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BARRY ZORTHIAN

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INTERVIEW

Q: How did you come to join the Voice of America, Barry?

Events Leading to Entrance into VOA

ZORTHIAN: Let me just give you a general summary of my time in the Agency so that when we move along you can fit things in as needed.

In World War Two I was in the U.S. Marine Corps, and at the end of the war I was stationed down in Quantico after service in the Pacific. I left Quantico, was demobilized, out of uniform, in the spring-summer of '46, and went back to my hometown of New Haven, Connecticut, where I soon joined the New Haven Register and was working as a journalist at that time. The key point in reference to USIA being that I had graduated from Yale, and in the course of my year in New Haven, at a Yale cocktail party, I ran into Lowell Clucas, who had been managing editor of the Yale Daily News when I was on it. Lowell told me he was a very senior editor, official, at the Voice of America. I'm not sure I'd ever heard of the Voice of America before; if I had, it had been in the most general terms. He was then chief of what now you would call Talks and Commentary. I told him I was anxious to get down to New York, which I was, and he suggested I come down and work for the Voice of America.

After the appropriate amount of correspondence, I joined the Voice of America in the winter of 1947 as a GS-9 script writer in the commentary section. I used to do a show called Commentators Digest, which used excerpts from radio commentaries at the time, and UN Review, which was a weekly review of UN activities. And then I did some actual commentaries. That was then all in the Argonaut Building in New York, on West 57th Street. The newsroom was in the same building then. People like Hal Berman, John Knox, Art Kauffman, Mort Glatzer, Renee Hill, Hal Courlander, Bill Stricker and various

others were all in the newsroom at that time -- holdovers from the wartime period. I was the young squirt who came into the commentary section, worked for a fellow named Doug Blaufarb, who eventually joined CIA and served at length and with distinction in Southeast Asia, in Laos and so on. I ran into him later. And our overall boss was Lowell Clucas. Lowell later came to fame as PAO in Munich. He was the target of the Cohn-Schine investigation. He was the one who talked about "junketeering gumshoes." That phrase came from Lowell Clucas. Eventually he was forced out, and joined St. Regis Paper Company in San Francisco as vice president for public affairs. I've run into him periodically over the years.

1947: Congressional Funding Cuts Split Some VOA Functions Off to CBS and NBC

But I was in that Talks and Commentary section at that time. In the fall of 1947, Congress, for a whole series of reasons, essentially annoyance at the Voice of America, pressures from the outside -- "Why is the government continuing in the 'propaganda business'?" -- shifted funding for many of the Voice's broadcasts from the Voice proper to CBS and NBC. As a junior employee I was terminated, I was in a RIF notice, but was picked up by CBS for its expanding news operation for Voice of America programming. I worked at CBS, in that blue studio building on West 53rd Street, for about a year, with a group of people, some of whom later joined the Voice, along with me. We were there for about a year, then went back. Dan Harvey was chief of news, a fellow named Larry Haas was his supervisor. Jerry Thiese worked with me there. Dan became UN bureau chief of the VOA newsroom subsequently. We worked there for a year, just doing straight news programs. A lot of our broadcasts went to Latin America, which had been CBS' particular turf, but some of it also went over to Europe. It wasn't a Mickey Mouse operation, that's not fair, but it was a very low-budget basic operation.

Q: It was not labeled VOA?

ZORTHIAN: It was not labeled VOA. It was CBS' short-wave news service.

Q: Was VOA just out of the business at that time?

ZORTHIAN: Well, VOA had some operations, and essentially they were doing the commentaries. They were providing to these networks, CBS and NBC, official commentary. CBS, incidentally, in the building right across, was just starting television. I remember Jerry Theise, and I thought it would be great if we got into TV.

Congress Changes Mind: Funds (and Zorthian) Go Back to VOA

After that year at CBS, and similarly at NBC, there was a reversal of thinking in Washington. The networks wanted to give up VOA; it had been a pain in the neck to them because they had come under criticism. They pretty much wanted to get out of it. So

the funding went back to the Voice proper, and they reacquired the personnel, including people like me. So we rejoined the Voice, or at least I did, as did various others.

