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

MICHAEL G. WYGANT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: August 14, 1990
Copyright 1998 ADST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background
Dartmouth
U.S. Army
Entered Foreign Service 1959

INR 1959-1962
Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria
France and the FLN

Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia 1962-1964
Ian Smith
Winston Field
Asst. Secy. Williams at independence celebrations
Contacts with black community

African studies, Boston University 1964

Lomé, Togo 1965-1967
German influence vs. French
Peace Corps
U.S. relations

Moscow, USSR 1968-1970
Language training
Soviet specialist
Brezhnev
Ussuri River – China-USSR conflict
Soviet attitude towards Nixon
Ambassador’s access to Soviet leaders
Life in Moscow

Vietnam 1971-1973

CORDS program
Tet of 1972
Military operations
Relations with U.S. military
Dealing with Vietnamese
Montagnards
Relations with U.S. embassy

AF bureau 1973-1975
Sekou Toure
Ambassador Terry Todman
USUN
Kissinger’s attitude towards Africa

Banjul (Bathurst), Gambia 1975-1978
Chargé
Peanuts
U.S. interests and relations

Canberra, Australia 1978-1981
ANZUS alliance
Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and U.S. B-52s
Attitude towards U.S.
Embassy operations

AF Bureau 1981-1983
Public Affairs
Chester Crocker
Southern Africa
Relations with press
Contacts with U.S. black community

Oceans, Environment and Science Bureau 1983-1985
U.S. ASEAN economic dialogue
Pacific islands
Negotiations of Compacts of Free Association
Congressional interest
Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshal Islands and Palau

Federated States of Micronesia 1987-1990

INTERVIEW

Q: I might mention that Mike and I go way back, just about thirty years.

WYGANT: It is thirty years.

Q: We've kept in touch over those years, and Mike has just retired. Mike, I wonder if I could get a little something about your background. How were you educated and where did you come from?

WYGANT: I was born in Newburgh, New York in 1936. I grew up in New Jersey, went to high school in Montclair, New Jersey, then went to Dartmouth College. While I was an undergraduate at Dartmouth, in my junior year, I took the written and oral examinations and was admitted into the Foreign Service, pending graduation from Dartmouth.

Q: As a junior?

WYGANT: I took the written examination in December 1956, and the oral in the spring of my junior year. I had to wait until I could graduate.

Q: And also turn twenty-one.

WYGANT: And also turn twenty-one, yes. I graduated in 1958. I did a brief six months in the Army, because I had an ROTC commission, and entered the Foreign Service in July 1959. I could go through my various assignments if that would be of interest.

Q: Why don't you give us a rundown of your various assignments and then we'll come back and return to them.

WYGANT: Okay. After the A-100 course, I served two years in African Research in INR, dealing with Morocco and Tunisia.

Then I was assigned overseas for the first time, in 1962, to what was then Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia. There I did some economic work for the first few months and then became the consul (actually vice consul). I was the head of the consular section--not having taken the consular course, which made it rather interesting, but I at least got my baptism of fire in consular work in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

We left there in 1964. I came back to the U.S. and had a year of African Studies at Boston University, sponsored by the State Department.

Next, in 1965, we were sent out to Lomé, Togo, where I was second secretary, pol./econ., and occasionally consular officer. It was a small embassy, with just four FSOs on the substantive side and some people in administration. It was a far smaller embassy than it is today, I believe.

In 1967 I came back to Washington to FSI and studied Russian, preparatory to going out to Moscow.

In the summer of 1968, about three weeks before the Soviets marched into Prague, we arrived in Moscow. And there I was the Africa watcher. I also followed events in Latin America, but my primary purpose in the political section was to see what the Soviets were doing in Africa. There were a lot of African embassies that had been established in the Sixties in Moscow, and I was our embassy's liaison with the African embassies. Although it was a difficult time in terms of the Cold War, I did have some limited contact with Soviet academics who were working with African affairs, and some of the Soviet journalists and commentators, as well as Foreign Office officials. I also met a number of African students studying at Soviet universities, including Patrice Lumumba Institute.

In 1970 we returned to Washington briefly and I was in INR dealing with Soviet research for one year.

And then I went off to South Vietnam and was in the CORDS program in Pleiku Province, in the Second Military Region up in the highlands of central Vietnam, for two years.

I returned to Washington in 1973 and was desk officer for Guinea and Benin (then Dahomey), in the Office of West African Affairs, for the next two years.

In 1975 I went to Banjul, The Gambia, where I was chargé d'affaires of the embassy for three years. In those days, the ambassador to the Gambia was also ambassador to Senegal, and he resided in Dakar. So I was in charge of the embassy throughout most of the time, although occasionally the ambassador would come down from Dakar.

In 1978 we were transferred to Canberra, Australia. And there I was in the political section, mainly dealing with political/military matters but also with the party that was in then in opposition, the Australian Labor Party.

In 1981 we returned to Washington. I was the director of Public Affairs in the African Bureau for two years, during the early regime of Chester Crocker.

And then in 1983 I transferred to the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), where I was the deputy director of the Office of Cooperative Science and Technology Programs. There I was dealing mainly with bilateral agreements that we had with East Asian countries and with some countries in South Asia.

In 1985 I was sent out to be the last status liaison officer assigned to the headquarters of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in Saipan. We'd had a long history of negotiation with the Micronesians about new relationships that would follow from the Trust Territory period, and I was there to help with the final negotiations and arrangements.

I came back to Washington briefly in the spring of 1987 and was then appointed by President Reagan to be the first U.S. Representative to the Federated States of Micronesia, the largest of the subdivisions that resulted from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

And I went out to Pohnpei, the island that contains the capital of the Federated States of Micronesia, in the late summer of 1987. We had established an office approximately one year earlier, and we essentially started from scratch to build an embassy, put together a staff, develop a program, and carry out the mission of the U.S. government in that part of the world.

I was in the FSM for three years and returned to Washington several weeks ago to retire from the Foreign Service. A new ambassador has been named. The new person going out will actually have the title of ambassador. My title was U.S. Representative. Now we have in Pohnpei a fully functioning embassy that was basically a hotel room in August 1986.

Q: Now we'll start going back and hit some of the highlights of this. Mike, you're unusual in that you, as a junior in college, followed the Foreign Service. What pushed you towards the Foreign Service?

WYGANT: Actually when I first went to college I had no idea of what the Foreign Service was. There is no particular family background in the Foreign Service; in fact, no family background even in government service.

But a very dynamic and hard-hitting Foreign Service recruiter, a Foreign Service officer, came to Dartmouth, and I had a chance to sit in and listen to what he had to say. It sounded very interesting, so I thought well, I'll take a shot at it. That actually occurred, I guess, in my sophomore year. And the following year, when I was old enough to take the exam, I took it basically because I thought it would be interesting to take and see what happened.

I managed to pass it (not with a very high score, but it was a passing grade). I wrote to the Board of Examiners and said, "I'm only twenty years old and I think maybe I should wait at least a year or two before I take the oral examination."

Their answer was, "No, you'll take the oral examination now, because otherwise you'll have to start the whole process from the beginning."

So I agreed to sign up and take the oral examination, and I managed to pass that too.

Q: Just to give a little flavor, what sort of a class was it when you came in? We call it the A-100 course.

WYGANT: Well, we were an interesting group. There were about thirty of us, as I recall. I was one of the youngest, as you might imagine, but not the youngest. I think the youngest member of the class was twenty-two; the oldest was in his early thirties. So we had about a ten-year age range. We did have one woman in the class. We had a varied background in

terms of education. There were perhaps six or eight Ivy Leaguers, but the rest were from all over the country. Most of us in the class had had prior experience in the military with a couple of years perhaps in the Army or the Navy. Several had had prior experience in business, teaching, or in a profession, at least for a few years. I guess the average age was probably around twenty-five or twenty-six, so most of the class had had some prior experience other than university.

Q: You were in INR for two years, working on the Maghreb area.

WYGANT: I was in INR's African office, dealing specifically with Morocco and Tunisia. In those days Algeria was still considered to be part of Europe. So, although the Algerian war was raging and it was key to what was going on in the area, Algeria was the official responsibility of the French Desk in the European office of INR.

Q: Could you give me a little feel for the atmosphere of this, because there was what was known as the Battle of Algiers within the Department of State. The people, particularly those concentrating on Africa, were saying, hell, Algeria really is not part of France, and never will be part of France, and should not be treated as part of it. Looking at it, because you were somewhat involved, how did you find the relations within the department on this?

WYGANT: The influence of the European Bureau was very, very strong. They insisted, based on the fact that as far as the French were concerned the northern five or six departments of Algeria were departments of metropolitan France, that basically it was the European Bureau that would call the shots in Algeria.

It was also very much a part of our policy to support General de Gaulle, who we thought was the best and probably the only person who would be able to make an honorable ending to the French involvement in Algeria, and therefore we wanted to do nothing that would annoy the General.

We were cautious in our approach. In fact we virtually had no approach to the Algerian resistance, the National Liberation Front (FLN). And we were trying to restrain, to the extent that we could, the Moroccans and the Tunisians from providing as much support as they did to the Algerians.

I remember at one point during the time that I was in INR, the French re-invaded Bizerte, the big Navy base in Tunisia, in order to stop some threat that they felt was going on involving Tunisian support for the Algerian rebels.

It was a difficult time for the Africanists, because we could see that the FLN was clearly going to prevail in Algeria, and that the United States should be thinking in terms at least of opening some dialogue with the FLN.

John F. Kennedy, when he was senator from Massachusetts, had actually made a speech in the Senate, I think around 1958 or 1959, along these lines. But when he became president,

he, I guess, had another look at the situation. And there really wasn't much change in policy in terms of letting the European Bureau representing our support for France, call the shots.

I think it's ironic that one of the main arguments used was that we had to work with de Gaulle, and that he was the best one to bring about a peaceful solution, or at least a reasonable solution, to the Algerian crisis. We figured that if we made life difficult for him, then he might pull out of NATO or do something drastic with NATO. Well, he waited a couple of years until the Algerian business was over, but that's of course precisely what he did.

Q: Did you feel any constraints on you from within INR or within the department, as, obviously, a very junior officer, but dealing with states that we were considerably involved in?

WYGANT: I didn't feel that there was any particular substantive restraint. The whole experience of dealing with INR and the rather complex system that they had of writing analyses and then having them edited and reviewed and reviewed and edited in a number of layers was a whole new experience for me. I did feel that what I might be able to do as a first draft bore no relationship to the final product.

But I don't recall any real substantive problems other than the fact that the position, I'm sure, of the African Bureau, certainly of the African research wing, was that Algeria was really part of our bag, and that we should have had a greater input into the intelligence analysis for that area, which would in turn support policy recommendations. That was a bigger battle than INR could fight, and quite clearly the State Department had decided that responsibility for Algeria would remain in the European Bureau.

Q: You were assigned to Salisbury and you were there from '62 to '64. This was an interesting period. The countries around it were all going independent and Salisbury obviously digging in the heels. What were your impressions before you went out there, and then how did you find the situation?

WYGANT: It was a fascinating experience from many angles. First of all, I had never been overseas, so just the fact that we were finally going overseas and being real Foreign Service officers in a foreign area...

Q: You say "we." This is you and your wife Lee.

WYGANT: My wife and I, yes. Lee and I have been together throughout this entire experience, and we have three children who were with us during most of the experience, so I use "we" a lot.

About ten days after we arrived in December, 1962 the party of which Ian Smith was a member won an election over the long-established "liberal" party. This of course was an election only within the white community. The white establishment party was overturned,

and a rather conservative farmer by the name of Winston Field led the conservative movement to an electoral victory. He became the prime minister; Ian Smith became his treasurer. And that was a sharp break with the past as far as the white hierarchy in Southern Rhodesia was concerned.

Southern Rhodesia was then part of the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, so that there was a federal aspect of the election, although the federation was basically coming apart by that time. It was clear that Northern Rhodesia was going to become Zambia shortly, and that Nyasaland was about to become Malawi. They would go their separate ways under black leadership. But the arrival on the scene of this conservative government, I think, accelerated the fracturing of the federation.

It was also clear from the time we arrived that the white establishment was not going to concede anything to the overwhelming majority black population. While Zambia and Malawi were headed in the direction of majority rule, it was quite clear that the white minority in Southern Rhodesia was not going to share power in any meaningful sort of way with the country's blacks.

This was also, as you may recall, a very turbulent time in the United States in terms of race relations. The civil rights movement was going very strongly in the United States. We left a few years before the landmark civil rights legislation was passed, but American popular opinion was becoming much aroused over racial issues. We were headed in one direction, whereas Rhodesia's whites were moving the exact opposite.

The white Rhodesians were terribly concerned that the United States was pushing them too hard to make accommodation with Rhodesian blacks, and therefore in our relations with the whites we found ourselves constantly trying to explain American policy and explain what was happening in the U.S. civil rights movement, and being told that whatever was happening back in the States really had no relevance to their part of the world.

By the time we left, which was in the summer of 1964, Ian Smith had overthrown Winston Field in a palace coup within the ruling party, and it was quite clear that Smith and his followers were headed toward their unilateral declaration of independence. That actually happened about a year after we left, but we did have an opportunity to see a part of the last of white-ruled Africa. The British were still nominally in charge in Southern Rhodesia; very much in charge in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Q: When you say "the British," you're talking about the British government, as opposed to just the white settlers.

