was no trial and no process - he was cashiered without, as far as we could see, any hearing, any appeal, any weighing of the evidence. So I was tempted to go on the public record in his defense. We weren't close friends and I didn't feel bound by either friendship or duty to defend him, but I was inclined to speak out that this was a crisis as far as process was concerned, which was being handled very badly. But other people said, who knew more than I did, or they were more cautious, "Don't get out on a limb defending Felix Bloch. You'll just bring the State Department and the Foreign Service officers down with him. It will seem like Dean Acheson defending Alger Hiss, a mistake." So I didn't, and in the end, Bloch resigned, I think, or they worked out an arrangement whereby he was not prosecuted but simply left the service and forfeited his pension. And his wife lost hers, too, and people said, "Why don't you find a way to restore at least her pension? I believe that was done. But Felix Bloch, in the end, as of course the press reported, was fired from a job for petty theft later. Apparently his self-respect must have completely deserted him.

Q: Well, one of the problems, of course, I would have thought that you would have been faced with, was the fact that he really wasn't mounting a real defense of himself. I mean, it seemed to be -

WILKINSON: Well, how could he? I mean -

Q: I didn't -

WILKINSON: There was no trial - it was all an administrative procedure. I guess he could have gone to the press, but -

Q: Was there a countersuit or something?

WILKINSON: No. At any rate, the man had disappeared within months, and we dropped it. He did not come to us and ask us for help.

Q: Yes. Because this has always struck me -

WILKINSON: If he had come and asked assistance, then I think we would have been constrained to do more.

Q: Yes, it's very difficult. The fact that there was no real defense mounted on his part, a countersuit or something like that...

WILKINSON: Then, within a few weeks or months of taking office, there was an article in *Newsweek* which absolutely was worse than criticism of the Foreign Service. It said the Foreign Service officer corps was a bunch of drones and that anybody with any virility or gumption had left the Foreign Service and gone the route of Richard Holbrooke or Tony Lake or a lot of those people who served a couple of years and then got out. And again, we were faced with the difficulty of trying to find ways to challenge this image. One of the things that we did do, which I think was a positive step, was to... Well, I should back up a step by saying that apart from these transient problems, we had the chronic problem of developing support on Capitol Hill for funding the State Department and making the State Department a viable enterprise of which we are an integral part. And that was the focus of much more of our lobbying over the long run, together with this short run business of either defeating undesirable ambassadors or countering the impression in the *Newsweek* article that we were a bunch of dolts.

Q: Speaking of Newsweek article: usually this thing comes about from somebody who - I mean, one can't help thinking that this was inspired by somebody who may not have been hired by the Foreign Service or something. I mean, often there is this behind it. Now did you have -

WILKINSON: Believe it or not, I don't remember her name. I actually tried to get together with her, but she never wanted to bother to learn anything more. She already knew it all. She was not somebody who had ever been in the Foreign Service. She was a *Newsweek* reporter of some renown.

Q: Were you getting anything of what was behind it?

WILKINSON: No, I think it was just an unstimulated, unsolicited piece about the Foreign Service today, and she had a lot of evidence, comments by people who either were disaffected or people who came in at the top and weren't satisfied by what somebody on their staff did for them, or people who felt that the Foreign Service had not taken a strong position on some ideological issue, which of course we don't, because we tend to be less

ideological than the ideologues. So, I mean, there were a number of people for whom one has - people that she quoted who were nationally known, but not particularly respected within the Foreign Service.

Q: What about Jim Baker as Secretary of State as far as interest, support of the Foreign Service as an institution?

WILKINSON: Jim Baker developed a reputation of being very close to one or two people like Margaret Tutwiler, very much like what Madeleine Albright supposedly does today, in having a couple of cronies that help run the State Department. I got to know Baker. I went to see him a couple of times, and then organized a Fourth of July Eighth Floor ceremony, in which I met him and took him around and introduced him to a whole bunch of people at a big reception that we held for the Fourth of July on the Eighth Floor, to commemorate the occasion and to watch the fireworks on the balcony. And I liked him a lot. I thought he was a very open and engaging fellow, to the point where I said to his staff, "We need to counter this reputation that the Secretary doesn't like to mix with the Foreign Service and listen to them." That's what got him to do this 8th floor thing, I believe. So one swallow doesn't make a summer, and the impression remained, I think, that he didn't operate very closely "in synch" with the Foreign Service. But he was a good Secretary of State, and I think he's now doing a mediation job in North Africa. That shows a confirming commitment.

So there was this problem of developing support for the Foreign Service. What my AFSA board decided to do, after a retreat which we organized at the very beginning - a weekend with a "facilitator" to talk about to do to confront the problems that we had - was to hold a series of conferences to try to bring leading businessmen into the State Department and show them what the State Department and our foreign missions abroad could do for them that they might not be entirely familiar with. Our idea was to show how much more broadly State and our embassies could serve them than just the Department of Commerce alone. And we led this off with a 200-year commemorative of the founding of the State Department in 1789. We had a conference in November of 1989 at which EB, the business bureau of State, cooperated by drafting a "bill of rights" for American businessmen, which Larry Eagleburger read out in a speech at the meeting. Larry at that point was acting Secretary of State - I think Baker was away - and this speech was transmitted to all the posts, and they were told to respect it. These are things you have to do with businessmen they wanted. And we followed that up with a series of ten conferences where we invited businessmen in. We organized activities on the Eighth Floor. We had receptions and distinguished speakers and panels and reports, and we did the environment, we did pharmaceuticals, we did telecommunications, intellectual property, and then we did some area conferences, one on Korea, one on Mexico, which at least reverberated to some extent. And they still are going on, but sporadically and without, I think, the same impetus that we tried to give it in those first couple of years.

So that's one thing. And other activities were certainly to bring the Department to recognize and create the Foreign Service Reserve Corps, which they did, and have since

more or less walked away from. They've just abolished it or disestablished it, but for three or four years at least they maintained it as a pool of retired talent to draw on. I don't know how effective it was. With budget cuts they used it less and less. Other issues that came up, while I was in that job. We received two new reports about the State Department, one prepared by Jerry Bremer, former ambassador, recommending among other things that the Foreign Service be reduced to two cones, a substantive cone and an administrative cone (as I believe is also a recommendation of this most recent CSIS report). And a report done by John Thomas, a former assistant secretary for administration, recommending that instead of two cones we have 11 "specialties," and also recommending that there be a set limit of personnel at each grade, to be approved annually by Congress. This was sort of a horrifying concept because it would have starved promotions almost indefinitely until there were vacancies at each higher grade. But it was being promoted by a staffer named Graeme Bannerman, who was not friend of the State Department but who was under the impression that the State Department was top-heavy and there were not enough high-level jobs to justify that many high-level employees. We had, in effect, to fight this constantly, and eventually we lost the battle. In the mid-'90s Congress mandated some progressive curtailing that we see in the Senior Foreign Service. I think it was around 850, and they forced it down to around 650.

The problem there was not so much the lack of high-level jobs. It's the lack of money to maintain the posts that would demand that many high-level positions, and that's the last line, and Peter Bradbury's article in the *Foreign Service Journal*, that you mentioned, was that what's lacking is the resources, not the talent. So in two years in AFSA I can't say that I was able to accomplish a great deal to salvage careers. We did renegotiate the career structure so that senior officers were allowed a total of 12 years combined in the jobs of career counselor and career minister, which saved a number of people from being selected out on the basis of time in grade prematurely, because previously they only had X number of years as a counselor and Y number of years as an MC, and now they had a combined total of Z years. There were also some changes in the length of time it took to be promoted in other grades, slowing down promotions a little bit in the lower grades. The membership in AFSA went up from 9,000 to 10,000, which is a good sign. We crossed the 10,000 mark when I was there. One thing I sort of liked was exchanging letters with Shirley Temple, because I wrote to Shirley-

Q: Shirley Temple Black.

WILKINSON: Shirley Temple Black. And as I mentioned earlier, as I'd known her before, and I said, "Look, now that you've become an ambassador to Czechoslovakia, it's time for you, because of your many previous Foreign Service positions, to become a member of AFSA." And she wrote me back a nice letter with a last line which was, "Your letter has won me over." So I considered blacking out all the rest of the letter and just keeping that part of it.

And I liked Perry Shankle's story. He became an inspector after he left, and of course he had been the previous president of AFSA so that we were in close touch. He said that he

had gone to Prague to inspect the post, but while he was there, the Prague Spring took place. Perry had a hotel room over Wenceslas Square, where the demonstrations in favor of changing government, to bring down the old Communist government, were taking place daily, so Shirley Temple Black asked if she could come and watch the demonstrations from the hotel where Perry was staying, and she spent the afternoon there. When she left, he called up his wife and he said that he wanted her to hear it from him first before anybody else, that Shirley Temple had spent the afternoon in his hotel room with him.

So of course, we had... I don't want to get into some of the detailed problems that went on when I was there. I don't think they're appropriate for here. And I think maybe it's a good time to stop.

Q: Yes, one question about this. How did you find dealing with the problem of women and minorities during your time, '89-91? This is always a thorny problem.

WILKINSON: The courts had already taken up the question of the women's rights case, the case of Alison Palmer, who claimed that she was discriminated against while she was in the State Department and that all other women in her class were also. It became a class action. My wife received a payment for some hundreds of dollars for the fact that one of her efficiency reports said something that could have been interpreted as sexist. By 1989 the issue wasn't a problem within AFSA. I think that equality of women is accepted in every respect by the people who worked in AFSA for the last 15 or 20 years. There is no residue of sexism, therefore...

Q: Actually, women in important positions historically have been around longer in the State Department than in a lot of other parts of the government. It wasn't great, but fairly early on we-

WILKINSON: You knew Eugenie Anderson?

Q: Yes, and even-

WILKINSON: Even before that there was a woman ambassador in the 1930s.

Q: Yes, that was the sister or daughter of Jennings Bryan.

WILKINSON: It was?

Q: It's never enough, but it used to be - I talked to people saying, you know, during the '30s and all the State Department was considered a better deal than other government agencies, not great, not great at all, but there was considered a little more room to do something as for bright young ladies to take the Foreign Service Exam. The problem was as soon as they got married, they were out, and that was the...

WILKINSON: I think all semblance of sex discrimination had passed by the mid-'80s and the early '90s. I did have one problem with an African-American woman who actually was employed by AFSA. We needed a new general counsel, and this person looked like an ideal candidate, and not just from the equal opportunity standpoint. She also came recommended by the Treasury Employee's Union, where she had worked before, and she was experienced, articulate, and well-dressed. But how deceptive appearances can be! She was insubordinate; she didn't do what she was asked to do; her writing was terrible; her legal advice was bad; and we just literally used her as little as possible without laying her off, even while I was there. And then after I left, my successors began an action against her, and she came in and took some documents out of the file, so they were able to actually charge her with removing documents without... I think it was the formal reason to fire her. They fired her, and she sued. And we had to spend... I had to fly back from Mexico and stand by for a week in Washington waiting to testify. In the end, the judge didn't call me because the woman spent so much time testifying on her own behalf that the judge never had time for me. But he got tired of listening to her and eventually quashed her case because her answers to his questions convinced him that there was no basis for it.

Q: Did the Gulf War have any impact on AFSA? I'm told that there were the usual things, that some people...

WILKINSON: They did. I'm glad you mentioned that, because in the effort to promote the image of the Foreign Service, the pre-Gulf War situation in Kuwait was made to order. Here was an embattled group of FSOs who dug their own well and managed to figure out how to survive in the miserable circumstances of being held virtual hostages in Kuwait by an invading Iraqi force, so when chargé Nat Howell came back to the United States, I said, "We have got to send this guy on a speaking tour." And I went to AFSA chapters and world affairs chapters all around the country and got commitments to have him come and speak, and we organized a tour for him. And then we went to the State Department and said, "Would you be willing to fund this trip as a public relations effort for the U.S. government in general, and for State and the Foreign Service in particular? This is part of your public relations as well as our." And they said, "No, we're not going to fund it. We don't want him going there." And I said, "Why?" And I was told, "Well, he isn't our designated policy spokesman on the subject, and this is under Tutwiler's firm control as to who speaks for the United States on sensitive issues of foreign policy. We don't want a mere chargé that's going out on speaking tours." And Howell - I don't really know Nat Howell well, but he's the kind of guy who wouldn't raise his profile in his own self-enhancement. He was very old-school, finest tradition of the Foreign Service. Not only that he does what he's told and does it well, but he doesn't go out crowing about it. And he was hesitant to do anything. We finally got the Director General, who at that point was Ed Perkins, to stand up for us and at least allow him to go. We paid for it, and he went, and it was a great success. But that aspect of the Gulf War was beneficial to the Foreign Service. The later part of this was the war, and the Foreign Service of course was only marginally involved.

Q: Was there any concern about April Glaspie?

WILKINSON: Oh, April Glaspie! April Glaspie was the other side of it. If diplomacy is to head off armed conflict, April, of course, did not do her job very well. I tried to defend her publicly as having been given short shrift, because she was removed from her post and then she couldn't get a new assignment for a while and eventually ended up going up to the UN, but when I tried to publish an article in the *Foreign Service Journal* about her, just a short article saying that I didn't think her case had been heard, I showed her the text beforehand, and she said, "Don't print it." So I didn't. She didn't want to become any more of a lightning rod than she already was. I was disappointed that I couldn't use a great title: "Saddamasochism."

