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

JAMES M. WILSON, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Department of State - Office of Mutual Security Coordination 1957-1961
- Country program reviews
- Douglas Dillon

Madrid, Spain - Economic Counselor 1961-1964
- Air programs
- Franco
- U.S. bases
- Ambassador Robert Woodward

Bangkok, Thailand - DCM 1964-1966
- Deputy Representative to SEATO
- Ambassador Graham Martin
- Indochina wars
- Thailand bases
- Vietnam
- Government
- Laos
- CIA
- Royal family
- Corruption
- Embassy staffing
- Relations with Saigon embassy
- Gulf of Tonkin incident
- Khe San attack
- Diplomatic community

Manila, Philippines - DCM 1966-1970
- President Marcos and Imelda
- Manila Conference
- Embassy staff
- U.S. base problems
- Fidel Ramos
- Visa problems
- Lyndon B. Johnson visit
- The Kaiulani gift
- Nixon's Guam doctrine
- Huk insurgency
- SEATO
- ASEAN
- Sabah issue
- Symington Committee
- Ambassadors

State Department - East Asian/Pacific Affairs 1970-1972

Deputy director
Marshall Green
Cambodia
Lon Nol
Thailand
Pentagon Papers task force
Marcos declares martial law
Health problems

White House - Micronesia Task Force 1972-1974
U.S. trusteeship in Micronesia negotiations
UN Trusteeship Council
Congressional interest
Paul Warnke
Relations with State Department and NSC
U.S. military interest
Marianas

State Department - Office of Humanitarian Affairs 1975-1977
Human rights issues
Dean Brown
MIAs
Personnel
Human Rights Reports to Congress
Henry Kissinger
Security Assistance Program and human rights
Foreign reaction to reports
Relations with regional bureaus
Patt Derian

State Department - Foreign Service Inspector 1977-1978

Post-Retirement - Inspection Corps
Author: Diplomatic Theology, an Early Chronicle of Human Rights at State

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 31st of March, 1999. This is an interview with James M. Wilson, Jr. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do they call you Jim?

WILSON: Yes indeed.

Q: Jim could you tell me something about when and where you were born and something about your family?

WILSON: I'm a China brat. I was born there of American missionary parents and grew up there.

Q: Where were you born and when?

WILSON: I was born in a mountain resort outside of Hangchow in 1918.

Q: What type of missionary were your parents?

WILSON: My father was an architect/engineer who went out to China in 1911 to build various things for the American mission boards. He built hospitals, schools, houses, and churches all over China. As a matter of fact, the book on the coffee table right in front of you that I just got from the Old China Press has a piece in it on my father.
Q: It sounds like they were moving you all around quite a bit?

WILSON: We lived first in Hangchow, where my father also taught engineering and math at Hangchow College. Then we moved to Shanghai.

Q: How old were you then?

WILSON: Let's see, we were in Shanghai from 1925 to mid-1926 and then came back to the States while there was some political unpleasantness in China.

Q: In '26, what was this? Was this the Kuomintang?

WILSON: Yes, it was the Kuomintang forces, coming up from Canton and taking over - rather turbulent years.

Q: It is often a period forgotten I think when people look at China. The Kuomintang was also revolutionary.

WILSON: Very much so. This was in the days before the great split between Mao and Chiang Kai-shek.

Q: Do you recall those first years? How did you live?

WILSON: We lived very well on a college campus - in many respects, as you might on a college campus anywhere else around the world. When we moved to Shanghai, my father went into partnership with a fellow American architect and they planned to take over a lot of the construction that had previously been done by his engineering office in Hangchow.

Q: What was your mother's background and your father's, too?

WILSON: He was a graduate engineer from the University of Kentucky and then got a masters in architecture. She was a Phi Beta Kappa from Wellesley, also from Kentucky. During the time that Father was building things, she was usually teaching - first in Hangchow and later on at St. John's University there in Shanghai.

Q: What was she teaching?

WILSON: English literature.

Q: Do you recall sort of life at home? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

WILSON: Yes, I had three sisters; two older and one much younger. We had quite a number of friends and acquaintances. Many of my pals ended up in the Foreign Service later on.

Q: When you left Shanghai in '26, you had already gone to school for a year or two hadn't you?

WILSON: Oh, yes, both in Hangchow and in Shanghai - at American schools which were in both places in those days.

Q: How long were you back in the United States?

WILSON: Almost four years.

Q: Where did you go to school? Where did you live?

WILSON: In Kentucky, that's where the family is from.

Q: Did you find that Kentucky was quite a change from China?

WILSON: It's hard to try to quantify that or qualify that either way. I was rather young, something like eight years old when we came back and 11 when we departed.

Q: You went back to China?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: This would have been 1930?

WILSON: 1930, yes that is right.

Q: Where did you go?

WILSON: Back to Shanghai. My father had gone back to China a couple of times during the period when the family was in Kentucky. Interestingly enough, one of his assignments was with Curtis Wright Aviation, where he had a major hand in building what is now the Hangzhou Airport in Shanghai. When we went back in 1930, the Episcopal Mission Board had asked him to build a major new replacement for St. Luke's Hospital in Shanghai, along the lines of St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. That he tried to do manfully for quite a number of years; but as you know, there were many trials and tribulations in Shanghai in the 1930s, including Japanese occupations in 1932 and 1937. This caused all sorts of difficulties.

Q: You were about high school age when you got there in 1930.

WILSON: Yes. I went to SAS, the Shanghai American School.

Q: What was the American School in Shanghai like?

WILSON: It was very much (and deliberately so) like a private school here. SAS was conceived as a preparatory school for American children going back to college in the States. It has now come back to life, enrolling many more nationalities than just the children of Americans, as it did in my day.

Q: Were there any Chinese going there?

WILSON: Very few. They were almost all Chinese-American.

Q: Did you feel as though you were living a somewhat separate existence in those days?

WILSON: Of course. This was in the days when so-called extra-territoriality was flourishing. The "white man's burden" mentality was still very evident.

Q: What about the presence of the Japanese when they came in, how did that catch you?

WILSON: As far as family was concerned, it didn't bother our living arrangements especially; but in terms of my father's duties it was catastrophic, because the area which had been chosen for his hospital was right in the line of fire for the Japanese troops. It was finally decided to move the entire operation out of the Japanese zone of occupation and start from scratch.

Q: When did you leave Shanghai?

WILSON: In 1935 to come back to college. We came back via the Trans-Siberia Railroad and Europe.

Q: At the American School, what were your favorite subjects or most interesting subjects?

WILSON: I guess English and history.

Q: Was there much Chinese history or was it more the European-oriented history?

WILSON: Mostly European, but I took a couple of courses in Chinese history. They also had courses in Chinese language which, I regret to state, I did not take.

Q: It wasn't really pushed at that time, was it?

WILSON: Not really. The name of the game in those days was to teach the Chinese how to speak English.

Q: What were the various communities called, cantons?

WILSON: Settlements.

Q: Did you get involved with the French or the British?

WILSON: Not really. There were two different governments in our day in Shanghai, in the settlements that is. There was an international settlement which was made up of what had been the British, American and German concessions, and then there was the French settlement or concession. The French ran theirs, and an international municipal council ran the international settlement. In 1932, when the Japanese came in, however, they took over a large part of what had been the old American settlement. It was called Hongkew. The Japanese relinquished it only very, very slowly. When they came back in 1937 they made that area their headquarters. Surrounding all of this, of course, was the Chinese city, which was under Chinese jurisdiction. It was a strange and wonderful complex in those days.

Q: Can one go out and go up the Yangtze or do things like that?

WILSON: Oh, yes, in the days when there was not a war going on.

Q: You left in what year?

WILSON: 1935.

Q: That was before the Panay incident?

WILSON: Yes. That was I think in 1937. I went back for the summer in 1938.

Q: Where did you go to college?

WILSON: Swarthmore.

Q: This is a Quaker school, isn't it?

WILSON: Yes, Quaker sponsorship.

Q: You were there from '35 to when?

WILSON: From '35 to '39.

Q: What was your major there?

WILSON: History and political science.

Q: Were you pointing yourself towards anything?

WILSON: No, I wasn't very sure what I wanted to do at that juncture; something in the international field; but exactly what was rather up in the air.

Q: How did you find Swarthmore?

WILSON: I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Q: Did you get involved in extracurricular activities?

WILSON: Yes, in the student government and the newspaper. I was editor-in-chief. I did various other things, the usual line of sports and activities.

Q: When you came back to China, after the Panay incident where the American gun boat was deliberately sunk by the Japanese, did you find a change in atmosphere?

WILSON: Of course. This was in the summer of 1938 and by that time the Japanese had occupied the entire coastal area. They started out in the summer of 1937 in Peking with the so-called Marco Polo Bridge incident. When I arrived in Shanghai, the international settlement was an island in the midst of Japanese-held territory. It was possible to go down with a special permit to places like Hangchow and up to Suchow, but the rest of the time we were pretty well confined to the international and French concessions in Shanghai.

Q: Was it very obvious that the war was going on at that point or was it far away?

WILSON: It was reasonably far away, but the settlements were full of refugees. I was interested in doing some articles for the *Louisville Courier Journal,* and I must have done three or four of them on the Chinese political and economic situation at that time. I mailed them back, and they were finally published.

Q: What was the general feeling that you were getting from your colleagues about the Japanese at that time?

WILSON: I don't think anybody was very sympathetic to the Japanese. Quite the contrary. But one had to be rather circumscribed out there about expressing one's opposition.

Q: How about the Kuomintang and the Chiang Kai-shek government?

WILSON: One the whole, the efforts that had been made by the Chinese before the Japanese came in were very much applauded by the foreign community and the Americans in particular.

Our people were mostly supportive of the efforts of the Kuomintang and rather anti-Japanese.

Q: You graduated from college in '38 was it?

WILSON: In '39.

Q: This was an interesting time.

WILSON: A very interesting time.

Q: What did you see for yourself?

WILSON: I saw for myself a little more study and went to Europe in the summer of '39. I was caught there when the war started.

Q: What were you planning to do?

WILSON: Nothing specific beyond study at the Geneva School of International Studies in Switzerland. I got back here after the war in Europe was well under way and went to the Fletcher School for a master's degree.

Q: At any point had you been talking to people who had been involved in foreign affairs at the embassies or that?

WILSON: Of course. A number of my Fletcher colleagues went into the Foreign Service, people like David Linebaugh, Si Wilson, Ralph Jones, and Ralph Clough. I finished up at the Fletcher School and decided that I wanted to try journalism. I went back to Kentucky and tried working for the *Louisville Courier Journal* for a brief time. At that point, seeing that the draft was coming along, I decided to avoid it by joining the Kentucky National Guard. It sounds a little bit familiar, doesn't it? A certain vice president of ours...

Q: Oh, yes, we're talking about Dan Quayle.

WILSON: To make a long story short, I enlisted as a private with the idea of getting out in a year, but came out actually five-and-a-half years later as a 27-year-old lieutenant colonel.

Q: What happened? Was the Kentucky Guard nationalized?

WILSON: It was nationalized. We went off to Mississippi and took part in great maneuvers later on.

Q: Oh, yes, the Louisiana maneuvers.

WILSON: Exactly. After this, I this was in the artillery - they split up our old regiment and sent our half out to the Pacific. We were put onboard ship and sent out heading for the Philippines to be the artillery support for what later became known as "the Battling Bastards of Bataan," the 31st infantry regiment. On Pearl Harbor Day we were someplace out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, all alone and reported sunk.

Q: You were very fortunate.

WILSON: We were very fortunate. At that point we turned around and ended up in Pearl Harbor. I finally came back from Hawaii as a candidate for the 90 day wonder course.

Q: This was as an army officer?

WILSON: I came back to officer training at Fort Sill.

Q: Artillery?

WILSON: Yes, artillery. Thereafter the powers that be in the military looked at my record and said, "Ah, China background. You better go to the intelligence school, though you'll have to wait for an opening slot." So I went to a replacement depot to wait and found myself summarily moved in a couple of weeks to Fort Ord, California where I was assigned to the Third Infantry Division and informed in no uncertain terms that its personnel were all frozen for movement overseas. Instead of going to China I ended up in the second wave storming the beaches at Fedala outside Casablanca.

Q: This had been in October or November of '42?

WILSON: November of '42, correct.

Q: Were you ending up fighting the French at that point?

WILSON: Oh, yes, we were fighting the Vichy French. We had a three day battle with them while they were deciding what their political affiliation was going to be. You know that tale, long and involved.

Q: Then you fought, I assume, in the North African campaign, the Tunisian campaign?

WILSON: That's right. We did North Africa and then we did Sicily, Salerno, Cassino, Anzio, Rome. We hit all the "garden spots" along the way.

Q: When you were in North Africa, under whose command were you?

WILSON: The Third Division landed under Patton for operations in Morocco. We were under Bradley and Patton in Tunisia and in Sicily we were under Mark Clark in southern Italy.

Q: The Salerno was a very close run thing wasn't it?

WILSON: That's right. We didn't get there until several days after the initial landing, fortunately for us, but still had to land across the beaches.

Q: What was the feeling about Clark within your division?

WILSON: I don't think we had much feeling about Clark in our division at that time. I got yanked out of artillery just before Anzio and was selected to be aide-de-camp to our division commander, a gentleman by the name of Lucian Truscott, a young (48) major general, ex-cavalry man and former internationally rated polo player who had worked with Mountbatten on Combined Operations in London, started the Rangers, commanded the U.S. task force in the Port Lyautey landings in Morocco and served as Ike's deputy in early Tunisian days. As you may recall, he replaced the U.S. corps commander as overall beachhead boss at Anzio after we had a considerable setback there. We went on to Rome but were pulled out after that operation to make landings in southern France in August and stayed with that until the Vosges Mountains. In November, Truscott was promoted again and returned to Italy to replace Mark Clark as Fifth Army Commander. That lasted until the end of the war in Europe.

Q: What was your impression of Truscott as a military commander because he certainly was...

WILSON: I think he probably was the best general we had in the army - an opinion shared by quite a number of military experts - an exceptional individual.

Q: Where did you end up? Did you keep following Truscott?

WILSON: I stuck with him. I had enough points by V-E Day to be civilianized; but he was very persuasive so I stayed on. After V-E Day he was ordered out to China and

persuaded me not to leave until he had completed that operation. That would have been a very interesting assignment. He was to have commanded a group of Chinese army groups in northwest China, which would have included some of the Chinese communist forces. We got there in early August and saw the Gimo and General Wedemeyer. But the Japanese surrendered, of course, and that ended it.

Q: Were you in China at that time?