VOA Organizational (or Disorganizational) Patterns in Early Days of Fully Resumed Operations

I then, personally, joined the English section of the Voice of America, which was absolutely embryonic. There was no news operation. We started then, and I technically was the first member of an English section news operation, quite separate from the central news operation. By then the Central News Operation had moved from the Argonaut Building kitty-corner on 57th Street to the General Motors Building. We had an English service news operation in the Argonaut Building. Directors then were Gene Kern and a fellow named Sidney Sulkin. Gene Kern finally stayed in New York and became an announcer; Sidney Sulkin became editor of Changing Times. Their supervisor was Al Puhan. Over at the newsroom, Hal Berman became chief. We went through a series of policy advisers. The Policy office was over there. The key adviser in those days, in the early fifties, was Ed Kretzmann, a State Department officer assigned there.

Q: Why was there a separate newsroom set up for the English operation?

ZORTHIAN: The central newsroom was not in the habit of putting together news shows. They put out a news file. Language services put together their own news shows, and English was just restarting so it needed a news show. The first members of that English news service to join me were Jerry Theise and later Bob Goldman, then Mark Lewis joined us, Jerry Bakst joined. Tweeny Ryan joined. As we went along Alis DeSola joined. And we had announcers like Paul Parks and Fitz -- whatever his name was. Russ Shephard and Hank Miller were in the English section, and so was Ed Goldberger as chief of features. We had quite a group then, a lot of whom went on for years at VOA.

That news service grew, and remained separate and became quite an expanded news operation. But never originating copy. Copy originated in the Central Newsroom and came over to our building. We were operated as a separate service. We had a long table and put out the individual stories and would keep substituting a new version or pulling one off when it became dated. When it was time for a show, the announcer came in and just picked up page after page after page and went on and read it. Each separate story was a separate dateline. Some of the announcers were great sight readers. A guy like Paul Parks could almost read four or five lines ahead, you know, and catch errors. But it was a good operation, a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of spirit. Sometimes fighting the newsroom proper, which was much more under policy guidance if you will, policy restrictions, holdover habits from wartime days. We were young Turks and wanted to give the news straight, and we'd have our constant hassles and fights. But they weren't too bad. The real hassles were with the language desks even more than the central newsroom.

Q: But why would you have hassles with the language desks?

ZORTHIAN: You're right. We sort of set the broadcast pattern for VOA but we really did not battle the languages. The central newsroom did. They didn't have it that bad with us, although we did have some with the policy people. In due course, about '51, or it may even have been '52, Al Puhan made a decision to bring the newsroom under control -- the Central News Operation. As program manager, he was not really in charge of the central news operation. It was then brought under his control and I was shifted over there to become, first, assistant chief of the news division, working for Hal Berman, and then, in one of those astounding things in government, we switched jobs. Puhan made me news chief and Hal became assistant news chief. He and I got along very well personally. I regarded him as a good friend. He was not held in high regard by some of the Al Puhan camp, if you will. Mucio Delgado was with Puhan then, too. At any rate, we also then ultimately brought over the English language news operation as well -- Jerry Theise, Bob Goldman, all came over -- and we set up a central news operation. Those were the days when we started the VOB wire -- the VOA wire had been going, but we had a VOB wire and we had a VOC wire. We set up regional news desks. We prepared news shows as against just a news file.

Q: What went on the VOB and VOC wires?

Long Battle to Get Various Language Desks Under Central News Control

ZORTHIAN: If I remember, spot news was VOA. More extended and feature news was VOB. And VOC in theory was texts that would be issued. But still the language desks put together the final version of the news. It wasn't until years later, when I became program manager, that we put through a rule that the news desk would make up news shows which would be run by the language desks; any variation would have to be authorized by the regional news editor. That process of getting the language broadcasts -- and in this case English was the first one to go -- the language news broadcasts under control of central news was a long, difficult process in which there was a lot of blood shed, a lot of hassles under way. But we did finally get that through, and it held for quite a while. I don't know what the present practice is, but this was over the dead bodies of an awful lot of language barons, particularly East Europeans and the Soviet desks, who wouldn't present an American news show, or the news of the day as seen from the U.S., but the news of the day as seen from Hungary or the Soviet Union or Poland or what have you. So we got tremendous variations in the news.

Those also were, it goes without saying, the peak days of the Cold War, so the selection of news items was based more on those considerations than on news values. But I remained chief of that newsroom until a year after we moved to Washington. I'm sure you've caught up with the background on Washington deciding the Voice of America was out of control; it was too far away; it couldn't be supervised.

1954: VOA Moves to Washington. Accompanying Confusion and Separation of Related Functions

Q: Was that mainly Congressional or mainly Administration?