Q: Okay, well, why don't we stop at this point, and we'll pick it up the next time -

WILKINSON: The next time I went back to Mexico in 1991, and I have a tour in Mexico to describe.

Q: All right, well, we'll do it then. Great.

Today is the 15th of March, the Ides of March, 1999. Ted, you're off to Mexico. What was your job?

WILKINSON: Can you stop this for a second?

Q: Okay, we were just talking over, and Ted, you wanted to add some anecdotes that you hadn't had before, so if you just give me when the time-frame is on each one, so I'll know.

WILKINSON: Yes, well, there are actually three different incidents that I just wanted to mention, one sort of an amusing case... One while I was still at the United Nations in 1978-1980, and early in my tour there - it was just after the first World Disarmament Conference and the U.S. delegation was still winding up business - and there was a black tie dinner to which neither of our principal delegates, Butch Fisher and Ambassador Jim Leonard could go. So they sent me instead to have dinner with some luminaries, including Paul Newman and a lady-

Q: The movie actor.

WILKINSON: The movie actor Paul Newman and an attractive lady from Connecticut who had been part of the delegation, a politically active Democrat Marge Benton, who was rumored to have been having a flirtation with Newman. And at this dinner I sat next to her and Newman sat across the table, and she proceeded to attempt to make him jealous by flirting with me and by, you know, reaching over and ruffling my hair and doing things like that that I thought were very amusing, that a sideline of being a diplomat

was to be available to make people like Paul Newman jealous.

Q: He's considered a longstanding, very handsome movie star, married to another movie star.

WILKINSON: Married to Joanne Woodward, a marriage that's lasted... I'm quite sure this was an innocent flirtation, but I thought it was a sort of an amusing side light.

Then another anecdote involves my relationship with John Gavin when he was ambassador to Mexico and when I was serving there from 1981 to 1984, actually before he went down there he was still having his briefings, Gavin came in to see Assistant Secretary Jim Malone, and Jim Malone was rather new to the job, but one of his responsibilities was peaceful nuclear matters, and we had a discussion going on with Mexico about how we would interrelate with the building of their reactors. They had two nuclear power reactors under construction in the Veracruz area, and because they respected the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they thought they should get favorable benefits and treatment and that we should be willing to negotiate with them on a number of issues like assurances that we would always provide them enriched uranium fuel. So Malone told Gavin, in effect, Give them a public line that "of course, we'll give them everything they ask for" and then privately don't do it. Words to that effect. In other words, he was telling Gavin to string the Mexicans along. And Gavin said, "That's not the way I operate. I want the Mexicans to say, *'Este es un hombre sincero.'*" I remembered that exchange later-

Q: "This is a man of honor?"

WILKINSON: "I am a man of honor." So I remembered this, and as Gavin had a little farewell lunch for me and my wife, both of whom had worked in the embassy, and when I got up to reply to his toast, I said I'd have to remember that he came down here with the intention of being seen by the Mexicans as an honest man. In fact, he even said, "*Yo soy un hombre sincero.*" And I guess you would add the words, "*de donde cresce la palma,*" which is the lyric from the song "*Guantanamera,*" because he was from California. But I neglected to add at the end of that what I wanted to say, but my wife precluded me from saying, which was that Gavin was known as one of the more handsome movie actors around, and he really doesn't want me to stay in Mexico any longer because I'm the only person in the embassy who's tall enough to see his bald spot. And when I told my wife I was going to say that, she said, "If you persist in that, I'm getting out of this car right now and will not go into that building with you." So I never said that. So much for Mexico.

Finally, on a more serious note, I talked about some of the things that we had done while at the American Foreign Service Association, but I'm not sure if I put it in complete context that one of the efforts that those of us who served on the board at that time were most engaged in and which is still very much a problem is trying to stimulate adequate funding for foreign relations in general and that the difficulty stems, perhaps, from unfamiliarity of some congressmen but also partly from the fact that we were going

through the end of the Cold War. Among the more experienced Congressmen, I found a feeling of why should we bother - why do we need more money for foreign relations and for the United Nations when, in fact, there is no competition? And that helps to, I think, understand the current situation of low priorities for foreign relations. We're still waiting for the new world order, but what do we need a U.S. world order for, and what do we need the UN for if, in fact, we don't have any serious threat or competition from others in the world? (This is not to say that we should perhaps create one.)

Moving on to one lesser point, we've all read recently in the newspapers about the outcome of the study that was commissioned as part of the peace in Guatemala about what actually happened in the '60s, '70s, and '80s and how deeply the U.S. Government was involved - not involved, perhaps, but at least knowledgeable about what was going on in the country and to some extent in complicity with the Guatemalan government in allowing as many violations of human rights to occur without taking any kind of retaliatory action. But one case I recall particularly was the case of an American nun named Donna Kasich, who was released by uncertain, unspecified law enforcement agencies in Guatemala, after having been kidnaped and allegedly raped and then allegedly also thrown on a pile of bodies and finally released, allegedly, she said, because the chief or the person who seemed to be an American security officer with the first name of the station chief had intervened with the Guatemalan security to get her released. The implication was that the American station chief controlled or orchestrated Guatemalan security force. And when I was at AFSA, the editor of the *Foreign Service Journal* said, "I think we ought to do a story about this case." And I said, "I think that's a very good idea, because I don't think this woman's story - her story's being given a lot of credibility, but it seems to me that it doesn't entirely ring true, particularly the part of about being thrown on a heap of bodies. I mean, that's a very bizarre story, and I wonder if the woman really recollects it correctly." So we went to the front office of ARA and said we want to do a story about this because we think that more light needs to be shed on it and to help defend the position and reputation of the embassy, which says that we knew nothing about this nor did we ask or allow this woman to be released. And Anne Stevenson, who at that point was the editor of the *Journal*, went to ARA and got a promise that she would be able to go through all of the documents, the unclassified documents, and write a story about her. And at the last minute, the permission for her to look through the unclassified documents was withdrawn. ARA refused to allow her to even do that. So here we have ARA telling a friendly organization, or ostensibly friendly, that they can't even see unclassified information - which left us in the position of... the only conclusion we could draw was that what was alleged about the American role in this case was basically true, even though I still doubt it, personally.

We had the impression that the decision not to show us the files may have been on the orders of Ambassador Stroock in Guatemala, a Bush appointee who - I wouldn't want to be critical of him because I didn't know very much about him. The only thing I do know is that in the documents that were sent to the Hill to support ambassadorial candidates, the Administration had taken so much care in preparing his that they said he would make a great ambassador to Venezuela. So one wonders again about how much attention and

care was being put into ambassadorial nominations. So much for the past. Let's move on to Mexico.

Q: All right. You were there from '91 to when?

WILKINSON: To '94.

Q: All right, can you tell me how you got the job, what you did, and let's talk about Mexico in '91?

WILKINSON: Great. Okay, I had hoped at the end of my AFSA tour to get a job as a deputy chief of mission. Several appeared to be open and available. One was in Lima, Peru, and I was given the impression that I was the leading candidate for that job but something strange happened - to this day, I don't know what - and Ambassador Tony Quainton broke off contact with me, at which point an opening occurred in Argentina, and Ed Perkins, the Director General, tried very hard with Ambassador Terry Todman, to help me get that job, but again, Todman had his own choice. So I was given the option at John Negroponte's invitation to come back to Mexico and work as his minister counselor for political affairs. And although from a career standpoint that didn't seem as good an option as the DCM jobs, it certainly was an attractive offer because we liked Mexico and because I knew Negroponte and thought I would be able to work as well with him in that job as I had in the past. The man who was the political counselor who preceded me in that job was, again, the person who had preceded me at the OES Bureau in 1986, Allan Sessoms, who in the meantime had been science counselor in Paris and then minister counselor for political affairs in Mexico. And Negroponte had arranged for him to be promoted to be deputy chief of mission. So he stayed in Mexico and I came to Mexico to take his place as Political Section chief. The first thing that I ran into in coming to Mexico, unfortunately, was that the house that usually had been the political counselor's was being occupied by Sessoms, and there was no house available for me, which normally didn't need to be a problem. I was free to go out on the market and find one, which the embassy would pay for, but the new regulations that had just gone into effect put not only a money limitation but a space limitation on the type of housing that we could have, and I ran into tremendous difficulties finding a decent house that fit those space qualifications. So that's merely an administrative problem; everybody goes through it, but the Foreign Buildings Association office...

Q: What happened to the DCM house?

WILKINSON: When it was vacated by the previous incumbent, Bob Pastorino, the embassy had determined that it was too expensive and they gave it up, so there was nothing available for me when I arrived. This went on for six months. One house after another was proposed, and then either my wife didn't like it or it was too expensive or it was too big, and FBO was being particularly tough because the embassy had already gotten a waiver for the commercial counselor, who was a previous undersecretary of Commerce, Roger Wallace, who had gotten a large and expensive house, violating the

precepts, and they weren't going to allow any more exceptions for Mexico. So I ended up being a guinea pig for the new and very strict regulations. And finally my wife spoke to Diana Negroponte about it, saying this is an intolerable situation, which made Negroponte angry because she was using the "wives channel," and it made our reentry into Mexico very difficult. Compounding this was, after five months in temporary quarters, we came home on Saturday night and were held up at gun point, being robbed of our car and our money and everything we had in the car on the street, and in the street only a few blocks from the embassy and right across the street from the residence of the foreign minister. We got the car back. The ambassador brought it up with the foreign minister, but again, it was a difficult passage.

Q: What was the political setup in Mexico at that time, '91?

WILKINSON: Well, it's interesting the change. Mexico was modernizing, although not yet part of the North American Free Trade Area. The influence of American market culture had pervaded, so that there were supermarkets with everything on the shelves that you could find in American supermarkets, much more so than 10 years earlier. But apart from society and culture, our relationship with Central America was no longer an issue between the United States and Mexico, and Communism was no longer an issue. The Soviet Bloc was either disintegrating or had completely disintegrated. The Soviet Union was about to disintegrate when we got there. Mexican relations with Cuba were still an irritant, but not anywhere near as difficult an irritant as Mexican relationships with Central America had been in the previous decade. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the president, had made the decision, courageous decision, for Mexico to negotiate a broadening of the Free Trade Area that had already been agreed between the U.S. and Canada. Mexico having rejected the idea of a free trade area with the United States before Salinas, reversed course under Salinas to embrace the idea and to want to negotiate it. The negotiations were already underway when we got there. I think Salinas certainly understood, as most educated Mexicans did, the economic consequences of the NAFTA, that it would subject Mexicans' antiquated or archaic ways of doing business to much more modern competition, which would have a negative impact on some old, established ways, but in the long run would benefit Mexico economically, revitalize its economy. Whether Salinas also understood fully the social consequences, I wonder, because the social consequences are really more hard to perceive, and they're still being played out, even today, five or six years later, inasmuch as the sort of rural peasant economy, which constitutes still a major part of Mexican society, can't survive the competition from modern American agriculture. There was no way that the inefficient production of corn and beans and staples in the Mexican countryside can economically continue to exist when foreign basic commodities can enter free from the United States at costs which are well below the cost of production in Mexico. So the result socially is a tremendously accelerated migration from the country to the towns and ultimately also out to the States. It had been going on for a long time, but it accelerated in the mid-'90s, and it's still very high. Everything the Mexicans did diplomatically was through the NAFTA optic. The U.S. could have rejected it. It was an uncertain time for America participation in NAFTA. It was by no means certain that it would be approved. Ross Perot, running in the 1992

election, garnered almost 20 percent of the U.S. vote, which showed how strong the anti-NAFTA sentiment was. Taking this into account, newly elected President Clinton insisted on two additional conditions for the North American Free Trade Area which he felt were essential in order to get the agreement through Congress. There should be provisions to ensure minimum labor standards in Mexico, and there must be provisions on the environment. Both of these features were not in the original agreement to the extent that the new administration wanted them, and they were difficult for Mexico and Canada to accept. And even when they were negotiated in mutually acceptable ways, it wasn't clear that it would be enough to get the agreement through the U.S. Congress. So during that entire period when I was in Mexico, from 1991 to 1994, the uncertainty of NAFTA approval by the U.S. guaranteed us high-level access whenever we needed it in the Mexican administration in ways that we had never really perhaps had in dealing with the proud and nationalistic Mexican Government in years gone by. Because of Salinas' commitment to succeeding with NAFTA, they were very tractable most of the time and on most issues.

Q: Well, I was just wondering, I've just finished reading a book about a recent ambassador to Canada, James Glatcher, and he talks about the Canadian bureaucracy. You have your political leaders, but you have your Canadian bureaucracy who had been fighting, you might say, their own particular battle, which was to sort of put the Americans in their place, and that administrations came and administrations went, but these bureaucrats were continuing to fight the battle - it was basically anti-American - and stop anything from happening. So it was very difficult for the political leaders in the Canadian Government to bypass them. Did you see a comparable set of bureaucrats within the Mexican Government?