WILSON: With him, yes. We witnessed the Japanese generals when they came in to surrender in mid-August.

Q: It was a very interesting situation when the Japanese surrendered - this would have been in August of '45 - about who was going to be where and all that. Did you get involved in the sorting out?

WILSON: We didn't. We turned around and went back to Italy via Kandy in Ceylon where we visited Lord Louis Mountbatten, an old friend of Truscott's. I was then going to get out of uniform, but made the mistake of going with Truscott to say good-bye to Eisenhower in Frankfurt. At that point, Patton had just opened his mouth once too often, and Truscott ended up taking over the Third Army from Patton in Bavaria and western Czechoslovakia. So I stayed on there until Christmas and didn't get out of the army until early 1946.

Q: Patton was always controversial and he was seen as getting too close to the powers that had been in Austria and Bavaria I guess.

WILSON: That's right, Bavaria it was. Benes, whom we met, was back as Czech President.

Q: Was it difficult moving in? I would have thought particularly the officer corps of the Third Army would not look with any favor...

WILSON: I don't think it was that difficult at all. The officer corps in the Third Army headquarters wasn't very happy with Ike. Nobody was mad at Truscott. Truscott, in fact, was a personal friend of George Patton. They had played polo together in the old days. Patton was considerably senior and Truscott had served under Patton in quite a number of different places along the way. There was no personal animosity at all involved.

There was a major series of problems in the occupation of Bavaria. The old question of fraternization was the one that Patton had stubbed his toe on very badly in addition to his remarks about political parties and the Nazis.

Q: Like the Republicans and Democrats, something of that nature. It was not a good time. How about fraternization because you've got a bunch of GIs sitting around, and

you've got small children, young ladies, and all of that. To keep them all apart is not very easy.

WILSON: It wasn't very easy. We had other important problems as well, including a large number of displaced persons we had to deal with and resettle. There was also the problem of what to do about setting up the war crimes trials.

Q: At Nuremberg.

WILSON: I went with Truscott to the opening of the Nuremberg trials. We also went to the opening of the Dachau trials. We had problems too with the Russians in Czechoslovakia, so we traveled down there on several occasions. This was, of course, before all of Czechoslovakia was handed over to the Russian occupants. Laurence Steinhardt was our ambassador. It was an interesting and busy time.

Q: Did you get involved in the forced repatriation of Russian prisoners, Vlasov's army and all of that?

WILSON: Not really, no. General Clay's headquarters handled that. We didn't have too many problems along those lines. We did see something of our Russian opposite numbers in Czechoslovakia, but not otherwise.

Q: What was the feeling at that time about the Soviet army and all that? Was it brothers in arms or was there already sort of a standoffishness?

WILSON: It was a bit of mutual suspicion. The name of the game in many cases was to see who could out-drink the other and get the others to divulge their secrets - which, of course, they didn't; nor did we.

Q: When you left in '46, what was your outlook about what the future foretold? How did you feel at that time?

WILSON: I was optimistic as everyone else was at that time that we'd work things out. It was really before the Iron Curtain had descended completely. I came back and scratched my head as to what I wanted to do and decided that I didn't want to do journalism, I had gotten rather too much of it in World War II. So I went to law school.

Q: Where did you go to law school?

WILSON: Harvard.

Q: How long did you do it?

WILSON: We did an accelerated program of two years and came out in '48.

Q: Can you characterize or describe how the law school was at that time?

WILSON: It was jammed. Everybody and his brother was trying to catch up and make up for lost time. We had something like 600 in my class as I remember it spread over three terms with everybody boning away. It was a frantic period.

Q: What was sort of the attitude? Was it I'm going to catch up and I'm going to make money?

WILSON: Yes. I don't know about making money but at least they were going to catch up.

Q: How did you feel about law when you finished it?

WILSON: I finished it and decided that I did not want to be a regular lawyer. I was more interested in international law than anything else. I had worked with Professor Manley Hudson on a number of private projects. In those days, faculty members at Harvard were encouraged to take over private clients of one sort or another and Hudson had several.

Q: His specialty was international...

WILSON: Yes. He was one of the early American judges on the World Court in The Hague and he had a number of private clients, which, as I say, was encouraged in those days. I had the dubious distinction in my last year at law school of being the world's expert on the law of sedentary fish. It is not quite as silly as it sounds. A sedentary fish is indeed one that sits on the bottom of the ocean, but this was about the only legal precedent that anyone could find for the question of property rights on the bed of the sea, which was very important in terms of off-shore oil.

When I graduated from law school in '48, I had two offers for jobs. One was to go with Standard of Ohio, which had large property interests in the Gulf of Mexico; and the other was with ARAMCO, the Arabian American Oil Company. After kicking that one around for a while, I decided I didn't want either and instead took up an offer to come down here to Washington. I passed the DC Bar Exam and have been in and out of Washington ever since.

Q: I got a little taste of international law when I was an undergrad at Williams and I remember being assigned to do an international law course. I was trying to do something about air planes and the only law that I could find - this was around '48 or '49 - was about balloons. It didn't seem to be a very developed field as far as the pertinence to today, talking about sedentary fish and all. Did you find an awful lot of, if not making up law, of using old precedents and changing them around to make them apply to today?

WILSON: People tried to rectify that in the Law of the Sea Conference and the agreements and so on that came out of that. But this is still somewhat controversial, to say the least, as far as the U.S. government is concerned.

Q: I don't think we've subscribed to it have we, or not?

WILSON: Not entirely, much to the discomfiture of people like Elliot Richardson and others seeking to regulate our oceanic problems.

Q: When you came down to Washington in '48, what do you mean by coming down to Washington?

WILSON: Specifically, an old war time acquaintance of mine and colleague of General Truscott's, General Pierpont Morgan ("Pete") Hamilton (J.P. Morgan's grandson and Medal of Honor recipient) was starting something called the Policy Planning Division in the new Department of the Air Force. This was the Air Force planners' early attempt to establish something like an office of international security affairs [ISA] (which hadn't been heard of in those days.). I joined his outfit.

I started out in disarmament with two UN negotiations: 1) nuclear weapons, where our chief negotiator was a former Army colonel named Dean Rusk, and 2) conventional weapons, where our man was a former Navy captain and law professor named Frank Nash.

We got into a great number of international security problems and were also involved to some extent in the formulation of NSC [National Security Council memo] 68. But I found myself very shortly focused on establishing bases abroad. By this time, of course, the Cold War was well underway and NATO [North Atlantic Trade Organization] was getting started. To make a long story short, I spent about nine years negotiating base agreements around the world, ending up in ISA in the office of the Secretary of Defense, with Frank Nash as boss.

Q: When you were with the Air Force initially, I would have thought that the doctrine for future plans would have heavily rested on using a nuclear bomb or something like that, or did it?

WILSON: Well, there was a split, as I recall, of no mean proportions in the Air Force, with Curtis LeMay on one side and moderates on the other. The old idea was that you were going to "nuke them into submission." Fortunately, that school did not carry the day.

Q: The Air Force had just separated at that point, hadn't it?

WILSON: Yes. It was established by the National Defense Act of 1947, along with the Department of Defense and the National Security Council.

Q: It was trying to establish a role for itself and was very much in competition with the Army and the Navy.

WILSON: Yes. There were all kinds of shenanigans going on between the three services.

Q: You were working for the air force for bases, is that right?

WILSON: That's right.

Q: During that nine years or so, we were putting them all over the place, weren't we?

WILSON: Yes. The disarmament business did not prosper in the Cold War, and I found myself on a task force putting together the first draft of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement. Then I slid into something called the Banana River project. "Banana" was Cape Canaveral. We were trying to establish a long range proving ground running from the Banana River in Florida to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. I was hauled out of these talks, however, when an urgent need developed to negotiate for the establishment of five strategic air bases in Morocco. A group of us, led by Pete Hamilton, went to Paris and then to Morocco. That done, we got into the whole business of bases for U.S. NATO forces in Europe and North Africa.

The whole process went through various organizational gyrations. First of all, representatives from the three military services each had separate headquarters in Paris. Then something called the Military Facilities Negotiating Group with representatives of the three service secretaries was established in Paris to coordinate the services' efforts and move together to establish bases in France, the Low Countries, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. (We didn't get into Britain because bases had already been established there.) All of this coincided with our Marshall Plan efforts and European rearmament. The Office of the Special Representative for Europe, Averill Harriman, was moved to Paris. The whole base negotiating function was taken over by what became "USRO," the Office of the U.S. Special Representative in Europe, who was also our ambassador to NATO. We went through various organizational metamorphoses as a result. I ended up in USRO as director of the base negotiating office. We had lawyers stationed around various spots in NATO territory and in North Africa and were backed up by ISA in Washington.

Q: When you are working on these bases in Morocco, I've heard from people who were involved sort of from the Department of State side and they say that supposedly these negotiations would be between the United States government and Morocco for example, but the real negotiations were with the Pentagon lawyers they would say, which would be you and the Department of State. Did you find that?

WILSON: Well, no, I didn't in those early days. I've forgotten who our consul general was in Casablanca, but our consul in Rabat was Bob McBride. It was the first time I had got to know Bob. He was extremely helpful and became a good personal friend. In Paris,

we worked as part of the embassy. Actually, I had two hats. I was "defense advisor" in the embassy and also had my hat in USRO. We worked very closely throughout Europe with a number of stalwart embassy types. Later, I got a third hat as "defense advisor" in Bonn.

There was a stellar group of FSOs [Foreign Service officers] in Paris. David Bruce was ambassador to start out with, Philip Bonsal as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], then James Dunn and then Douglas Dillon. On the USRO side, we had Harriman and then Bill Draper. Bill Draper's principal deputy was Ambassador Livy Merchant, and the political counselor/minister was Ed Martin. On the embassy side, Ted Achilles took over as DCM, and Chip Bohlen make a couple of cameo appearances. At the working level, Mac Godley, Matt Looram, and Dean Hinton. On the economic side, Harry Labouisse, Bill Timmons. In Rome, there were Ellsworth Bunker, Durbrow, Outer Horsey, and Tony Freeman. The list goes on. That's quite an array.

Q: I was going to say, absolutely. These are sort of the stars of the post-war American diplomacy.

WILSON: Exactly. In addition, of course, we had the SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe] with Doug MacArthur first and then Freddie Reinhardt as political advisor. We had to work with all these people, not to mention the U.S. military forces themselves, our principal clients.

At time there were sharp differences between USRO and the embassies concerned, which had to be brokered, not to mention problems with the growing NATO bureaucracy. I remember my introduction to the word "infrastructure." A word taken from the French, meaning the bed on which railroad tracks rest. What was then a new word is now, of course, in much wider use with a broader definition. About all of our base construction became "infrastructure" and now "infrastructure" seems to include anything underlying something else.

Q: How did you find dealing with the French?

WILSON: The French are never easy, but we had some outstanding French representatives to deal with. The principal one was a gentleman by the name of François Le Duc. He was a career foreign service officer and also an expert in North African affairs. Later, he was an under secretary of foreign affairs and French ambassador to Austria and Canada.

I should back up a bit to your earlier question. There was a difference of opinion on the subject of whether we should be negotiating with Morocco or with France. I guess the chief proponent of "with France only" was Doug MacArthur. Pete Hamilton and I were of the opinion that we should at least consult the Moroccans under the circumstances. But we were overruled. Of course, three years later came full independence for Morocco, and the result was that we had to renegotiate the whole business all over again. There was an interesting cast of characters on the earlier negotiation. One of the guys we were dealing

with on the French Ministry of Defense side was General Maurice Challe, who later on was one of the three general officers, who led the military revolt in Algeria. That was a very interesting series of negotiations... Where were we?

Q: You had gone back but let's talk about Libya and Tunisia. Did we get involved there?

WILSON: Tunisia, no; Libya, yes.

Q: Wheelus Air Force Base?

WILSON: Not during that time. Wheelus had been negotiated earlier. We took over, as I recall, from the Brits who had worked out arrangements with the Libyans after the liberation of Libya. It was not until later on when we had to renegotiate that I personally got involved in it. Morocco remained a problem until the Air Force finally decided that it didn't need the bases anymore.

Q: What was the problem with Morocco?

WILSON: The agreement hadn't been negotiated with the Moroccans.

Q: Morocco was considered a fallback place for what was it, B-47s, I think?

WILSON: B-47s, but it wasn't a fallback. This was a forward deployment. It was before we got into B-52s and before we got into IRBMs (intermediate range ballistic missiles).

Q: When you were working with this was it was very much a cooperative effort with the State Department, the people you were working with and the Pentagon?

WILSON: Oh, yes, most definitely.

Q: I was just wondering whether you were getting anything from the people back at the Pentagon saying these wimps are not...

WILSON: In Paris, we were always fighting with the Pentagon and the State Department. I can remember a number of times when we had a combined assault on Washington from Paris. On one occasion (I don't remember what the issue was.), Larry Norstad, who was the air deputy commander of SHAPE at the time, decided that the issue needed a little personal massage in addition to a cable we had just sent. He called me in and said, "Come, get on my airplane." We took off and flew to Washington. We drafted and cleared the answer to our Paris cable and flew back to Paris, where everything was fine until the next dustup.

Q: Was there a feeling of we've really got to get this done in a hurry because the Soviets are up to something?

WILSON: Oh, yes, a real sense of urgency. We got an agreement with the French to establish seven or eight airbases in France, plus a major Army installation. Then some years later, of course, DeGaulle decided that he didn't want any of them anymore and invited us out along with USRO and SHAPE. By that time, the Cold War was well underway.

Q: Were you in Europe in 1956?

WILSON: No. About the last thing I did from Europe was the West German agreements in late 1954 after the EDF failed (the European Defense Force)...

Q:. This was where it was...

WILSON: The EDF was David Bruce's baby, but the French vetoed it. Specifically, Mendes France came in as the new prime minister, as you may remember, and there had to be a major switch of signals. We ended up with something called the London and Paris Agreements which ended the official state of war with the western powers, which restored West German sovereignty and brought Germany into the Brussels Pact and NATO. I was very much involved in one of these at the working level. Right after that, I came back here, went to ISA, and set up the first worldwide base rights negotiating office there. It is still there [entitled Foreign Military Relations Affairs - FMRA].

Q: At the time that West Germany was being integrated into NATO and you were working on it, what was the attitude of the people who were involved in this? Was there concern about bringing Germany in?

WILSON: The plan had been to bring Germany in as part of the EDF, as you will remember. They came in sort of through the back door this time. Part of it was the framework, which brought Germany into the Brussels Pact and then NATO. I've forgotten the intricacies of the thing, but it was a very high priority operation.