WYGANT: Yes, the British government. There was still a governor-general of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. I guess that position finally faded into history in 1963. But there were also British governors in all three colonies: Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland.

I was able to go up to Malawi for independence in 1964, which, as I recall, was around July 5th or 6th, it was close to the U.S. independence day in any event. This was the only independence celebration that I actually attended in Africa, and it was a colorful and moving experience lasting several days.

I recall one anecdote that might be of some interest. I had gone from Salisbury up to Blantyre because there were just two other American diplomats in Malawi at the time and they needed some extra help, so the Salisbury consulate general was willing to let me go there for about a week or ten days. We had our Fourth of July reception at the mission in Blantyre and we were attending the various ceremonies related to Malawi's independence. The British certainly did it up very well, as they always do for these ceremonies.

And then quite unexpectedly, almost at the last moment, G. Mennen (Soapy) Williams, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs at the time, decided that he was going to come to the celebration. The official head of the delegation was our newly appointed ambassador to Malawi, but Williams was coming along to lend an extra hand at the independence celebration, as he was visiting a number of African countries at the time.

So he arrived, I believe, on the 5th, and it was either the 6th or the 7th that they had the final ceremony, which was the opening of the parliament in Zomba. Zomba is about 40 miles north of Blantyre, on what was then the only paved road in Malawi. The leader of the official British delegation was Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. We had all gone up to Zomba for the opening of the parliament. Williams' schedule was such that he had to leave immediately after this ceremony and head off to the next African country on his visiting itinerary.

Well, this created a bit of a protocol problem for the British. They said that the first cavalcade to go down the road from Zomba to Blantyre would be the prince's entourage, and that anybody else would have to follow afterwards. We had some discussions with the British officials, and eventually they conceded that, since the American assistant secretary of state was in such a hurry to get on with his schedule, he could go down the road first. (I was still up in Zomba, but I heard about this afterwards.)

The towns between Zomba and Blantyre are very densely populated. In fact at that time Nyasaland had a higher population than either Southern or Northern Rhodesia, with about a tenth of the land area. So there was this extremely dense crowd of people dancing, children singing and so forth in each little town along the road.

Williams got into his official Cadillac and took off with flags flying in a caravan of two or three cars. Along the way, the children and the dancers and the various merrymakers assumed this was Prince Philip coming by, so they were dancing and singing and the bands were playing. Soapy Williams, former governor of Michigan, of course loved a good campaign crowd, and he was waving and smiling, and he had a wonderful, triumphant progress from Zomba to Blantyre. T

he prince came along several hours later, and I don't know whether the prince got quite the same reception.

Q: Were you under any sort of restraints of not rocking the boat as far as dealing with the blacks?

WYGANT: No. Not at all. We were highly encouraged by our then-consul general (unfortunately he was killed in a road accident quite a few years ago). Paul Geren, who was then consul general was a very strong-minded Southern Baptist of missionary background. He had notably strong feelings about the equality of blacks and whites, and was very outspoken in the way he dealt with the white establishment in Rhodesia. He encouraged his staff to have as broad contacts as possible with the black community, so we fortunately did.

About the time that I was leaving, Ian Smith was beginning to put some of these people into various kinds of detention and even into prison. But up until just before we left, it was possible to go into the townships, which were black, and see some of the leaders and talk to them. And so I never felt that I had any restraint at all in terms of developing contacts with the politically active black community.

Q: What was your impression of the Ian Smith people and how they were handling this?

WYGANT: I think my overall impression was that they were extremely shortsighted: people who were looking to the past and had no vision for the future, at least in terms of the realities of what was taking place in the rest of Africa. I guess it was around 1960 or 1961 that Harold MacMillan, then British prime minister, Macmillan, went to Cape Town and gave his famous speech about the winds of change blowing through Africa. I don't think Ian Smith ever understood the winds of change--certainly not at that point.

Q: It must have been rather difficult to have relations with them.

WYGANT: Yes, it was. The government was quite hard-line toward Americans and felt that we were trying to pressure them and interfering in ways that we shouldn't have. At my level as vice consul I wasn't dealing with the likes of prime ministers and government ministers, but I believe that the consul general and the deputy consul general did have a lot of difficulty in dealing with this government.

Q: You came back to Boston University for a year of African Studies. I wonder if you could just give a little feel for it. Looking back on it, how good was a course like that? Was it a child of its time, or was it up in the air?

WYGANT: BU had a very interesting program in African Studies. The first African Studies Center in the United States was developed at Northwestern University I believe in 1948. In the early to mid-Fifties, I've forgotten now whether it was the Ford or the Rockefeller Foundation gave some money to Boston University to establish what was to

become the second African Studies Center at an American university, because they felt it was important to diversify area studies outside of just a few of the prestigious universities.

William O. Brown, who was one of the early American scholars dealing with Africa, had done his work in South Africa in the 1920s on race relations in that country. ("Race relations" being the relationship between the Afrikaners and the British.) But he had a very broad view. He'd been in OSS during the Second World War. He had also been in INR--in fact was the founder of the INR African research office in the late Forties. But he went up to Boston around 1954 or 1955 and established this center, and I was fortunate enough to be studying under him in his last year before retirement from that position at Boston University.

I thought they had a very good program. They had a center where the professors were physically located, and at which a number of the classes were given, although some were also given in the regular classrooms of the university. The program offered a mixture of economics, history, geography, anthropology, and political science courses. Those who wanted to pursue a degree program took a degree in one of those disciplines, but if you were interested in African affairs, you could give it a very strong African slant.

We had, I would guess, maybe thirty to forty graduate students who were involved in the African Studies Program at the time. I was the only Foreign Service officer at BU that year. Basically it was a good opportunity for me to learn a lot about the history and political development of Africa as well as the economics of developing areas, and the experience provided a good basis for further assignments in Africa. I thought it was very worthwhile.

Q: Your next assignment was to Lomé, Togo. You were there from '65 to '67.

WYGANT: That's right. I arrived out there about five years after Togo had gotten its independence. There, we had an opportunity to be in a French-speaking country for the first time. I had studied French a lot in school and found it, obviously, of immense use when we arrived in Lome.

Togo had not really changed all that much, I don't think, from the colonial period. Lomé was a very small, sort of sleepy town. There was a civilian government, headed by Nicolas Grunitzky, that had been installed some years before by mutineers who had actually murdered the first president of Togo. The government was rather benign. There wasn't a great deal going on, but some economic development programs were underway.

Interestingly, the West Germans were providing a great deal of economic assistance, to some extent as rivals of the French.

Q: This goes back to their pre-World War I experience there.

WYGANT: Sure, sure. The African coast along Dahomey (or Benin as it is now) and Togo is very straight. There are no natural ports, and it was difficult to arrange for proper docking

and port facilities unless a completely artificial complex was constructed. So the French put in a large berm to enclose a man-made port in Cotonou. And they had more or less told the Togolese that they could bring their products in through Cotonou, that they were not going to build two ports--one for Benin and one for Togo.

So the Togolese went and talked to the Germans, and the Germans agreed to build Togo its own port. They were working on it when we were there, and in fact it opened just about the time we left in 1967. The new port was at least as good as the one in Cotonou and the Togolese were very proud of it: they were able to export and import products through their own port without going through the neighbor next door.

This was the kind of rivalry that often developed between the French and the Germans at that time.

Q: Did we have an embassy? Who was the ambassador?

WYGANT: We had established an embassy in 1960. William Witman was the ambassador during our time. Bill Witman was a distinguished senior Foreign Service officer who had quite a background in African affairs. He had been at one time director of the Office of North African Affairs when that office was in the African Bureau. He was ambassador for the full two years I was there. Also, Terry Todman was the DCM, he of course has gone on to real glory in the Foreign Service, now working, I believe, on his sixth ambassadorship, this one in Buenos Aires.

Q: What were you doing?

WYGANT: We had an administrative section, which was a joint administrative operation that handled AID, USIA, and the Peace Corps. But for the substantive work, we had Ambassador Witman, Terry Todman, myself, and a junior officer. The junior officer did some of the consular work and was commercial attaché. I was political officer, economic officer, sometimes commercial attaché, and sometimes consul. So I did a little bit of everything.

Q: What were American interests in Togo?

WYGANT: Rather modest. We did have an AID program, and we had over a hundred Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: That's a big Peace Corps.

WYGANT: Well, we had a smaller Peace Corps, and then Sékou Touré threw the Peace Corps out of Guinea, so we picked up about fifty or sixty volunteers who had been working in Guinea and came down to Togo. We had three or four major programs that the Peace Corps was working in and several smaller ones.

With AID, as I recall, they were mostly working on agricultural assistance. And I think there might have been one infrastructure project, a bridge project.

There was no significant American private investment in Togo. Occasionally, businessmen would come through to see what the possibilities might be for import-export. The Germans made a major investment in a brewery at the time that I was there. It became a very good moneymaking proposition, I guess for the Germans, but also for the Togolese. The beer was good, and they doubled the capacity of this brewery in the first year of operation because it had been such a success.

Subsequently, of course, Lomé has taken off and become much more a center for joint ventures and economic development, but this was only just beginning to happen when we were there.

Q: Is there something about the Togolese that make them particularly adept? It's a small country.

WYGANT: It is a very small country. Sometimes the older Togolese will tell you that the reason they're more disciplined and organized is because they were a German colony for awhile. The Germans taught them organization before the French took over at the time of the First World War. I don't know if that's valid or not.
But the Togolese, or at least the coastal Togolese, are a very industrious hard-working and efficient people who were able to get Western education at an early stage and did very well by it. I understand that during colonial days when there were numerous French colonies all over Africa a number of Togolese were in the French colonial administration. Also, they provided a lot of cadre for the big French trading companies in other parts of West Africa--not so much Togo, but in the Ivory Coast and even as far north as Senegal.

While we were in Togo a number of other Francophone African countries were resentful of these outside Africans within their borders. These countries were forcing Togolese and some Dahomians to return home to their countries to seek work. And of course those two countries being so small and impoverished, there wasn't much in the way of work for any of them, which was a hardship.

Togo has been a very stable country. In early 1967 the present president of Togo, Etienne Eyadema, came into the presidential palace and asked Grunitzky to get on the plane and leave. Eyadema had been an Army sergeant, actually, in the French Army during the Algerian War. I guess by 1967 he felt he was old enough and mature enough (he was then in his early thirties) to take over, and he did. By and large, I think, over the twenty-plus years that he has been in charge, Togo has been quite stable.

The government has been reasonably effective, and I think this has been translated into a fairly successful economic situation, by African standards. But I would hasten to say that I have been away from the country for a long time, and these are just some general impressions that I have; I don't have any specific knowledge of more recent years.

Q: How did you deal with the Togolese government?

WYGANT: We had good relations with the Togolese government; we had good access. The French still assumed proprietary interests in everything that was going on there, and I think the French were always somewhat suspicious of any country, be it the United States or Germany or any other, that might even be perceived to be displacing French influence.

But French influence was waning in any case, and the Togolese were quite eager to develop relations with other Western countries. They also had good relations with the Soviet Union. In fact the Soviet Embassy was quite active when I was there. Togo was asserting its independence and its desire, while still maintaining close ties with France, to develop ties with other countries. We had good access, and I would say that the relations between the U.S. and Togo were very good at the time.

In fact the United States signed a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation when I was there. This was the first such treaty to be signed between the U.S. and a newly independent African country. It had been negotiated over a period of years, but I was there for the final negotiations and the actual signing of the treaty, which was about 1966, as I recall.

Q: Then you were assigned first to Russian language training and then to Moscow. You served in Moscow from '68 to '70. Who was the ambassador there?

WYGANT: When we arrived, it was Llewellyn Thompson, who was on his second tour as U.S. Ambassador to the USSR. He left in the middle of our tour and was replaced by Jake Beam. So I worked for two very distinguished Soviet specialists in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Q: Being a non-Soviet specialist, how would you characterize the people in our embassy at that time? I mean, you were sort of an outsider looking at this breed.

WYGANT: To some extent, although I had taken the full year of Russian language training. This had not been the case with my predecessor, who, I believe, had a few months of Russian.

We had of course our ambassador and DCM. We had political and economic counselors. And then within the political section we had a chief of the internal branch and a chief of the external branch. They of course were more senior officers with considerable background in Soviet affairs.

But there was a cadre of about eight or ten of us, as I remember, who were junior to middle ranking political, consular, and economic officers, all of whom had gone through the training at about the same time. As you've suggested, most were firmly committed to Soviet

specialization, or at least Eastern European specialization, and so therefore only a few of the political officers were actually specialists in non-Soviet fields.

There was another officer who was following Latin America for the first year I was in Moscow, who was basically more of a Latin American specialist than Soviet. We then had two China specialists serving in Moscow, both of whom spoke Chinese and Russian--you might say they had a foot in both camps. We also had an Arabist who had spent more of his career in the Arab world than in Soviet affairs.

So there were some who had had experience outside of the USSR and Eastern Europe, but basically the cadre of officers who were there, particularly the more senior ones, were Soviet specialists and, I would say without any reservation, some of the finest people I have worked with in the Foreign Service. They were very well motivated, highly trained, and good language officers. At least that generation of Soviet specialists, I think, were some of the best that I've worked with anywhere.