WILKINSON: No. I didn't, and I think the difference. I don't know Canada, but I suspect the difference is that the PRI mechanism in Mexico is powerful enough and exercises enough political control so that recalcitrant bureaucrats are crushed. There were no recalcitrant bureaucrats. A political decision had been made, and if there was any problem in implementing it, we could get to the political level to solve it. We didn't have any trouble with second-level officials who wanted to block it. There may have been some. There may have even been some who recognized that it was going to be not a certain blessing for Mexico, which in fact many still question and can now adduce evidence to make an argument that at least in the short run it was difficult for Mexico. I personally believe that in the long run, it did Mexico good and that this will become evident in due course, if not immediately. But, you know, the book is not finished on the subject. We had many, many visits. I wrote an article for the *Foreign Service Journal* a couple of years ago at the request of the editors about how the negotiation of the NAFTA affected the operations of the embassy. And it affected them in a number of ways, one of which was to give us the high-level access that we really couldn't normally demand. Even at the mid-level at the embassy one could go and see a cabinet minister, whereas before when probably even the ambassador might have had difficulty getting to see the same person. Also it meant that we were a focus of U.S. congressional attention. Virtually every member of the Congress felt that he or she had, as they so often do, to be able to tell his

constituency that he had been there on this issue, so that meant to come to Mexico and say, "We have seen at first hand what the situation was that made it necessary to vote for the NAFTA" or, conversely, "vote against the NAFTA." Some of them would come and go out on the streets and see beggars and unsanitary conditions in the factories and immediately say, that proves that NAFTA is the wrong thing for the United States, and go back and vote that way. So all of them came, allegedly, with open minds, and I think the majority of the ones that came with genuinely open minds went away with a favorable impression, certainly the ones that were brought out by Republican Jim Kolbe and Democrat Bill Richardson, who were the respective floor leaders managing the NAFTA, and brought groups of congressmen down on several occasions and worked very hard to convince the undecided to go for the NAFTA. And then, of course, the ultimate vote did come out the right way on November 17th, 1993, a year and a half into the Clinton Administration, when the agreement was finally approved by the House.

Q: Did you work up an itinerary? Congressmen, or Congressmen/women, want to come and see something. Did you and your staff work out places for them to go see, or did they just sort of come on their own?

WILKINSON: Well, I think there was a fairly complicated procedure, because each group came down with a little different amount of time available, a little different focus of interest. One or two members had heard something they wanted to look into. So each group we really handled a little differently. I think the one standard part of the package was a tour of Mexico City and, of course, the ritual embassy country team briefing, in which we got to be quite deft at giving a short overview briefing to congressmen, even more so than most embassy teams do. They all have to deal with VIP visitors some once or twice or month, but we were doing it maybe once or twice a week for long periods of time. Then we had I guess, one other impact of the NAFTA or one other overlay on the embassy in Mexico, was when John Negroponte left to be ambassador to the Philippines. His successor was picked particularly to finish the NAFTA. The administration wanted a person who could appeal to economic actors in the States, who in turn could influence their congressmen to vote for the NAFTA. So Jim Jones, at that time president of the American Stock Exchange, was asked to come be the ambassador, and did so in mid-1993 and stayed through '95. I worked with him for the next year until I left in the middle of '94. And of course we had also, as I've mentioned, a very varied group of congressmen. One visit that I recall vividly was by Congressmen Torricelli (now Senator), who came with his lady friend, Bianca Jagger. They are no longer an "item," but they were known to be... uh... quote, "together," unquote, during that period, and we had a breakfast for them, at which Torricelli was holding court in one room and Bianca Jagger was meeting a whole bunch of different people, mostly human rights activists, in another room, and breakfast was being served in the third, and it was a circus. They just sort of took over in our own house while they were there. But the reason that Torricelli was so controversial was because he was the author of the 1992 so-called Torricelli Law, which extended the embargo against American exports and trade with Cuba to cover American subsidiaries abroad, and the Mexicans were furious about that law. Later, the Torricelli Law was succeeded by the so-called Helms-Burton Law, which is even more severe, and

Torricelli's role has faded. But at the time Torricelli was the target of a great deal of resentment on the Mexicans' part, so his visit had to be handled very carefully, particularly since we wanted him to support NAFTA and to vote for it. We had to protect him from angry Mexicans.

Q: Was there any concern during the election of '92, George Bush versus Clinton versus Ross Perot, about what the results of this election might have on NAFTA? I mean you had both Clinton and Bush essentially supporting it, but there were people within Clinton's group, like Richard Gephardt, the House leader, who opposed it strongly, for unions. I mean, I'd like to get the attitude of the embassy as you watched this develop.

WILKINSON: Well, the embassy, of course, at the time, was at first representing a Republican administration, and an administration that was dedicated to getting NAFTA through and finishing negotiations and making sure that the whole operation was a success, so if there was a tilt it was in favor of the existing administration's policy, which is perfectly natural for any embassy. The Mexicans, on the other hand, were extraordinarily clever, and I must say I think it's a great pity what has happened to Carlos Salinas de Gortari, because he was quite an impressive operator as president. While professing admiration and personal friendship for George Bush, the Mexicans began to sense by late September, early October of 1992 that he might lose. And they had to figure out what to do, so they quietly sent their ambassador in Washington on a secret mission to Little Rock, where he met with Clinton all by himself in a back room and said, you know, "We want to make it a concordat with you about this agreement that we're involved in, in case you should win this presidency, and would you please promise that your first foreign visitor will be Carlos Salinas de Gortari?" And Clinton, caught unawares, said, "I guess. Sounds reasonable to me," and in fact that's what happened. So the Mexicans were well prepared for a Clinton victory, and there was a very smooth transition. Clinton embraced the NAFTA, as he had during the campaign, but with these additional conditions, and then in the negotiations with the additional conditions, they were brought down from absolutes to levels where they were *desiderata* that the Mexicans could live with. And so now really the NAFTA looks to a Mexican as much a product of the Clinton Administration as it does of the Bush Administration, where it was actually originated.

Q: Did this affect the politics of Mexico as you were watching it? Was this a problem with the PRI, because we're looking at a gradual change in Mexico to what we would call sort of an open democracy instead of a one-party system, which was going since, what, 1920-something or other -

WILKINSON: Right, 1928.

Q: Were we seeing this, the NAFTA, as being one of a series of things which were bringing Mexico into a fuller political society?

WILKINSON: That's a very interesting question. I'm not sure if I have a good answer to it, whether and how it affected Mexican domestic politics. I guess one would have to say

that there has been an effect because, up to and including 1992, Mexican elections have tended to end up with the PRI winning and the party to the right of the PRI, that's the PAN (not very much to the right and in some respects not to the right at all, but at least identified as the more conservative pro-business party), in second place, and the left (either fragmented or all together) in the distant third place, because the PRI was seen as in the middle or a little bit left of center. With the NAFTA and with Carlos Salinas identification with big business, not just through the NAFTA but also because of the privatization program and because of a famous meeting at which he brought all the leading businessmen together and allegedly had his campaign chief ask each one of them for 25 million for the PRI's 1994 electoral campaign, his identification with big business, PRI seemed to be moving to the right and taking ground away from the PAN, and the left was filling in, and that is still the case today. I think that in the year 2000, which is the next election in Mexico, the PAN is going to have great difficulty winning an election against the PRI candidate - it's always hard to beat the PRI - but if the opposition wins, I think very possibly the left, Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the mayor of Mexico City, has a better chance of winning than the PAN does. So it has affected... I think the answer to the question, yes, in subtle way the NAFTA has changed the playing field. NAFTA along with other factors has changed the political playing field in Mexico.

I wanted to move on to talk about a unique issue that transcended our bilateral relationship throughout this period and yet wasn't directly tied to the NAFTA. That was an issue on which I spent at least half of my professional time in Mexico as political counselor, and maybe the toughest political issue I've had to handle, and it concerned a doctor named Humberto Álvarez Machain who was believed to have been present at the murder of a DEA agent named Enrique Camarena in Mexico in 1985.

Q: This was an American DEA agent.

WILKINSON: An American DEA agent who was working on exposing narcotics rings in the Guadalajara area and got too close to one of them, was kidnaped and tortured and died while he was being tortured. This doctor was considered by the DEA to have been keeping Camarena alive and conscious while he was being tortured by injecting drugs - a scumbag, in the words of some other Mexican doctors that I knew. So the DEA wanted him, and they got him in 1990 by arranging for him to be kidnaped from Mexico and smuggled across the U.S. border in the trunk of a car. And they wanted him brought before justice. So he was arraigned, was held prisoner, at the request of U.S. law enforcement agencies for complicity in the murder of Enrique Camarena and brought to trial in late '90 or early '91. And of course, the first issue for the U.S. courts was whether they had jurisdiction, considering the way he had been brought before the court. He had been kidnaped. Was it legal to prosecute an accused felon after kidnaping him from foreign country. Alvarez' lawyers, hired by the Mexican Embassy, argued that the proper route to proceed with a felon in another country is to ask the law enforcement agencies of that country to arrest him and then to extradite him, which of course is true. But the DEA claimed that they would never get him that way, that they had tested the waters of extradition and been told that no way are you ever going to extradite a Mexican citizen,

so the only route left open for them to achieve justice was to kidnap him. The case was appealed and eventually went to the Supreme Court, and in July of 1992 the Supreme Court ruled in a six-to-three decision ruled that it didn't matter how he got to the court, he could be tried because the crime was a crime against an American and U.S. courts had jurisdiction. This was over the *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs submitted not only by Mexico but also by Canada, which had the same concerns about people being kidnaped and tried in the United States and caused a cry of indignation. Throughout not just the Americas, but the legal world were all upset about this Supreme Court decision, which appeared to ignore the provenance of a felon before the court and just turn a blind eye to the procedural aspect of the whole case.

In reaction, the Mexicans called the ambassador in immediately - I went with him - and they said, "Your DEA has to get out of the country, now. We don't want any more DEA agents in Mexico." And the ambassador said, "Wes, I can understand your sentiments, but think of the signal that you are sending to Washington. It sounds not as if you are against DEA's misconduct; it sounds as if you are against their mission here. It will sound as if you don't want any help and you don't want to prosecute drug offenders in Mexico." Of course, all of this reverberates today because it's still very much an issue. And we argued for an hour with Andrés Rosental, the under secretary of the Foreign Ministry, about this, and eventually, I think, the ambassador was effective in talking him into going a little bit slower and at least reflecting on the situation before they threw the DEA out. We went back to the embassy that night and reported this angry discussion, and the newspapers the next morning reported that the DEA had been thrown out of the country because the content of the *demarche* had been leaked before the *demarche* itself, which made the situation worse.

We spent the next year and a half having weekly visits with Washington trying to save the DEA in Mexico, to change the rules of the game under which they operated, to rein them in, to make them more accountable, to curtail their freedom of action in the country, but to save their right to operate in Mexico, and in the end we negotiated new rules of the game which, I suspect, the DEA promptly threw in their desk and ignored, because it was very hard to tell them anything. But we did succeed in keeping them in the country. The Mexicans were still angry, and because of the fact that they had not achieved anything decisive in the area of retaliation against the DEA for illegal acts in Mexico, they went to international organizations and introduced a resolution in the UN asking for an international study of the issue, which we tried to block and failed to block, and the study was commissioned.

This work was so consuming that the entire Political Section was involved in various aspects of it, but we got a superior honor award, a group section, for having done what we did, which was partially successful. And of course, although DEA is still there, the drug situation in Mexico hasn't gotten any better, so we can scarcely say that we've solved the basic problem.

Q: Had there been precedents for extraditing both ways - from the United States to

Mexico and from Mexico to the United States?

WILKINSON: There are very, very few cases of extradition. We have extradited recently, since then, one major notorious Mexican drug dealer and we were prepared to extradite back to Mexico one former under secretary of the Ministry of Justice, who was involved in all kinds of drug corruption issues. His name was Mario Ruíz Massieu, whose brother was murdered ostensibly by orders of Raul Salinas, the brother of the ex-president - a very complicated situation. But Mario Ruíz Massieu committed suicide before he could be sent back. And we in turn have asked the Mexicans to extradite Mexicans. There is a legal provision allowing the Mexican president to waive the provisions of their constitution and extradite a Mexican citizen if the crime is sufficiently grave, but we have never been able to get the Mexicans to do that. Even today, I don't think there's any case of any Mexican president feeling strong enough politically to override that provision of the constitution that grants immunity from extradition to Mexican citizens. So that issue continues, and it's one of the major issues between us - one of the irritants that stimulates many in the U.S. Congress today to favor suspending Mexico's certification.

Q: Were you and your section monitoring the effect that drug money had on the political process? Not only the political process, but the judicial process and all that in Mexico, because it would seem that this was really becoming a matter of real concern.