ZORTHIAN: I think it was mainly Congressional, although the Administration had a hand in it. But remember, the Administration changed the direction of the Voice and what was then the predecessor of USIA.

Q: I thought the decision (to move VOA) was made after the Eisenhower administration took over.

ZORTHIAN: The move was in '54 but the decision to move was made, if I remember -- Cliff, you'd have to correct me on this, and I'd have to look at the records, but the movement towards it was made just before Eisenhower came in, I believe. Double check that. I could be wrong. But remember, Dulles disowned us very quickly, said, "Get that God-damn thing out of the State Department." And so whoever came in -- and it ultimately was Ted Streibert -- wasn't there very long when this decision was made. This was not a decision based on the experience of the director of USIA; it was based on prior experience. We had gone through that whole period of IIA and the whole alphabet soup. I suspect that if you looked at it, that as far as the executive department goes, George Allen probably had as much to do with bringing it down here under control as anyone. Ed Barrett was into the thing then. Howland Sargeant was director for a while. Bill Benton was director for a while. We really had a God-damn revolving door.

We also had a revolving door in New York. The last sort of stable director was Foy Kohler. Charlie Thayer was in there. Then we went through that horrible McCarthy period, when Len Erickson came in, and -- what the hell did we call Morton, Doc Morton? We had a great expression for him, built out of his thing about "Keep your tailboards up," or something. I forget what we called him -- Tailboard Morton, or something. He wouldn't dare come out of his office, the guy was so scared. Then Jack Poppele finally took over; he was director when we shifted down to Washington. Then he in turn was followed by Bob Button, Henry Loomis, and then -- onward.

But I was chief of the newsroom when we moved down here. We initially moved down to 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue, in the IPS newsroom. Those were the days. They had an air circulator but no air conditioning. The teletype machines had the air conditioning; we had air circulation. By the afternoon it was like a cloud in there, from smoke and so on; you couldn't see. IPS was supposed to turn out the basic, U.S.-oriented copy. We were supposed to add to it foreign news, other news that they would not have prepared for the Wireless File. And then we were supposed to put it all together and transmit it over to the Health, Education and Welfare Building, where the desks would pick it up. One of the reasons you couldn't effectively control the desks' news copy was the physical separation. And one of the final things I was able to achieve before I left as program manager was to get that newsroom over to HEW, separate from IPS. There was a lot of argument and battling over that. It didn't actually move, as I remember, until after I'd left, but the decision had been made. Construction was under way, and so on, and that made the

control much easier. I spent about a year in Washington as chief of the newsroom. I was chief of the newsroom for about three years, and again I'd want to check the exact dates.

1955: Zorthian Moves Up From Chief of Newsroom Through Policy to Become Program Manager

Then I moved into the policy office. Gene King became program manager. Jack Vebber, for whom I had worked in New York, left, and Gene King was brought in. He had been a friend of Poppele's. Gene and Poppele had worked at WOR in the old days. Gene had then gone to Europe; he was in that European ECA operation, with people like Dan Morely, and so on. When Poppele became director of VOA, he reached out and got Gene to come back as program manager and replaced Al Puhan, who then went into the Foreign Service. Gene and I hit it off well, though we hadn't known each other before. I was chief of the newsroom when he came in. I forget who left prior to me on that policy job. It wasn't Ed Kretzmann; there was someone in between. It may have been George Edman or Lew Revey. At any rate, Gene gave me the policy job, which I then took over for about a year. And then Poppele left, Button took over. Button sort of forced Gene King out and made me program manager. That was then about '55. And then I was program manager for about five years.

That whole period was an effort -- my entire tour, in a sense, from '48, after I came back from CBS, to '61, first in the newsroom, then policy, which was somewhat of a detour, then program manager -- to make the Voice a respectable, legitimate and, if you will, professional radio operation as contrasted to a propaganda, Cold War operation. I think we made great progress. I don't think we solved it all by any means, but we made great progress. We adjusted to new situations in terms of our listeners. The Cold War started to recede somewhat. The pressures started to recede. Eventually it resulted in the Charter, which reflected what was happening rather than initiating it. And with the adoption of a Charter, we adopted institutionally what had developed over the years in practice.

(In your notes) you mentioned a book. If you're referring to what I'm referring to, it was not a policy guidance book but a style book for the newsroom, which I did write, and which I'll show you a copy of some day.

Q: The thing that I have seen is a document for new employees -- not just the newsroom, but the language people and everybody else -- but it described how the news process worked, and it had a whole section on policy.