Q: How did they look upon the Soviet Union?

WYGANT: They looked at it, I suppose you could say, in academic terms, trying to understand it, trying to understand what was going on, digging very deeply into the language and the culture.

Some of them were having difficulties with the Soviet administration, because they were getting into areas that the Soviets considered sensitive, particularly the unofficial artists and unofficial entertainers. To some extent they had opportunities to view the samizdat publications, which were considered subversive by Soviet authorities.

Q: This is the unofficial mimeographed publication.

WYGANT: Yes, they were occasionally mimeographed, but in most cases just typed over and over again. This was all of great interest to the U.S. government, but very sensitive as far as the Brezhnev regime was concerned.

Q: This was early Brezhnev.

WYGANT: Yes, quite early Brezhnev. He took over in 1964, so he had been in power for about four years. He was really pretty much at the height of his power at that time, I would say. Brezhnev orchestrated the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. And then the Soviets had some very serious confrontations with the Chinese in the spring of 1969. There were some islands in the Ussuri River that the Russians and Chinese fought over, with the loss of many lives.

Q: Ussuri River or something like that.

WYGANT: Yes, let's see, Domansky was the Russian name for the island group. The Chinese also have a name for them, which I've forgotten.

There were a number of troops killed on both sides in that battle. In the late spring of 1969 another embassy officer and I were the first American diplomats allowed to visit Khabarovsk since the Ussuri incident. The Soviets were sensitive about this area and didn't really want Westerners to come in, but they did finally give permission for us to have a look. We didn't see much. The fighting had died down, and Khabarovsk was then a sort of garrison town of Russians in a little corner next to China. But the people we met didn't seem to be too concerned that the Chinese were about to come over the borders.

This was a very turbulent time in China, as you may recall. The Cultural Revolution was going on; Mao was trying to shake the party up and get things moving again to his satisfaction. There were large demonstrations, both in Beijing and in Moscow, against the other side's embassy. In fact one of the things I remember particularly in that spring of 1969 was a major demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Moscow, which we were able to see from the sidelines. It was very highly orchestrated and organized: the slogans were all pre-printed and the workers were bussed in from outer factories.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia we used to call them "Rent-a- Mob."

WYGANT: Yes, we called them "Rent-a-Crowd." They were told, several blocks away, what they could shout at the Chinese and what they couldn't shout, and they were told what to do. Demonstrators were given bottles of colored ink, and when they got in front of the Chinese Embassy, selected members of the mob threw bottles of colored ink against the walls, which of course made splashes of red, purple, yellow, orange and green, and broke quite a few windows.

It was interesting that the building attacked was a largely unoccupied apartment compound that was on the main street. The actual embassy chancery, where the Chinese diplomats worked was half a block back from the street. The Chinese left this apartment building as is for a good long time, and it became kind of an eyesore. The Soviets were a little embarrassed that this building in the middle of town was looking so crummy. The Chinese said, "Well, if the Russians are this barbaric in the way they deal with foreign diplomats, we'll just leave this as a symbol of our disdain for their behavior."

Q: What was the atmosphere and the impression at the embassy? You had just arrived during the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

WYGANT: We were very concerned, obviously, but I guess the feeling was that, while we would protest and we would denounce the whole concept, we certainly had no intention of intervening directly. I mean, we were opposed to the so- called Brezhnev Doctrine, which said that the fruits of Socialism would have to be protected whenever and wherever, but I think it was pretty clear from the beginning that the United States was not going to oppose actively what the Soviets would do in Czechoslovakia (as we had not actively opposed the

invasion of Hungary twelve years earlier). I think the feeling was that, while we could protest what the Soviets were doing and make them uncomfortable, we would not be in a position to use counterforce to try and stop them.

Q: You didn't feel that relations were on the verge of being broken or anything like that?

WYGANT: No, no. I think it was a very tense, difficult period, but it wasn't a comfortable period in general in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations. Later on that same year, Richard Nixon was elected president. He was somebody that the Soviets didn't much care for. They felt that he was a hard-line anti-Communist, and they had been highly critical of him at earlier phases of his U.S. political career.

It was interesting that, after he was elected, while they continued to be highly critical of many U.S. government leaders, including people that he'd appointed, they never attacked Nixon personally. Of course later on, particularly after he began to develop relations with China, the Soviets had quite a different view of Nixon and felt that they had an opportunity to begin some useful negotiations and discussions, and the detente of the early Seventies was born. But that came along after I had left.

Q: Did Llewellyn Thompson and Jake Beam have different styles?

WYGANT: Llewellyn Thompson was one of our most senior Soviet specialists; this was the second time he was ambassador to Moscow. Frankly he would tell us that he was rather disappointed. He felt that he had had an opportunity to come out and try to really get some things going with the Soviets in terms of negotiations over Berlin, in terms of arms negotiations and several other issues that we had on our plates at the time, but he felt that he really didn't have much access and didn't have the opportunity to do the things he'd hoped to do.

Thompson once noted to us toward the end of his two year tour in Moscow that Gus Hall, the leader of the U.S. Communist Party, could come to Moscow and get in to see Brezhnev any time he felt like it, but he, Thompson, had only shaken hands with Brezhnev at a huge New Year's reception which was about the only time he'd had a chance to talk to the Soviet leader.

Q: How about when Beam came, did things...?

WYGANT: Well, Beam also had served previously in Moscow. In fact, interestingly, he was the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in 1953 when Stalin died. He had also had a very distinguished career in Eastern European affairs. He had previously been ambassador to Czechoslovakia, and I know he served in Yugoslavia. But I don't think his access particularly improved either. It wasn't really until the China card was played that the Brezhnev government decided that it needed to take another look at relations with the United States, and particularly with President Nixon.

Q: Could you tell me a little about life for a political officer in Moscow and in the Soviet Union?

WYGANT: I think that depended a lot on what you were doing. The officers who were dealing with internal things, particularly those who had some contacts with the unofficial artists and if not the dissident community, at least those who were on the outs with the regime, had a very difficult time because they were constantly being watched. Of course all phones were bugged, but people who were dealing with issues that were sensitive to the Soviets had a much more difficult time.

I was lucky, I suppose, in that the Soviets were not too terribly concerned about the African equation. I was seeing African students, which probably annoyed them. I was seeing some of their academicians and their journalists and commentators, but these were all people who were acceptable to the regime. So, except perhaps for African students, I didn't have contacts with the kinds of people that would get the Soviet system excited about what I was doing.

But, as with everybody else in the embassy, we were very closely watched. We had a policeman outside the door who knew when we were coming and when we were going. We knew that our phones were bugged, our apartments were bugged. It was just a fact of life; you expected that you were going to be watched and under surveillance all the time.

Q: While you were there, what was the Soviet interest in Africa, from your perspective?

WYGANT: I think they saw it as a growth area. Khrushchev had started out talking about countries that followed the non- capitalist path of development, and this was expanded upon by Brezhnev.

There were a half a dozen countries, in the late Sixties, that the Soviets felt had bypassed capitalism. They had basically gone from being colonial to something that was approaching Marxism-Leninism. Guinea was a leader in that category, as was Congo, Brazzaville. I believe Somalia was, at that time, as well as Sudan. Mali fitted the category to some extent. Of course they had enjoyed particularly close relations with Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and certainly felt he was moving things in the "correct" direction. But Nkrumah had been overthrown by his conservative military in 1966, and by 1968 the Soviets were definitely on the outs with the Ghanaians.

I think the Soviets saw opportunities for checking Western influence and activity in Africa through the development of regimes which would be favorable to the Soviet Union, favorable to a collectivist approach, and favorable to the kinds of economic and political development you find in the Soviet Union, Cuba, Eastern Europe, and Vietnam.

Q: Then you left Moscow and spent a short time in INR. And then you mentioned Vietnam. Off you went. How did that come about?

WYGANT: Well, I was at a point in my career where I felt that I needed to get overseas again. Vietnam was certainly the great issue of the day, and, I felt, basically the issue of my generation. To have had an opportunity to go there and then not taken that opportunity, I felt, would not be good. I got a great deal of support from Lee and the family on this, because it was considered a rather unusual decision to make.

I was not forced to go; in fact I volunteered to go. The CORDS program sounded like an interesting program. It looked as though, if South Vietnam were going to make it, the kinds of things that you could do with the CORDS program were the sorts of things that would stabilize the political structure and make it possible to develop a non-Communist government in South Vietnam which would function and be able to provide services and economic opportunities to its people. So it was for a mixture of reasons that I volunteered to go.

Of course I had no idea that I was going to Pleiku when I left Washington, but I did know that I was going into the CORDS program and that I would be in one of the provinces.

Q: You went out there in 1971 and you stayed until '73. What was the atmosphere in the department, sort of both the training and the people who were sending you out?

WYGANT: It was a very controversial period. There were a lot of FSOs who were being forced into Vietnam assignments who did not want to go. This eventually developed into a confrontation between a few of the officers who flatly refused to go and the Foreign Service, which said: "The needs of the service say you shall go; otherwise, resign." The upshot of it was that officers who refused Vietnam did not resign, or at least were not forced to resign. The "needs of the service" effectively passed into history around this time we're talking about.

Having served in the Soviet Union, I had a very clear idea of what Communists would do in any country that they controlled. That wasn't anything that I would ever wish on anybody. So, therefore, I frankly was not all that sympathetic to the strong movement in this country that felt we shouldn't be involved in Vietnam and that we should just pull out and let events take their own course.

But this was a very turbulent time in the Foreign Service, both in terms of what Foreign Service involvement would be, and whether State Department FSOs could be coerced to go into a program that they didn't really want to be a part of, or coerced to go to Vietnam at a time they didn't want to go to Vietnam.

Q: Was there a feeling of hope, cynicism, or is it difficult to characterize?

WYGANT: All of the above, I would say, when I arrived out there in the fall of 1971, there was a feeling that the South Vietnamese military forces were getting better, and that the North Vietnamese were at least not any more difficult than they had been, in military terms,

and that perhaps we were beginning to make some impressions through the civil operations programs in CORDS, in some of the provinces anyway.

For example, shortly after I went up to Pleiku in September 1971 (by plane) a group of us were actually able to drive all the way from Pleiku down to the coast and then down along the coast and into Saigon. And that was the first time American civilians had been able to make such a trip in several years.

Q: This was that famous road that twice was cut.

WYGANT: There were several famous mountain roads that could be easily cut, yes. But the roads I mention were open and we were able to do it. We drove in two cars, eight of us, both American and Vietnamese who came down and then also drove back. We observed only one firefight (at some distance) near a river crossing north of Saigon. We were obliged to wait for about an hour for ARVN to clear out some Viet Cong on the other side of the river. So the security situation was improving to a marked extent. And of course this was also at a time when there was a tremendous drawdown of U.S. forces; President Nixon was pulling out the forces in large numbers every month.

Then we got into the spring of 1972. Everybody talks about Tet '68, but there was another major offensive during Tet in 1972. It didn't get nearly the same headlines. Tet '72 certainly didn't have the same political impact that '68 had. But, in military terms, the South Vietnamese acquitted themselves reasonably well.
The provincial capital just north of Pleiku, Kontum, was surrounded by a couple of North Vietnamese divisions in March, 1972 and it looked like we were going to lose this province. In fact Kontum is all of twenty miles north of Pleiku city. But the South Vietnamese dug in. And with a little bit of help from what was left of the U.S. forces but very largely on their own the South Vietnamese forces, finally dislodged the North Vietnamese and forced them to withdraw back into Laos, which was right next door. This was typical of what the North Vietnamese would do: hang out in the border areas of Laos and Cambodia and come in to South Vietnam when it suited their purposes.

By the time that offensive was over, which was in the early summer of 1972, in my opinion the South Vietnamese position was as good as it had ever been. Throughout the rest of that year there was a very strong American movement for negotiations. The negotiations almost came to a conclusion at the end of the year, and then, as people may remember, they broke down and Nixon ordered a bombing of the north once again. Eventually the cease-fire agreement was signed on January 27, 1973.

I was part of the small civilian CORDS group in Pleiku that saw the last of the U.S. forces pull out in March of '73. By that time the only U.S. military forces left in Vietnam were a small but still substantial number of military advisors down in Saigon at the MACV headquarters. During my last few months in Vietnam it was strictly a civilian operation, and we were watching what was going on and trying to get a feel for the place.

Q: Could you explain, you were in what in military terms is known as Two Corps, in the highlands, and Pleiku was the major city of...

WYGANT: Pleiku was the military capital of the Second Military Region, yes.

Q: What were you doing?

WYGANT: When I first arrived, our team was composed of about 150 men. Six of us were civilians with the other 144 U.S. Army. Our Province Senior Advisor, as the team leader was termed, was Chris Squire, a Foreign Service officer and good friend from Moscow days, and I also served with him in Australia. Unfortunately he passed away shortly after retirement a few years ago; a fine man. His deputy was an Army lieutenant colonel. The way it worked in CORDS was: if the Province Senior Advisor was a civilian, his deputy would be military; if it was a military Province Senior Advisor, a civilian deputy.