WILKINSON: No. And the answer to that is that we didn't have the tools to monitor... We didn't know where... how much drug money was coming into Mexico, where it was going or even how many drugs were flowing through Mexico. I remember a case, even in the early '80s, when Congressman Rangel from New York, who was the head of the Joint Anti-Narcotics Committee of the Congress, came and was briefed in Mexico City and asked the question, How many Mexican drugs are going into the United States? And the chief of the Narcotics Assistance Section, Mike Yohn, couldn't answer the question. And the ambassador fired him. Gavin fired him because he didn't know the answer. Well, nobody knew the answer. And I don't think anybody knew the answer when I was there 10 years later. I suspect they still don't know. They can tell that a lot of it is going over land, but they can't tell how much, what percentage. And similarly, it was very difficult, even harder, to know what was happening with drug money. Now there was a sting operation in which we infiltrated the Mexican banks not too long ago, infiltrated them, used intelligence sources to find out what was going on, and as a result arrested or indicted a number of bankers in the U.S. for illegal bank operations, which caused a great stir, which still resounds, in U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations because the Mexicans claim we were illegally operating an intelligence scheme without telling them. And of course, we don't trust the Mexican police, and with good reason, so it's very, very hard to deal with.

When I was working in Mexico last - and as you can tell, I'm still interested and keep up on Mexican affairs - I got to know fairly well the head of the Human Rights Commission and his deputy. Jorge Carpizo was the head of the Mexican Human Rights Commission, and his deputy was a man named Jorge Madrazo. Carpizo eventually became justice

minister and became responsible for the administration of justice in Mexico and later, currently, Madrazo also became minister of justice, responsible for trying to do something about corruption among the Mexican police and, in general, of the Mexican Government. Carpizo is a brilliant intellect, former rector of the university, head of the law school, a man of total integrity - as is his former deputy, Jorge Madrazo, both of them. I got to know them particularly well at first because of an incident that took place on November 7, 1991, shortly after I got there, in which a plane loaded with civilian policemen from the national police landed on what appeared to be a small landing strip being used by drug smugglers in pursuit of a supposed drug smuggling scheme. The policemen got off the plane and were shot and killed by the Mexican army. And a second plane still in the air, a U.S. customs airplane, had taken pictures of what was going on on the ground, using infrared photography. It started late, just at dawn, and continued after daylight, but they didn't have regular photography; they were using infrared photography, which still works in the daylight. So this was a national incident, obviously, the army shooting the police and the army claiming that the police were in collusion with the drug smugglers and that they shot them because they were there to collect their money. In contrast the police were saying that the army was waiting to welcome the drug smugglers and as soon as they got on the ground took their load and disappeared with it. Both groups were pointing fingers at the other and saying they were in collusion with smugglers. What really happened? And the Mexicans came to us and said, "Well, you must know, because you are the United States; you know everything, you had this customs airplane operating under an agreement with Mexico, you were up there taking pictures." So we at that point took the pictures and went through them one by one and tried to figure out what had really happened, and the answer was you couldn't tell. They weren't clear enough in the infrared. They showed certain things - they showed some cows and they showed the airplane landing - but they couldn't tell what had happened after it landed. One of the things that the Mexican investigators were trying to establish was whether the airplane had been signaled in by somebody on the ground who was there beforehand who was in collusion with the alleged drug smuggling operation. So at any rate, they had to prepare a report on this, and they eventually prepared a report saying that the army appeared to have acted improperly. They couldn't say for sure that the army was working with drug smugglers, but they had certainly acted incorrectly in shooting these policemen on the ground. But in the process, both Carpizo and Madrazo were sucked more and more into the police work area, and eventually, Carpizo was asked to take over the Justice Ministry and clean up the federal police - Mexico's rough equivalent of the FBI.

This is sort of a long answer to a short question, but Carpizo tried to reform the Mexican police. He knew they were corrupt, so he said, We're going to set aside the whole existing police force, and we're going to create a new one, and we're going to call it the Institute of Mexican Police, and we're going to recruit new people and educate them and train them, and we're going to put the old people aside. Well, of course, it didn't work, because the old people knew where the skeletons were buried, and pretty soon the new police, who were trained at this academy, started going to the old police and saying, How do you do this, that, and the other thing? And before you knew it the two services were so interrelated and interdependent that whatever infection had existed before had spread to

all of the new people. And Carpizo, after a year in the job, was moved to another even tougher job - Minister of Interior. That effort has been tried several times since then, and then the Mexicans eventually turned to the army, because they gave up on the possibility of reforming the police; and now the army is corrupted by the same contagion - simply because the pay in government is too bad, and the money in drugs is too good. And so there doesn't seem to be an easy recipe for reforming the system or the situation. I mention that all because of what is the impact of drug money in Mexico? Well, the answer is it corrupts everybody who comes close to it. And the police were often all working for the drug barons, I mean, one faction of the drug smugglers' cartels would be paying one faction of the police, and another drug ring would be paying another faction, and you'd have police wars, with the two police forces shooting each other up in bars and on the streets. So much for drugs and drug corruption.

Central America was over as an issue between the U.S. and Mexico, but we were still involved, during those years, in the endgame of putting to rest the U.S. involvement of the 1980s in Central America. With regard to El Salvador, Pete Romero, who's now the acting assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, came to Mexico as an office director in that period, and worked with Salvadoran negotiators on the peace agreement there. He and I and a few other Americans attended the Chapultepec ceremony that formally ended the Salvador guerrilla war, with the president of El Salvador and all the guerilla commanders and all the Presidents of Central America, a solemn and quite moving occasion in Mexico City to formally sign an agreement that provided certain actions by the UN to monitor the situation, disarmament and reorganization, creation of the police academy, all of these elements of a package agreement.

In Guatemala, the peace process was still ongoing. Mexico City was also the venue for many of the meetings because that's where the so-called friends of the peace process would meet with both sides in Guatemala and with the UN. Mediation had been under the aegis of the Catholic Church until 1992, and then it was turned over to the United Nations. A United Nations mediator was named, and he was given the assistance and whatever he needed, help from the outside. A group of "friends" of the Guatemala peace process were called into action., and they consisted of the U.S. and Norway, in addition to Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Spain. And we would meet with the guerrilla chiefs, and at one point the Guatemalan president came and discussed the issues that were still dividing the two sides - the terms for a cease-fire, for disarmament, and for a truth commission that would assess responsibility for the civil war, not to call for justice or retribution but simply to assess responsibility; and that commission has now finally published its report.

The agreement wasn't achieved while I was there, in 1993-94. The level of participation in the other countries was ambassadorial, but all the meetings were in Spanish, and our ambassador did not go and sent me instead. So I represented the U.S. in these meetings until I left, at which point the ARA picked it up, and the coordinator for Cuban affairs was given that responsibility and came down and went to those meetings after I left. The person who was the Mexican representative in the talks and really the leader of the

mediation effort, as far as national representation and liaison with Mexico, was Rosario Green, who is now the Mexican foreign minister. I had known her since 1981, always admired her. She's a very bright woman, but she's also very tough and basically not very friendly to the United States, very much of a nationalist and very angry about any perceived U.S. meddling in Mexican Affairs.

Q: I can't remember now, did Chiapas and all that take place while you were there?

WILKINSON: Chiapas is next.

Q: Okay.

WILKINSON: You're wonderful. You always foresee directly what I've got down in my notes.

Q: This is obviously something that's still there.

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: But Rosario - what was her -

WILKINSON: Green.

Q: - Green, how did you find dealing with somebody like that? You know, as a diplomat, you're up against the people who, fair enough, are nationalists, but also have a problem with the United States, a big chip on their shoulder. How does one work with someone like that?

WILKINSON: Well, the answer is that when you're at my level at an embassy you don't. It happened that I knew Rosario and had dealt with her, I'd say, as an equal in the '80s, when I was there before. I certainly was no longer at the same level in 1991-94 to be able to level with her, in effect, and tell her what I thought. And she recognized that, so we didn't have any... No, that's not true. We did sit next to each other at dinner one night and I had a long conversation with her mostly about the Álvarez Machain case, when she just told me how badly the United States had behaved, and all I could say was, "Wes, you're right." I mean, there was no question in my mind that our handling of Álvarez Machain was wrong. I didn't mention the ultimate outcome of that case, which was that, having been upheld on jurisdictional basis by the Supreme Court, the case went back to courts in Los Angeles, and the judge - I think it was the same judge who had initially ruled that it could be heard and had the supreme court sustain him, then took up the case on its merits and threw it out. He said there's no case against this guy. It may be that you have a right to try him, but you don't have any evidence to convict him. You have hearsay that shows that he went to the house at the time that Camarena was being held there. He went to the front door, and when he went to the front door, he says that he knocked and somebody came to the door and said, "You're not needed at this time." And he went away. And you,

the DEA, had no evidence to prove that what he says is not true. And they didn't. They had some kind of a second-hand story that he had been present and administering drugs to Enrique Camarena, but they couldn't prove it. If they had more evidence, they couldn't use it. And I don't know, frankly, from what I know whether... I don't know who to believe. But at any rate, the case against him couldn't be proved, so he was freed and he went back to Mexico, where he lives now a free man. The Mexicans certainly won't be able to try him. So that's what happened in that case, and you know, we took our lumps diplomatically for the activities collectively of our law enforcement agencies, which were... They were acting like cowboys.

Q: I mean, this is... One of the things in looking at American diplomacy dealing with narcotics is that there really is a broad divergence between the Foreign Service and the DEA as far as procedure and all that, isn't there. I mean, the DEA sort of operates on its own, and you are constrained by international law and how we deal with that.

WILKINSON: That's right. They are too, when they operate abroad, supposedly, and the embassy has to answer to it, and there are times when we wish we didn't.

Q: Oh, yes. Way back in the '70s I had problems with... heh heh... Well, okay, now to Chiapas. Could you explain what this is all about?

WILKINSON: I wish you'd ask me another question. I was on vacation in Valle de Bravo, which is about two hours drive west of Mexico City and a place where we spent a lot of our time, not only because we liked it but to get out of Mexico City, which wasn't good for our health. On New Year's Day, 1994, when having come off the tennis court, a doctor friend said, "You know that there's a revolution, at least a revolt, going on in Chiapas?" Not the capital of the state but San Cristóbal, the second city (and perhaps more important city because it's a religious center) of southern Mexico, has been taken by the rebels. It's called San Cristóbal de las Casas (which is named for Bartolomeo de las Casas, the monk who was famous for standing up for the rights of Mexican Indians), and it was taken and held briefly by Indian revolutionaries and by a funny, pipe-smoking masked figure named Comandante Marcos. I went back to Mexico City late that day and found that my deputy political counselor, Ross Rogers, had taken the initiative, quite rightly, to get on the first plane he could to Chiapas and, in fact, got to San Cristóbal, borrowed a car from an American animal and plant inspection service facility down in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital of the state of Chiapas, and took the car, drove the car to San Cristóbal, and got there before the army, so that the American embassy, true to form, was on the scene before the cleanup began. At that point at least the rebels had left the city. In the night they had come in and taken the place, and then they beat a strategic retreat; and when Ross Rogers got there, they had already left, but they had made their political statement. A number of people had been wounded and some killed in the brief action, and they went back into the forest, an inaccessible region of the Lacandona Forest and adjacent areas in the heart of Chiapas, which is still undeveloped, and they're still there. Why are they still there and why hasn't the Mexican army come in and simply wiped them up, which they're perfectly capable of doing? The answer to that is that, one, they

had a lot of support and sympathy from, you might call him, the “Red Bishop” of southern Mexico, whose name is Samuel Ruíz, who, as the religious leader of the region has a lot of resonance on the political left not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America. Ruíz felt they had legitimate claims and for years had been telling them that. So one could even say that he helped instigate this revolt by encouraging the Indians to believe that they were not treated justly by the Mexican Government. That’s one reason. A second reason is that no sooner had the news of this revolt spread throughout the world than hundreds of reporters and human rights organizations descended on San Cristóbal to make sure that the Indians weren’t mistreated by the Mexican army when it came in to clean up the place. So the Mexicans, Salinas’s government, which was already close to on its way out of office, because his term ended in 1994, decided that for political reasons it didn’t make any sense to simply come in and wipe these Indians out. Let them have their heartland of the Lacandona Forest (it has no strategic importance in Mexico; Tzotzil rather than Spanish is the language there). And a number of high-level negotiators were appointed, all of whom sincerely tried to find some kind of a solution, whether to allow them nominal autonomy, some special provisions in the State Charter for their councils to be elected in a different way, for their taxes to be treated differently so as to respect their communal traditions. All of these efforts have failed to date, not just because the government hasn’t been willing to cede them local sovereignty or to rescind the 1994 elections or to take some national step that they demand or to agree to some exaggerated position on the part of the rebels, but also because the Indians themselves don’t really seem to know what they want. They’re divided; they’re obviously very difficult to negotiate with. So there’s a stalemate, and it continues even today, five years later.

Q: Did you find yourself under pressure because this thing gained so much notoriety in the media and all, and obviously within the media and within the, I don’t know, the ranks of the chattering class, or whatever you want to call it in the United States, that there would be a great deal of sympathy for the Indians? Did you find that it was difficult to operate in this particular arena as a political officer?