I was introduced to it when suddenly summoned to Dillon's residence near the Trocadero on a Sunday afternoon. A number of people were sitting around the big dining table, with Foster Dulles at one end, Dillon and James Conant at the other, and David Bruce in between. Livy Merchant, who had become Assistant Secretary for Europe by that time, was there along with several other people from Washington, some of whom I recognized and some not.

I was asked what would have to go into a base agreement with Germany. A gray-haired stranger to me, in a gray suit sitting next to Dulles, mentioned several things, some of which I begged to differ with. It turned out the gentleman was Robert Anderson, the new deputy secretary of Defense and my boss' boss. Oh, well!

Notwithstanding this, I found myself assigned to the sovereignty task force covering bases and financial arrangements among other things I knew little about. Fortunately, the

State Department working level representative was Jacques Reinstein, who has probably forgotten more about postwar Germany than most experts will ever know. There began a mad shuttle between Paris, Bonn, London, and Washington, finally ending in Lancaster House in London.

One of the major issues in our group that arose very late was whether or not the U.S. would honor a commitment made by Frank Nash (no longer in office) to assist West Germany financially in rearming its forces. This had been very closely held, and few knew about it on the U.S. side. Jacques did, but Struve Hensel, Nash's successor and my new boss, who had just come aboard, did not, it seemed. When I tried to pin him down, he said he was rushing off to another meeting and couldn't it wait; how much money was involved? I said, "Something more than $900 million," to which he replied "You decide" and hastened off. So, in consultation with Merchant, we decided to reaffirm the commitment, but to use that as a bargaining tool for a couple of other things.

The only problem was that the West German Finance Minister decided the commitment had to be made at the highest level and we could not get to Dulles before the opening of the final session. Came the opening gavel from Anthony Eden with Merchant sitting behind Dulles and Reinstein and I behind Merchant. Eden observed it was grand that everyone had come to an agreement. Mendez-France said much the same thing. But Adenauer said yes, but something still had to be done, looking across the hall at Dulles. Silence followed while Dulles turned around to ask Merchant what was going on. Merchant whispered for about 30 seconds. Then Dulles gave a most gracious five minute talk recommitting the U.S. to Nash's offer.

Q: Had we a pretty good group of military bases in Germany early on?

WILSON: We were occupying forces of course. One of the things which we had to do in returning sovereignty, however, was to work out arrangements on such things as status of forces and what happens to various bits of real estate, etc., not the least of which was our agreement to the establishment of Germany military forces and to supply military aid.

Q: Were there any particular problems during this period? You left when, about '55?

WILSON: I left at the very end of '54.

Q: Was there the feeling that you had a pretty good complex set up of military bases by that time?

WILSON: Yes. We were mostly buttoned up at that point in Western Europe. When I got back, I took up a host of other chores including places like the Philippines. Japan had been done earlier, of course. That's also when I got involved with places like Libya. There were a few problems at the air base at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. We also took on some other things such as agreements for cooperation and exchange of military information on nuclear weapons. I was also very much involved in a 1957 worldwide

review of U.S. bases abroad commissioned by President Eisenhower and headed by Frank Nash. He died before it was fully finished, and Barney Koren and I had the job of completing it.
Q: What about during this time was the renegotiation of the Azores agreement always a...

WILSON: That was a perennial. It was never a great problem. We renegotiated the Lend-Lease Agreement, destroyers for bases, you'll remember that one.

Q: That was back in 1940, wasn't it?

WILSON: We renegotiated the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line Agreement with the Canadians.

Q: An early warning or something like that up in Canada.

WILSON: That's right. There were several others. We got involved in the question of stationing, of establishing intermediate range ballistic missiles in Turkey which came to play a specific role later on in the Cuban crisis.

Q: Yes. Well you gave them a bargaining chip. Did you see a change in how we were negotiating? I would have though early on everybody understood the Cold War and we've got to do something about it and get ready, and then later on everything is sort of in place and everybody starts doing the nit-picking on both sides.

WILSON: Oh, yes. We had a lot of that, not so much in NATO, but we certainly had difficulties along the way in places like the Philippines.

Q: How about Greece? Was Greece a problem?

WILSON: We were sort of in and out of Greece with the bases. We had earlier done Italy. I think Aviano was one of them, as a matter of fact, which has a certain prominence these days. We had Leghorn and Aviano and a couple of other places that escape me.

Q: How about Turkey? Was Turkey a problem?

WILSON: Yes. We spent a good deal of time on Turkey.

Q: What were the difficulties?

WILSON: I think we had the usual problems of jurisdiction and what to do with various pieces of real estate, customs and taxes and all that stuff.

Q: You mentioned the Philippines. When you came back you were back in Washington doing this work at the Pentagon from when to when?

WILSON: From the beginning of ‘55 until early ‘58.

Q: Why would the Philippines be a problem?

WILSON: Because the Filipinos wanted to renegotiate the old base agreement.

Q: This was a matter of money or were there other principles involved?

WILSON: There were all kinds of things involved, not the least of which was money. There had been a series of incidents of one sort or another that got people very much upset over there. At least the politicians were upset, and they wanted some changes made.

Q: In the Philippines what were we looking at then? What did the Philippines represent from our military?
WILSON: The bases then were a keystone in the so-called forward strategy in that area. SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] had just been put together by John Foster Dulles. We had Japan and Korea on the north and the Philippines in the south.

Q: We were going through a change in status in Japan too. Did that cause any problems?

WILSON: Not in my time. There were very few problems. We had a couple of nasty jurisdiction incidents, as I recall, but I can’t really remember the details at this point. They blur because we’ve had so many of them.

Q: Reversion of Okinawa, was that an issue?

WILSON: That was later.

Q: Korea, any problems there?

WILSON: None. That was semi-occupation in those days. It was just a few years off the Korean War.

Q: At that time looking at Vietnam was there a possibility of getting involved?

WILSON: Not really.

Q: When did you leave this job? Did you move over to State or did you change your job at the Pentagon?

WILSON: I moved over to State early in 1957, leaving the base business in the capable hands of my deputy, Bill Lang. Douglas Dillon had been given a new hat in addition of being Under Secretary. Congress named the Secretary of State coordinator for all the foreign assistance programs: military, economic, technical, international agencies, all of

it; an he in turn delegated it to Dillon. Dillon set up a small staff that became known as UMSC to back him up.

Q: It being the under secretary office.

WILSON: That's right, "U" for "under secretary;" and mutual security coordination is what MSC stood for. The idea was to make sure that all parts of the foreign assistance program worked together.

Q: What were we talking about?

WILSON: You're talking economic aid programs, MAP (military assistance) in Defense, technical assistance, World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, etc.

Q: That covers the waterfront.

WILSON: That covers the waterfront, exactly. Congress was unhappy that the left hand didn't necessarily seem to know what the right hand was doing. So, they set all this thing up under Dillon.

Since I had some background in uses of military assistance and economic assistance, Dillon asked me to come over and help staff that office, which I did.

Q: How long were you there?

WILSON: Until 1961. Earlier, special assistants to the Secretary (Merchant and Fritz Nolting) had tried to handle a small part of this. Under the new system, a "deputy coordinator" headed up a small office. Bob Barnes, later our ambassador to Jordan, was the first; John O. Bell, later our ambassador to Guatemala, was the second. I was their deputy. Our job was to see that the various parts of the foreign aid program, hopefully, meshed together, with Dillon having the final word on assistance levels in all categories of aid.

Q: I would have thought this would have been, if not difficult, impossible, or if not impossible, difficult, particularly in those days you had AID who was riding high and handsome and pretty much an independent agency often far more powerful than the embassy overseas.

WILSON: In my day, we had, let's see, Riddleburger, Harry Labouisse, and Jimmy Smith (who, incidentally, was the Navy representative on our early base negotiating group in Paris a few years before) as economic aid administrators - ECA, MSA, AID, or whatever.

Q: Even if the AID administrator might have been on board in Washington, so often the AID administrator in places like Greece and all that get as little pro-consuls and...

WILSON: This was when the idea of a country team came to the fore, you may recall, and the insistence that the U.S. ambassador didn't represent just the State Department; he represented the U.S. president. All of this was part and parcel of the old coordinating business. We had quite a time with this one. But then the Kennedy administration took over and George Ball succeeded Dillon and decided he didn't want to do it this way anymore.

Q: He wanted to concentrate on Europe, I guess. Tell me, during this '57 to '61 period, can you tell me some of the issues or battles that you had to fight?

WILSON: We had so many of them it is hard to say. Offhand, no, I can't really give you anything that stands out as unique. It was a roaring battle from start to finish.

Q: Was the military assistance program and the MAG [Military Advisory Group] program part of it?

WILSON: That was part of it - administered by ISA, of course.

Q: I would have thought that in a way there would be battles about what were we doing down in Latin America, particularly.

WILSON: That was part of it as well.

Q: Did Israel come in under that?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: How did that play out or was that just something that you learned to leave to Congress?

WILSON: Part of it was left to Congress. This was something which was pretty well dictated by political circumstances, as you're well aware of. We didn't have too much to do with Israel except in so far as their numbers affected the total that we were asking Congress for. For other countries, there were all sorts of questions about how a particular program being proposed was supposed to fit in with country objectives, etc. We went through a whole series of reviews of country programs each year and held regular hearings where people had to come in and defend their budgetary requests.

Q: Did you get into the balance that we've had to maintain between Turkey and Greece?
WILSON: We probably did, though I don't recall anything specifically.

Q: I think it was 40-60 or something like that. This was early on in the aid program down in Africa, I would have thought that we really didn't have much in the way of strategic interest down there at that time.

WILSON: Very little.

Q: It was hoping we can help these emerging countries. We're getting towards the end of Eisenhower's administration, did he or any of his policies at this time make any noises as far as his interests in this particular field?

WILSON: I don't recall anything particularly. I remember going to the White House several times, though what the issues were I don't recollect now. We dealt a great deal of the time with Andy Goodpastor, whom we had known at SHAPE and who was a special assistant to the President.

Q: Dulles was there and then Herter, did they play much of a role or was this pretty much left to Dillon?

WILSON: It was pretty much left to Dillon, though both were fully supportive.

Q: How did Dillon deal with this?

WILSON: He took it in stride. He was a remarkable fellow. I think he relished it.

Q: It would seem to put him right in the middle of the great battles between departments. You had Treasury, Defense, probably Culture, and State, all of whom are pretty good infighters.
WILSON: It was a bureaucratic nightmare in many respects, but Dillon I think handled it remarkably well.

Q: What was your particular role in this?

WILSON: I was the deputy's deputy. The official title I had I guess was "assistant coordinator for mutual security assistance."

Q: In '61 not only Ball came in but was there a different thrust to the Kennedy administration did you feel in your particular area?

WILSON: Well, yes, we had two major developments that I recall in this area. One was the emphasis on counterinsurgency on the military side and on the political front as well. Then there was the whole push toward development assistance. This was of course George Ball's forte, pushing money into various institutions and developing basic infrastructure in various parts of the world. A lot of feeling at that time as I remember was that if we could only take care of developmental needs, politics would follow. You may remember this one.

Q: Yes, this was from particularly Walt Rostow's takeoff theory. You left early on in the Kennedy administration didn't you from this particular job?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: Where did you go?

WILSON: Spain. I had joined the career Foreign Service laterally by that time.

Q: What were you doing in Spain?
WILSON: I was supposed to head up the combined economic section and aid mission, but unbeknownst to me, my predecessor was asked to stay on a while. He left in due course. In those days, Congress in its wisdom saw fit to give Spain 20 million dollars annually in economic assistance, plus a large chunk of military assistance.

Q: This was quite big money in those days.

WILSON: It was quite a lot of money in those days. In 1964, we finally persuaded Congress not to give the Spanish any more economic aid at least (Military aid continued.). At that point, I started to look around for something else to do.

Q: You were in Spain from '61 to when?

WILSON: From '61 to '64.

Q: What was Spain like in those days?

WILSON: Franco was still very much around. He was in his mellow period, and our relationships with the government were very good. In terms of living arrangements, also very good. It was a time when there was a significant relaxation in some of the domestic political restrictions, and Spain was beginning to open up economically. So, it was a good time to be there.

Q: What type of work were you doing and what was in the aid program?

WILSON: We had a whole basket full of things. There were excellent relations with the Spanish Foreign Office and Ministry of Finance. The Spanish side was headed by a guy who later was ambassador here, Juan José Rovira. His deputy, who was later deputy foreign minister, was Gabriel Valderrama. They were both young career diplomats, very bright, aggressive, able, and a pleasure to work with. On the Foreign Office side was Angel Sagaz, also later Spanish ambassador in Washington.

What we tried to do was to work out a series of basic infrastructure projects and a number of technical assistance arrangements. There had been some major developments in hydroelectric dam building in Western Spain. There were major irrigation projects of one type or another and a host of agricultural projects. I'll give you an example. Part of the technical assistance money was used to establish a ladies' shoe industry in an area north of Valencia, honchoed by a former vice president of I. Magnin. It turned out only too well

and sales soared. We had some protests from American manufacturers and had to persuade the Valencianos not to expand into the mens' shoe business as well.

Q: Were there any problems with the local chief or something, trying to get you to pass contracts to the local flange, or relatives, or anything like that?

WILSON: No, no, nothing like that.

Q: It was a pretty straight forward business type atmosphere at that point.

WILSON: Thanks in large part to the people we were dealing with in the Spanish government.

Q: How did you find the Spanish bureaucracy?

WILSON: Our dealings were primarily with the Spaniards in our own coordinating group who handled most of the dealings with Spanish bureaucracy. This made it relatively easy for us.

Q: Had we put in our bases there yet?
WILSON: Oh, indeed, yes. They were established way back in 1951-1953.

Q: Did these have any influence on what we were doing at that time?

WILSON: They had a great deal. The military assistance program in particular was geared to what we were doing with the bases. But there were arguments as to whose bases they were, whether they were under Spanish or American flag, this sort of thing.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

WILSON: The ambassador when I first got there was Tony Biddle. But he got sick almost immediately, had to be hospitalized back here and died. Bob McBride was for a long time chargé. Then Bob Woodward took over. He was absolutely wonderful.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed him. As this was moving did you see both society and maybe the political side beginning to change in Spain?

WILSON: Oh, yes. You could see a slow development along the way. Franco by that time had committed himself to restoration of the monarchy. There was considerable liberalization on the political side.

Q: Were there times that you asked the ambassador to go to Franco because of problems?