ZORTHIAN: Is it called, "This Is Your Job?" Or something to that effect?

Q: The title page is missing.

ZORTHIAN: Well, somewhere I've got one. Someone borrowed it a few years ago and I'll pull that out, Cliff, if it's the same thing. It did describe the news, it did talk about policy,

it talked about the purposes of the Voice, and so on. This had never been done, or pulled together.

Ups and Downs of Policy Guidance: Cold War Waxes and Wanes

Q: My only point was that there was still continuing policy involvement in the news operation.

ZORTHIAN: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There was no point until well into the fifties that you would say policy did not have a voice in news. What was changing was the nature of that policy guidance. We would have policy guidance every morning. Charlie Levy wrote it for, I don't know, 15 years or something. And when you think back it always sounded the same. It was not too far away from the "Stress but don't emphasize" crack; it came close to that very often. And presumably he would comment on the news. But from saying "Play this up" or "Play it down," it gradually got shifted to "Better double-check this," "Make sure it's accurate," or "Let's check this one out with State before we run it" type of thing. It was not as strong -- on news, I'm talking about -- it was not as strong a hand, as heavy a hand, as it had been in the earlier period. That lightening came gradually. Now it still came in things like "This should be emphasized to East Europe" "This should be emphasized to Africa," even in the news, but we gradually grew out of that, and towards the end of my time, that guidance to the newsroom was virtually non-existent. One way I was able to hasten the process was by chairing the morning policy meeting and keeping policy in check.

Q: So in those early days, what was the atmosphere like in the Voice of America? Was it chaotic, was it smooth, was it efficient?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, it varied. There were different trends. There was a Cold War focus, there's no doubt. A lot of the desks were manned by expatriates, refugees. A lot of them had been politically very active in their countries, with a very, very strong anti-Communist -- in the full conventional sense of the word -- feeling, because they'd left their countries when the Communists had taken over. The overthrow of the Masaryk government in Czechoslovakia had a great effect, and so on. And there was a tremendous intensity, of using these broadcasts to undo the Communist control. They regarded themselves as the voice of oppressed people. Barmine had left the Soviet army, defected, in '37 or whatever it was. He was a very smart guy in many ways, but thick-headed and bull-headed in others. But very intense, very bitter about the Communists, about their process of thinking, about their control. So any of the sort of wartime alliance atmosphere had long since gone.

And the U.S. Government generally had become used to running this kind of an operation, a wartime operation, trying to shift to a peacetime basis. We were going through the "mirror of America" versus the "showcase of America" arguments. We were going through the "If we can sell so much soap why can't we sell the United States?"

argument. We had the largely East European -- I don't mean to condemn them --and Soviet desks seeing the Voice strictly as a political instrument. "Don't give us any of that crap about features on American life and what's happening out in Utah and all the rest of it." There was constant argument about how much opposition voices in the U.S. one would run; whether you would do a cross-section of editorial comment in the press or selective and just one-sided, supporting policies.

The McCarthy Era

All of those arguments were constant. Some of it would get personal and bitter, and it all came to a climax of course in the McCarthy thing, which was a horrible experience for the Voice. It started off with a group, a so-called Loyal American Underground. I never felt they were particularly sincere, though I guess some were.

Q: I've heard everything from half a dozen to 25 people in that Underground. Do you have any idea what it really was?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, there were more than a half-dozen. There were activists, and there were supporters who went along, or were sympathetic. Jerry Dooher, Paul Deac, Steve Baldanza, Howard Hotchner, and in the newsroom Virgil Fulling. The thing hit a number of areas, but then ended up to a great extent focusing on the newsroom. We had a very, very tough period. I've never forgotten that the day Stalin died -- when the newsroom was pouring out copy on his death and the history and background, who was taking over, and so on -- that same day, that afternoon, Virgil Fulling was in Washington on television before the McCarthy committee accusing three of his colleagues of being pro-Communist.

Q: I remember one illustration was they changed the term "anti-Communist" in a story about Guatemala to "pro-democratic." It was purely a stylistic thing, because they had just used it in the sentence before.

ZORTHIAN: If there had been the type of thing Virgil was talking about, he picked on the wrong guys. He picked on Hal Berman, Don Taylor, and Bob Goldman, and for want of labels, if you wanted three anti-Communists, these guys were that. But Virgil was thick-headed -- he was disappointed, frustrated that he hadn't been promoted, he wasn't more senior, he wasn't held in high regard. And the activists, to my mind always, used him. They took advantage of these frustrations of his.