WILKINSON. No, by no means. This is one of those few issues where the United States wasn’t such a directly involved player that we were forced, for some political reason, to take a position that was difficult to sustain in the local context. Washington, of course, wanted to be sure that no human rights were violated, and for that reason we, I think, we kept somebody down there for a long time. Ross Rogers stayed for two weeks. My local Mexican assistant went down to help him and arrange appointments for him. I went down and spent a couple of weeks there in the end of January. I was succeeded by other people from the Political Section. And eventually I told our ambassador, Jim Jones, “Look, this doesn’t make any more sense. We’ve been down there for six weeks or eight weeks; nothing is changing; this is a static situation; let’s come back and just visit occasionally.” So he reported back to Washington and said, “We’re going to withdraw our semi-permanent position. We’re not going to keep somebody reporting down there, just watching things all this time.” And Washington said, “No, we need somebody down there. It doesn’t matter whether anything is happening or not. We want to be able to tell Congress that we’re on top of this and we’ve got somebody down there watching it.” So

we kept somebody there for maybe six months, on a rotational basis, even though, you know, there were little flurries of isolated aggravation. Maybe somebody would shoot a bullet out of the woods at soldiers, but there were no pitched battles any more. The Mexicans had been constrained not to go into the forest and wipe these people out, and the guerrillas in the forest knew very well that if they went out of the area, if they tried another sortie, they would be decimated. The people who complained the loudest and who suffered the most, I found, already when I was down there in the second two weeks, were the law-abiding citizens who were neither Indians nor representatives of the government. They said, "Law and order have disappeared. These people have come and taken our cows. What are we supposed to do about it? Can't you provide us some police protection?" These were people living on the edge of the guerrilla area, and they eventually organized themselves into vigilante groups, and that has caused a series of separate problems. Some vigilantes a couple of months ago shot up a village and killed about 34 of the people and, again, quite naturally there was a great outcry from the human rights organizations - there's no justification for shooting 34 people - but on the other hand, in order to maintain law and order, they have no recourse other than to form their own vigilantes.

I have another anecdote from the days that I was down there, which I guess was probably the peak of public interest and press involvement. There were still several hundred reporters down there looking for news, when there wasn't any, trying to create it. And there were also all sorts of human rights activists, including Ramsey Clark. Ever since being Attorney General under Lyndon Johnson, Clark has given himself to all kinds of liberal causes and was down there on behalf of one group and had a press conference in which he denounced alleged violations by the government of Indian rights. And later in the day, somebody came up to me and said, "That was a brilliant speech you gave this morning." And I said, "I didn't give any speech. Who do you think I am?" And they said, "Aren't you Ramsey Clark?" And later in the day, I stood next to Ramsey Clark, and oh my God, he and I really do look like each other. We're the same height, about the same size, and we were both dressed in lumberjack shirts and... I've got to be careful - I might get zapped by some loose right-winger. So...

Q: Were we watching for similar types of movements in Mexico, particularly southern Mexico, groups that were encouraged, you might say, who felt they'd been left out and wanted to draw attention to themselves?

WILKINSON: This revolt in Chiapas in January, 1994, came as a complete surprise, certainly to me. I had spent a week in Chiapas the year before, in 1993, traveling around talking to people, mayors. I talked to the governor. The governor was an old-school... what's usually known in Mexico as a "dinosaur," one of the old-school PRI politicians who believes very strongly in tough law and order but who, at the same time, said that he was very conscious of their need to develop the Indian heartland of the state and made all the right noises - no suspicion that anything was going on, brooding down there. The attachés had been down once or twice, and they had one report that a patrol of army people had come across an armed camp somewhere in the forest and reported back that

there was something going on, but this was one isolated report and it got filed away and nobody paid any attention to it. So even though Comandante Marcos had allegedly been training down there in the forest for some months, if not years - years, I think - nobody had really come across them, and if they had they wrote them off as crazies, as you might write off some militia group in the United States, just a bunch of crazies who would never amount to anything. Oh, and when they did revolt and publish their manifesto, even leftists like Gabriel García Márquez, who at least used to be a sympathizer of the revolutionary left, people like that said this is archaic, these Zapatistas are talking about some kind of revolution that died with Che Guevara. This is classic Maoist revolution-rises-in-the-countryside, which has been proven to be fruitless - it doesn't work. It's a dead ideology, and it will never get anywhere. So disregard it; they'll wither on the vine. Don't worry about it. And what's more, it's the only place in Mexico where this kind of dissidence exists. This was 1994 or 1995. Now in 1997-98, you have other groups claiming to represent the revolutionary left arising in other states in Mexico, in the south. In Oaxaca and in Guerrero and even in Puebla, there are elements of several revolutionary groups, although they seem to be very fragmentary. But by 1994 none of these organizations had done anything, if in fact they existed then, and nobody had ever heard of any other revolutionary left in Mexico since the '70s, when there was a rural armed guerrilla group in Guerrero state.

Q: Were you seeing any change in the north-south relationship? I'm talking about north Mexico and south Mexico. We've mentioned this before, as NAFTA comes in and all, that the north becomes more almost removed from Central Mexico, Mexico City and all. Did you see any development in that way?

WILKINSON: I don't think I have anything new there. I talked before about the division of Mexico into political parts and economic parts, and that certainly hasn't changed. People said that Chiapas really had been left behind, even by the other southern states of Mexico, that there was a more enlightened regime in Oaxaca, for instance, for dealing with Indians, for respecting their communal traditions, more so than in Chiapas, which was really feudal. And of course, the state of Chiapas wasn't even a part of Mexico for 10 or 15 years, immediately after the revolution. It was part of Guatemala, I believe, or separate somehow, and then there was a plebiscite to find out where it belonged, and the people, to the extent they voted at all, they voted to go into Mexico, and it reverted to Mexico in, like, 1840. So it was always different. And southern Mexico is backward, but if southern Mexico is a century behind the rest of Mexico, Chiapas may be two centuries behind the rest of Mexico, so there is that distinction. It's a beautiful state. I love it. It has wonderful natural beauty. It has a forest which we were trying desperately in the early '90s to preserve as one of the regions of biodiversity of the world, and of course, once there was a revolution there and it became a political issue, then all the efforts to preserve the forest were completely forgotten, because how can you create a UN sanctuary in an area half of which is occupied by rebels and the other half by the army? So that sort of got forgotten and probably still has been forgotten.

Q: At one point - I don't know if it was true at this point - there was a sizable

Guatemalan refugee population down there.

WILKINSON: Well, I talked about that the last time. And I talked about going down and meeting those refugees in there, and they came across in the '80s, principally. They started in late '81 and kept coming *en masse* until late '82. This was at the peak of the Guatemalan army and President Ríos Montt's "beans or bullets" - you know, you either cooperated with the government and got beans, or you got shot. It was *frijoles o fusiles* in Spanish. And so they all came across, and they were about 50,000. There were no more after '84. Ríos Montt left, and the campaign was over. The peak of that cleaning-up-the-countryside campaign in Guatemala was in those years, and that's what created the refugees. They stayed there until the war was over, and then when I was there in the '90s, they started going back, in trickles and then eventually in thousands. And the elected Guatemalan government in the '90s had a very liberal policy. They found tracts, places for them to stay; they provided them with agricultural infrastructure, seeds. I went into Guatemala and visited some of the places that they were going to go to, and they had really thought through exactly what they were going to do there on the other side. So that problem is pretty much over. I think their refugee population in Chiapas is now largely gone. I hope - I don't know for sure.

Q: You left in '94. Had NAFTA taken hold by then, or was it still in the sort of implementation stage?

WILKINSON: No, the NAFTA took effect on the 1st of January, 1994, and that was the beginning date, and there were many, many provisions that didn't go into full effect, some for 15 years. Some went into effect immediately, but others were phased because they would have more impact and would be felt more deeply socially, like the ones I mentioned that would, in effect, depopulate the countryside. The Mexicans realized that they were important measures, but I'm not sure that they realized how far-reaching they would eventually be. We don't really even know yet because they're not fully in effect. They won't be until the year 2009.

Another impact of the NAFTA, somewhat indirect, was on the Mexican elections of 1994. The Mexican Government, although NAFTA was signed, sealed, and delivered, in effect were still in a mode where they were sensitive to the demands of the NAFTA, both political and economic. And for that reason, they not only were pressed by us and others, but felt themselves that they ought to have clean elections and they ought to have a better, more transparent electoral system. And there were many efforts to achieve constitutional and legislative electoral reform in '93 and '94. The Mexicans passed a series of laws. Each time they were told it's not enough, that's a step in the right direction, but you need to do more. And they kept going back to the drawing board and doing more things, with the end result that the elections of '94 were demonstrably clean, and fraud was practically nonexistent, certainly in the national elections, even to a major extent in state and local elections that took place at the same time. Now there are state elections at various times for governors and state legislatures that since then have taken place with some allegations of fraud, but basically I don't think even in those subsequent elections anybody's been

able to prove that there was substantial fraud. One of the many reasons for this was the fact that the Mexicans for the first time began using state-of-the-art photo ID cards, which have 14 different types of identifications on them. They have thumb-prints, they have holograms, they have photographs, they have bar codes, they have all kinds of stuff on them so you can't possibly falsify them - I guess you can falsify anything, but it would be very difficult to falsify. They were designed by Xerox and IBM, if I recall correctly, at a cost of almost a billion dollars. Most of it was paid, I must say, to American firms. It was a nice export package that we put together from a trade standpoint to do these ID cards. Another important reform was to place the supervisory electoral commission under independent authority, to provide, for the first time, for the election of the Mayor of Mexico. This is a highly political and important post, always appointed previously by the president, and now elected, elected for the first time in 1997 and won by the left, by the former presidential candidate of the left, the son of Lázaro Cárdenas, who just yesterday announced himself as candidate for the presidency in the year 2000.

Q: Was he a figure when you were there?

WILKINSON: Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas? Absolutely.

Q: How did we view him at that point? I'm talking about when you were there.

WILKINSON: Well, I knew him fairly well, and I also knew Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who was the president of the Revolutionary Party. And I arranged for them to come and meet our ambassador. They came and had breakfast at our house. I did that for all of the presidential candidates. They came and met privately with our ambassador in our house for breakfast. It was not something that would attract attention as it might have if they went to the embassy residence. And Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas is a - I wouldn't call him a strong person - he's a nice person. He is not a brilliant intellect. He's decent. He is the prisoner of the ideology of the left, but his instincts are PRI centrist. And he has said that if he's elected president - at least he said in 1994, and I assume that the same would be true if he runs in 2000 - that he would want to renegotiate parts of the NAFTA. But in fact, I think he's indicated privately that that would be a token renegotiation which wouldn't be a substantive change. Now I'm not sure. That was the case in '94. That might no longer be the case because the impact of the NAFTA in some ways may have been difficult for Mexico, and there may be some genuine renegotiation that they would seek. But at the time it didn't look as if it would be a problem that we could not surmount - not that he was likely to win the election. In '94, the PRI had a very strong candidate named Luis Donaldo Colosio, who had always seemed to me as the best potential candidate. He had the combination of political skills and political experience as the head of the party with technocratic credentials as the head of the combined Ministry of Development and Environment, which is the job he had for his last year alive, just before he was nominated, and months before he was assassinated in the spring. He was assassinated by, as far as I can tell, a crazy. No one has ever been able to prove a plot, although most Mexicans believe there was a plot to have him killed, and some even ascribe it to the previous president, Salinas. According to this theory, Salinas arranged to have him nominated but

then some people said, Well, he got out of hand, and the president got tired of listening to him saying how things would be different, so he had him done away with. Well, that doesn't make any sense to me.

Q: Those things sound like the usual people who believe in plots.

WILKINSON: The problem was that, you know, when you look at the high-level of Mexican assassinations, when you see what happened to Francisco Ruíz Massieu, whose murder they have now convicted Raúl Salinas of being the intellectual author of (whether there really was a plot or not I don't know). But if the president's brother was responsible for having the chief of the PRI party killed - and he was convicted and is in jail for it - then you have to wonder, who might have arranged to have the presidential candidate killed. Anyway, I was with a bunch of other people from the embassy out on a poker cruise when Colosio was killed. We had taken a beautiful sailing boat up the Bay of California and were sailing in the bay and playing poker at night. I'm happy to admit that I like that kind of thing, and my wife arranged for us to be called by radio and told about the assassination, at which point we were about as far away from port as we could possibly get, and we all sat there and talked about it and decided there was not a damned thing we could do about it, so we took our time getting back. And we got back a couple of days after his assassination. And at that point, the runner up in the PRI presidential sweepstakes, Zedillo, was called on to step in and fill his shoes. And Zedillo, for all his honesty and financial experience and wizardry with numbers, was not a capable politician. He ran a lackluster campaign and just barely won the election. And he won it without the same kind of control and clout that a new candidate would have normally. He would take over all of the reins of power, but he had to rely a lot on an organization bequeathed to him by a previous presidential candidate and an outgoing president, so he was picking up the droppings, if you will, and as a result, he wasn't able to have enough influence over financial policy. The Mexican peso was artificially sustained throughout the year during his campaign by people over whom he had no control, while Carlos Salinas, the outgoing president, was interested in his own future in history and maybe in getting some great international job like UN Secretary General or something afterwards, for which a devaluation at the end of his administration would look bad, so there was no devaluation. Then Zedillo was elected and, *boom*, the bottom fell out of the Mexican market, and there was the crash of December, 1994, in which the peso just fell like a skyrocket because no preventive steps had been taken before then.

Q: And you left when?