WILSON: No, there were no problems at all along those lines. We would go and see the foreign minister every now and then but not any major issues that I can recall specifically. We used to go see the foreign minister primarily on the economic side of the house. I had two hats; one on the aid mission and one on the embassy economic side, including American commercial interests, where we worked very closely with the American Chamber of Commerce. We also got in the business of establishing the first nuclear power plant in Spain.

Q: What about commercial interests? So much of our effort for really quite a bit of time after World War II was aimed at building up countries; we were in a way building up commercial rivals. Were you able to sort of introduce American goods and that sort of thing?

WILSON: I don't recall any particular arguments that we had. Primarily we were concerned with sales of major items of equipment, this sort of thing.

Q: I thought this probably is a pretty good time to stop. We'll pick it up the next time in '64. Where did you go then?

WILSON: Bangkok.

Q: You were in Bangkok from when to when?

WILSON: From '64 to '66 as DCM and deputy representative to SEATO.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

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Today is the 13th of April, 1999. You are off to Bangkok. Who was your ambassador then?

WILSON: Graham Martin.

Q: Why don't we start off by asking about Graham Martin. I've had quite a number of people talk about him either in Rome or Saigon but not anybody in Bangkok.

WILSON: Graham was there for I guess four plus years.

Q: How did he operate? Did he choose you?

WILSON: Yes. I had known him for quite some time dating back to our Paris days. He was administrative counselor in the embassy in the early '50s and I got to know him at that time. He then came back as special assistant to Douglas Dillon when Dillon came in as under secretary first for Economic Affairs.

Q: How did he use you at the embassy?

WILSON: I'm not sure I know how to answer that one. A week after I arrived in Bangkok, we had the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and things became very, very busy. This continued during my two years in Thailand. Graham was there for most of my stay until taking extended leave at the end. We got along quite well. I was chargé for about six months out of my total of two years.

Q: I've heard Martin was renowned for playing his cards close to his chest.

WILSON: Very much so.

Q: As the DCM normally you are supposed to be the alter ego and all of that. Did you find that he kept you informed of what was going on with the Thai government?

WILSON: Oh, yes, completely.

Q: What were the issues during this '64 to '66 period?

WILSON: The main issue was the war in Indochina. When I first started out, the primary objective, I would say, was to keep Thailand in our camp and get bases established in Thailand which would support the operations in Vietnam. Gradually, of course, we had Thai involvement, not only with some token forces that were sent to Vietnam but also with the so-called undeclared war in Laos; and later on to a certain extent in Cambodia, though Cambodia did not really enter the picture, as you know, until later.

Q: Were you there during the sort of negotiations or continuing negotiations or agreements to get the bases in?

WILSON: Yes, very much so.

Q: What was the Thai attitude? How did this work out?

WILSON: The Thai were in general quite cooperative on this. The prime minister at that time was a fellow by the name of Thanom who had a military background. His defense deputy was an air force marshall by the name of Dawee. The foreign minister was Thanat Khoman, a veteran in the diplomatic business, very much up to date, very much interested in what the Thai government might get out of the situation and, I would say, entirely protective of Thai interests in the whole thing. I wouldn't say there were no disagreements at all. There were quite a few, but all very friendly.

Q: What about the Thais on this war in Indochina, where did they see... (end tape)

This is tape two, side one with James Wilson. What was in it for the Thais as far as for them letting us use their air bases? They weren't in Indochina. How did they see their interests?

WILSON: They were into Indochina in the sense that they were very much exercised by what was happening on their borders. The proximity to Vietnam, of course, was really enhanced by the North Vietnamese incursions in both Laos and Cambodia, which the Thai were well aware of and very much concerned about. They did not want to be the next domino, to coin the old phrase; and as it turned out, they weren't. They were also worried about the infiltration that was going on across their borders. There was an insurgent movement in the south of Thailand tied in with the remnants of the Malaysian problem. There was another one on the border with Laos, and they were very much concerned about what might happen in terms of the infiltration of ideas and irregular armed forces.

Q: Was there the feeling in Thailand at that time that there was very definitely a communist threat to Thailand itself if they didn't do something?

WILSON: Very much so. Their northern border is not too far from China.

Q: What were the indications of that?

WILSON: A good deal of guerrilla-type activity within the borders of Thailand itself. You may remember that in the southern provinces down by Songkhla, there was considerable movement of insurgents back and forth across the border with Malaysia. This was the internal communist led fracas between...

Q: It was called the emergency or whatever in Malaysia.

WILSON: And there were a number of irregular forces, the insurgents there, who would go back and forth across the Malaysian-Thai border joined by a number of Thais. The same thing became so in the Laos situation, where there were a number of insurgent bands, irregulars, in the mountains south of Udorn particularly and others over on the other side on the border with Burma. Of course, you are also not too far from the Chinese border in that area.

Q: When you are working on these base agreements one of the stickiest things is always the element of status of forces agreements as far as American troops not ending up in Thai jails and all of that.

WILSON: Exactly.

Q: How did this work out?

WILSON: It worked out without too much difficulty, happily, I think, for all hands. There were no major incidents; not of the same variety that we had in Japan for example or in the Philippines. There wasn't too much that was written down a lot of times. The Thai were very much concerned about their image. They did not want to create the impression that they were in any sense being pushed around by big Uncle Sam. They were very sensitive about that. We talked, for example, not of U.S. bases but Thai bases being used by U.S. forces. Nevertheless, there were practical arrangements which had to be made in terms of status of forces and such, which we did obtain.

Q: I take it then there were a certain number of arrangements that were arranged just by understanding rather than getting everything pinned down?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: Usually the Pentagon players like to have reams of paper...

WILSON: That's right.

Q: ...which really makes it very difficult to negotiate.

WILSON: The circumstances at that time in Vietnam were such that I don't think the Pentagon was in any position to insist on a lot stuff. The main thing they wanted was the use of those bases as fast as possible.

Q: I would have thought that there would have been difficulty because Bangkok was I suppose then and certainly it became later sort of the sex capital of the world, and not just for the military. You had hordes of foreigners from Europe and Japan and moderately the United States coming in for a dirty week in Bangkok or something of that nature.

WILSON: That happened a little bit later, and I don't think that the presence of the U.S. forces contributed a great deal to that situation. There were, as I recall, five bases. Whether or not that included the navy at Sattahip I can't remember at this point. Everybody on the base side was busy fighting a war. It is not like the situation in other places where you are simply on stand-by duty. There was not much opportunity for people to get into trouble.

Q: What about communications with the port? I know later it became quite difficult where goods would disappear between the port in Bangkok or elsewhere. Was this a problem for you all?

WILSON: Sure it was a problem, but most of that was handled by JUSMAAG [Joint U.S. Military Army Advisory Group], military-to-military. Not that we were not concerned or involved. We were, but the nitty-gritty of this stuff was handled generally at the military level.

Q: How did Graham Martin deal with JUSMAAG and with the military component of our embassy?

WILSON: Graham was very much a stickler about who was in charge. Washington came out with a new presidential decree at that time emphasizing that the ambassador was not just the representative of the Department of State, he was the representative of the President. Graham was very particular about seeing that all members of the country team knew that and toed the line. The same thing was true of course with AID and the other U.S. agencies involved.

Q: Here you have an ambassador who from what I gather was a rather solitary person who played his cards close to his chest and you have a huge embassy there at that time, or a large embassy.

WILSON: It was growing all the time.

Q: Did you find yourself as the DCM sort of having to act as the intermediary and having to sort of run the basic elements of the embassy while Martin tended to higher policy?

WILSON: No, I don't think that was necessarily the case. Graham was very much interested in what was going on throughout the embassy and he was not one to sit in the ivory tower and let somebody come to him. He was very much involved and intervened whenever he felt like it.

Q: I understand now that somebody was saying that Graham Martin was a great one for dropping by and looking at what was in you in-box.

WILSON: He did that, oh, yes, but only now and then.
Q: So he went back to his old administrative habits. What about reporting on the Thai political situation because this is not a stable situation. There is a lot of movement in Thai politics even though it often ends up with military, civilian, military, civilian type rule alternating depending on who is a little more powerful than the other.

WILSON: In those days, we did not have that alternating arrangement; it was almost all military on the political side, except for the Foreign Office. As you may recall right after World War II the prime minister of Thailand was a fellow by the name of Sarit who had been a field marshal and became something of a benevolent dictator, if you want to put it that way. Sarit died about a year (I've forgotten exactly how long it was.) before I arrived on the scene and Thanom was his successor but by no means the strong man that Sarit had been. There was a leveling out at that point and the backing and filling which you are referring to, I think, really occurred considerably later.

Q: It was a solid government that you weren't sort of having to...

WILSON: The chief worry in our day was the possibility of some sort of revolt or coup attempt, within the prevailing military cast. That was always a problem.

Q: I recall, I'm not sure what it was, but there was the coup that happened when they were having a dredger come in or something like this.

WILSON: I don't recall that one at all.

Q: I had somebody talking about this and my Thai details are very vague. They had brought a brand new dredger in from America and everybody was lined up at the diplomatic reception and all of a sudden there was a coup right in front of everybody.

WILSON: I don't remember that one. Must have been later.
Q: What about with Laos, what was our involvement with what was happening in Laos at that time?

WILSON: It was a growing involvement. The ambassador when I first arrived on the scene was Len Unger. Len was there not very long before he was succeeded by Bill Sullivan. Sullivan held forth for most of the time when I was on duty. It was during that time of course that we had the terrific buildup of North Vietnamese forces in Laos. The Ho Chi Minh trail was big news, and border incursions were the name of the game. We had problems too internally I remember with the Pathet Lao as they were called then. There were problems with the Hmong, the internal disturbances that led to the Plain of Jars. All of these were very disturbing developments and everybody was much concerned with what was going on in Laos.

Q: Were we encouraging the Thai to put troops into Laos?

WILSON: We weren't entirely against it, I would say, and they were not against it either. I remember Thanat Khoman at one point saying, "Well, we don't have much difficulty justifying this or defending it because the North Vietnamese say they are not in Laos and therefore any people that we might have there can't be fighting them." It was played like a chess game by the Thai.

Q: At some posts the CIA develops almost an independent status. Did you feel that the CIA and Graham Martin were working together well?

WILSON: I have no doubt whatsoever about that. Graham was very meticulous about keeping the CIA onboard as part of the country team, and there was no doubt as to who was calling the shots. The same thing with Sullivan in Vientiane.

Q: Did the ruling family play much of a role or were they off to one side during this time?

WILSON: Oh, yes, they were and are very prominent in just about everything going on. The Thai monarchy, of course, is a very benevolent one. The king is very much loved,

and still is from what I can gather; but he wields no power except the power of persuasion, and he is very much revered. He usually stands in the background, but when something gets really out of line, the king is generally there to express his views very quietly, which usually prevail.

Q: How about dealing with the royal family, we went to the prime minister basically?

WILSON: Yes. Dealings with the king were usually ceremonial. There was an awful lot of pomp and ceremony in Thailand in those days and I guess there still is. You can take it from the palace on down to the royal barge processions, to summer sessions at Hua Hin and up in Chiang Mai.

Q: What about the problem in our various dealings with aid, military and all, with corruption, was this a problem?

WILSON: It was always something of a prickly point. I remember in particular one occasion when I was chargé with Graham away someplace. I received a peremptory order to report to the foreign minister, who was usually the soul of politeness, suavity, etc. When I arrived on the scene, he practically grabbed me by the lapels and pushed me into a chair, waving in front of my nose a copy of *Time Magazine* which had in it an article on corruption in the Far East with particular emphasis on Thailand. Thanat launched into a tirade on the subject and said that we Westerners would never really understand what morality was. He said we set up a series of puritanical standards which we hold up for everybody else to see but don't pay much attention to ourselves. He went on to say that, whether we knew it or not, the Thai in particular and the orientals in general had moral precepts of their own which were relative and hard to understand. But they understood them. One could go so far along that way and it is accepted. But if he goes beyond that point, and everybody knows when you go beyond that point, then you are corrupt, and it is dealt with, said he. And he added, "I don't know what you Americans want us to do, give honorary citizenship to Bobby Baker?"

Q: Bobby Baker being...

WILSON: LBJ's cohort who was under indictment in Washington for corruption at the time.

Q: It had something to do with some kind of chemical supplies. I can't remember but we all knew it at one time. What do you do when you get something like that, just sort of look grave?

WILSON: You look grave.

Q: How did you find the officers? Was it easy to do political reporting, economic reporting from there?

WILSON: Yes. We had I guess three counselors at that point, not counting administration and USIA. We had a political counselor, economic counselor and a political-military counselor. The political-military counselor was seized with problems of the bases and with the problems of insurgency and counter-insurgency, and worked very closely with JUSMAAG. The economic counselor was involved also with the AID mission.

Q: What were we doing with the aid? What was our main thrust?

WILSON: We had a big agricultural program and quite a big technical assistance program. We had some infrastructure programs not the least of which was the road which received a certain degree of notoriety I guess later on, up in the northeast area. It became known as the "freedom road," which was supposed to be joint military-civic action and economic.

Q: What was your impression of how AID operated in those days? Were we able to sort of fine tune it or was it pretty much going into a lot of projects?

WILSON: The Thai had, and still have quite a number of very competent technocrats in the economic and finance ministries. They had three or four really outstanding young fellows, mostly all Western educated, and they were very cooperative at that point. I can't speak for what has happened since, particularly in light of the current economic situation in Thailand. In those days, it was, I would say, a very profitable relationship.

Q: What about the Thai brigade in Vietnam, how did we view that?

WILSON: About the same way we viewed the Philippine contingent, I think. They didn't engage in any active fighting; they were not foot soldiers in that sense. They were military but they were more civic action than anything else.

Q: Did you get any high level visits from Washington?

WILSON: Absolutely, we had them all over the place. Vice President Humphrey was there and Nixon (then out of office). There were several visits from the Secretary, Dean Rusk. A considerable amount of military brass came through and all sorts of congressmen, all interested in what was going on.

Q: This was a period where some of the hostility in the United States in certain aspects of the public had not yet manifested itself.

WILSON: That's absolutely right. This was when we were gung ho and thought we could clear everything up and go home. It didn't exactly work out that way.

Q: Did you find back with the Far East Bureau and the desk and all, was there any problem with them or was there a pretty good relationship?

WILSON: I think we did very well indeed. This was in the days of Bill Bundy as assistant secretary. I think we saw very much eye-to-eye with Bill on most matters. Graham had some difficulty with some of the things that were going on in Vietnam even then and had no hesitancy about expressing his views, some of which did not go down too well.

Q: This would be Lodge maybe?