Q: He later killed himself.

ZORTHIAN: That's right. And I think Virgil had many, many second thoughts. He became a very pathetic creature. The Monday after that day on TV, he came back, and those three guys had to sit at the desk with him and continue to work with him. We couldn't touch him, simply because he had testified. He came back, worked in the newsroom, and that operation had to keep going. I was very proud of the newsroom then;

they all turned to, from all extremes of political opinion. There were conservatives, there were liberals, there were Democrats, there were Republicans, and so on. But in support of that newsroom. No one at the top of the Voice stood up to defend it. We had to defend ourselves. We used every contact. We went to people like Elmer Davis. Joe Alsop's brother Stewart did a column because he was a college friend of Don Taylor. Don Taylor had been a college classmate of mine. I remember coming down here to talk to the Alsops. Fred Galvan got me a meeting with Cohn and Schine up in that famous Waldorf Astoria suite they had. My interview with them formed the basis of a story by Richard Rovers in The Reporter magazine that was almost a literal transcript of it.

One of the things I'm proud of is that I protected those three people who were accused. Bob Goldman was promoted in due course to chief of News. Don Taylor went into the Foreign Service and had a very good career. Hal Berman was forced out; he resigned. He was going to be protected but McCarthy found out -- or whoever it was found out that he -- today it seems almost an anachronism, you know quaint -- but he was living with a woman he wasn't married to, he had a common law wife. So technically his son Robert was illegitimate, and Hal did not want that to come out. It would have hurt the kid, it would have offended his wife. For whatever reason they didn't get married -- his wife's family didn't approve of him, or something that was none of our business. At any rate, rather than have that become public, he resigned. But I'm happy to say I got him back at the Voice. I got him cleared, through clearance. And a guy like Hal Courlander, who finally left, also came back to the Voice.

Q: They both made great contributions.

ZORTHIAN: They made great contributions, and were both very solid people and were saved. Sure they were hurt by McCarthy in the personal sense, but professionally they were not damaged.

Q: Well, I would think that in the atmosphere of that newsroom, with Fulling and the others, it would be almost impossible to work freely.

ZORTHIAN: Well, it was awfully tough, obviously. We had to live with Fulling. He was isolated. He himself came very subdued and, as you know, finally led to suicide. But the newsroom gang help pretty well together. There were some -- well, I was going to say there were some supporters of Fulling, but I'm not sure even that was the case. There may have been some with some quiet sort of sympathy for what he was saying, but I didn't see very much of it. The gang stuck together pretty well. Fulling was a pariah, in a way. But, you know, we also ended up with most of that gang in Washington. Some of them stayed behind in New York; didn't want to move for other reasons. Art Kauffman, Joe Frank didn't come down. Mort Glatzer went in the Foreign Service. That McCarthy period was intense. It left scars that continued to some extent, but in another sense we were able to put them aside and get about our business of trying to develop a good, professional radio operation.

Congressional Budgetary Cuts Force VOA Broadcast Reductions

Q: During this period, quite aside from the McCarthy thing, you had the budget cuts imposed by the Congress with the new Republican chairmanships -- John Taber had disapproved of the information program all along. So what went on there, in terms of budget cuts?

ZORTHIAN: You reduced, and you reduced some of the languages at the same time. I would note for you, Cliff, as we moved along we reduced, if you remember, in Latin America, for instance, Spanish language broadcasts; got out of that business.

Q: Turned it over to Walter Lemmon.

ZORTHIAN: Right -- well, what there was of it. We reduced in West Europe. Short-wave, over a period of time, went completely out, but there were feeds to West Europe. We expanded, however, in English. That was one of the George Allen things.

Q: We didn't expand in English until 1958.

ZORTHIAN: Earlier. Bob Button got in trouble, and, if you will, got fired because he didn't expand in English fast enough.

Q: Barry, when Panorama USA went off the air, that was because of the Marines going into Lebanon. George Allen seized that opportunity, put English on the air around the clock, then when we cut back we didn't go back to the half-hour a day to each region of the world.

ZORTHIAN: What year was that?

Q: '58

ZORTHIAN: Was it that late? I had the impression it was a little earlier. But there's no doubt we tightened up everywhere. We cut out some languages completely as well.