WILKINSON: I left in the summer of 1994, and I'm projecting a little bit after I left.

Q: Was there anything else we should cover on Mexico?

WILKINSON: Yes, I've got some other notes on odds and ends of things, which I'll just sort of tick off if that's all right with you, and then I think maybe I'm imposing a lot on your time, and we'll try to finish. How do you feel?

Q: Well, I was thinking, maybe we could stop kind of at this point, because you probably have... Where did you go after this?

WILKINSON: Brazil. We've got enough time for at least one more session.

Q: Absolutely, so why don't we do that. So if you want to make a note in your notes, there are few more things you wanted to add about Mexico, and then we'll move on to Brazil, okay?

WILKINSON: Right

Q: Great.

Today is Appomattox Day, April 9th, 1999.

WILKINSON: I'm cold, because I haven't really looked at my notes for a couple of weeks, and it's been almost a month since our last session, so I may be a little incoherent.

Q: That's all right. You can "cohere" it later.

WILKINSON: Right. One of the things, I wanted to go back to add a footnote that I've just recently thought of about serving at the UN in the late '70s, and that was that together with Herb Reese, who was the legal advisor and John Willett, who handled the Far East at the mission, the three of us sent what I think was quite an important dissent cable, dissenting from American policy. The policy that we were dissenting about was the continuing recognition of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, where we were insisting in the face of adverse majority at the UN, in particular in the face of all the public information about the Pol Pot atrocities, of not recognizing the fact that the country had effectively been conquered by a Communist puppet at that time, and that Pol Pot was no longer in charge, either *de facto* or *de jure*. The Hun Sen government was originally imposed by Vietnam, and we couldn't tolerate the fact that Vietnam had imposed a government in Cambodia, so we continued to insist that Pol Pot had the right to represent Cambodia at the UN. The three of us from USUN argued that it was simply beyond our comprehension as to why we would want to recognize and insist on seating a government that was guilty of so many known atrocities, and that we should change our policy to favor keeping the Cambodian seat *empty* - simply not recognize any regime. And we were told that Secretary Vance looked very carefully at this dissent cable and asked for a complete review of the situation. Ultimately, after review, he decided to maintain our policy. It was gratifying to know that our message was taken seriously, but I still don't understand why we had to go on for so long recognizing Pol Pot. In the end, we of course shifted to agree to seat the Hun Sen government, which even today is more or less still in power.

Q: That's very interesting. One can only think that the aftermath of the Vietnam War was so strong within, you might say, the more conservative circles, that anything that smacked of not being anti-Vietnamese was unthinkable at that time.

WILKINSON: I think that's the only explanation. I think it was somebody who was also, presumably, playing macro-international politics and balancing Soviets against the Chinese and maintaining the balance of power in the region - but it didn't make any sense, and it still doesn't to me.

Well, we were talking about Mexico. And although we covered the main themes, or most of the main themes, about Mexico in the early '90s, when I was serving there as the minister counselor for political affairs, we didn't touch on a few. One was a contact that I had rather frequently with Manuel Bartlett. Bartlett was at that time, and until very recently, was the governor of the state of Puebla in Mexico. And he's on a wanted list in the United States. At the same time, he is a political leader, and came very close to getting the PRI presidential nomination in 1988. He is again a serious contender for the PRI presidential nomination next year.

Q: Why is he on the wanted list?

WILKINSON: He's on the wanted list because there is evidence, which I have never seen, but alleged evidence, linking him to a cover-up in the Camarena case, that he at that time was the secretary of Gobernación, which is in Mexico similar to the vice-presidency, a very important post that controls the security forces of the country, and that although he probably didn't or most certainly didn't know beforehand about what was happening to Camarena, that there was official knowledge, maybe even complicity in the covering up the murder after it took place in 1994.

Q: I can't remember, did you go into the Camarena case before?

WILKINSON: Yes, I did.

Q: Okay, then we don't have to go back over it. I was just thinking if somebody weren't in this... so it's all right.

WILKINSON: We covered the Camarena case and the Álvarez Machain relationship to it. But Bartlett was a friend of personal friends and came to me and said, "How can I clear my name? This is unacceptable that I am on the U.S. wanted list and I'm governor of Puebla. I still have political ambitions." And I arranged for him to meet with the ambassador, but nothing came of it, and I'm told recently that he is still, that he would probably be in trouble if he came to this country, that he would have trouble getting a visa. He has not tried to come to the United States since this information, whatever it is, fell into U.S. hands indicating that he knew about the case and tried to cover it up, so that's still out there as an issue.

Another incident which was very humorous that I wanted to make note of was in a brief period - I believe it was in early or mid-1993 - when both the ambassador and the DCM were away and I was chargé for a week or 10 days. I got a call from an assistant to the drug czar, the Mexican equivalent of our drug czar, whose name was Carillo Olea, saying that a "Mexican security agent" was in trouble in Miami and could we arrange to get him released? I asked for more details and never got another phone call. But separately, I learned from American authorities that a Mexican agent had indeed been arrested in Miami for attempting to smuggle out a gorilla, an animal, out of the United States. And it turned out that this man was not really a security agent; he was an employee of the state of Mexico where a gorilla had died in the zoo, and the state of Mexico sent one of its agents to Miami to try to buy illegally, on the illegal animal market, a gorilla from a zoo. And the FBI got wind of this and decided to go ahead with a scam, or a sting, and they dressed an FBI agent up in a gorilla suit and they actually loaded him on the airplane, and the Mexicans were all ready to take off, and then they sprung the trap on these guys. So they were-

Q: I can see the gorilla pointing with his finger: "I accuse!"

WILKINSON: *J'accuse!* So the Mexican so-called security agent that they had called to ask me to help with was actually a gorilla smuggler, and he went to jail in Miami.

I don't know really where it fits in, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the level of American financial interest in Mexico in those NAFTA days. I had an intern in the early '80s named John Blum, and John Blum was very successful and is now a principal at Morgan Stanley.

Q: This is a financial institution.

WILKINSON: John came back to Mexico City to visit with a group in early '94 as we were getting ready for the election and asked me to set up a lunch to have a political briefing for these people, which I was quite happy to do. We went to an elegant restaurant, the Hacienda de los Morales, and I got three people who were not part of the establishment, who were not PRI and who were not happy with the way political reform was going, even though the Mexicans were pursuing a much cleaner election and developing a system that was going to be much more transparent than earlier systems. I got Adolfo Aguilar, who is a still independent opposition, now a senator; a human rights activist named Sergio Aguayo; and the organizer of an umbrella organization of election observers named Julio Fesler. The three of them came for lunch and briefed these financial representatives of the investment banking world, of whom there were about seven or eight, all quite young. It seemed to me they were probably in their early to mid-30s and just out of curiosity I went around the table and asked them to identify the level of financial interest that they represented, and collectively around the table there were \$60 billion of investments, people who had that much money *at their fingertips* to invest. I was just amazed at how important, from a financial standpoint, these American "masters of the universe," if you will, who were sitting around talking to these people. And then

afterwards, according to John, their eyes were opened considerably to talk to some of the opposition in Mexico because up to that point they had been dealing only with establishment people.

Q: Well, did you see a pattern in what American investment was at that period? Was it cheap labor? Was it diversification? Was it something different than in the United States? What did you find were the motivators?

WILKINSON: Well, you know, I don't really know. I just never focused on exactly... It's hard to... There are two kinds of investment: one is portfolio investment, and the other is direct, people looking actually at opportunities to build a factory or produce automobiles. The people I was dealing with at this time were clearly portfolio investors. They were money managers. They were people that were moving money back and forth in short-term securities between countries, so what people were looking for in terms of -

Q: That would be a different.

WILKINSON: Yes, but it's that kind of people who today are the ones who decide on the fate of nations, because what's happened in Brazil last fall, what's happening in Ecuador right now is that the country is a prisoner of these short-term financial movements, which drive the value of the currency up or down and lead to rigid financial measures and inflation, etc.

Anyway, moving on to a couple of other things that I wanted to talk about. I had an opportunity to watch the PRI at work at actually being a revolutionary party in the throes of change. It had been ruled by a traditionalist, very politically structured threefold organization based on a workers' movement, a peasants' movement, and a so-called public sector of bureaucrats, professors, and others who weren't either blue collar or peasant. Those were the three classic supports of the PRI, and they always used to depend only on a kind of top-down organization, where they would coopt the leaders and tell them what the PRI was going to do, and the leaders would go out and more or less tell their followers, their unions, who the candidate was going to be and how the PRI would act. That was changing to a much more grassroots kind of organization, with the growth of the middle class in Mexico. For them, it was necessary not just to tell but also to listen and have people feed up their concerns and have a more responsive leadership in order to win an election, as opposed to simply impose a candidate and know he would win. So with that background, I watched the PRI, went to the PRI's convention in 1992, which was a prelude to the nomination of Donaldo Colosio, the first nominee for the 1994 election, who was subsequently assassinated, and I found that a fascinating experience. I spent a week in Aguascalientes, where that convention took place. I met there and became very close to a woman named Silvia Montes Montañez, who was working for the leader of the PRI and then moved to the Mexican Institute of Social Security, and she was able to arrange visits for me later to see the governor and to stay, in effect, as the guest of the governor of Zacatecas. I also stayed in the governor's mansion in Tlaxcala and later was able to attend the nominating convention for Colosio himself. And so I got to know the

political leaders pretty well, and when Ambassador Jones came, he asked me to arrange meetings for him with the presidential candidates, which I did. They came and had breakfast at our house, and the ambassador was able to meet them sort of quietly, without any publicity, and hear not only from the PRI candidate but also from the PAN candidate on the right and from Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the candidate of the left party, the Party of Revolutionary Democracy. In the embassy at that time we had a highly- motivated Political Section, I thought a group of excellent people. We had some people on loan from the Agency - not part of the normal operations directorate but rather the intelligence directorate, and they would take a tour abroad just to get to know Mexico, in particular a woman named Janet Anderson and a man named Tim Langford, who were both experts in Mexico and had more benefit than most Foreign Service officers of years and years of study and background on Mexico, so that they knew all the names of players when they came and wrote wonderful reports. And I arranged to have awards for both of their reporting. I had some excellent interns. Among regular FSO political officers, I had Stuart Symington, the grandson of the senator, who was so good that I wrote his review statement in poetry, which the selection board kind of was amused by. That was the first time they had ever seen a review statement in double dactylic. And I thought that we had a very successful three or four years there. It was not quite so successful for John Negroponete, who was the ambassador, because I didn't think that his DCM did him any good. He had, as I mentioned earlier, a DCM named Allan Sessoms, who had come in laterally into the senior ranks and who has now left the service for a series of senior academic administration posts. He has a reputation for a roving eye that's gotten him into trouble more than once. He didn't pay as much attention to running the largest chancery in the world as he might have, and the inspectors noticed. Negroponete didn't really suffer. (He got another ambassadorship; he went to the Philippines, but after that he was competing for Korea more recently and lost out to Steve Bosworth, who had left the Service and came back.) I don't think Negroponete was fully conscious of how little attention his DCM was paying to his job in the embassy.

So I think that pretty well covers it. We also had some wonderful recreational avocations in Mexico. I used to organize the diplomatic tennis tournaments for the diplomatic community there. We frequently spent weekends and vacations at Valle de Bravo, which is about two hours west of Mexico, and at one point I organized a sailing trip that is described above.

Q: Just one thing.

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: I mean, serving in Mexico, how did we treat the Mexican-American War? I mean there must be commemorations and things of this nature, ones we don't observe, but what about with the Mexicans? Was this a difficult time each time, or was this the bloody shirt that was waved in our face once a year or something of this, Chapultepec Day?

WILKINSON: Ironically, the Mexicans have a statue to what they call the *Niños Heroes*,

the “Hero Children,” the young men who allegedly threw themselves off a cliff rather than surrender to the Americans at the hill of Chapultepec Fortress in 1846, before the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war and ceded California and all of the territories of Texas and New Mexico and Arizona to the United States. And whenever a senior military or senior statesman comes to visit Mexico, it is traditional for them to go and lay a wreath at the statue of the *Niños Heroes*, which was a symbol to Mexico’s honor being preserved in the face of United States exercising “might equals right.” We’ve gotten in the habit of going and laying wreaths ourselves. We just sort of look the other way and lay a wreath there, so whenever our visiting dignitaries come we do the same thing. It’s sort of a joke because historians say that in fact this sacrifice of jumping off a cliff probably never took place. I used to be very quiet in Mexico about my own antecedents because my father got the Medal of Honor at Veracruz in 1914. The Medal of Honor was awarded at the time to 55 people.

Q: That was quite a to-do later on, wasn’t it? They tried to straighten that one out.

WILKINSON: Well, I never heard that they wanted to take his Medal of Honor away.

Q: Oh, no, but I think they put more strict-

WILKINSON: Oh, yes, there are much stricter conditions on the Medal of Honor later. There’s no question about the fact that that was not as... The terms have changed for the award of the Medal of Honor.

Q: Well, we didn’t have many medals in those days.

WILKINSON: I don’t know - I -

Q: I think a lot of the medals, the Navy Cross and other things, I think -

WILKINSON: - have been invented since then?

Q: I think from... I think this is the problem: you had either/or, or something.