WILSON: Maxwell Taylor and later Lodge, I guess, were the two ambassadors at that point. Alex Johnson was deputy ambassador, succeeded by Sam Berger, former ambassador in Seoul.

Q: Sam Berger.

WILSON: Sam Berger, yes. I guess Westmoreland was there the entire time that I was in Thailand.

Q: Did Martin go down to Saigon from time to time?

WILSON: Oh, yes, he got down there quite frequently or the Saigon folks came to Bangkok (Many of their families were in Bangkok.). We also set up an informal arrangement which was called SEACORD, Southeast Asia Coordinating Group, which consisted of the U.S. ambassadors from all of the Indochinese countries and Thailand, Westmoreland, and CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific], who was, I guess, Administrator Oley Sharp to begin with and then Administrator Jack McCain. That group met almost monthly to coordinate what was going on in several operations that were being conducted simultaneously in Southeast Asia. We alternated between Saigon and Bangkok and reported the meetings to Washington.

Q: During this particular period, this was when the great buildup started in South Vietnam. How was this looked at, a good thing or a bad thing? What was your impression that you had from the vantage of Bangkok?

WILSON: I can't put any particular dates on this but I think our feeling was that we needed to go very, very slowly with the American presence. We weren't being asked for our opinion on a lot of this, however. The Gulf of Tonkin incident kicked off the base establishment. One of the conditions of our being there laid down by the Thai government was that the bases could not be used for combat operations without the permission of the Thai government. I remember vividly being waked up at two o'clock in the morning and summoned down to the embassy (Graham was away at something.) to get on the secure telephone. It was Saigon saying that there had just been a large attack on our Marines at a place called Khe Sanh and they wanted permission to fly some missions from the Thai bases to help relieve the pressure on the Marines. Westmoreland himself got on the phone and said it was very important and wanted me to see what could be done, as it had to be done as soon as possible. I got Air Marshall Dawee on the telephone at that hour in the morning and told him what the problem was (I had never heard of Khe San, by the way. I

had to look it up on the map.). He evidently consulted with the prime minister and got back very shortly and said, "Okay." All this was done orally.

Q: Later Sullivan in Laos became renowned as being the bombing commander with targets and all of this, the targeter. Did Graham Martin get into it that way in Thailand or did he leave the military sort of alone?

WILSON: No, he didn't get into that part of it. This was Sullivan's baby. This was stuff that was going on in his country, and he worked it out with the military. We tried to help

Q: Is there anything else? Are there any other major developments that we should talk about do you think in Bangkok?

WILSON: SEATO was quite active in those days.

Q: I wanted to ask about SEATO. You had a SEATO hat?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: SEATO sort of seemed to almost fall off the radar. How was SEATO involved in this?

WILSON: Well SEATO was not involved. You'll remember that Dean Rusk used to be very emphatic in saying that Vietnam was not a SEATO operation. SEATO was very much interested, however, and SEATO wanted to be very much kept informed of what was going on. That is what we did primarily. It was an interesting time in many ways.

Q: Did Pakistan get involved? Pakistan was in SEATO wasn't it?

WILSON: Yes indeed.

Q: That was sort of the contact with the old CENTO [Central Treaty Organization]. Did they do more than sort of keep a watching brief?
WILSON: That's all they did.

Q: How about the Indians? The Indians played a rather interesting role in that period.

WILSON: They were not involved. The Indian ambassador was very affable and we used to talk to him quite frequently; but nothing on a confidential basis at all.

Q: The Indians wanted to keep out of everything I guess.

WILSON: That's right.

Q: What was the feeling about the Chinese at this point?

WILSON: We didn't have a Chinese ambassador to Thailand; only the government in Taiwan. There was a Russian ambassador, and he was very affable. We used to have lots of fun fencing with him.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Chinese were behind...

WILSON: Of course there wasn't. There was no Chinese communist ambassador. The ambassador from Taiwan was a great fellow. The Thai, along with the Filipinos, were probably one of the few who continued to recognize Taipei.

Q: Was there sort of the underlying feeling that there was a Chinese menace in Thailand at that point?

WILSON: Thanat Khoman himself was of Chinese ancestry. A large part of the population, particularly in Bangkok, was Chinese. There was never any difficulty on that score during the time I was there, but there was always that basic unease with the situation, given the proximity of Singapore and Malaysia.

Q: What about China itself - not local ethnic differences? Was there the feeling that China was behind what was going on in this as part of Chinese expansion?

WILSON: Yes, very much so. We were very suspicious of what was going on in China proper.

Q: Were there China watchers in your embassy?

WILSON: No, not anyone particular that I can recall. Hong Kong of course kept everybody informed.

Q: You left there in 1966, where to?

WILSON: Manila.

Q: You went to Manila as what?

WILSON: DCM.

Q: And you were there from '66 to when?

WILSON: To 1970.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you went there?

WILSON: When I first went there it was Bill Blair. Later on, there were "Soapy" Williams and "Hank" Byroade.

Q: What was the situation in the Philippines when you arrived in 1966?

WILSON: In what sense?

Q: Sort of the political situation.

WILSON: Marcos had just come in, and he was considered in those days as something of a white hope for the country. Macapagal had preceded him. Relationships with Macapagal were very good in many ways, but the hopes for Marcos were greater. When I arrived on the scene, Marcos was in Washington on his first state visit. Bill Blair was with him, so when I arrived I became chargé immediately.

I should tell you that I arrived under something of a cloud in that the day after I got there, I went down to the embassy (It was a Sunday morning, I remember.) just to take a look at what was going on. I had come in by boat and I was out of touch with things. I walked in the front door and was smartly saluted by the Marine on duty; and he said, "Sir, you should know that Seafront is on fire." Seafront is the logistics, administrative section of the embassy compound up Roxas Boulevard from where we were. Sure enough, the commissary building had caught fire. So I had that for openers.

Then, two days later, I was awakened, this time about four o'clock in the morning, and told that there was an urgent message in the code room, eyes only for me from President Johnson. I hopped in the car and drove myself down to the embassy, and here was a long cable saying that after discussions with President Marcos, he and LBJ had decided to hold a summit meeting for the leaders of all the countries who had troops in Vietnam. They were going to hold the conference in two weeks and they wanted it to be in the Philippines. They wanted my recommendation by return wire as to whether it should be held in Manila or in Baguio.

Q: Baguio being in the hills.

WILSON: Yes, the summer capital. At that time, I had never even been to Baguio. I got on the telephone called up the air attaché and said, "Crank up your airplane. We're going to Baguio," which we did. I came back and recommended strongly that the conference be in Manila because of the lack of communication facilities for the media. This was the origin of the Manila Conference.

Q: When you got there did you find a unified embassy? Each embassy has its own almost personality and it changes and it depends on leadership, the situation and all of that. How did you find the embassy?

WILSON: It was a huge embassy, of course, and it still is. But it was even bigger in those days because it was supporting what was going on in Indochina. We had something like 1,200 people in the embassy proper, not counting the thousands of military dependents. The Peace Corps had 900 volunteers, the biggest in the world. There was a very active

country team organization. Blair was very much on top of what was going on. We had a whole variety of military types there. We had 13th Air Force headquarters, JUSMAAG, and CINCPAC representatives, Philippines, representing all of the diverse U.S. military elements and we had the bases. The two principal ones were Subic and Clark. In those days, we still had the one at Cavite and another one down at Mactan on Cebu. We had several communication stations in various places and we had a major rest and recreation center at Camp John Hay in Baguio.

Q: Was there any question about any of the officers at the time about the bases or was this just a given; we had them, we needed them, and...

WILSON: There was an almost perennial base negotiation going on with the Philippine government. You took that for granted. You would button up one thing and another would start. There was also a continual drumbeat from certain of the politicians in the Philippine legislature raising one thing or another about the bases at times and there was a loud clamor in certain sections of the Philippine media - anti-U.S., anti-base, and very loud, although this was not reflected to a great extent in the Philippine government itself.

Q: While you were there, four years is a long time, did you have major problems with the American troops in the Philippines?

WILSON: We had a couple of fairly good sized incidents. One of the major bones of contention was, as you indicated, the status of forces arrangements. The original base agreement with the Philippines was quite different from base agreements with other countries, particularly ones in NATO which I had a good deal to do with earlier. In the Philippines, the major criterion for determining who got jurisdiction was whether the incident, whatever it was, occurred on or off base, whereas under the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, this was determined by whether the offense happened on or off duty. That is a gross oversimplification though.

The Filipinos were very unhappy about the on and off base business and they didn't like the idea of the bases being under a foreign flag. This became a very sensitive issue politically. They also were concerned that some of the bases took up an awful lot of territory, particularly Clark and to a certain extent Subic Bay. This was, as I say, a running bone of contention during the entire time that I was there. We sort of agreed to disagree on some things, but on others there were active negotiations that were going on almost all the time.

There were also questions of whether or not rent should be paid for the bases and we insisted that this not be the case. The whole defense arrangement was based in the first place not on the war in Vietnam but on the basic defense treaty, which went back to immediate post-war times. Under those circumstances we felt that the bases were an integral part of that defense arrangement and should not have any rent connected with them. Besides which, the Philippine people were getting a awful lot in the way of revenue out of the bases themselves, not to mention employment.

Q: Was there a problems with our involvement in Vietnam at that point because this is when the anti-Vietnam business had cranked up both in the United States and in Europe. We were picking up an awful lot of heat during this period.

WILSON: That's right. But there were never any direct air operations conducted in Vietnam from bases in the Philippines. Ours was entirely a support operation.

Q: Was this on purpose?

WILSON: It was an agreed arrangement with the Philippine government, which had taken place before I got on the scene. Clark was a major supply point anyway and Subic, of course, was a major haven for all naval vessels in that part of the world: Cubi Point for the naval air and Subic shipyards for main ships of the line. We were very careful to observe the restrictions that applied on that. B-52 operations over Vietnam were conducted either out of bases in Thailand or Anderson Field on Guam. None of our missions originated out of Clark.

Q: Was there an indigenous Philippine movement against the war?

WILSON: Not much of one. There were some loud critics, yes. But the Philippines had PHILCAG [Philippine Civilian Advisory Group], the commander of which achieved a certain prominence later on as president of the Republic, namely Fidel Ramos. He was then a lieutenant colonel and also the son of the then foreign secretary, Narciso Ramos.

Q: How about sort of the social activities of the embassy? I'm saying social but I mean business activities. One has heard reports particularly later on but I was wondering at the time that there were a lot of people with money and they could almost embrace the embassy staff. One had to be sort of careful of not getting too chummy. There was just too much money and these are sometimes the wrong people to be involved with.

WILSON: Yes, we did have that problem though not as much I think in my time as you had later on. But as you probably know one of the Philippines major problems is what to do about the oligarchs who control the society as a whole. It was basic in a whole host of ways to the question of who controls much of the agriculture and a lot of the industry. You've got the 400 family syndrome going back to Spanish times. They still control an awful lot of the money and wealth. Yes, you had to be careful not to get too personally involved.

Q: I would imagine that one of the perennial headaches there which most DCMs and ambassadors want to avoid like the plague is visas.

WILSON: Oh, that is a perennial problem, a terrible problem. We issued more visas there than any other post in the world.

Q: I know, and there are all sorts of problems about visas because a lot of Filipinos get visitor visas and then don't return. They have fake credentials, the whole gamut. Did you get involved in that sort of thing?

WILSON: You are always involved. Fortunately, we had a couple of very good consuls.

Q: Lori Lawrence was one, wasn't he?

WILSON: Not in my time. Lou Gleek was the first one there, and Will Chase was the second. It was an impossible job. We had people crowding around the gates at five o'clock in the morning to get in and get their visas. The place was a madhouse. We had a huge section and everybody was overworked. We also had 24,000 private American citizens to look after.

Q: Was there concern about corruption moving into the consular work at all?

WILSON: No. There were a few incidents where corruption was alleged as I remember, but we looked into it very carefully and there was nothing. I think later we did have trouble with one local who had done something but the circumstances escape me completely.

Q: What about dealing with Marcos? Can you talk about during this time dealing with him, how he operated and how we saw him?

WILSON: As I said earlier, he was the white hope in those days. It wasn't until after I left in 1970 that he really kicked things over and declared martial law. Getting along with Marcos was really very pleasant in my time. He was doing all the right things, making all the right noises, from our point of view. He was by no means an American stooge, quite the contrary, he knew exactly what was going on. He was very smart, very quick, very responsive.

Q: The old Philippine hands were always comparing everybody to Magsaysay, was this still sort of the...

WILSON: Magsaysay's image was still very much around. Magsaysay was a very charismatic fellow in many ways but I don't know how effective he really was as president. His son was a congressman and then a senator, a very pleasant guy but he never achieved the prominence of his father by any matter or means.

Q: How about Imelda Marcos, was she a power at that time?

WILSON: Oh, yes. Imelda was a major force in the whole operation. She and the Romualdez family were quite influential in many ways. Imelda was very active on the social front and took on such things as building a cultural center in Manila. She was also Mayor of Manila and had all kinds of projects of one sort or another. I think a lot of that

maybe stemmed from her experiences as hostess at the Manila Summit. She managed to take care of all the wives of the heads of government and did a magnificent job of hosting in the social sense.

Q: Can you talk about what you observed at the Manila Summit?

WILSON: It was really more of a public relations operation in the last analysis than it was of great political significance. It was designed to show the solidarity of the cooperating powers, and in that I think it succeeded. What the practical consequences of it were, though, is something else again. Both Thieu and Ky were there from South Vietnam. I can't say that it had any material effect in getting them any closer together.

Q: How about the care and feeding of Lyndon Baines Johnson? That is usually equivalent to a major war or an earthquake.

WILSON: I am sure you have millions of stories about what happens when any president travels. LBJ was somewhat unique, though, even in that regard. We had a whole series of logistics problems as I remember, not the least of which was the insistence on the part of the Philippine government that all heads of state stay in the old Manila Hotel. I remember a whole series of demands from Washington, including remaking the bathrooms in LBJ's suite and getting a super king size bed, all of this to be done in a very short period of time.

The worst came when I got a call about midnight the night before LBJ was due to arrive. It was Bill Blair, and he said, "You've got to come over here right away." I went over to the residence and he said, "The Secret Service was just here and they said that they had looked over the Manila Hotel and they don't think that the cables on the elevators are up to snuff. They are going to insist that LBJ not stay there." I said, "What are we going to do with him?" Bill said, "They want this embassy residence immediately - to take over the whole thing."