Q: Ironically, they've cut Thai very recently. Here they've had all this money thrown at them, and yet they're cutting a language service.
ZORTHIAN: Well, that I don't understand. Unless -- and you see, if you don't keep up with it -- unless the pattern of listening shows there's no short-wave listening in Thailand. I don't know. How much has medium-wave taken over? One of the great continuing questions used to be -- and that was one of the justifications for dropping West Europe -- was whether short-wave broadcasting was disappearing; whether medium-wave had taken over. We built that long-wave transmitter in Munich. Eventually we cut down Munich, if you remember. Munich was very active, and was a big operation at one point, a broadcast center. So those were difficult cuts, but English was growing. We started putting more

emphasis on good, solid programming in English. We were fighting the fight of straightforward news, commentaries that were rational and "moderate" as against extremist.

Q: During your term as program manager, we started Press Conference USA, Issues in the News, Forum, Panorama USA --

VOA Growth in Program Diversification.
Origin of VOA Correspondents Abroad

ZORTHIAN: We had a Panorama, we had the Breakfast Show -- that started out toward the end. We tried some quality broadcasting of the American Theater of the Air, which Ed Goldberger used to run out of New York. We started getting these things going. Some of it was drafting the language services into the twentieth century, kicking and screaming, but little by little they came along. Special Events grew in scope and operation. The correspondents network grew. Our first overseas correspondent was Bob Walker in Beirut. I remember doing a paper proposing a system of correspondents while I was still chief of the newsroom. And we finally sent one out: Bob Walker in Beirut. That was while we were still in New York, I believe. That would be about '52 or '53, somewhere in there. That came along slowly. You know, getting them established, getting it accepted, setting up the technical facilities and the administrative support. They were then under the embassies; they were official. This new set-up of independent correspondents didn't come till very late.

Q: There was a temporary assignment of somebody from the newsroom to Korea.

ZORTHIAN: Oh, Korea was different. We did have a correspondent in Korea. I'm talking about a foreign-based correspondent in an area. Korea, I went over to cover Korea first. That is, I took three months off and went to Korea in the winter of '50-'51. I was then still in the English newsroom. I was one of the first assignments overseas. Howard Garnish got the first assignment overseas; he went over to Geneva almost every year for a UN meeting. I then got an assignment to cover ECOSOC (the UN Economic and Social Council) in '50 in Geneva. And, you know, it was one feed every other day, with fairly primitive portable equipment. I remember taking a trip down to Italy and doing some interviews and sending them back.

When Korea came -- I was still in English news then -- I went to Korea. I was in night law school then. I took a term off and went to Korea. I remember landing, along with the Korean desk chief, who was then a Bulgarian named Eugene Prostov. He had served in Korea. Gene and I went to Korea together. En route, I remember we checked into the Tokyo Correspondents Club, and that first night there was a news item saying, "General MacArthur's headquarters reports today they captured two soldiers, who claimed they were Chinese, on the Yalu River." MacArthur was on the Yalu. I went over to cover the post-war reconstruction period. Well! The war ended about three years later.

But I covered a lot of the foreign units then. One of the units I covered very big was the Turkish unit. My broadcasts were quoted at length in the Turkish press all through that time. I was followed by Jim Greenfield, who later joined Time Magazine and then was assistant managing editor of the New York Times. I don't remember whether Jack Stuart or Bob Lasher came next, I'm not sure, but Jim Greenfield, Jack Stuart, Bob Lasher and I were all correspondents in Korea. There may have been others. And I guess that was the first set of war correspondents. I don't know whether the Voice had some people in the field in World War Two. But the first correspondent -- you know, a normal assignment, a tour of duty -- was Bob Walker in Beirut. And then ultimately the whole system started, till it has grown to what it is today. So all those things started then. Concepts were sold. Each of them came after a good deal of consideration and argument, debate. But for the Voice those were the transitional years, I like to think, from the Cold War to a legitimate and reasonably professional radio operation.

Need For and Origins of VIA Charter: 1959

Q: In connection with that, you mentioned the Charter a while ago. Let's go a little more into how that thing started.