We civilians were basically advising the South Vietnamese provincial administration on the whole range of civilian services. We had a sanitarian on the team who was dealing with public health issues. We had an education specialist who worked with the director of education for the Province of Pleiku. We had a logistics expert who was dealing with some of the civilian supply problems. We also had a police advisor. In those days we had police advisors in each of the provinces. This man had been a state trooper from the Los Angeles area and he was the advisor to the provincial police.

My immediate deputy and I were basically involved in all kinds of programs that were being supported by AID for relief in the provinces. We spent a lot of time on refugee relief, because there were a number of Montagnards (the population of Pleiku being largely Montagnard not Vietnamese) who were short of food and had other basic human needs.

Q: There had been a major resettlement program, bringing them into areas where they could fortify.

WYGANT: Where they'd be safer.

Q: How was this working?

WYGANT: There wasn't a great deal of this going on when I arrived in 1971. But then, when the offensive broke out in the early part of 1972, we immediately began to have enormous refugee problems.
The interesting thing was that, whether Montagnard or Vietnamese, the population always moved toward the government side; they never seemed to move into the areas controlled by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. So that whenever fighting broke out, you had enormous numbers of refugees who were trying to stick with the South Vietnamese administration.

And this was the problem we faced that spring. We had to close the schools in Pleiku and re-open them as refugee camps. We often had as many as 15-20,000 refugees in a town that only had a population of about 40-50,000 at the best of times. We also were moving them as fast as we could down to the southern parts of Two Corps, which were considered safer and further away from the heavy fighting.

The fighting during the 1972 Tet Offensive was pretty much fixed battles between division-size units. It wasn't hit-and- run terrorist stuff, it was North Vietnamese divisions battling South Vietnamese divisions, in a Korean War type of classical military confrontation. Moreover, in Pleiku we didn't have the problems that still existed in some other provinces of an indigenous Viet Cong that remained active and dangerous. Most of Pleiku's indigenous communists were wiped out as a result of Tet '68.

Q: I'm interested in relationships. One of them is just sort of an internal one. I mean, here are Foreign Service officers working with military. We don't even speak the same language and often don't have the same outlook. How did this work, looking back on this?

WYGANT: Well, there were a lot of strains. I think in some respects it was probably more difficult for the military to try and figure out who we civilians were and what we were trying to do. I remember the lieutenant colonel, the deputy Province Senior Advisor once said, "I never know what you guys are. You're just Sam, Tom, Dick, Harry. I don't know whether I should salute you or whether I should..." I mean, they had a hard time figuring out who we were and what we did.

But the other side of the coin was that most of us had had some kind of military experience ourselves, so that the military way of doing things and the military outlook was not alien to us. If we get into these kinds of situations in the future, frankly I don't think there would be the same basis for understanding between the Foreign Service and the military, because so few Foreign Service officers, let's say under the age of forty, have had any military experience.

Q: I served in Saigon from '69 to '71, and I had four years in the barracks as an enlisted man. I wasn't wild about it, but I knew the lingo and there was this common understanding.

WYGANT: And I think that was our case too. For instance, the administrative officer for our CORDS team was a former Army chief master sergeant. He was wearing civilian clothes, but he sure knew the Army backwards and forwards. And I can't think of anybody who was with that group of mine that hadn't had prior military experience of one kind or another. So therefore we used to kid each other a lot and there was a certain amount of rivalry, comradely rivalry I guess you could say, but I think we basically got along pretty well. Occasionally you would get either a military officer or a civilian who really had a difficult time dealing with the other group, but that was the exception, I think, rather than the rule.

Q: What about dealing with the Vietnamese? I suppose I ought to really say dealing with the Vietnamese and the Montagnards, because these were two quite different groups. How did you deal with the Vietnamese? You know the definition of expert in the United States is: "A son of a bitch from out of town." And you were kind of the son of a bitch from out of country. How did this work with the Vietnamese officials?

WYGANT: My principal counterpart was the deputy Province Chief. In those days all the province chiefs were military officers, and the principal counterpart for the Province Senior Advisor was the Province Chief. The deputy Province Chief was always a civilian, so he was my principal counterpart. And I used to spend several hours a day with him and we'd go over what was important, what was going on.

Q: Using French?

WYGANT: I had two different deputy Province Chiefs. One spoke good English, so he and I used English. But his successor was a somewhat older Vietnamese who spoke excellent French and very little English, so with him we used French. I could speak a few words of Vietnamese, but I never really studied the language all that much, so French was very useful.

Q: How did it work?

WYGANT: Generally I think it was a good cooperative effort. The bottom line was that a lot of the resources and the money was obviously coming through the AID pipeline, and therefore the civilians on the team were the ones who could turn the tap on or turn the tap off and could help in those ways. But I don't want to be too cynical about this. We had a genuine rapport there, and I think the civilians had worked out particularly good relations with their counterparts on the Vietnamese side.

Obviously there are enormous cultural differences between Vietnam and the United States. The Vietnamese have an ancient culture and are justifiably proud of their history. They are an efficient, hard-working people, but a people who have not, at least in the Western sense, been able to organize themselves politically in ways that would bring the nation together. The Communists have done it, through hard-headed totalitarian tactics, but those who were not Communist were never able particularly to bring this together. So therefore you got a great variety of attitudes.

A number of the Vietnamese, in fact I would say probably the majority, were more involved with family and clan and class concerns than they were with a more general nationwide concern. And their concept of efficiency and getting a job done can be quite different than the American concept thereof. The prevalent feeling seemed to be that you looked out for your own and you didn't have to worry too much about those who were not affiliated with you either by class, clan or family.

And that was difficult, because we were trying to administer a program that would provide for the people of the province regardless of their backgrounds.

The Montagnards were considered to be almost subhuman as far as the Vietnamese were concerned. They are an aboriginal people who had been in Vietnam long before the Vietnamese started coming out of China two thousand years ago. They are Montagnards because the Vietnamese had chased them up into the mountains out of the valleys where the Vietnamese could grow rice and do the things that they wanted to do. The Vietnamese never cared too much for living up in the mountains.

I think, unfortunately, the Montagnards were treated the way a rather unsophisticated indigenous people can be treated by a much more sophisticated outside group which comes in and wants to take over land and property that belongs to an aboriginal people.

Q: Did you find yourself in the position of being the intermediary?

WYGANT: Oh, yes. The CORDS program, in fact the whole U.S. program, had to deal with South Vietnam's population in ways that made sure that the Montagnards were properly taken of. And the Montagnards basically saw the United States, as they had seen the French earlier, as their protectors from the Vietnamese.

Q: There has always been this relationship of the Montagnards, and one can also talk about the Bedouin and other groups, that people from outside take to them very well. They're sort of an attractive people...gentle, I guess is the term. Did you feel resentment from the Vietnamese: What the hell are you doing?

WYGANT: I don't think so. I think the Vietnamese that I dealt with had had enough Americans around to know the way we were going to behave anyway, and so if they had any reservations, they didn't voice them.

The one great distinction that you could make (it's terrible to make generalizations, but I think I will in this case) between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese was that the Montagnards were fairly simple and straightforward people, and, the way an American would look at it, an honest people. You would ask one a question, and he would give you a straight answer. If a Montagnard said he was going to do something, he would do it. Because they were unsophisticated, they were quite easy to deal with. And they were men of their word; they would do what they said they were going to do, or not do it if they didn't want to.

This was not the case with the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese are much more complex. It was often difficult to find what the real motivation was behind a particular course of action. If you felt that you had a program that was successful and that things were working and so forth, you might find after a while that it really wasn't going well and that it wasn't working, because the kinds of commitments that you thought you had from the Vietnamese administration sort of melted away. Without putting value judgments on this, I think it's

just two different ways of approaching things. The Vietnamese are far more inclined to do things from their own inner motivations and their own approach to life, in ways that might be considered devious or underhanded by outsiders. But basically it just takes a long time to find out what's really going on with the Vietnamese.

That was not the case with the Montagnards. And I think that's why a lot of Americans, as the French had before, found the Montagnards to be so pleasant to deal with.

Q: What about corruption?

WYGANT: Corruption was of course an enormous problem in South Vietnam. I'm sure a certain amount of it was going on in Pleiku when I was there. I never saw any blatant examples of corruption. The Province Chief, who was a Montagnard by the way, lived a fairly simple lifestyle. He didn't have a grandiose mansion or a lot of visible personal property. Certainly the provincial administration seemed to be living in fairly modest circumstances. There were indications that some of the ARVN generals at Two Corps had a lot of extra material goods and were skimming things, but that was more of a general impression than hard evidence. I would say that blatant, out- and-out corruption and misuse of property and money and so forth was not a problem in Pleiku when I was there.

Q: How about direction from the embassy?

WYGANT: The embassy didn't really have much to do with us. We reported to the AID administration in Nha-Trang. Two Corps actually had a bifurcated capital. The military headquarters was in Pleiku, but the civil administration for the region and all of the civilian offices plus AID headquarters were in Nha- Trang down on the coast. So we basically were following the directives of the AID mission headquarters in Nha-Trang. I guess, in the two years that I was out there, I got to Saigon maybe a half a dozen times, and usually I'd go by the embassy and have a chat with some of the political officers whom I knew, but there was very little involvement of the embassy in what we were doing, until the last few months of my tour.

Once the peace accords had been signed and our military had gone, then indeed we did become more responsive to directions from the embassy. Nha-Trang was designated a Consulate General with an FSO Consul General assigned. We had one up in Da Nang for the First Military Region, and one over in Bien Hoa for the Third, and down in Can-tho. So then it became a more traditional Foreign Service setup. From that point we were dealing a lot with the Consul General down in Nha- Trang.

Q: You left there when?

WYGANT: I left in May of '73.

Q: What was your impression whither South Vietnam?

WYGANT: When I left in 1973 I felt that South Vietnam had a real chance to make it. I would guess that in the spring and early summer of that year the South Vietnamese were in about the best shape they'd ever been in. Things obviously began to fall apart rather quickly thereafter. And I guess there was a general deterioration into 1974, to the point that when the North Vietnamese made the decision in '75 to make another big push, that was enough to carry them to victory. Of course you had to understand what was going on back here in the U.S. regarding the tremendous upheaval in the U.S. political structure, the lack of support on the part of the American public and the Congress for the South Vietnamese administration, and the demoralization that I think must have set in rather quickly. Entering 1974 the South Vietnamese must have felt basically that the Americans were going to abandon them and that they would have to do it on their own, but with a feeling of inadequacy in being able to do it on their own. The optimism attending the cease-fire in the early part of '73 rapidly deteriorated.

Q: Were you at all concerned about the American presence being, my God, you know, the equivalent to almost at the county level in a foreign country?

WYGANT: The surprising thing was that I did not feel, or did not sense, any real resentment on the part of the Vietnamese toward that degree of American involvement. I guess we had been there so long and they were so used to having Americans around that basically, at least in Pleiku, there was not much resentment.

For instance, we mixed all the time with Vietnamese and Montagnards, to a far greater degree than the military did. My wife and family were not in Vietnam with me, so I was on my own most of the time and I'd often go out to dinner together with my Vietnamese counterparts. Both professionally and socially we were pretty close, so I did not feel that there was a resentment.

Of course, I would imagine that the CORDS experience varied tremendously from province to province. I know that in one or two of the coastal provinces in Two Corps there was much stronger support for the Viet Cong and for the North, and, there, perhaps there would be resentment of Americans or what Americans were doing. But that wasn't the case in Pleiku.

Q: You came back and you served on the African Desk for West Africa for two years.

WYGANT: I was desk officer for Guinea and desk officer for, well, it was Dahomey and then it became Benin while I was there- -two French-speaking West African countries.

Q: What were our interests? Any problems there particularly?

WYGANT: In Guinea, Sékou Touré was still the president, and we were trying yet again to work out a more friendly relationship. Sékou Touré was in a somewhat better frame of mind toward the United States in the early 1970s..

I think he was disillusioned with the extent and effectiveness of economic support that he was getting from the Soviet Union. He had a fair amount of military support, and he was allowing the Soviets to use his harbor from time to time for naval visits, and his airport for deployment of aircraft, particularly surveillance aircraft. We weren't too happy about that.

But I think he was beginning to realize that there were possibilities for greater economic development in Guinea coming from the West than from the East.

For example, he was very keen on the two private investments in aluminum that we had in Guinea at the time, one of which was quite new and had been built up during the Sixties. The U.S. and some West European partners were mining a good deal of bauxite for export to alumina refineries in the Caribbean, and then it was being used to make aluminum in the Northwest, in Washington State. The bauxite mine represented a several-hundred-million-dollar investment, in which U.S. interests amounted to close to fifty percent, as I recall. There were also Canadian, French, and German interests in this particular company. And then there was another, older investment, in a different part of the country but again a bauxite mine, which had twenty-five-percent American participation. So Toure was very keen on these two investments and was helpful to those Americans who came to Guinea on mining business.

However, he was suspicious of us. I think it was around 1969 or 1970, there had been an abortive invasion of Guinea by a bunch of Portuguese mercenaries, and he felt we were involved in that episode. So he was still highly suspicious about anything that appeared even vaguely clandestine.

Terry Todman, who had been my DCM in Togo, by this time was ambassador to Guinea. He had made a major effort to open up relations between the United States and Guinea, and under his leadership things were on the upswing.