WILKINSON: At any rate, he did lead a shore party under fire, so he deserves some kind of recognition, but probably under today’s terms it certainly wouldn’t have been the Medal of Honor.

But that’s not the kind of thing you brag about when you’re serving as a diplomat in Mexico.

Q: My grandfather was an officer with Sherman’s army. I keep a little bit quiet on Atlanta. You were in Brazil from when to when?

WILKINSON: From late 1994 until I retired in ‘96, but then even after retirement I stayed

in Brazil for two more years and worked as the American representative on the scene in the negotiations between Peru and Ecuador which resulted in a peace treaty last fall. So I'd like to talk about that a little bit, too, although not in great detail because I'm writing a study about it, so I don't really need to.

Q: All right. Well, why don't we stick first to '94-96. What did you do, and what was the situation? Can you talk about that?

WILKINSON: Both my wife and I studied Portuguese for a couple of months in the fall of '94. We didn't speak it. We needed to be trained in a new language. At this point I only had one more year in the Service, or two more years for sure, one more year before my last chance at promotion to minister counselor, so I faced very likely retirement in 1996. It looked like it was going to be a two-year assignment, or even less than two years. But I thought that I joined the Foreign Service not to sit in Washington, even though it meant giving up "locality pay" for retirement purposes, so we both thought it would be good to go to Brazil, and we studied Portuguese. My youngest daughter was admitted to Maret School for a semester and started in September, '94. I studied Portuguese and went as soon as I could in November, and Xenia and Julia followed in January. Xenia didn't have an assignment yet. She went on the likelihood that she would be made the science counselor in the summer of '95, and she was. She served there from '95 to '98 as the science counselor in Brazil, a very important and interesting job for her because it meant dealing with environmental issues, including maintaining the so-called "carbon sink" in the forest of the Amazon.

The first issue when I arrived in Brazil in the fall of '94 was quite naturally the election, and the-

Q: Your position was what?

WILKINSON: As political counselor. Brazil has a two-round system of elections whereby if you don't win an outright absolute majority in the presidential or gubernatorial elections, there is a second round in which the two leading candidates compete, and the winner of those two becomes the president or governor. It turned out in Brazil in 1994 that Fernando Henrique Cardoso won the first round and there was no need for a second round of presidential elections. There were a number of governors who were competing, and so there was a second round in the gubernatorial elections about six weeks after the first round, which I was there to see, but I had already missed the first election, which Cardoso won going away, largely because of a plan that he had put into effect as finance minister to stop inflation. And the plan, called the Real Plan, was quite successful. It did, in effect, stop inflation and kept it stopped while avoiding any substantial devaluation of the country's currency until January of this year, when the bottom fell out and it was no longer possible to maintain the relative value of the Brazilian real. Cardoso was helped by the second round of elections because three key governors who were elected at that time were of his party - the governors of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais states, all from the president's Social Democratic Party. But he only held about a sixth of the

seats in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate as a result of these same national elections. And so that was the way the situation was pretty much when I arrived, as a result of the 1994 elections.

Cardoso himself is a classic late 20th century president, cut out to gain respect and international support because of his credentials. He is a former professor. He's multilingual. He's urbane, articulate in more than one language, English, French, and Spanish as well as Portuguese, and he began to travel a lot around the world and reap the benefits and respect of his new election. He had also served as foreign minister in '92-93, so he was almost perfectly prepared as president, first foreign minister, then finance minister, then president. The problem is that he was not quite as good at managing his congress, and he was held back in pursuing a reform program by the weakness of the 1988 constitution in Brazil. The constitution provides for elections of deputies at large. They have no districts. And therefore if you are a well known figure, you can usually get enough votes to get elected, but you have no loyalty to your constituency. There is no local basis for politics in Brazil, so it's very difficult to control deputies. They're not responsible to their parties; they change them frequently; and they don't have any kind of party discipline. The result is that whenever you want to get a vote through congress, you have to line up the congressmen individually for every vote and pay them off. And they want to be paid off in terms of patronage, and the president soon runs out of patronage. You can't go on increasing the federal payroll to put cousins and friends of individual congressmen on the payroll. So the system doesn't work very well, and after a while, the president's proposals to reform the Brazilian governing system ground to a halt. He has a couple of advantages. The Brazilian president can rule by decree. He can pass a law, in effect, send it to the congress, and ask them to approve it. And they can either approve it within 30 days or vote a different law. And he can go on doing that by changing the decree every 30 days. He also has the possibility of the "item veto," which our president briefly had and then was told that it was not constitutional. But the Brazilians have it, so you can take one item in a budget or in a law and veto it without vetoing the whole law. On the other hand, changing the constitution in Brazil is extremely difficult, and some of the programs which the Brazilian president hoped to pursue required constitutional change.

So this is a prelude to what I was doing in Brasilia, which was to report and analyze what was going on with Cardoso's efforts to, first of all, modernize Brazilian government and, second, to reduce the fiscal deficit, which the country had begun to run up, and to get some control over social security, a world problem where the input into the social security trust fund in almost every country is less than the outflow, and new sources of financing have to be found.

The first wave of Cardoso's reform program was quite successful. He was able in his first year as president to open the door for privatization of public enterprises and to bring in a great deal more foreign participation under relaxed laws for foreign participation in Brazilian capital markets. The second wave was much more difficult. It involved changing retirement ages and civil service privileges and, basically, curtailing many of the

privileges that congressmen and their families enjoyed because they put them in positions in the administrative part of the government. And he struggled for almost three years trying to push through social security reform and administrative reform for the civil service and was unable to do it. The result was that international capital began to flee Brazil. A lot of money left with the Asian flu. More left when the Russian-

Q: You might explain what the Asian flu was.

WILKINSON: Yes, money began to leave the country first when confidence slipped in the Asian financial markets and when it looked like Asian economic activity was becoming stagnant in 1997. More money left when the bottom appeared to fall out of the Russian market in the summer of 1998, and of course, Brazil had its own crisis and a great deal of money left again in early 1999.

Q: Ted, I want to bring you back, particularly in this period - we're looking at '94 to '96.

WILKINSON: Yes, indeed, but it's not possible to isolate that period when the president is still struggling with the reform program from the results which are being played out today.

Q: When did he come into power?

WILKINSON: He was elected in November, 1994, and took office in January, 1995.

Q: So you really came there when he... I mean, you were watching his early attacks... I mean, ab initio.

WILKINSON: Right. And as I said, he had an early success with certain measures to make more flexible the possibility of privatizing major public corporations, both at the national level and at the state level, like the state power companies; and to open up government contracting. For instance, for Petrobras, the petroleum giant, to allow competition in contracts rather than have simply government-controlled subsidiaries doing petrochemicals and gasoline services. He passed a constitutional reform and implementing legislation, which made it much easier for competition. So that was an early success, but where the success of his program began to break down, already in 1996, and continued to stagnate through 1998-99 was in the much more difficult measures that affected the personal interests of too many of his bureaucrats and legislators - measures to curtail the fiscal deficit.

Q: When you arrived there in '94, what would you describe as America's interests in Brazil?

WILKINSON: Secretary Christopher came to visit in the spring of 1996, and I was his control officer and went with him on several of his conversations. I thought he put it very nicely at one point in talking to the foreign minister, when he said, "Brazil really can

move South America because it's the dominant country of the continent, and when Brazil and the United States are on the same wavelength, we can move the entire Western Hemisphere. And if together we can move the Western Hemisphere, we can move the world." That, of course, is not always the case, but coordinating our goals and policies with Brazil gives us a nucleus of very important solidarity on the basis of which we can achieve a great deal in foreign policy. Brazil and the United States have traditionally not been on the same wavelength. Brazil, throughout the '60s and '70s, probably through much of the '80s, was a Third World country, and was notoriously difficult to manage in international organizations, often not only opposing U.S. points of view but leading contrary movements in the north-south dialogue and sometimes also on security issues. Today, particularly under Cardoso and under his foreign minister, Luis Felipe Lampreia, who is a very sophisticated and American-oriented foreign minister, Brazil is independent and not always in agreement with the United States, but much more tractable and much easier to deal with; and our interests continue to be in improving that relationship and maintaining that mutual understanding that I think we developed in the last four or five years. Former Brazilian foreign minister, Celso Amorim, is now the ambassador to the United Nations, where Brazil is a member of the Security Council.

He is less helpful and attuned to our wavelength than the current foreign minister, Lampreia. But one example of our interests, and I'll talk a little bit about Brazil's foreign relations when I do that, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry is usually called Itamaraty. That name comes from the palace in Rio where the Baron of Itamaraty had, in effect, given his palace to the government when Brazil became a republic in 1889, and the Foreign Ministry was housed there until the capital moved to Brasilia in 1959. So Itamaraty is very much like the Mexican Foreign Ministry. It's staffed with intellectual people, artists, authors, very proud of their heritage, many of them sons and grandsons of former foreign ministers and cabinet ministers, somewhat democratized, but nowhere near as democratized as the American Foreign Service has become, and a little bit condescending towards the less aristocratic American way of dealing with foreign affairs. Cardoso himself began to change the system to make it somewhat more democratic, and after the beginning of the Cardoso administration, Brazilian diplomats told me they were very happy that people were finally being assigned and promoted on the basis of merit and not on the basis simply of personal friendships. The Brazilians, as evidence of their movement towards the U.S. and growing sympathy for United States foreign policy goals, became members first of the missile technology control regime, an effort sponsored by the U.S. to prevent the proliferation of missile technology. They agreed that they would not allow exports to "rogue" regimes, and then they moved one step further - they had already moved in the previous administration of Fernando Collor to proscribe nuclear weapons, together with Argentina, from their two territories - they converted that commitment into a more general one by becoming parties to the Non- Proliferation Treaty in the Cardoso Administration.

I was also very impressed when the new foreign minister, even at the beginning of his tenure, announced in his introductory speech that Brazil was going to focus on improving its own record in human rights and would collaborate much more effectively with the UN

and with the U.S. in trying to improve human rights performance worldwide. One of their principal diplomats is now the director general of the organization set up in The Hague to police the chemical weapons treaty that is now entering into force.

I also wanted to mention, with regard to the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, that they're paying much more attention, as we are, to non-governmental organizations. That in effect is another example of democratization, where Foreign Ministries, as ours does, draw on the advice and expertise of non-governmental organizations in formulating policies. So we're listening to the experts on the outside, and the Brazilians are doing the same.

So those are some of the thoughts that I was struck with about Brazilian foreign policy and its relationship to the United States during those years that I served there.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

WILKINSON: Our ambassador while we were there was Mel Levitsky. Levitsky is now retired and teaching at the Maxwell School at Syracuse. But I worked very closely with him. I liked him a lot, and we're still close.

Q: Were there any particular issues? It sounds like this is really almost a feeling of pleasure working with this new government that came in, that you were both on the same wavelength and that, while there might have been differences, you were really going in the same direction. Did you feel that way at the time?

WILKINSON: Yes, very much so. Christopher, when he came, in 1996, his last previous visit to Brazil had been in the late '70s, when he was the deputy secretary of State, and he had come down with the message that Brazil was not cooperating with the United States, in particular in the nuclear area. Brazil had just reached an agreement with Germany for the Germans to export nuclear technology and build a number of reactors, the by-product of which could have been used for nuclear weapons, and it was not going to be satisfactorily controlled. And we insisted with Germany and with Brazil that that deal not continue because Brazil was not committed not to produce nuclear weapons. He also was spokesman of the Carter human rights policy, and Brazil's human rights record was being criticized. It was a military government, and there were people who had disappeared. So Christopher had an unenviable diplomatic task in the 1970s, and he was happy when he came in '96 to be able to say, "I no longer have this kind of problem to talk about. The only problems we're talking about are the kinds of disagreements that one has with close friends about how best to achieve something." An example of the kinds of disagreements we had was on the pace and organization of the "Free Trade Area of the Americas" [FTAA]. We had agreed with the Brazilians and others in December, 1994, really just after I got there, at the Miami Summit Conference, the Summit of the Americas, organized by President Clinton, and a keystone of American policy in the hemisphere, to broaden the NAFTA or - if you will - to start from scratch and create a hemispheric free trade zone. And the U.S. at that time, hoping to get "fast track authority" for these negotiations from the Congress, was pressing very hard to move fast on this front in 1995

and 1996. The Brazilians' concern was that their own Southern Cone common market was still in its early stages and wasn't really ready for a complete open market for the entire hemisphere; that their "Mercosur" group, which consisted of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay (with Chile and Bolivia in association), couldn't stand free trade competition directly from the United States yet, and that the pace should be a lot slower. So in the years '96 and '97, we sparred with Brazil about how fast this operation should go, and in the end, when President Clinton was unable to get fast track authority, which he needed to negotiate fully, it became clear that we too were not ready for that accelerated negotiation, and so the issue became a little bit moot. Now the only issues between us and Brazil of any great importance, I think, are how to organize international efforts to improve the environment, given that Brazil has such an important role. And we, of course, want Brazilians to do their best to preserve their own forests and curtail environmental degradation. And Brazil, although committed to that goal, is having difficulties implementing it in its own vast country and is saying, in effect, we need more international help. If we're going to be given so many responsibilities, who is going to help us with the costs? And our attitude is kind of "Don't bother me with the costs; just do it." So that creates a certain amount of disagreement and tension. Of course, the other area of disagreement with Brazil today are our financial norms and the international financial institutions telling Brazil to curtail costs and restore the balance of the federal budget at a time when they're finding it very difficult to do that constitutionally and legally.