We scratched our heads, and finally Bill came up with a bright idea. He called up the admiral at Subic and said, "Would you be good enough to send down by chopper your two best engineers?" (We converted the tennis courts at the embassy, by the way, into a helicopter landing pad by that time.) The Navy engineers arrived and Bill told them to look over the residence and the Manila Hotel and report. They came back and said that the cables seemed to be fair enough, but the embassy residence was a fire trap and shouldn't have the President in it at all. So, the Secret Service backed down, and LBJ arrived and went to his suite. I don't think he knew a thing about it.

Q: Just what they wanted.

WILSON: We had something like 750 take-offs and landings from that temporary helicopter strip during the conference, if you can imagine, and two hotels full of American media people alone.

Q: It is incredible what happens.

WILSON: We also had a lovely one that had to do with the ladies program. You were asking about Imelda. It seems that when Macapagal was president he had gone to Washington and in the name of the Philippine people, had presented LBJ as a present for the American people from the Philippines the hull of what had been the last four-masted ship to do the clipper run on the Pacific. The only difficulty with this was that it had an old steel hull and had been found rotting away in Australia early in World War II when it had been picked up and used as a coal barge, being towed back and forth across the Pacific. Nobody had bothered to put the cabins and masts and that sort of thing on it. They were someplace in a storehouse in Australia. This ship, called the Kaiulani, as I remember, had been floated and brought into Cavite harbor where it was docked.

The people from Washington arranging Lady Bird's program thought it would be a very good idea if Lady Bird went out and saw the Kaiulani. We didn't think it was such a hot idea because the ship wasn't anything to look at. They went out to see the Kaiulani anyway, only to discover that it had filled with water in the last typhoon and had sunk at its dock. Nothing phased the gal who was arranging this on our side came in and said, "Tell our navy to come in and raise it." The Navy took one look at it and said, "We can raise it, but it will cost you $1,500,000 to do it." That stopped the American group for a while.

But then they went to see Imelda, and Imelda said she would see what she could do with the Philippine navy, which she did. She called in the head of the Navy and said the Kaiulani had to be raised. The good admiral got out the swabbies and a bunch of buckets and at low tide they bailed out the Kaiulani, which then rose majestically from its place on the bottom. Overnight, it was painted it a bright blue; and the good ladies all went by chopper the next day and had their pictures taken by the Kaiulani, and all was fine. The next day it rained like hell and the Kaiulani sank again. But nobody cared by then.

Q: The Nixon administration came in in '69, did that make any change from your point of view?

WILSON: Not really. Nixon, if you will remember, stopped in Guam on the way out and took the occasion to enunciate what became known as the Guam Doctrine to the effect that we weren't going to continue to help those who didn't help themselves. I found that very interesting in many ways because Nixon had come out in 1967 before running for President and while I was chargé. We had talked for two or three hours about the overall situation, and when he finally asked for my personal opinion, this is what I had recommended to him among other things. I won't claim authorship of the Guam Doctrine by a long shot, however. Others, including Marshall Green in Jakarta, told him the same thing, I discovered later.

As President after 1968, Nixon got along famously with both the Marcoses, which in some respects I think may have influenced the decision not to step on Marcos's toes when he declared martial law four years later. But that is only speculation on my part.

Q: It became sort of almost standard operating procedure - correct me if I'm wrong in this because I have not served there - but at least later for Marcos and his wife Imelda to sort of absorb visiting delegations, congressmen and what have you, and sort of embrace them so much that this must have been disquieting to the embassy. I would think that people were getting the wrong impression of the problems in the Philippines. Was this happening when you were there?

WILSON: It was beginning when I left but I think it really got out of hand only much later on.

Q: What about insurgency in...

WILSON: The Huks? Well, the Huk insurgency was still dribbling on during the entire four years I was there. We thought it was under control a half a dozen times, but it would flare up again someplace else. We never took it too seriously at that time. That is to say, everybody remained concerned, but nobody could understand why they could not be complete eradicated. I was personally never too impressed when the insurgency was named as one of the principal causes for the imposition of martial law in 1972, but again that is a personal opinion.

Q: How about SEATO, did that play any role or was that just a treaty?

WILSON: Not much as far as we were concerned during the time I was in the Philippines. The secretary general of SEATO was a Filipino, a very affable former general but our principal concentration was more on Vietnam and support for the U.S. efforts. We did not become involved in any discussions in Bangkok on the SEATO business but kept a watching brief on what was going on. ASEAN, however, was beginning to come into prominence.

Q: ASEAN?

WILSON: Yes. The Association of South East Asian Nations.

Q: Who was foreign minister while you were there?

WILSON: I was there for four years, spending a total of 18 months as chargé between ambassadors. The first foreign minister was Narciso Ramos, who was the father of the later president; and the second one was Carlos P. Romulo.

Q: He was sort of the grand old man.

WILSON: The grand old man, that's it.

Q: How did you find dealing with both of those men?

WILSON: Narciso was a dream. He was a wonderful guy personally, a very experienced career diplomat. Romulo was something else again. I liked him very much indeed despite his foibles. He was a tremendous raconteur who had been everywhere, done everything, knew everyone. He didn't suffer from lack of ego, but was very well informed. He was very cooperative and we got along famously.

Q: Were there any major issues during this time other than the on-going base negotiations which seemed to go on until Mount Pinatubo took care of everything? Other than that were there any sort of sticking points, problems?

WILSON: We had a problem with Sabah as I remember. That was when Soapy Williams was our ambassador. The Filipinos claimed sovereignty over Sabah in Sarawak, which is in northern Kalimantan. The Malaysians got all huffy about the whole thing, and then the Filipinos made noises in the press about invoking the terms of the Mutual Defense Treaty with the U.S., which we didn't think much of. Our press spokesman back here was asked a question about what the U.S. was going to do, and he tried to brush the whole thing off in terms that were something less than flattering to the Filipinos, or at least they took it that way. There was a major dust-up on that store before it finally quieted down.

We had a big hoop-de-do just as I was departing the scene, which I was right in the middle of, I am sorry to say. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee back here, most particularly Stuart Symington, decided to look into the extent of U.S. commitment abroad, since the pressure against the war in Vietnam was really building. He sent around a couple of gentlemen by the names of Pincus and Paul to take a look at what was going on. They visited each of the countries in the area where we might have commitments and arrived in due course in Manila where again I was chargé. We received them, briefed them, etc. The net of all this though was that I was summoned back to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S.-Philippine relations just after Hank Byroade arrived as ambassador.
The Symington Committee held extensive hearings for three or four days in executive sessions, having brought back several other members of the country team to testify. Then, having recorded all of this, Symington insisted that he wanted to declassify what we had all said. This caused considerable problems, to say the least, on instructions, since we had been rather frank in our testimony. I finally left after about two weeks of arguing with Symington and Pincus over what could and could not be deleted for reasons of classification. The thing finally came out in somewhat edited form and, as predicted, it created a real stir in Manila. They ran the testimony with deleted sections in just about every newspaper in Manila for a week and I found myself being quoted all over the country. It was a major catastrophe.

Q: Soapy Williams, G. Mennen Williams, was ambassador for part of the time you were there?

WILSON: Yes.

Q: He had been assistant secretary for African Affairs and all and had made quite a name for himself. He was very publicly known on that and having also been governor of Michigan. How did he work as an ambassador?

WILSON: Soapy was splendid, but he was there for only eight months, having been appointed by LBJ. When Humphrey lost, Williams was obviously someone who was going to have to step down for political reasons. He had come out to Manila with the thought that he could follow the example of Frank Murphy, the former governor of Michigan, attorney general, etc., who was also an early, popular U.S. high commissioner to the Philippines.

Q: At the very end of the war.

WILSON: That's right.

Q: He was the last one I think wasn't he or very close to that?

WILSON: I'm not sure. In any event, Williams put very much of his heart and soul into the Philippine assignment and was very much liked - to the extent that some people thought he should run for president of the Philippines.

Q: I thought we might quit at this point anyway. You left in 1970, where did you go?

WILSON: I came back here to the Department.

Q: Where in the Department?

WILSON: EA (East Asian and Pacific Affairs).

Q: All right, why don't we pick it up next time there.

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Today is the 30th of April, 1999. Jim, you are in EA in 1970. You were there from when to when?

WILSON: I was in EA from 1970 to the end of 1972.

Q: What was your job in EA?

WILSON: I was one of Marshall Green's deputies.

Q: Can you talk about your impressions of Marshall Green?

WILSON: Marshall Green was a wonderful person. I'm sure you've gotten the same reaction from most people.

Q: Yes, but I would still like to get any of his style.

WILSON: He was a thorough professional in every sense of the word and in addition had an absolutely delightful sense of humor - by which he was known. I had run into Marshall many, many years back. I think he was stationed in Sweden, but had come down to Paris when I met him for the first time. Later, he was part of the Nash presidential mission on bases in 1957. Marshall came along on the expedition that went out to the Far East as the resident expert on Asia at that time. I've been friends with Marshall ever since. By 1970, he had become assistant secretary for East Asia.

Q: When you arrived, what piece of the EA were you given?

WILSON: I had all of Southeast Asia except for Vietnam and Laos. Bill Sullivan had that.

Q: That must have been a certain blessing in a way.

WILSON: It was, though I did have Cambodia, which I inherited after the invasion had taken place; I was still in the Philippines when that happened.

Q: Why was it divided up that way because Cambodia has always been part of Indochina and it certainly is part of that whole complex that we were dealing with?

WILSON: I think part of it was the matter of how you allocated your manpower. Bill Sullivan was the resident expert on South Vietnam and he was also a former ambassador to Laos. Those two were intimately connected. I succeeded Jonathan Moore who went off to the Pentagon with Elliott Richardson. This was, I think, probably put together (and I'm guessing here) simply to accommodate the skills of Bill Sullivan.

Q: Your area would include then Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

WILSON: It did not include Indonesia except for more or less routine things because Marshall himself had just come back from there and Win Brown who was the senior among the deputies was also an expert on Indonesia. I touched Indonesia only with my left hand. Most of the real stirring was done by Marshall and Win and some very competent officers in the desk, headed by Ed Masters.

Q: Let's take Cambodia first during this '70 to '72 period. The invasion was in the spring of 1970?

WILSON: That's right.

Q: I was in Saigon at the time. In the aftermath of that, what were our interests in Cambodia?

WILSON: Primarily, we were interested in seeing the war completed successfully there. We were not very successful in the long run, but at first we did reasonably well. Beyond that, of course, our long-term objectives applied to Cambodia just as much as it did to other parts of Indochina.

Q: Did the Khmer Rouge seem like a very potent force at that particular time, particularly when you got on, or not?
WILSON: They were certainly a factor to be reckoned with. I remember going out to Phnom Penh just after they had taken a crack at the airport there. You may remember the incident. Tom Enders was chargé at the time; when Coby Swank, the ambassador, was away. It was a very active period for the Khmer Rouge.

Q: How did you find the embassy there?

WILSON: Very much on it's toes. I don't know if there was a great deal against the Khmer Rouge that they could do in those post-Sihanouk days. The name of the game was how to support Lon Nol.

Q: What was our estimate at that point of Lon Nol?

WILSON: It is hard to say. He was about the best we could find, though people had reservations as to his ability. But there wasn't much that anybody could do to find anyone better.

Q: Sort of moving around that area, how did we see Thailand during this '70 to '72 period?

WILSON: They were in very good shape in those days. By that time Graham Martin had departed the scene, and Len Unger was ambassador. Things I think were on a very even keel in many respects except for the always very difficult business in Indochina. The economy was doing well. They were getting along beautifully internally with a few major problems like drugs. The economy was thriving.

Q: Did you see any problem with internal communist movements?

WILSON: I thought it was pretty much under control at that point. There were still outcroppings, particularly up in the area south of Udorn. There were some difficulties

way up above Chiang Mai on the Burmese border but other than that, it was in very good shape.

Q: Did Burma play much of a role?

WILSON: Not a great deal. Our ambassador was Art Hummel, and the main object at that point was to keep the lid on things there, given the nature of the military government. It went downhill afterwards, and it is still not a progression but a retrogression. It did not figure very largely in the political power game in Southeast Asia.

Q: Malaysia?

WILSON: In Malaysia, Jack Lydman was there. It really had not started to feel its way very much. It was before the oil exploitation. They were still picking up after the split with Singapore and were pretty much on an even keel but not moving ahead very rapidly, as they did later on.

Q: Singapore?

WILSON: Singapore was Lee Kuan Yew. I don't really have to add much more.

Q: With this grouping we were going through the draw-down in South Vietnam and turning it more and more over to the South Vietnamese and pulling our troops out. How did you find the support for South Vietnam in these areas?

WILSON: The governments most immediately concerned were Thailand and the Philippines. They had been aboard for quite some time, and I didn't see any signs of their faltering in those days. We had been through a period with the Philippines on PHILCAG, so-called, which was the Philippine contribution to the war in South Vietnam as you will probably recall from your Saigon days.

Q: The protests were building up in the United States and I was just wondering whether sort of the dominos that we were saying might fall if Vietnam went completely communists, if these countries were looking rather skittishly at what was happening in the United States?

WILSON: I think they were nervous about what was happening in the United States feeling that they might be left out on the end of a limb. I don't recall anybody saying so in so many words, but there was an undercurrent of, "Well, are you guys going to stay the course?"

Q: Coming back to the State Department, did you feel divisions, rifts, or whatever you want to call them, within the State Department on Vietnam and on our whole Southeast Asia policy?

WILSON: Not terribly much so. The big splits had occurred before I got there. We had defections on the issue of Cambodia particularly, including people like Tony Lake and Dick Holbrooke. The furor had pretty much quieted down, and it didn't raise its head again to any great extent until we got around to the Pentagon Papers. I, unfortunately, happened to get caught in the Pentagon Papers mess.

Q: How did you get into that?

WILSON: Marshall and Bill Macomber put the finger on me to honcho the Department's task force vetting the papers. That was an experience I don't want to go through again. I had three days of no sleep. We were running a deadline trying to put together a list of examples from the Pentagon Papers of the areas where our national security would be compromised by the Papers' publication. There was one task force at the Pentagon and one task force at the Department, which included the CIA and USIA. We tried to go through all of these thousand pages or so and come up with material which we could give to the solicitor general, Erwin Griswold, in his argument before the Supreme Court. I had the unhappy duty of sitting down with Griswold and trying to find something that would really show that we were going to be hurt in a national security sense by the release of the Pentagon material.

Q: Were you having to stretch, I take it, rather than to... I mean there really wasn't that much that would hurt us?

WILSON: We couldn't find anything.

Q: Not even a footnote or something? In a way it does show how bland these studies can be in some ways.

WILSON: Studies?