Benin had been taken over by a military coup a year or two before I became desk officer. The Beninois were embarking on what they called a Marxist-Leninist path, so we were going through a difficult period. In fact at one point our ambassador had to leave, and they came within an ace of declaring him PNG [persona non grata]. I don't think he was declared officially PNG, but he did leave. And for about another eight or nine years we simply had a chargé in Cotonou, we did not have a resident ambassador.

I might also mention a very interesting assignment I had during the time that I was desk officer. I was sent to New York in the fall of 1974 for the annual UN General Assembly session. That was a great year for the radical non-aligned Third World. Algeria's Foreign Minister Bouteflika was the president of the General Assembly, and he was getting a lot of support from the non-aligned, particularly the militant anti- Western non-aligned states. This was the year that PLO Chief Yasser Arafat came to the U.N. and swaggered up on the UNGA stage with a pistol on his hip. It was certainly the last time, and I think the only time, that he addressed the General Assembly.

We had an Africanist assigned to the U.S. Mission in New York, so I was working with him to help with the African delegations during that fall. We had two very tendentious issues to contend with that session, on which the U.S. position was strong and we were trying to get as much support as we could.

One of these issues was support for the Lon Nol pro- Western government in Cambodia to make sure that his ambassador could continue to occupy Cambodia's seat at the U.N. I remember we had worked very diligently with the African delegations, as others had worked with the Asians, the Latin Americans, and certainly the Europeans.

I recall that one evening, I guess it was probably in October or early November, the session had started around two o'clock in the afternoon and went on until about two or three o'clock the next morning, wrangling over the issue of whether Lon Nol's government would keep Cambodia's seat or whether it would go to the Khmer Rouge.

The Western side was being led by the British Permanent Representative, Ivor Richard, a former Member of Parliament and excellent debater. And the opposite side was headed by Shirley Amersingh, who was the Sri Lankan ambassador to the United Nations and a very brilliant Oxford debater himself. I particularly recall the verbal pyrotechnics and the ebb and the flow of debate and parliamentary maneuver on both sides.

The crucial vote finally came about two o'clock in the morning--and the U.S. side won by only a vote or two. We had gone into the rest rooms, restaurants and bars to get everybody out, and we were a little bit better rallying our troops than the other side was.

The other big issue was that of Korea. Neither Korea was then a member of the United Nations, but they did have observer delegations in New York, and this was fought out in the First Committee. We finally were able to get a reasonable Korean Resolution, but that involved a lot of work with the African delegations, too. I think the UNGA experience was probably the highlight of my time in AFW.

Q: Henry Kissinger by that time was secretary of state. Did you feel, in AFW, that he was paying much attention to Africa?

WYGANT: I think he was really only interested in the most crucial issues effecting Africa. Toward the end of his tenure he became interested in Rhodesia, and he was also concerned about South Africa. We had a succession of very, I think, highly qualified career Foreign Service officers who were assistant secretaries for African Affairs during that time. Although there was quite a turnover, they had a good understanding of what was going on in Africa.

Q: They were good solid sort of professionals, so there weren't sudden policy swings or anything like that.

WYGANT: No.

Q: You went then to Banjul. Was it called Banjul at that time?

WYGANT: Yes, the name had changed a couple of years earlier from Bathurst.

Q: You were there '75 to '78. Could you describe the situation at the time?

WYGANT: The Gambia at that time was in quite good shape for a tiny, poor, country. We arrived shortly after the tenth anniversary of Gambian independence. Sir Dawda (David) Jawara had been president from the beginning. In fact he is still president of The Gambia.

Groundnut prices were pretty good. (Groundnuts being peanuts.) When peanuts are good, The Gambia is in good shape; when peanut prices are not good, or if there is a bad year and the rains don't come, then The Gambia has real problems. It is a monoculture. I say "it is," I don't think there has been much change; through the Seventies it was a monoculture. [The 1990 Encyclopedia Britannica says it is "a classic monoculture; peanuts are the only valuable crop."] But prices had been good, the rains had been reasonably good, and, although The Gambia was considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world, certainly in Africa, it wasn't doing too badly. It had a stable government; there was a certain amount of investment going in; there was a fair amount of tourism; and peanut prices were reasonably good, so The Gambia was doing well.

It also had a functioning democracy, which was unusual. There was an opposition, or a couple of opposition members in the parliament (it was all very gentlemanly). But Sir Dawda never tried to establish a one-party state or snuff out the others who would disagree with him. There were a few people within his own party who questioned things, and sometimes they'd have to try to work those things out. But basically it was a very pleasant country to work in, both in terms of the political structure and in terms of its people. Moreover, although the economy was modest, it was doing rather well. Unfortunately, I guess The Gambia has fallen on hard economic times since then, but that was not evident in the mid- Seventies.

Q: Did we have any particular problems with Gambia at that time?

WYGANT: No. Basically The Gambia was quite supportive of the kinds of things that we were trying to do in the United Nations and other places. Obviously, as a Third World country, on any strong Third World issue, they were heavily influenced by the non-aligned position, but I don't recall any really contentious problems that we had.

Our interests were rather modest. We did have a small AID program. In fact our AID mission was run by just one individual. Now, I understand there are quite a few more people in Banjul working in the AID mission. This perhaps is a function of the fact that The Gambia has fallen on hard economic times and has needed more support.

We had a Peace Corps program in The Gambia with about a hundred volunteers. The volunteers were very active and scattered throughout the country doing a good job.

My staff was small. I was the chargé, and we had a married couple (a tandem couple). He was the administrative officer and consul; his wife was the secretary and communicator. We had a Gambian staff of about six or seven. But for a rather modest investment in terms of Foreign Service resources, I think we had a good, functioning, solid embassy. We got quite a bit of help from Dakar, because the ambassador was accredited to both countries, and thus Dakar could provide us some of the regional support we needed.

Q: I'd like to move on, I think. Is there anything else I should touch on there?

WYGANT: In The Gambia? I would just say that that was a highlight of my career, because I could actually run an embassy for the first time. The ambassador was very supportive.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WYGANT: My first ambassador was Rudolph Aggrey, and then he was replaced by Hank Cohen. So I guess I worked for Aggrey for two years and Cohen for one. Both were supportive of what was going on in The Gambia but largely left the running of the embassy and the conduct of relations with the chargé.

Sir Dawda had a notably good relationship with other leaders in West Africa. He has now become one of the deans of the African presidents. At that time he was not nearly as far up in seniority. He took a number of opportunities to call in other West African leaders for discussions of regional problems. The Sahelian countries, for example, were still having drought problems The Gambia had been somewhat affected by this, but not to the extent that some other neighbors had, and Sir Dawda was very active in the Sahel organization. Although The Gambia is a tiny country with at that time a population of only 700,000/800,000, it played a bigger role than its size might indicate.

Q: You left there in '78 and went to Canberra, Australia, and you were there until '81 as the political/military officer.

WYGANT: Yes, in Canberra we had a political section with three officers: the counselor, myself, and a labor attaché. Australia was our only country of assignment that could be termed modern and westernized. It was a great change from all the developing countries that I'd served in previously, and also from the Soviet Union.

The family, I think, particularly enjoyed Australia, as I did. Canberra is a pleasant place to live and a good place to raise a family. Our two oldest girls went through high school there and then on into college in the United States.

The Australians are close allies of the United States. The ANZUS Alliance was then in good shape, but it also required constant attention. The government was then headed by Malcolm Fraser, a Liberal (which is the more conservative of the parties in Australia).

The Labor Party, in opposition, has always been somewhat suspicious and concerned about the several joint facilities that we have in Australia. We have several such facilities in remote areas of Australia where we can monitor space activities and rocket launches. We also have a major naval communications site in Northwestern Australia. I think elements of the Labor Party have always been suspicious, not to say distrustful, about what these facilities do. Therefore, we were constantly responding to questions and trying to explain just what was going on, obviously without giving away classified information.

The most important single item that I became involved with was related to the Soviet's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. And in order to respond to what looked like might be a Soviet incursion down toward the Persian Gulf, or at least in the warm- water ports, we greatly expanded our military presence in the Indian Ocean. This meant, among other things, that we were sending B-52 bombers on reconnaissance missions from Guam out over the Indian Ocean, and surveilling the Indian Ocean as far as the East African coast.

Now a B-52 is pretty good; it can stay up in the air for a long, long time with aerial refueling. So the extent of its usefulness is really based on the amount of fatigue and wear and tear that you can put on the crew. As I recall, the crew consists of four or five people. And when we began this surveillance of the Indian Ocean, the crews from Guam were flying all the way from Guam, through the sea between Australia and Papua New Guinea, out over the Indian Ocean, over Diego Garcia, then to within two hundred miles of the East African coast, north up to the Arabian Peninsula, and back. The crews had these enormous, twenty-nine-hour sessions in the air, in a very uncomfortable aircraft that was built for utilitarian military purposes not for human convenience.

We asked the Australians if we could bring the B-52s into Darwin, where they could rest up for twenty-four hours, refuel, and then go on out and do their Indian Ocean surveillance. In principle, the Australians said sure, they could work something out like that and it wouldn't be a big problem. But in practice, the proposal required some rather careful negotiating over a period of better than a year to work out the terms of the U.S. use of Darwin and also some Australian airspace in order to do this surveillance of the Indian Ocean.

And I was deeply involved in those negotiations. Australia's biggest concern was what these aircraft might be carrying. We had made it clear from the beginning that these were reconnaissance flights, that we were simply going up to have a look around, and that they wouldn't be carrying a lot of armament or nasty things on board. But the Australians had to have absolute assurances on this, so it took a long time to work out, finally, a formula of words that was acceptable to both sides.

In any event, it was successful; we did sign the agreement. The first B-52 came into Darwin, as I recall, early in 1981, which was shortly before I left Australia. I was up there

with our Air Force colonel who was the CINCPAC Representative in Canberra, and we greeted that first plane.

A little footnote to history: several months ago the B-52s were removed from Guam (we don't have any B-52s based in Guam anymore). The last B-52 to leave Guam had been completely refurbished by the command at Anderson Air Force Base and was flown off to Darwin to be part of their air and space museum.

Q: In the first place, could you explain how we got over the wording. We are always very careful because we don't want to give away something. I mean, really, when you're talking about armament, you're talking about nuclear weapons. And it's been our policy since 1945 not to comment or to commit ourselves to what any particular military craft or vessel is carrying.

WYGANT: I'm not sure what the final classification of the agreement might be, but I can assure you that we did manage to preserve our policy of neither confirming nor denying what would be on these planes. We did get some language from the Air Force which indicated that they were unarmed--so basically, therefore it suited both sides.

The interesting thing is, of course, that this has implications all over the world. We have problems, I think, with some of the European countries about what armaments may or may not be aboard ships or planes. Certainly we know what's happened with New Zealand in more recent years. And the Japanese have a strong position on this issue. So it wasn't just a question of working out a bilateral arrangement with Australia, it required an understanding of the positions of a number of other allied countries.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a bit about the relationship as you saw it between our embassy and the Australian Labor Party, which was out of power at that time. This is an aside, but I remember one time I talked to an Australian ambassador who said, "You know, we try very hard not to get too many immigrants from England, because they're usually working class and they come with all those labor antagonisms, and we don't want any more of that brought over here, because then you end up with a situation as you have in New Zealand." I mean, how did you find this?

WYGANT: The Australian labor unions are very strong. I believe somewhere around fifty percent of the Australian work force is unionized, which would be an incredible percentage compared with the United States, and, I think, compared with almost any other industrialized country. Of course there is tremendous variety in the way the unions approach issues, but there are some strongly left-wing unions that are inherently suspicious of the United States, and they carry weight in the Labor Party. In fact the Labor Party itself is composed of a number of factions, and the left-wing factions have been highly critical of the defense relationship between Australia and the United States.

There is something of a generational thing, too. Most older Australians (by now, we're talking about Australians who are in their mid-fifties or older) recall the Second World War

and understand the basis for having concluded the ANZUS Alliance, and are very grateful for the kind of support that the United States was able to provide in the 1940s and the early Fifties when Australia was feeling rather isolated and out on its own. But that feeling is dissipating as the older generation passes on, and the younger people don't have any knowledge of that period, other than what they've read in the history books.

The Labor Party has, I think, finally, to a great degree, come to terms with the American relationship under the present prime minister. Now this has all happened, of course, since I left Australia. But Bob Hawke was an extremely popular figure in Australia when I was there. He was still the leader of the labor union movement. And then, I guess in the last year I was in Australia, he resigned from the union and ran for and succeeded in winning a seat in parliament. Just a few years later he became prime minister, which was an extremely unusual thing to happen under the Westminster system. Usually you have to serve a long time on the back benches before you can end up being prime minister. But he leapfrogged over a number of hurdles and eventually was able to spill Labor's then leader (who had been leader when I was there, Bill Hayden) and go on to become prime minister at the next election.

I think we had a reasonable working relationship with Bill Hayden when I was in Australia. I met with him a few times. Of course the ambassador met with him, and others.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WYGANT: The ambassador was Philip Alston, who was a political appointee of President Jimmy Carter. President Reagan was elected several months before I left Australia, so virtually the entire three years that I was there Jimmy Carter was president, and Alston was his ambassador.