Q: Were relations by thins time pretty good with Argentina?

WILKINSON: Relations with Argentina were very good. The Brazilians had a tendency and still do to take decisions unilaterally and then tell their Mercosur partners afterward what they've done to increase or lower tariffs and decisions they have been forced to take by international financial pressures. Their neighbors would like to be consulted before they do it, but the neighbors have really no choice because Brazil is so much larger and more... Brazil's economy is probably four or five times that of Argentina and maybe 10 times that of Chile.

I wanted to talk a little bit about a couple of high-level visits that we had, not just the Christopher visit I mentioned before but also the First Lady's visit. The First Lady came-

Q: You're talking about Hillary Clinton.

WILKINSON: Hillary Clinton came in the fall of '95, and I was also responsible for that visit. And at least I was control officer for most of the time, and then I was eventually succeeded by a new deputy chief of mission, Lacy Wright, who came to become DCM in the fall of '95. But in the organizational phase of getting ready for Hillary Clinton's visit, her advance team came and went to the state of Bahia, which is the state of the most traditional patriarch of Brazil, a sort of Brazilian "colonel" type who you might compare to an old-style southern landlord, a "king maker." He's now a senator, but he's been a governor three times, and when the advance team said they wanted to go and look at the

possibility of her visiting the city of Salvador in the state of Bahia, they said, “We don’t want to have any protocol; we just want to go down and look at possible places that she might visit, including in particular public health facilities and social welfare programs, but the governor doesn’t need to bother to see us.” So we call down and talk to the governor’s office and say, Look, this is what we want to do. We don’t want any protocol and no visits to the governor *et cetera* for the advance team. And that night I got a call from Senate President Antonio Carlos Magalhães, the king maker, who proceeded to tell me in the most earthy Portuguese for about a half an hour just exactly what was wrong with that idea, that it wasn’t appropriate for this team to go down, and they should see the governor first, and they should be in the hands of the governor, who should decide what they were going to do when they were down there. And that was a very difficult problem. We eventually smoothed the ruffled feathers of the Brazilians, but it was not easy to deal with the White House advance team, because they didn’t want to be bothered with any of the niceties of international diplomacy, particularly in an area where ladies were not even expected to travel much on their own. There was a lady mayor of the city of Salvador, elected against the opposition of these more conservative so-called “Liberal” politicians who are, in effect, of a very conservative bent, and the governor and the senator all hated her because she was too leftist and because she wanted to educate prostitutes rather than isolate them. She was forward looking, and they were not. So we were also walking into the middle of a domestic political mine field, and that was quite difficult.

Q: How did the trip go?

WILKINSON: In the end it went all right. I’m not sure that she left without... I mean, she personally is a charming and very skillful politician and probably would make a very good senator, so she personally made a very good impression, but her advance team left some bitterness that was never completely dispelled.

Q: This seems to be a constant problem no matter what administration.

WILKINSON: No matter what administration, no matter what party and in what country. I’m sure you hear this constantly from people who are telling their oral histories about what difficulties they have with advances. I had a similar problem with Secretary Christopher’s visit six months later when it was proposed that Secretary Christopher visit Brasilia for 24 hours, where he would meet with the president and the foreign minister, and then he would go to São Paulo, where he would give a speech to 750 businessmen who had changed their plans, interrupted a Chamber of Commerce weekend at the beach - they were all going to have a retreat, but they’d canceled it - and arranged to be in São Paulo on Saturday for the Secretary. And then he was going to spend a third day in Brazil in Manaus, where he was going to symbolically show his interest in the environmental side of diplomacy; he was going to plant a tree and visit a rainforest and do some symbolic stuff there that would show our American interest in environmental aspects in Brazil. Washington decided at one point, because of events elsewhere, that the Secretary couldn’t afford to be gone as long as they had originally foreseen and that he would have to curtail his visit to Brazil by one day. Therefore, they would drop São Paulo. He would

go to Brasilia and then go to Manaus, and he would leave high and dry these 750 businessmen who had canceled their weekend away at the beach in São Paulo. This was about a week or 10 days before the visit when it would have been impossible for them to reschedule their original retreat. And of course we said that this was a ridiculous thing to do. You have the most influential businessmen in Latin America, and you're going to stand them up at a time when we're trying to promote American business. And we were told that the policy wonks were in control in Washington, and that the Secretary was about to give a speech on the environment a month later incorporating environmental issues as a cardinal element of American foreign policy, and therefore it was essential that he go to Manaus, and to hell with the businessmen in São Paulo. So ultimately, luckily, whatever it was - it was something to do with the Middle East negotiations - attenuated, and the Secretary was able in the end to spend all three days in Brazil, and the issue disappeared.

Another issue at the time concerned travel in Brazil. The Secretary was coming with his wife, and the ambassador and Mrs. Levitsky proposed to meet and travel with them on the airplane from Brazil to São Paulo to Manaus. And I got a call from Maura Hardy, who is now our ambassador in Paraguay, a young lady who has done very well, because she was a junior officer in Mexico when I first served there in the early '80s, on her first tour. But now she's an ambassador. She called to say there wasn't any room on the airplane for Mrs. Levitsky to do at least one leg of the trip in Brazil. That she would have to fly separately in commercial. And I said to Maura that I thought that she or whoever was responsible needed to rethink that because if the Secretary was flying with his wife, he probably would not want to kick the ambassador's wife off the airplane; he'd want somebody else to get off the airplane and fly commercially. And Maura Hardy said (at that point I was about six months from retirement), "You wouldn't want to jeopardize your career over this issue, would you," as if she were trying to threaten me to drop this point about the ambassador's wife. And I said, "I'm not about to drop it, and I don't think that Mrs. Christopher or the Secretary himself is going to want to hear the ambassador's wife was kicked off the airplane." And in 30 seconds she had reversed course and agreed to put her on the airplane - silly point, but it just illustrates to me the arrogance of people who tend to see everything from the perspective of convenience of the Washington group that's on this mission, and everything else has to fall by the wayside.

Q: You then retired in '96, is that right?

WILKINSON: I retired in the summer of '96. I came back and did the retirement course and then returned to Brazil.

Q: And do you want to talk about the Ecuador-Peru problem. I find it interesting because I have an interview whose name escapes me right now - it's a well-known name - who was a junior officer on that desk in the early 1940s, who said he was called up by Sumner Welles, who said, "Young man, they're having trouble down in Peru and Ecuador" - this is right in the beginning of World War II - and I want you to settle it. I don't want to be bothered with that sort of thing." That was the beginning of our becoming a guarantor,

so I'd like to pick it up now some 50-odd years later. What were you up to then?

WILKINSON: Well, that's interesting. I wonder who that was.

Q: He got in trouble with the Un-American Activities Committee, and he was closely associated with Lillian Hellman, who was such a Communist, and this got him in a great deal of trouble. I'll come up with it soon.

WILKINSON: How interesting. Well, I'm just working on that now because I'm doing a case study to be published for SAIS and the Maxwell School on the Peru-Ecuador negotiations, principally on the dilemmas for American policy involved. And what happened in 1942 was that the two countries had basically struggled over their boundaries from the days of Atahualpa and Huascar in the Inca era and all down through the Spanish colonial period and after independence from 1822 to 1941, and in 1941 the Peruvians, incensed by the Ecuadorian unwillingness to sign a treaty giving up some of their traditional claims, went to war, conquered part of the country, and then negotiated from strength in January, 1942, in Rio de Janeiro at a conference of the foreign ministries of the hemisphere, at which we were represented by Sumner Welles. And even Welles was busy. Cordell Hull was somewhere else. Welles, who was under secretary, was our negotiator at this meeting of foreign ministers, and we pretty much told the Ecuadorians that we had just gone to war with Japan and with Germany and we couldn't afford to be tinkering with a minor border dispute in Latin America, and therefore please sign this treaty, which basically spelled out where the frontier was going to be. It wasn't really a bad treaty from the standpoint of Ecuador because it was very close to the *status quo*, but the *status quo* was a situation that Ecuador didn't like because they had lost bit by bit large portions of the territories east of the Andes and stretching all the way down to the Brazilian border, which they had claimed for centuries before. And they didn't even get access to the Amazon River. They considered themselves to be an Amazon country, but this treaty did not appear to give them access to the westernmost tributary of the Amazon, which is called the Marañón, in what is now northern Peru. So they were not happy with the treaty, but they signed it *force majeure* and then over the ensuing 50 or 60 years have been trying to find ways to reinterpret it, modify it, or get away from the commitments in the treaty to restore their national dignity and get the some kind of at least nominal access to the Amazon. So that's the story of the Peru-Ecuador dispute in a nutshell. What happened in 1995, when I got involved in it first, shortly after coming to Brazil, was renewed hostilities in one of the disputed areas of the frontier in the Andes, a distance of 50 miles or so from the Marañón, the upper Amazon, but where Ecuador was still trying to preempt a little bit of disputed territory, and the Peruvians resisted, and hostilities soon became quite intense. There were up to 5,000 troops from both countries in the area, and air support was being called in by the Peruvians to dislodge the Ecuadorians from positions up in the mountains. And the guarantors - so designated because they had agreed to guarantee the treaty of 1942 - the U.S., Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, were called once more into action. And in a series of intensive meetings in January, 1995, in Brasilia, then in Rio, then back in Brasilia, we - that is, Alan Watson at first assisted or in company of Mel Levitsky, our ambassador in Brazil, and then Luigi Einaudi subsequently

as the special envoy taking Watson's place in the thing (because Watson, as assistant secretary, couldn't sit in Brazil and work on this problem constantly) worked out a declaration. The declaration told the Peruvians and Ecuadorians that we would send in a Peace Observer Force to the area in question, but that in return they would have to pay the costs, and they would have to agree to negotiate a final solution to these remaining areas of dispute, where the interpretation of the 1942 protocol was still being contested.

Then the next question, which was how to organize and dispatch this observer force to the border, what it would consist of. Our Washington team left the site leaving the ambassador and me to work out the details of this force. The Brazilians were to lead it, but the United States was to provide the helicopters, the logistics, in effect to support the force. While we were talking about this, in late February it was agreed that an advance team would go out and look at the area to see how the force could be constituted, and this advance team consisted of a couple of Americans, a Brazilian general and a couple of assistants, some Argentines, and some Chilean military. And the force was due to leave on the morning of, it think it was, February 23rd.

Q: '96.

WILKINSON: '95. We're still in early '95, and I've only been at post for six weeks or two months. The ambassador said or somebody said in the small meeting that maybe we ought to send some political-military types along...

Q: Yes, so they caught you at the-

WILKINSON: Yes, so this is like February 22nd, and we're talking about sending political-military civilian types along with this mission for their input, and the ambassador says, "I don't have anybody to send." The Argentines have already agreed to send their deputy chief of mission, and the Chileans make the same decision. The Brazilians will send somebody from Itamaraty. The ambassador says, "Well, I could send you, but I'm having a party for 200 people tomorrow night to introduce you to Brasilia." And I said, "Send me. Thanks for your party, but please send them home. I'd much rather go on this trip." So I did, and I got to see the terrain where they had been fighting and to be in at the beginning on how to organize this observer force, where the demilitarized zones should be, how the separation of forces of the two sides should be implemented, and then came back to Brasilia. So that was the beginning of that process. We stationed an observer force, which is still there. At first it was just the four guarantors, and then we brought in members of both the Peruvian and the Ecuadorian military, to make them part of the observer force. And although they reached an agreement, the Peruvian and Ecuadorian presidents signed an agreement late last October, the observer force won't be withdrawn until the demarcation of the border had been finished, and that's now projected for sometime this year. Anyway, I took part in that first phase in 1995 of disengagement of forces was followed in 1996 by getting organized for negotiations, and I continued to work on this while I was still active in the service, and then after retirement, it was decided that there should be a commission in Brasilia to monitor the

negotiations, and I became the U.S. member of this commission. There was a Brazilian, an Argentine, and a Chilean ambassador, who were named for those three countries, and we sort of sat, not really as judges, but as people offering their good offices during the phase of negotiations in 1997 and early 1998 when both sides were exchanging positions and before the actual trading began. Then as the negotiations got into their advanced stage and reached higher levels, the commission ceased to function, and our principal negotiator, who was Luigi Einaudi, working as the so-called special envoy for this, was working behind the scenes along with people at the undersecretary level in the other guarantor foreign ministries, to try to bring the situation to closure and get both sides to agree, which he and the Department ultimately did.

Q: By the way, the name is John Melby, of the person who was, I think, working on this. I have an oral history with him, a short one, but it goes way back. We'll take a peek at that in a minute. Anyway, Ted, I guess this brings us to a close.

WILKINSON: It does, yes.

Q: And, you know, the usual thing - if there's anything you want to add or anything, you can certainly do that when you get the draft copy. Thanks.

WILKINSON: Wonderful.

End of interview