Q: I mean the Pentagon Papers themselves were a rather straightforward history weren't they?

WILSON: Well, they included a whole series of internal documents. There was a lot of discussion about executive privilege and that sort of thing, but Griswold wasn't looking for that. He was prepared to make that argument separately. What he wanted from the task force was something he could stick his teeth into, to say that its publication actually would actually be damaging to the security of the United States.

Q: What happened? You sort of drew pretty much something of a blank and then what happened?
WILSON: We lost the case in the Supreme Court.

Q: Were you feeling any pressure from particularly the White House staff?

WILSON: Oh, gosh, yes. We had everybody all over us on that one. That was why we didn't get any sleep for three days. I had a couple of very canny fellows working on the Department side of it. Josiah Bennett was the father of all knowledge on the subject of Vietnam, as you may remember; and there was a bright young lad by the name of Bob Miller from the executive secretariat to keep things in order.

Q: Has he retired?

WILSON: Yes. He retired a while back after his last ambassadorial assignment, but he has been doing the Freedom of Information thing.

Q: I'll have to get his name and just make a quick note. What about on the Philippines, was there sort of the perpetual base negotiation?

WILSON: Oh, yes, that kept on. During my time Marcos was flirting around with martial law but actually had not declared martial law before I departed the scene. I should say that shortly after the Pentagon Papers, I came down with a heart attack and never really came back to full-time work in EA.

Q: Was that Pentagon Papers, do you think?

WILSON: It might have had something to do with it. Anyway, in the spring of 1972, Art Hummel came in and took over the deputy job. While still recovering, I spent a little time as special assistant to Marshall before taking up the next assignment.

Q: Before we leave that time, were we concerned that Marcos might declare martial law?

WILSON: Very much so.

Q: Were we saying, don't do it?

WILSON: As I recall, we had a considerable debate internally on what the line should be and I recommended very strongly that we should lean on Marcos as hard as we could and dissuade him hopefully from doing this. But this went upstairs, and I'm sorry to say that point of view was not supported. We let him go ahead with it with a mild slap on the wrist.

Q: As you were looking at it, what would cause Marcos to declare martial law?

WILSON: It was a means to consolidate his position.

Q: But I mean was there the equivalent of an insurgency or something that was serious enough...

WILSON: So he claimed. He maintained that the Huks and their sympathizers were running amok in Ilocos Norte and that in Mindanao there were subversives throughout the province. That went on, and on - a litany of things that were supposedly the matter. Mostly I think he was just interested in getting rid of a very obstreperous legislature which was blocking various things that he wanted to do. Corruption was also a factor.

Q: You had dealt with the Philippines before, was there the sense that Marcos was turning sour by this point?

WILSON: Sour, I don't know if I would say that. I think he was always looking to us for support. I think he was testing the waters as much as anything as far as his relations with the U.S. were concerned. Unfortunately, there was the feeling in some sections of the White House that he could do no wrong.

Q: This of course was somewhat on the Nixon and Kissinger side of seeing things in kind of black and white terms and not getting overly concerned about...

WILSON: I don't know really what was in the back of their minds. You've got to look at it in the context of what was going on elsewhere. Note the date - 1972 - which was the time of the secret negotiations with Chou En-lai and the eventual opening to China. I suspect, I don't know this for a fact, that the powers that be were not interested in having the boat rocked by the disaffection of an old ally just at that time.

Q: That would make sense. You have one major thing in mind and other things are peripheral.

WILSON: That's right.

Q: What about New Zealand and Australia?

WILSON: Oh, they were lovely. I did not have them as part of my beat; Win Brown had those. On the few occasions that I had to get involved the Australians and New Zealanders were really very supportive in almost all respects. That was pre-anti-nuke, of course.

Q: What about then in '72 you had had a medical problem and all, did this have any effect on your next assignment?

WILSON: Sure. I had been out to the Cleveland Clinic, and they had recommended bypass surgery. Bypass surgery was just in its infancy then, and the medicos here recommended trying medication instead of surgery. That we did, but it involved a period of enforced rest for about six months. So this was why I had to step down as deputy.

Q: Then in '72, what did you do?

WILSON: Hummel and I effectively switched jobs. I went over to the White House and a presidential mission assigned the job of ending the U.S. trusteeship in Micronesia. This had been undertaken for some time by the president of the Asia Foundation, Haydn Williams. Haydn continued as the president of the Asia Foundation during all of this time and came to Washington only when he had to. The rest of the time he was in San Francisco or out on the road for the Asia Foundation. I was deputy U.S. representative and our job 100 percent of the time was keeping in touch with Haydn by phone. I was also chairman of the interagency group that looked after the substance of the negotiations and gave us our instructions in the name of the Under Secretaries Committee, who provided us guidance.

Q: Could you talk about the role of the Department of Interior on this and the navy? Then what did we want to do; what were we looking towards doing?

WILSON: The trusteeship was a so-called "strategic trusteeship" set up under the terms of the UN charter. The Trusteeship Council had the responsibility of looking after all of the trusteeships that were left over after World War II; but ours was the only strategic one, given the location of the islands and the history of the fighting there in World War II. There were a number of competing interests in the whole thing. Number one, we had the obligation of the UN charter to give the people in the Micronesian Islands a major measure of political self determination. Then the question was what would be their strategic position after the ending of the trusteeship and what sort of support economically would be provided to them, given the past history of their getting no support whatsoever from the Japanese. This was a former Japanese mandated area (with the exception of Guam, which we had maintained as a cooling station ever since the days of the Spanish-American War and fortified in violation of the terms of the mandate).

In any event, long before I joined the negotiation, there had been discussions with people in the fledgling Congress of Micronesia primarily to see what it was that the Micronesians themselves wanted. They had wavered on their side between independence, joining politically with the United States in some form of territorial association, or having some sort of a "free association," as it was known. When I hit the scene, the Congress of Micronesia had narrowed this down pretty much to independence or free association with the exception of the Northern Marianas, who really associated with Guam as much as anybody else. They had the same racial background, propinquity, etc. The Marianas had decided that they, like Guam, wanted to be part of the United States territory. There was some considerable controversy about this in the Congress of Micronesia who split on the issue.

So, when I started out, there were two negotiations: one with the people of the Marianas for territorial status with the United States and the other an agreement or free association for the other island groups, ranging all the way from the Marshall Islands to Palau. We had to define it in terms that would be acceptable to the U.S. Congress, the United Nations, and the people of Micronesia. It was not a very easy job.

Q: What about Interior? I understand there was the Interior's committee in Congress, and they frankly liked the idea of having a place to go to, to travel there, and all of this. Did you find this a difficult obstacle or impediment of some sort?

WILSON: The Interior Department was part of our task force. The individual in charge of the territorial office in Interior was in fact a Foreign Service officer on loan to the Interior Department, Stan Carpenter. Interior's interests were very much represented in the whole thing. We actually had our office in the Interior Department building. The Defense Department, the Interior Department, and the NSC staff, in addition to the Department of State, were all part of our working groups and contributed personnel to our negotiating team. Everything that we did was obviously subject to review by the Secretary of the Interior, who at that time was Roger Morton, who followed the negotiations closely.

Q: How about Congress?

WILSON: Congress was very much concerned to approve everything we did. Phil Burton, a congressman from California, was chairman of the House subcommittee in charge and took a very active interest in the negotiations, playing a major role in what was going on. We took it as part of our charter that we had to work very, very closely with Congress and proceeded to do so. We kept them filled in at all times as to what was going on, knowing from the start that what we did was going to have to be submitted to Congress for approval. There were various hearings and continuous contact with people on the congressional staff, letting them know what was happening, etc.

There was a lot of congressional positioning in the whole thing. Burton, for example, insisted that the people of Micronesia have a complete and full say in the entire process. It had to be acceptable to them. By the same token there were quite a number of people in Congress who had the example of Puerto Rico very much in mind and did not want what they considered to be a number of errors in our arrangement with Puerto Rico perpetuated in the Pacific with the Micronesian trusteeship. So we had that hurdle to jump over every time we went up to the Hill.

Q: What were the problems with Puerto Rico?

WILSON: Questions of sovereignty, questions of economic assistance, all kinds of nattering matters like immigration, this sort of thing. We had to be very, very careful. They still of course haven't solved the Puerto Rican problem.

Q: In a way, the negotiations were carried on pretty much with Washington lawyers working for Micronesians.

WILSON: That's right. It was a strange arrangement in many ways. As I said earlier we ended up with two negotiations, one with the Marianas and one with the rest of Micronesia. In both cases the negotiating teams on their side were made up of representatives from their legislatures. Their legal counsels were, as you indicated, hired

here from Washington law firms. The counsel for the Marianas was Wilmer, Cutler, and Pickering, Lloyd Cutler's firm.

Q: High grade lawyers.

WILSON: That's right. The counsel for the Congress of Micronesia was Paul Warnke, Clark Clifford's law partner and former general counsel of the Defense Department and assistant secretary of ISA. So there was some very high priced talent on the side and we spent a great deal of time working out various details with them, though the basic political decisions were made by the Micronesians themselves.

Q: You were doing this from '72 to when?

WILSON: To the end of '74, two years, plus.

Q: Did the White House or the State Department play much of a role?

WILSON: Very definitely. I spent a great deal of time, myself and with Haydn briefing people. Technically, we were assigned to the White House, but I knew perfectly well that what we did was of major interest to the deputy secretary of State (first of all, Jack Irwin and then Bob Ingersoll). We would troop over periodically to brief the secretary of Defense, deputy secretary of Defense, and chairman of the Joint Chiefs about what was going on. Ditto Rogers Morton, the secretary of the Interior. I also spent a considerable amount of time briefing the NSC staff on what was happening. The working representative there was John Holdridge, who was also on our steering group.

Q: I understand that THE major sort of Defense stipulation was to deny the Soviets, or communist Chinese, use of these islands as naval bases.

WILSON: Absolutely. It was not only that, but at one time the Pentagon had a wish list of desired U.S. military facilities of one sort or another. Remember that during this time, we were also using the Pacific islands as long-range proving ground terminating in the Marshalls. There were also vestiges of former navy management of the entire TTPI, as it was known (the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands). At least parts of it had been under Navy administration in the early days following World War II. I understand they also helped out in some of the more clandestine sides of the Vietnam operation.

There was a very high degree of interest in the Pentagon in this whole enterprise. It wasn't just the Navy. The Air Force was interested in having a major installation on the island of Tinian in particular. The Army, I think, was not concerned so much with facilities as it was with the islands' strategic position.

Q: Why did negotiations go on for so long?

WILSON: Because people couldn't make up their minds.

Q: This was basically the Micronesians?
WILSON: With the two different negotiations we were spending almost an equal amount of time with the Marianas group and the Congress of Micronesia group. By the time I left the operation at the end of 1974, and the beginning of 1975, we had two agreements. The first one was negotiated with the Marianas, which had been signed but still had to be approved. The last thing I did was to help deliver a ceremonial copy to President Ford. It is now in effect. The other agreement was initialed by the negotiators on behalf of the Congress of Micronesia. But after I departed, it was submitted to the Congress of Micronesia and rejected, in spite of the fact that it had been approved by the president of the Congress and the rest of their negotiating team. They kept on negotiating that one for years, and finally ended up breaking up the whole thing, as you know, in a series of separate agreements, all providing for some form of independence.

Q: Were you there at the time when the scandal broke out about bugging the Micronesian negotiators or did that come later on?

WILSON: It must have been later on because I don't know anything about it.

Q: In '74 you did what?

WILSON: In '74 (I guess it was in late December), we were in Saipan putting the final touches on the Marianas agreement and I was called by Nat Davis, who wanted to know if I was interested in setting up a new office in the Department which would combine refugees, MIAs [Missing in Action] and human rights. That's what I did.

Q: You did that from when to when?

WILSON: From early '75 to early '77.

Q: What was the inspiration for all of a sudden setting up this office?
WILSON: It wasn't an inspiration at all. The refugee office had been there for some time, as had the MIAs - each under special assistants to the secretary. The human rights business was started at the insistence of our Congress. The popular impression these days is that human rights got started in the Department by Jimmy Carter in 1977. That wasn't the case at all. It got started as the result of an initiative on the Hill, which was pushed by a congressman from Minnesota named Donald Fraser and on the Senate side by a number of individuals from both parties, including Hubert Humphrey, Jacob Javits, Scoop Jackson, and Alan Cranston. Quite a collection and all with different motivations.

This culminated in a piece of legislation which was added to the foreign assistance legislation in 1974, Section 502-B; I remember it well. The legislation declared it the sense of Congress that U.S. military security assistance should be denied or cut back in the case of any country who engaged in a consist pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights. The Executive was required to indicate to

Congress when we submitted our requests for military and security assistance why we wanted to make exceptions in the case of any such violators. This was pretty narrowly defined at first. That is to say, it was related only to the military security assistance program. But then it grew from there.

Q: Were the human rights reports part of the package when you took over or did that come later?

WILSON: There wasn't any such thing as human rights reports. We had to put together the such reports.

Q: In the first place you were handed a dead cat. This was not going to be a very popular thing...

WILSON: Absolutely not.
Q: ...in the Foreign Service because it's quite obvious that here would be an office that would point out the fact that Mr. Marcos was doing this, or Commander so-and-so is doing that.

WILSON: Or General Pinochet.

Q: Yes.

WILSON: A real hot potato.

Q: When you were setting this up, how did you go about it?

WILSON: There had been a study done by the policy planners in the Department, which had gone through various options and had come up with the recommendation that the Department combine MIAs, refugees, and human rights into a new Office of Humanitarian Affairs. It was to be a coordinating, not an operating function, except to the extent that the refugee section had to administer refugee funds and negotiate their allocation and use. This was where I came in. They wanted to combine existing offices with the new human rights function. We were asked to put together the usual table of organization, develop a budget, and the rest to set it in motion, working very closely with the bureaus and with Congress. We were to report directly to the deputy secretary.

Q: I would have thought that as you started to do this you find yourself absolutely overwhelmed by the refugees coming from South Vietnam.

WILSON: That's exactly what happened as a matter of fact.

Q: This was the height of the boat people and the whole thing.

WILSON: I wandered back to the State Department just as Vietnam was about to fall, trying to set up this new operation and sign off the old. Bob Ingersoll and Carlyle Maw, who was under secretary for Security Assistance, took me over and introduced me to Fraser as the new coordinator. That was in March. Ingersoll had told me to wind things up with Micronesia and appear in April in the Department to get going on the new assignment. Then I got word from him to hurry up because things were beginning to pop on the refugee side of things.