Bill Hayden is somewhat more understanding of the left wing of the Labor Party, and therefore I think has harbored suspicions about our facilities, harbored some suspicions about the military relationship between Australia and the United States. As I recall, he had been treasurer in the last Labor government prior to Fraser's Liberal government--the government that was sacked in a very dramatic constitutional confrontation in 1975. At that time accusations were made that the United States had played a role in bringing down the Labor government of that era. And so I think some suspicions perhaps continue from that period as well.

Q: Did you have trouble getting to these people, meeting them?

WYGANT: No. The Australians are very open and easy to talk to, easy to meet. At that time the Labor Party was out of power, and it's usually easier to see people who are out of power than those who are in. They've got more time to spend with diplomats. So I had a chance to meet with other leaders of the party. In fact, when I was in Pohnpei last year, Gareth Evans, the present foreign minister of Australia, came through. I had met him when he was a senator and fairly junior member of the Labor Party establishment back in

Australia ten years earlier. I had also gotten to know the secretary of the ALP, so that we had pretty good channels of communication with the Labor Party. Remember, along with political/military affairs, I also followed the Labor Party as it was the party in opposition, and that was the way we divided up the pie in the political section. The political counselor handled the Liberal Party in government, and I handled the opposition.

Q: How would you characterize the embassy? You had a political appointee as the ambassador.

WYGANT: Yes, he was a close personal friend, in fact lawyer, of the president and had excellent access to the White House. He would come to Washington and he'd go up to the family quarters for a get together. They were good social friends.

I think Ambassador Alston was reasonably well-liked by the Australians. He didn't have much of a background in foreign affairs. He was more interested in business, and so had some contacts in the Australian business community. He largely left the running of the embassy to the Foreign Service officers. He had two very good DCMs while I was there: Chris Squire, whom I have mentioned before, and Steve Lyne, who replaced Chris. They and the senior staff by and large ran the foreign affairs/Foreign Service aspects of the embassy. The ambassador did a certain amount of representational work, but he didn't involve himself too much in the details of the relationship between Australia and the United States.

Q: It must have been a very interesting period. You came back in 1981 to '83, working in the public affairs side of the African Bureau.

WYGANT: Right, I was then the director of the Office of Public Affairs.

Q: Under Chester Crocker. And this was also at the very beginning of the Reagan administration. I wonder if you could tell a bit not only what you were doing, but also about the ambiance of the African Bureau under a new administration--one which was so radically different from the previous one.

WYGANT: Yes, I think you can sum it up fairly easily, in the sense that when Crocker came over to the State Department he had an agenda. He knew what he wanted to do in terms of resolving some of the seemingly intractable problems of southern Africa.

He had written a rather seminal piece that I believe appeared in *Foreign Affairs* which had attracted President Reagan's attention during the campaign, and that sowed the seed whereby Chester Crocker became assistant secretary of state.

Crocker worked on the National Security Council, I believe, back in the Nixon administration. He basically came from an academic background and had a very deep abiding interest in, and understanding of, the problems of southern Africa. Not just South

Africa itself, but also Namibia, the former Portuguese colonies (Angola and Mozambique), and Zimbabwe. In fact his wife, I believe, is originally from Zimbabwe.

He saw opportunities, largely working the South African equation, to accomplish what he clearly saw as U.S. policy interests in southern Africa. Namely: the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and Mozambique, but principally Angola; the forging of an ultimate political solution to the problem of Angola (involving a political arrangement between the MPLA, the government that controls Luanda, and the Savimbi forces); independence for Namibia, which was still under South African administration; and a softening of the situation in South Africa to the point where there would be general accommodation between the races, so that you could somehow avoid a bloodbath in South Africa as the political process evolved.

He had a very clear idea of what he was doing. He called it a "policy of constructive engagement."

Crocker had apparently not had much experience with the press or with the media prior to coming into the African Bureau. He is very articulate, explains himself well, but he hadn't really faced the big guns on television and in the press. The media were somewhat intrigued with him early on, but became disillusioned after a while, because the policies that he was pursuing seemed to be moving too slowly. There was an appearance of accommodation toward South Africa.

I remember one particular crack that was made: "You think you're pursuing a policy of the carrots and the sticks, but once the South Africans have eaten all the carrots, then what are you going to do?"

Of course ultimately Crocker has been vindicated to a very great degree. By the end of the Reagan administration, Namibia was moving toward independence. The Angola situation was greatly changed, the Cubans were pulling out. The Soviets, even before the dramatic events of the last year or year and a half, were beginning to diminish their involvement in Angola. Mozambique has certainly become far more amenable to working out pluralistic solutions for that country, and working closely with the West for economic development purposes.

It took a lot longer probably than Crocker even anticipated to accomplish what he wanted to do. But he had a very clear vision, a great sense of purpose. However, I think it's a classic example (in fact it might even be one that in future years Ph.D. candidates will want to write theses on), about how one individual with a clear idea can make a tremendous difference in what had seemed to be a series of intractable problems.

Q: As you saw it, what was he doing? I mean, here's the United States, and the problem in a way wasn't ours.

WYGANT: Well, it wasn't ours. But it was, in the sense that we tend to get involved worldwide. Specifically in southern Africa, the Soviets were heavily involved in several of the countries, and therefore there was the East-West rivalry. The Cuban military was in Angola in great numbers, which disturbed us.

I guess Crocker's idea was that you try to work out a reasonable dialogue with the South Africans, who are really the key to the problem, and encourage them when they are doing things that we think are worth encouraging. Through quiet diplomacy we tried to discourage them from doing the things we didn't like: raiding into neighboring countries and taking a notably harsh line at a particular point in one of the regional conflicts down there.
I think he had a clear idea about where this was all going to come out. And basically that is the way it is coming out-- leaving aside South Africa itself for the moment, because I wouldn't presume to speak about the internal changes that are going on in South Africa right now. But I think, as far as the rest of southern Africa is concerned, recalling what he was saying ten years ago this is the kind of outcome that he thought could be achieved. And by marshaling the resources of the State Department, and more specifically the African Bureau, in that cause, he was able to make a tremendous contribution to bringing about a reasonable solution to these problems.

Q: How did he use you? Essentially you were his press officer, weren't you?

WYGANT: Right. As I say, he hadn't had much experience in the past with public affairs, and I'm not a public affairs officer by background; I'm a political officer. We pursued, I guess, a two-pronged strategy.

He was very anxious to see more private initiative in developing the economies of Africa back in the early Eighties, so we became involved in trying to get the U.S. business community and potential investors to become more active in Africa.

We did two rather major trade and investment promotion programs, one in Boston and one in Houston. Crocker was the featured speaker at both, but we had a lot of support from the Department of Commerce, the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and other elements within the U.S. government who deal with trade development programs. We had a series of lectures and then some practical workshops, spread out over a day (in fact I think the Houston one might have been over two days), in our effort to get more business involvement in Africa.

In terms of concrete results, I don't know. I think we raised a lot of consciousness levels. Whether some real investment or trade developed from these programs in hard terms, bottom line, I'm not sure. But we certainly were trying to get more U.S. business involvement in Africa.

Beyond that, though, when it came to talking about his southern Africa program, if you will "his constructive engagement," Crocker wanted to get the word out as much as he could in

the sorts of media, both print and electronic, that would be listened to and that would be paid attention to. So he nurtured several contacts with *The New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal*, and other opinion leaders. He would give interviews to reporters from those newspapers and others. I remember we went out to Los Angeles once and he did what was in effect a graduate seminar with the editorial board of the *L.A. Times.* He also was quite willing to appear on the major networks. I remember he was on *Nightline* at one time and once or twice was interviewed by CBS.

Our strategy was to sell his ideas for the political changes that needed to be done in Africa, especially southern Africa, coupled with the desire to see greater U.S. private initiative in Africa. The general feeling was that the economic development problems of the African continent were overwhelming, and therefore our major emphasis had to lie in terms of what the U.S. could be doing to assist African development. There was also a very specific commitment on his part and on the part of his bureau to try to resolve the southern African political problems.

Q: First there was Secretary Haig and then there was Secretary Shultz in that period. Did you feel there was much interest in Africa on their part, or were you given pretty much a loose rein?

WYGANT: I think the interest focused on southern Africa. That had also been Carter's particular interest, and that's where both Secretaries felt the emphasis had to be. Crocker of course was secretary for all of the African continent south of the desert, and there were times when he had to become involved in Nigeria or East Africa or what have you, but clearly, at least in those early years, the two years that I was there, his emphasis was on southern Africa. And the bureau was pretty much left to its own devices, to devise the policies that...

Q: In other words, Haig didn't come in with any particular African feel, or Shultz?

WYGANT: I'm not aware of anything like that.

Q: You probably would have been if there...

WYGANT: I think that both Haig and Shultz had a good deal of confidence in Crocker and pretty much left it up to him as to how he was going to handle the African issues.

Q: Just to get a feel for it, how would you work this? I mean, would Crocker go up and say, "Mr. Secretary, I think we ought to do this or that."?

WYGANT: Sometimes we were responding to requests; a television station or a radio station or a newspaper reporter would want to do an interview. In other cases, we would target someone whom we felt would be worthwhile to cultivate. Crocker would meet fairly often with the State Department press representatives, and occasionally he would give off-the-record briefings, not for attribution, in the State Department press room.

In essence, in those days I think each side was sort of feeling the other side out. It wasn't a question of a major blitz on the part of the African Bureau trying to put Crocker across, or Crocker himself wanting to put himself across, nor was it a case of overwhelming interest on the part of the media to try to find out what was going on. And I would say it was probably fifty-fifty in terms of whether we would initiate a contact that we felt would be useful, or whether one of the media would come to us and want to do something.

Q: I'm getting the feeling, from the time you were there, and it obviously continued, that Crocker's approach was a professional one, in that this was not an ego trip or something.

WYGANT: No, I don't think so at all. I think he had a deep personal commitment to trying to resolve the problems of southern Africa. And I think he had a deep understanding of what the problems were and a pretty clear idea about how he thought he could make it come out. No, it wasn't an ego trip. I think it was something that he felt was a genuine contribution that he could make.

Q: What was your impression of the press?

WYGANT: I think initially they were somewhat sympathetic to Crocker, because he was articulate, he was able to explain what he was doing, and always knew his brief.

In some cases, he was making changes in what had been U.S. policy. He was certainly in some ways being more accommodating to South Africa than the previous administration had been. Frankly the Carter administration had been pretty much written off by South Africa. Therefore, the South Africans were pleased when a conservative Republican was elected president, and they felt that they could do more business with President Reagan, so there was a more receptive attitude on the part of the South African government to deal with us. And Crocker took advantage of that.

I think that as time went on and the war continued to drag out in Angola, and the South Africans were making incursions into neighboring countries such as Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, there was increased irritation and discouragement and a feeling that Crocker's accommodations with South Africa were not working and that basically we needed to be tougher. And of course this eventuated in the passing of sanctions against South Africa in 1986. Crocker of course was still assistant secretary at the time; this was long after I left the bureau. And I think that disenchantment with the policy was manifest by the congressional action.

However, a year or two after that, the edifice that Crocker had been carefully building to bring about these changes had finally been constructed, and we now have an infinitely more optimistic outlook for southern Africa than has been evident for generations.

Q: Were you working to gain access to and a greater understanding of the black community in the United States?

WYGANT: Yes.

Q: How'd you go about that?

WYGANT: Crocker already had some contacts with the black community. I remember we went up to New York and had a discussion with the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which is a foundation that has done a lot of work in this area. He had had some discussions with Trans Africa, Randall Robinson's organization. The latter was pretty much opposed to what Crocker was doing. The communication lines were open, but there was very little meeting of the minds. He also tried to work with black businessmen. I remember that he addressed the Chamber of Commerce that is largely composed of black businesses in the United States. As I recall (I may have the term wrong), the National Business League held its annual conference in Dallas, at which Crocker gave the keynote address. So there was a very real attempt on his part for outreach into the black community to help them understand what he was trying to do.

Q: From '83 until '85 you were with the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science. So it has been sort of a melange of...

WYGANT: During that two years, I was dealing with a number of bilateral science and technology agreements which we had with East Asian countries: Indonesia, Thailand and others. We were actually negotiating an agreement with Thailand during this period. We concluded negotiation of a science and technology agreement with Sri Lanka which was signed when Sri Lanka's President visited Washington. I headed the U.S. delegation to a bilateral science and tech. meeting that we had in Islamabad in late 1984. I also was with a large U.S. delegation that held a discussions with the ASEAN powers in the Philippines on science and technology. This was the annual US-ASEAN economic dialogue, of which science and technology was a part. And I worked with people who were developing our bilateral science exchanges with Japan.

It was interesting work; it was markedly different from anything that I had done previously in the State Department. Moreover, I don't have a technical background in science. But basically what we were trying to do was to make a certain amount of U.S. technology available to foreign countries, but with a clear exchange in mind, where the United States would also have an opportunity to gain from the relationship.

The general supposition has often been that foreign countries, particularly the developing countries, simply want to raid U.S. technology and then use it for practical purposes and sell the products back to us. We had our eyes open to that and were trying to avoid the kinds of situations where that would be the case. But we were in a position to provide some technical advice and technical assistance which was helpful to their economic development activities and which would not put them in competition with us in the marketplace.

Q: I'd like to turn to where you spent, really, the last five years of the time you were in the Foreign Service, and that is, in the Pacific. I wonder, how'd you get into this? And then let's start with what you were doing.

WYGANT: I had begun to learn about the Pacific Islands when I was in Australia, because while working in Embassy Canberra the Pacific Islands were also part of my responsibility. The Australians are very active in the Pacific and I learned a lot about the South Pacific Islands during my Canberra sojourn.

That was also at a time when the Carter administration was heavily involved in negotiations to end the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and bring about the relationship called "free association" with various entities of the Trust Territory. In fact the chief U.S. negotiator, Peter Rosenblatt, had come to Canberra about 1979, I think it was, or 1980, to explain the situation to the Australian Government. At the time, it appeared that the whole business would be wrapped up and we would have the new relationship by the end of the Carter administration. There was some slippage, and the loose ends were not wrapped up by the end of the Carter administration.

When the Reagan administration came to power, it wanted to take a good look at what had gone on previously before committing the new leadership one way or the other on any issue. However, by the end of 1981 the Reagan administration had determined that the negotiations which had been virtually concluded by Carter's negotiator had been on the right track and could be supported by the new administration.

A new negotiator was appointed, Fred Zeder, and we began a process of final negotiation of the Compacts of Free Association. The agreements were signed in 1983 with three countries that were going to be in free association. All had formerly been part of the Trust Territory: the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and Palau.

The fourth part of the equation, the fourth entity within the old Trust Territory, was the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. They had determined at an earlier time, in the mid-Seventies, that they wanted to become a commonwealth of the United States, with a status rather similar to Puerto Rico. The Northern Marianas would have U.S. citizenship and the U.S. would have sovereignty over the island group, but they would have a very large degree of internal autonomy. We concluded a covenant with the Northern Marianas in the mid-Seventies, and so that part of the relationship had been pretty much solidified long before I went to Saipan. It only remained to end the trusteeship agreement for the covenant to come fully into effect.

Once the agreements were signed in 1983 with the three entities that were to become freely associated, it became necessary for the legislatures of those countries as well as the U.S. Congress to approve, and also to approve implementing legislation.
This was a very long and involved process. The U.S. Congress didn't finally take up discussion of the compacts until the spring of 1985, two years after the agreements were

signed. But throughout the calendar year '85 (and I should mention that I was sent out to Saipan in February of 1985) the Congressional process was at work.

Congressman Solarz, the chairman of the House Subcommittee for East Asia and the Pacific, and two other congressmen came to the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshalls, in the spring of 1985 to hold hearings and have a look at the situation. They went back; they did their work. Parallel efforts were going on in the Senate.

Then Vice President Bush came out to Saipan in October 1985 to talk to the leaders of Micronesia and to assure them that the process was moving and that the Congress seemed to be on the verge of passing the implementation legislation and passing the compacts. Finally, at the very end of 1985, Congress did pass the legislation, and President Reagan signed it into law on January 14, 1986. Then it was a question of when the legislation would be implemented and free association would actually take place.

During this whole period I was in the field. I was based on Saipan talking to the leadership, particularly in the FSM, although I had under me two junior officers, one who was dealing with Palau and one who was dealing with the Marshall Islands. There was a great deal of frustration on the part of the islanders because they felt that the whole process had taken such a long time and they were anxious to move into free association. In any event, things did begin to move pretty smartly in 1986.

The question of Palau is exceedingly complicated and probably wouldn't be worth going into in great detail. I would have to go back to my notes even to respond authoritatively about the Palau situation.

Essentially Palau has a constitution which has nuclear- free provisions, which are not compatible with the compact. While the Palauans, by significant majorities, have always voted in favor of the compact and evidently would like to have a compact of free association with the United States, it has not been possible to make this compatible with their constitution because it requires a seventy-five percent vote of the electorate in order to bring the compact into compatibility with the constitution. Although a succession of compact- related votes have always ranged between sixty percent up to as high as seventy-three percent in favor, Palau has never gotten the required seventy-five percent vote on a compact referendum, so therefore Palau remains even today part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. In fact it alone is the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

When it became obvious in 1986 that Palau was not going to be able to bring its status into compatibility with the compact, it was decided that we would go ahead to implement the compacts with the Marshalls and the FSM, as well as the covenant with the Northern Marianas, anyway. There had been a meeting of the Trusteeship Council in May of 1986 in which the Trusteeship Council told the United States to bring about implementation and to do it by September 30. We weren't quite able to make the September 30 deadline, but in October the Compact of Free Association came into effect in the Marshalls, and on November 3, 1986 the compact with the Federated States of Micronesia and the covenant

with the Northern Marianas were put fully into force by joint presidential proclamations--President Reagan and the presidents of the Marshalls and the Federated States of Micronesia. So since November of '86, now almost four years ago, we have had a brand new relationship with the Marshall Islands and the FSM.

I won't go into the relationship with the Marshalls. That has been the responsibility of my colleague Sam Thomsen, and I think you would want to talk to Sam for this purpose. I think Sam would have a lot to offer to this oral history project.

However, in the FSM I was, to borrow a phrase from Dean Acheson, "present at the creation" and have watched the relationship develop from dependence in 1985 through full recognition of sovereignty in 1986 and now to 1990 when the FSM is fully on its feet as a new nation in the Pacific. It is recognized by eighteen foreign countries, including China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Island States, Israel, Chile, and of course the United States. Presently there are four resident foreign embassies in Kolonia, Pohnpei.

Q: While speaking of this, you weren't mentioning any of the European powers. Is there any reason for this?

WYGANT: Yes, this is one of the problems that has developed since the compact was implemented. The British and the French are of the opinion that the trusteeship agreement, concluded back in 1947, by which the United States gained administrative control over the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, had not been properly terminated as far as these three entities-- the FSM, Marshalls, and Northern Marianas--are concerned.

We did it by notifying the secretary-general of what we had done, and then asked the secretary-general to circularize this among the members of the Security Council.

I should mention that the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands was the only trust territory resulting from the Second World War that was considered to be a strategic trust. And it was the Security Council that was to have overall responsibility for that trust territory rather than the Trusteeship Council. In fact several years after trusteeship began, the Security Council turned its powers over to the Trusteeship Council to be the supervisory body that would monitor the actions of the administrators and also listen to the concerns of the people affected in the trust territory. But the ultimate responsibility of the Security Council for the trust territory has never been disputed by anyone.

We did not want to go for what would have amounted to a partial termination of the agreement (Palau not being on board) because we were quite certain that the Soviet Union would take a hostile attitude and would probably veto such a measure, and therefore we would end up with a result that was worse than a situation where we had basically declared the trusteeship at an end.

But this is still an issue. The British and the French are still of the opinion that the trusteeship has not been properly terminated.

Q: It sounds like being a little bit precious.

WYGANT: Yes, it is.

Q: There must be something behind it.

WYGANT: I think what has happened is that they are taking a highly legalistic interpretation because people with that mindset in New York have taken that position. Moreover, the issue has not been perceived to be important enough politically to require a pragmatic solution. That's the way I'd look at it.

Q: What were you doing?

WYGANT: To start with, I was the head of the field office, if you will, for the status negotiations. That was in 1985 and 1986. I was based in Saipan, but I was traveling almost every month to the FSM, which was the area for which I had particular responsibility.

Q: How'd you travel there?

WYGANT: All by air. The old trust territory is about the same size as the 48 states in air miles and dimensions. It is less than half the land area of Rhode Island, but when you include the two-hundred-mile EEZs [exclusive economic zones], you have an area as big as the lower 48 states. So there was a lot of long and rather arduous air travel getting around to the different parts. But that's the way it is in the Pacific when you're working in the islands.

I had a deputy who was based in Saipan and followed the Palau situation, so he was traveling to Palau as often as I was traveling to the FSM. The third member of our operation--all Foreign Service officers--was based in the Marshall Islands. He actually lived and worked in Majuro. It had been the intention of the State Department that I would only be in Saipan for a few months and then I would move to Pohnpei and operate out of the FSM rather than Saipan.

Q: Pohnpei is where?

WYGANT: Pohnpei is one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia. It is the largest island in the Federated States of Micronesia, 125 square miles, and is the capital island containing the national government. The national government has a capital outside the main town on Pohnpei, which is Kolonia. Kolonia is the capital of the State of Pohnpei and was until a year ago also the capital of the FSM. But a year ago the FSM opened a brand new capital about six miles outside of Kolonia, named Palikir. So, technically speaking, the capital of the FSM now is Palikir on the island of Pohnpei, which is one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Q: While you were traveling, what were you doing?

WYGANT: I was meeting with the president of the FSM and with the foreign secretary to explain the processes that were going on in Congress and elsewhere in Washington, to help to negotiate some of the subsidiary agreements, and to make sure that there was a complete understanding between the FSM government and the U.S. government as to just what was going on and how the compact was going to be implemented. We had strategy sessions on how we would approach the United Nations, how we would approach friendly powers such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. And beyond that, trying to establish the basis for what would become an embassy. By the summer of 1986 a more junior Foreign Service officer was brought out who immediately set-up in Pohnpei as a one-man operation which eventually became the embassy.

I started to say that I was supposed to have moved to Pohnpei in the spring of 1985, but there was great concern in Congress about how the relationship would be managed after the compact came into effect. Elements in the Congress that had historically dealt with the area and which were inclined toward the Interior Department, in effect the House Interior Committee and the Senate Committee on Energy and Resources, were not sure that they wanted the State Department to manage the relationship. Basically, they wanted the Interior Department to continue to play the lead role. However, there was strong feeling on the part of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and to some extent the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, since these countries were going to be in effect independent, the more logical place for the government-to-government relationship to be managed was with the State Department. Because of this dispute I was constrained from moving to Pohnpei since the Interior-inclined elements in Congress were concerned that this might preempt the congressional decision about how the post-trusteeship relationship would be managed. So I dealt with the awkward situation of living in Saipan but working in the FSM (1200 miles apart).

Q: When you were getting direction from Washington, how much was this in the hands of State? Because it sounds like you've got Interior, you've got things in Congress.

WYGANT: The relationship was largely being managed by Ambassador Zeder and his staff. Fred Zeder was appointed by President Reagan to be the negotiator for the Micronesian status negotiations with the personal rank of ambassador. He was physically located in the Department of the Interior, but he reported to the National Security Council. His staff was made up of military and State Department officers, and since they were physically in Interior, they had a close relationship with Interior. So basically what you had was an interagency group that was making policy and giving directions. Although I was still more or less working for the State Department, I was really getting my direction directly from Zeder and his staff.

Q: How about relations with the American military? Often when we sort of pull out of places, there's an awful lot of heel- dragging and all this. How was this at the time?

WYGANT: I think that was very well-handled. Back in the early days, when the negotiations were started in the Seventies, the Pentagon took a good look at Micronesia and decided what they felt they might eventually want or not want. They decided that in the Marshall Islands they would want to keep the Kwajalein missile range, which of course has been around since the Sixties. In Palau, the Pentagon decided that there were certain areas that might be to useful on a contingency basis, depending on what our requirements might be sometime into the unforeseeable future. Defense also had interest in certain facilities in the Northern Marianas. They had no interest in anything in the Federated States of Micronesia. This was all made clear from the beginning and therefore became part of the negotiations of the covenant with the Northern Marianas and the compacts with Palau and the Marshalls. Thus our military had an opportunity from the very beginning to indicate what it wanted and what it felt it could use or not use.

The transition went very well. The Commander in Chief Naval Forces Marianas is responsible for the entire area minus the Marshall Islands and plus Guam; he is also the Commander in Chief Pacific's Representative. We were lucky to have had an extremely capable and very well-rounded individual as admiral on Guam over the past three years, who was able to shape the new relationship extremely well.

Q: Who was that?

WYGANT: Rear Admiral Thomas J. Johnson, retired now. And therefore the transition worked very smoothly, and we did not have the kinds of problems that perhaps we've had in other places.

Q: Did you have problems one way or the other with a particular congressman?

WYGANT: I don't think so. Once Congress finally made its decision, which in effect shared the responsibility between State and Interior, all moved ahead smoothly. State has the responsibility for managing the government-to-government relations. The U.S. representative, now to be titled U.S. ambassador, has the same role that any ambassador has anywhere else in the world. Everybody who works for the U.S. federal government in the FSM or the Marshalls works under the supervision of the ambassador.

However, the economic and financial aspects of the compact relationship are still handled by Interior. There is a subsidy of about a hundred million dollars a year that goes to the FSM from the U.S. government, and that is passed through the Department of the Interior's budget process. It is no-year money; it was all appropriated in one big block back in 1985, so that it doesn't have to go through the annual appropriations exercise. This compact funding lasts until 2001.

The Department of the Interior has technical assistance capability, and also gets money from Congress for technical assistance in the Freely Associated States and the Territories. The Freely Associated States have a call on that program, which is run by the Department of the Interior.

And then finally, the Department of the Interior coordinates the programs of the fifteen or twenty federal agencies that are still involved out in the area.

Those are the three basic responsibilities that Interior continues to have. So there has to be a good understanding between State and Interior as to how this relationship is to develop.

Q: Did you feel you were negotiating more with the Department of the Interior than with the people of the islands?

WYGANT: No, not really. For one thing, the Department of the Interior does not have any personnel in the Federated States of Micronesia. Interior prefers to handle the relationship directly out of Washington. So occasionally when we ran into differences of opinion or difficulties, these would have to be resolved in Washington between State and Interior. Given that Interior had nobody on the ground in the FSM, I reported directly to State, and that's how we handled the government-to- government relationship.