I arrived at Ingersoll's office and found a working group had just been established under Phil Habib to look after evacuees from Indochina. To make a long story short, in a very few days, this snowballed and the working group became a presidential task force under Dean Brown (called back from retirement). I found myself suddenly named as one of Dean Brown's deputies. That became a high priority, high intensity operation which took all my time and really threw a monkey wrench into human rights, which is what I was primarily presumed to be doing. That suffered, and I didn't get anything done, practically speaking, for a month at least. It finally calmed down sufficiently for Dean Brown to turn in his suit and give the operation over to Health, Education and Welfare (incidentally, to a lovely lady, who is now up to her neck in exactly the same sort of problem: namely, Julia Taft). I stepped out as well when Dean resigned, turning my duties over to Frank Wisner.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed Julia. She's got it from Kosovo in Yugoslavia.

WILSON: Exactly.

Q: How about the missing in action side of things?

WILSON: It wasn't very active then. Fortunately, I inherited Frank Sieverts, who had been special assistant to the secretary for MIAs. He became one of my deputies. He had virtually no staff at all but considerable experience, knowledge, and background in the whole business. After the POWs [Prisoners of War] were released, there were some 2,000 and something MIA names on the list. Nobody could get any cooperation at all, of course, from the Vietnamese, not to mention the problems in Laos and Cambodia, though very few in Cambodia. MIAs were not a very hot issue at that time.

Q: It became later really a political issue from the right and continues to be. I would have thought this would have been essentially a CIA, military...

WILSON: The military, of course, had its own office that did this. The extent to which the CIA may have gotten involved really didn't arise as an issue.

Q: Let's talk about the human rights side, how did you go about it?

WILSON: It was a long, involved and torturous process. When I came aborad, Carl Maw had taken the initiative in sending a circular instruction out to all chiefs of mission with security assistance programs in their country, telling them about new legislation, and

asking them to come back with word on how this would affect them and what the human rights violations might be in their particular countries. Practically all of them came back saying that they thought it would cause major problems. They thought it would mess up considerably many of the programs we were facing in the Cold War.

Q: You were saying that they thought it was a terrible idea.

WILSON: They felt that if the U.S. government had to broadcast publicly what was going on, it would be considered a slap in the face by the government concerned and, in terms of human rights, it would be self defeating. They very much preferred to do things quietly, without the glare of publicity, and said it should certainly not be done with a lot of public flagellation along the way. The first thing that I did, working in odd moments with a smart young fellow in Maw's office (We didn't have any staff at that point.) was to get human rights officers appointed in all the geographic bureaus that did not already have one.

There was a lawyer in L [Bureau of Legal Affairs] assigned to human rights, Charlie Runyon, who was most helpful in all of this and very knowledgeable about the whole subject. By and large, most officers in the bureaus had only the vaguest idea of what was involved in any of this. I was certainly learning myself as rapidly as I could. There were two people in the Department besides Runyon who really had any background in this. One was Warren Hewitt in IO [Bureau of International Affairs], who had been dealing with the Human Rights Commission in the UN. The other was George Lister in ARA [Bureau of American and Regional Affairs]. They and a couple of enthusiastic junior officers formed the backbone of the group that began work on a department-wide basis.

We had quite a time getting together a piece of paper to go forward to the Secretary laying out the problem, summarizing the material which had come in from the field and putting it into a shape, which would indicate in a preliminary fashion what the findings might be in terms of violations of human rights in specific countries. We set up a list of about eight countries which we felt were going to be real problems in the submission of the FY [fiscal year] 1976 security assistance legislation. We asked the Secretary for a decision on what should be done about preparing the country reports, recommending that we produce a series of individual country reports that would be submitted along with the regular security assistance requests. A great silence descended for a while. Finally, Dr. Kissinger came back saying, in effect, "Why do we have to do all of this? Can't we just tell Congress in an executive session what the story is?"

This was the beginning of a long, long, drawn-out hassle with Congress on what was going to be done. We had sessions with Carl Maw, went to see Javits, and Cranston on the Senate side, along with Scoop Jackson's people. On the House side, it was mostly Don Fraser, who had a couple of active staff members keeping tabs on us. Fraser himself was very much interested in our problems. However, it was clear they all expected to have reports of one sort or another made available to the Congress in the very near future.

Q: Public reports?

WILSON: Well, this was an issue which got skirted at first. To make a long story very short, again, we went up and down the bureaucratic scale within the Department, but could not get the Secretary to make a final decision on the subject.

Q: This was Henry Kissinger?

WILSON: This was Henry Kissinger.

In September of '75, I had sent up for approval a recommendation, which had the endorsement of both Ingersoll and Maw, that we send in unclassified reports, or reports that could be declassified in major respects, and then went off to Geneva to chair an international refugee conference. The Secretary turned the recommendation down. Instead, at the Secretary's insistence, my human rights deputy, Ron Palmer, prepared a generalized report which talked about the processes that we had gone through and the difficulties of defining criteria and publicizing what we were doing. It spoke generally about human rights violations but said as far as specifics were concerned that we would come up and talk to them in executive session. This went up to the Hill, and at that point, members of Congress went through the roof. I heard about it when I got home.

There were many recriminations thereafter. Fortunately for us, there had been long delays in the submission of the security assistance program for FY '76 which had nothing to do with human rights; and the assistance programs had been operating under continuing resolution. Then, after the blow-up in Congress, it was decided to combine the FY '76 and FY '77 programs into one bill.
It wasn't really until the spring of '76 that new legislation got passed, and by this time Congress had revised the section on human rights in the legislation. Instead of having "the sense of Congress" that assistance should be denied or reduced in the event of violations, they made denial or reduction of assistance mandatory unless extraordinary circumstances could be shown. Congress also put teeth in it by saying that the reports were to be submitted on a country by country basis and that Congress could ask for a detailed "statement" as to the violations in case they were not satisfied with what had been submitted to them.

As a result of this strange and wonderful arrangement where the two pieces of legislation got combined, we did not have to send in formal reports until the FY '78 program was submitted in the spring of '77. Meanwhile, the Senate said that they would like to have, before that time, some "samples" of what we were doing in the case of 13 specific countries (This was engineered, as I remember it, by Dick Moose, working for Hubert Humphrey in those days in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.). We sent that request to the front office and were turned down. Frazier, on the House side, then invoked the new legislation and asked for a formal "statement" for six countries, and that one we had to do something about. Even then, we sent up our report in classified form. Frazier

came back immediately and said he wanted the report unclassified. We finally sent him unclassified reports. And those, of course, hit the press immediately.

Q: What countries were these, do you remember?

WILSON: I don't remember exactly which the six were. I know they included the Philippines, Indonesia, Chile, South Korea. We got some really rather violent reaction from the countries concerned.

Q: Were we sort of saying to Congress, you better watch out because if we do this we are going to have to be sending reports on Israel and Israel is not that benevolent of a country, or wasn't this an issue at the time?

WILSON: That wasn't much of an issue at the time. I don't think there was much of a problem particularly as far as Israel was concerned.

There was a lot going on elsewhere. We were having trouble with getting any sort of a staff together to meet the new demands. I had started out with the idea that I needed a hotshot deputy for human rights, but he also needed some assistance. I was spending an awful lot of time myself on refugees in the midst of all the boat people of the world. I had difficulty getting any action out of the Department personnel system, and finally we got Ron Palmer in July of '75. Ron came in and took over manfully trying to get the early reports prepared. But it was a long time before I finally got him a couple of assistants. The whole idea at that point was that we were going to lean on the bureaus themselves to do the spade work.

Q: Were you a bureau at this point?

WILSON: No, we were an office.

Q: Under whom?

WILSON: The deputy secretary.

Q: Were you at that point geared up enough so that you were part of the clearance procedure of telegrams and things of this nature?

WILSON: What do you mean by that?

Q: I've interviewed Patt Derian and she said that one of the things that she started doing was saying, "I won't sign off on this telegram," and things of this nature which often gains the attention of the bureaus. You wouldn't have had the power if you weren't a bureau.

WILSON: Sure, but we had all the authority that we needed. If I had any problems, and I had quite a few I couldn't settle myself. I would take them to the deputy secretary, and he had overarching authority. We were at the assistant secretary level administratively, but we were not formally a bureau.

Q: I would have thought that you would have been at war with all the geographic bureaus and the political-military side of it.

WILSON: Not necessarily. We had various tiffs on specific items from time to time but on the whole I think we got along reasonably well during my tenure of office.

Q: What about the officers you got designated as human rights officers in the bureaus, did you find that they were more or less under instructions to write either apologetic or bland human rights reports? In other words to write something that won't cause me to change my ways, I think would have been the normal instruction.

WILSON: No, I don't think so. By and large I think we had very good relations with the human rights officers. We did have some problems getting their full attention, with the exception of George Lister and Warren Hewitt. The other human rights officers, at least when I started out, had other duties in addition to human rights.

The new legislation provided for a "coordinator for human rights and humanitarian affairs" to be appointed by the president subject to approval of the Senate. I had sent up a recommendation (This was in June of '76, I guess, when the new legislation came out.) that the Department get to work and get somebody on the job. I was not enamored with keeping myself on under the circumstances. That went nowhere for a month or so until finally in August Larry Eagleburger, then Under Secretary for Management, sent it up to the Secretary for the second time and recommended without my knowing about it that I be the guy appointed. This the Secretary signed off on. It went to the White House and was approved, but did not get to the Hill until September.

Q: This was an election year, wasn't it?

WILSON: It was an election year, and Congress adjourned without taking action on it, along with several other nominations. It was a rather curious arrangement. I was overseas when final action came making me a recess appointment. When I got back, before I could be sworn in, Eagleburger sent around a notice saying please submit your resignation for a new administration. I submitted my resignation before I got sworn into the office - all of which made me a real lame duck, a double lame duck. It was, however, a statutory appointment. After Derian came in, they, of course, changed the title to assistant secretary, but that was not until after June of '77 when she was finally appointed.

Q: Did you sense that there was going to be a change with the Carter administration?

WILSON: Oh, sure; most definitely. I had sent a series of memoranda up to the deputy secretary (who by that time was Chuck Robinson), recommending a number of things that might be done for the new administration on human rights. One of my recommendations was that the Department get a professional career type in the coordinator job. That idea obviously didn't get off the ground. When Derian came in and took over, what she wanted to do was to have her own human rights officers for each of the bureaus, not individuals located in the bureaus themselves. This was a change of major proportions in administrative terms.

Q: What happened to you?

WILSON: I was picked up as a senior Foreign Service inspector and when I hit the age of retirement at 60.

Q: With Patt Derian, who was sort of a force unto herself, was there much of a hand over with her, consultation, the usual thing?

WILSON: I had a couple of long sessions with Pat; and she then asked to take over completely, and that was that.

Q: Had it become a bureau by that time?

WILSON: No, it only became a bureau later. That took legislation.

Q: Had you thought about the refugee side? The refugee part was still a major, major factor.

WILSON: Absolutely.

Q: I would have thought that this would have again swamped you or could you divide it up fairly well?

WILSON: I had a very good deputy on that, a fellow by the name of Jim Carlin, who was later head of ICEM, if you know about that.

Q: Yes, the International Committee for Migration or something.

WILSON: Yes, European Migration it was and then they changed the E to something else later on. Palmer, my human rights deputy, was very good. The only difficulty was that he had been on board for less than a year when the Department in its wisdom sent him off as ambassador to Togo without consulting me in the slightest. That was a little unsettling, to say the least. We were very shorthanded on human rights to begin with, and to ship him off without any replacement in view, or anything of that sort, was, I thought, unconscionable. I said so at the time. It also took a long time before we finally got Monty Spear as a replacement for Palmer.

Q: What sort of a staff did you have by the time that you left?

WILSON: We had quite a bit of staff on the refugee side, something like 50 people. As I said before we had very few on MIAs and we had a running battle trying to get slots for the human rights business. We had Palmer and then Spear, but we only had two assistants. I'm not talking secretaries and that sort of thing.

Q: What about on the refugee side, was refugees when you were dealing with it all Indochina?

WILSON: No, no, it was worldwide. First of all we had control of the Department's budget for international refugees which in those days was just under 500 million dollars annually, quite a chunk of change then. We were responsible for funding people like the UN High Commission for Refugees, for special refugees in the Middle East, Palestine refugees, and then all the boat people around the globe. The actual handling of the refugee camps for the Indochinese and the boat people in this country fortunately we shoveled over to Julia Taft after the presidential task force was disbanded. We didn't have to do anything on that except get in on some of the funding and that sort of thing. We dealt with ICEM, and the UNHCR [United Nations High Commission for Refugees], the two principal international agencies involved, plus all of the NGOs (non-governmental agencies). That took a lot of time and effort. We also had responsibility for all the asylum cases, people asking for asylum, and that was a continuing responsibility along the way.

Q: Again I've dealt with some of them and that's not easy.

WILSON: No, it isn't.

Q: Very political, too.

WILSON: That's right.

Q: Was there any feeling at some point that you might want to split the two, particularly refugees, off to one place.

WILSON: Well they did of course later. I'm not sure that we shouldn't have been split but this was something that was done before I arrived on the scene and was one of the conditions of employment, so to speak. As it was, within a year of my departure, my old job had been spit three ways: two bureaus and one ambassador-at-large (I only had the personal rank of ambassador.). One bureau was headed by an assistant secretary, as was the second, in the fullness of time.

Q: When you retired at the age of 60, this was in '78?

WILSON: ‘78, yes.

Q: What did you do?

WILSON: I stayed on as a consultant. Indeed, I stayed on in the inspector general’s office doing a couple of inspections in the Department. I did the first inspection (maybe the only one ever) of the legal advisor’s office and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Q: How did you find the legal office? It has always been a very separate place.

WILSON: It is a separate place. I’m told legal advisors successively had (I had nothing to do with this in the first place) strenuously resisted anybody coming in and sticking their nose in it. I got to be the lucky guinea pig.

Q: How did you find the legal advisor’s office?

WILSON: It was in very good shape. I can’t even remember now what my recommendations were. If you want to look up the report you could probably do so, but it’s ancient history and confidential.

Q: Jim, I think we might stop at this point. I want to thank you very much.

WILSON: You’re very welcome. You should know that after leaving office in 1977, I did a longish paper - for the record, not for publication - on the human rights business, entitled “Diplomatic Theology, an Early Chronicle of Human Rights at State.” One copy is in the Department historian’s archives, one at Georgetown’s Institute of Diplomatic Studies, and one in my papers sent, at his request, to President Ford’s Library in Michigan - if anyone is ever interested in details.

End of interview