Q: Then you moved from your traveling office on Saipan to become the equivalent to the first ambassador to the FSM.

WYGANT: Yes, I closed the office in Saipan in February of 1987. This was because we had now instituted the new relationships with everybody except Palau. So the only reason even to have a Trust Territory government was to have some kind of administration for Palau. The TT government had drawn down tremendously by 1987 to just a few dozen people, and there wasn't any need to have a State Department office in Saipan after that point.

I came back to the U.S. for several months, and during that time I was going through the process of awaiting the presidential appointment: having my Senate hearings, confirmation eventually by the Senate, swearing in and so forth. The position was that of a chief of mission, and, except for the title, I went through the entire process that any ambassador would go through. My pay was also that of an ambassador.

Q: Well, tell me why. I mean, you were appointed during an extremely politically aware administration. I'm talking about domestic patronage and everything else. And I would have thought there would have been somebody selling cars or something who always wanted to sit on a South Sea island for a couple of years.

WYGANT: We wondered whether something like that might happen. I think you can attribute it to Ambassador Zeder and his staff. They were anxious to have two people go out to these freely associated states who had been deeply involved in the process for several years: myself and Sam Thomsen, who became the first U.S. representative to the Marshall Islands. Zeder eventually prevailed both in the State Department and at the White House. Sam and I were nominated as professional Foreign Service officers for Chief of Mission

positions. But of course, as with any other ambassadorial appointment, in the future it's really up to the gods as to how it will come out.

Q: Who's out there now?

WYGANT: Aurelia Brazeal will be sworn in, as a matter of fact tomorrow, to be the first ambassador with the title of ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia. She's my successor.

Q: What's her background?

WYGANT: She has quite an extensive background in economic affairs, and specifically with Japan. Most recently, she was minister-counselor for economic affairs in Tokyo.

Q: But she's a career officer?

WYGANT: She is a career Foreign Service officer, yes, and she will be going out very shortly to head the embassy.

Q: Shall we move from Saipan now to Pohnpei?

WYGANT: Sure.

Q: Were there any major problems that you had to deal with in this '87 to '90 period?

WYGANT: Our major job was to establish an embassy; to get ourselves into a building, which had been built for other purposes but which we adapted as a chancellery; to build a couple of residences for myself and for my deputy; and, to recruit and train a local staff. May I add we now have a very good local staff of four Pohnpeians. We also have an American "Part-time, Intermittent, Temporary" employee, who is neither part-time, intermittent, nor temporary--she's the admin. assistant who works a full forty-hour week plus. She is an American citizen who speaks Pohnpeian and has lived in Pohnpei for many years, and is a very valuable member of the team.

That, I suppose, was the basis of our work, where we started really from scratch in a country that is poorly served by outside communications. Everything has to be shipped in or air-freighted in. Shortages often develop. There aren't too many people with mechanical servicing capabilities, so when machines break down, sometimes you have to ship the machines thousands of miles to get them fixed. The utilities are problematical, especially electricity, so we had a lot of problems with getting our electrical equipment up to snuff and then keeping it that way.

Steve Mann, who was the FSO I introduced to Pohnpei in August 1986, worked out of a hotel room for a while and then had a small office in the Peace Corps headquarters. We came a long way over a four-year period to where we have a functioning chancellery and a

couple of residences which work quite well, and our presence on the island. As I say, we now have four foreign embassies there, but for most of the time we were the only embassy in town.

On the substantive side, the most important responsibility we had was to secure greater international recognition of what had actually happened, to convince major countries such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and China that free association was a reality, that the trusteeship was finished, and that what we had here were countries that were able to handle their own foreign affairs as well as internal affairs.

The only link that we have which might call into question the full independence of the FSM is the security link.

Essentially there was a tradeoff, whereby we would continue over a fifteen-year period to provide substantial amounts of economic assistance to the country, because the country still needed a good deal of economic and development assistance to survive.

We in turn would get the security assurances that we wanted. First of all, that the FSM would never invite a third- nation military force in without discussing it with us and basically getting our permission. We refer to it as a policy of strategic denial. We have no plans to put any kind of military forces into the FSM or to build any bases, but we wouldn't want any other country to do it either. Secondly, the U.S. assumes responsibility for the FSM's defense, in that the Micronesians have no military, naval, or air forces.

I think you have to look back a bit into the history and realize that the Japanese had heavily fortified this area and used Micronesia to attack us: Pearl Harbor, to begin with, and then later on, into Guam and into Southeast Asia.

So that was the tradeoff.

Q: How did you deal with and what was your impression of the government cadre there?

WYGANT: I think, at the top, they have some very good people. The president, who was there when I first arrived, Tosiwo Nakayama, was a wise and well-revered statesman who had led his country for a number of years toward this ultimate goal of free association. Rather ironically, the way the FSM constitution works, a president may only succeed himself once after an initial four-year term, so you can get two four-year terms maximum, and then must retire. Nakayama was coming to the end of his eighth year when the compact finally came into effect, so he actually was only president for a few months into the new period.

He was succeeded by a much younger man, a Yapese senator, John Haglelgam, who had had a distinguished career in the Congress for about ten years. Haglelgam was quite different in his approach, but has been successful as president. The FSM has displayed a

good deal of political maturity, in that an administration could be changed without any tremendous change in government.

So my dealings, if you will, started at that level and then extended through the Cabinet and the governors of the four states.

Q: What was your impression? I mean, was this a matter of our trying to let go? It's always difficult. I mean, these places don't sound like they're very economically sound.

WYGANT: The economic development of the area is still at a rudimentary level. The FSM has a population of about 100,000. There is hardly any manufacturing in the islands. The country has enormous potential in fish resources, and what we're trying to do is to get American fishing companies to be more involved and interested in the FSM, with some degree of success. Local fishing for export, however, remains at a rudimentary level.

The island of Pohnpei has agricultural potential, because it does have 125 square miles of highly fertile tropical land. The Japanese grew a lot of vegetables, sugar, rice and other crops during the time they ruled on Pohnpei.

But agriculture is not much of a prospect for other islands. A certain amount of copra is grown on the outer islands and around the fringes of the main islands, but copra is not a product that has done very well on the international market over the last several years.

The main industries, if you will, are government and the provision of services. The private sector, in some areas, might be roughly equal in size, in payroll size let's say, to the government, but in other cases the government actually has the edge. It is difficult to conceive of ways that economic development will work in a country that has so little land and such vast sea areas and problems with communication.

But slowly, I think some progress can be made. The goal of the first fifteen years of the compact is to try and develop a greater self-sufficiency through substantial economic assistance from the United States, so that at the end of the fifteen-year period (which ends in 2001), the FSM may have a higher degree of self-sufficiency than at present. Up until recent times Micronesia has probably been about ninety percent dependent on the economic assistance it gets from the United States. If that could be reduced to seventy or eighty percent, this would be a substantial achievement.

Q: I would think that there would be some concern on the part of the American representative, you yourself and others, and maybe on the part of the island people, about the return of the Japanese who by economic penetration might bring them into its orbit.

WYGANT: This has already happened to a large degree in the Northern Marianas. Now around half a million Japanese visitors come into the Northern Marianas in a given year. There has been an explosion of hotels, tourist services, etc. This is not yet happening in the Federated States of Micronesia, largely I think because the islanders don't really want to see

their culture changed that much by a massive influx of tourists. Controlled increases in tourism and some development of hotels, I think, will take place in the FSM over the next ten years, but I don't think you'll see the tremendous emphasis on tourism that you find in the Northern Marianas, or for that matter on Guam.

Q: What about economic investment?

WYGANT: There is some going on, but I'm not aware of any major Japanese economic investment going on in the FSM at the present time.

Q: Are there any strictures against this, either legally or...?

WYGANT: Well, theoretically, no. In principle the four states of the FSM and the national government are very anxious to see joint ventures and more foreign private investment. But when it comes right down to the nitty gritty of getting the permits, of trying to secure use of land, and developing local cooperation, progress is slow. Land can only be owned by local people; no non-Micronesians can own land anywhere in the FSM, or in the Northern Marianas for that matter.

It becomes a question of working out leases. In most cases there are disputed titles over land, and therefore a lease is a difficult thing because you're dealing not just with one landlord, but typically with a group of people who may or may not be related, or who may or may not even be speaking to each other.

Foreign investment also requires certain changes in island ways and the traditional culture to which Micronesians are still very tied. And so it just takes a long time to work out any kind of venture that will be sellable in Micronesia and also economically viable.

A few people have done it. There is one American couple who have built a very successful hotel in Pohnpei, and they also run several other small industries that are associated with the hotel, including a travel agency. They had a lot of patience and put in a lot of hard work and grit. Out there almost twenty years now they are making a go of it. But what is required is tremendous commitment, dedication, and patience.

Q: Much of what you've said has gone around the various constitutions of these groups. Were these sort of homegrown constitutions, or copies of the United States's one? How did they come about?

WYGANT: Well, the constitutions are a mixture. Back in the early days of the Trust Territory, from the mid-Forties until the early Sixties, and the Kennedy administration, one might say the Trust Territory was in a state of benign neglect. The Navy, which administered the area until 1952 had a firm policy of expelling all outsiders from the Trust Territory. So all the Japanese, Koreans, Okinawans, and others who had come in droves during Japanese administration were sent back to their home countries. Beyond that, the

administration was very light. Few resources were put in. Nor was much required of the islanders; they could just sort of do their own thing and be themselves.

This continued until about 1960 when the United Nations sent one of its regular visiting mission to the territory. Members were quite critical of the fact that the U.S. hadn't done much to develop infrastructure, hadn't done much to develop economic or social change in the area, and also was not doing enough in education, was not doing enough right across the board.

This being the Kennedy administration, there was a great deal of concern with the report of the UN mission, and the U.S. administration decided that by gosh, you know, we will start doing these kinds of things. So the money going out to the Trust Territory increased enormously in the early Sixties.

By the mid-Sixties a new equation was added when the Peace Corps began to arrive. At one time we had 700 Peace Corps volunteers in a country whose population then was 70,000, so you had about one Peace Corps volunteer per hundred people. The Peace Corps made a tremendous change in terms of attitudes, in terms of awareness of political rights and related opinions.

So that by the end of the Sixties the Micronesians were saying, look, this trusteeship arrangement is antiquated and we've got to modernize and update our relationship. I don't think there was ever a particularly serious desire to be completely independent from the United States, but there certainly was a desire to be far less dependent and more in control of their own affairs.

That awareness developed into the beginning of the negotiating phase. The negotiations went through several permutations before we finally got the agreement signed in 1983. In fact the negotiations extended over a period of about fourteen years.

Q: You mentioned Ambassador Zeder. What was his background?

WYGANT: He is a businessman, and has been a banker. In the mid-Seventies during the Nixon and Ford period, he was the director of territorial affairs in the Department of the Interior. So he has a mixed background of government and private sector experience. He was selected to head the negotiations because of his knowledge of the area based on the time he had been in the Department of the Interior. He is now, by the way, president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

Q: Well, Mike, we're at the end of this now. But you have probably had more experience than most in this Pacific area, which is almost an unknown area for most people, even those concerned with foreign affairs. Where do you see things going there?

WYGANT: I think the next major step is to resolve this U.N. question, on the political side, where we can finally get U.N. agreement that the trusteeship has been terminated for the

FSM, the Marshalls, and the Northern Marianas. It is important that the Marshalls and the FSM continue to broaden their relationships with other countries, most specifically with the European countries, who seem to have the biggest problem. And I think that's doable, even absent any particular change in the Palau situation.

I guess the other major issue, and one that will be with us as far into the future as you can see, is to try and stimulate greater economic development and growth of the economies at the grassroots level in Micronesia. This can be done through joint venturing. This can be done through greater efforts on their part. The Micronesians are going to have to develop their infrastructure, and they have the wherewithal through the compact funding to do this. And they are making some progress.

Remember that things move very slowly in the islands. There is a pace of life in Micronesia which is different than that of any other place I've been. Certainly different from Africa; also different than the Soviet Union or really any other place I've been. It just takes a long time to get things done.

The FSM is particularly complex, because it is a federation of four states. Each state has a tremendous amount of local autonomy. You could almost conceive of the FSM as being more like the United States under the Articles of Confederation than under the U.S. Constitution.

The governors have their own ideas about things, and they also have legislatures with which they have to work. The legislatures are developed on a checks and balances system. The constitutions are really very much modeled on the U.S. Constitution, so there is a good amount of wrangling between governors and legislatures, and, at the national level, between the president and the national Congress.

Q: Because of the small population and the number of legislatures, it sounds very much like a New England town meeting type of government, which is interesting but doesn't necessarily get an awful lot done.

WYGANT: Yes, that is the situation. And quite often decision making is paralyzed because of disagreements either within the Congress or the legislature, or between the Congress or legislature and the president or the governor. They move on the basis of consensus, and sometimes it takes a long, long time to put that consensus together. Once they have decided and there is a consensus, then things can move. But it takes a long time.

Q: Mike, I want to thank you very much. It has been fascinating.

WYGANT: Stu, it has been a very interesting exercise for me, too.

End of interview