ZORTHIAN: The Charter grew out of a lot of discussion about the need for the news to be balanced, objective, non-policy-oriented, gradually being accepted. You know, no one had ever said the news should lie. Everyone gave it lip service, but the amount of guidance, the amount of selectivity -- policy by selection, hesitation on balanced reporting about the warts, and so on was a continuing issue. The way Watergate was finally covered by the Voice couldn't have been done in the fifties. But that concept of straight news gradually grew, was accepted, with everyone starting to observe the principle. Then there was turnover; someone would come into a position of authority and we'd have to go over the God-damn thing again. So gradually the realization grew that we needed to institutionalize this principle, and get it in writing. I tried a number of drafts of a charter after Henry Loomis came in and we'd have discussions in the executive committee. Mine were, in hindsight, too verbose and too elaborate. Finally, Henry said, "Why don't you and Jack O'Brien form a committee and work on this?" And Jack, one day after a lot of discussion and looking at drafts and so on, went home and did a first draft. That was refined to a form we all accepted -- essentially Henry, Jack and me. It was very straightforward, fairly simple, and I don't think a word has been changed since then. Now I've read how Bernie Kamenske put it into effect and so on. Bunk! It was put into effect then.

Q: But putting it into law --

ZORTHIAN: That came later. First, Henry issued it, you see.

Q: That's right. But it was changed. Because the word "official" was left out of the legislated version.

ZORTHIAN: Then later it was accepted by the Director of USIA, and issued within USIA and then ultimately --

Q: I thought it was George Allen who put it out in the first place.

ZORTHIAN: No, George Allen was long since gone, Cliff.

Q: But this was '59.

ZORTHIAN: Was Allen still there then? Well, then it was. He was after Larsen, wasn't he? Then Allen was still there. I thought Allen had left by then, and Abbott Washburn was in that job as acting director. I was going to guess Washburn and then reinforced when the Kennedy people came in.

Q: Henry Loomis told me in his interview that they wanted to put it out in Eisenhower's name. It never got that far, apparently, though it did have the NSC's approval.

ZORTHIAN: Well, Allen certainly would have endorsed the idea. Abbott then took over for a while. There was an interregnum there. And then of course the Kennedy people came in. But the idea that all this came about in the mid-sixties is bunk. I've seen them print that version. Jack got Henry to write a note recalling some of those early days. But as I say, that Charter basically institutionalized what developed over a period of years and became commonly accepted -- although in the application there were pressures.

Q: Did you have a hard time getting it through the governmental bureaucracy?

ZORTHIAN: If you mean the concept of objective news, sure we had problems. Very often, people would acknowledge and accept it, pay lip service to it, but when the chips were down, put in that God-damn phone call saying, "Geez, are you sure you want to play that?," or "You'd sure better do that." You see, to a great extent my policy job turned into, rather than imposing policy, fending off State and IOP. We used to have some awful arguments. Not just over news but over commentary as well, where again the terms they were trying to set and the actual phraseology were so extreme... We kept arguing that the commentary has to sound like a reasonably objective commentator projecting, explaining U.S. policy, not necessarily being an advocate of it. But I got many gray hairs in my year in policy.

Q: That no longer applies, because now everything is a VOA Editorial, which is an official position of the United States Government.

ZORTHIAN: But although that was the official position of the United States Government, it was not the official position of the Voice of America.

<u>Henry Loomis Arrival as VOA Director Brought</u>
<u>Strong Direction to Voice for First Time,</u>

But Produced Some Strains With Zorthian

Q: Barry, when Henry Loomis came into the Voice, the story went through the halls that he called you in and said, "Up to today, Barry, you have been Mister VOA, but henceforth I am Mister VOA." Is that true or is that apocryphal?

ZORTHIAN: I think the actual words are apocryphal, but Henry sure as hell meant the thrust of those comments. Actually, the guy who really said that, I think -- not those words exactly, but almost that same thing -- was Walter Mylecraine, more than Henry. Walter came in with Henry, and Walter in effect was Henry's hatchet man, as you know. And what Walter did say one day, when I was resisting something or other, was, "Listen, you've been running this place for a long time, but now we're going to run it."

Q: You had been running the place for a long time, because the leadership was pretty weak.

ZORTHIAN: Well, Bob Button had been, you know, sort of neutralized and was off on all kinds of things. He wasn't that interested. And Bob was in trouble with George Allen.

Q: What kind of trouble?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, you know, Allen finally got rid of him. He didn't like him. First was Poppele and then Button, and Gene King was in and out. VOA had not had much direction.

Q: What was it like during that period when you were having to deal with Poppele and Button and Gene King as the leadership of the Voice?

ZORTHIAN: They left quite a vacuum -- and I don't want to be unfair to them. Gene King had a certain thing for feature radio and so on, but he was very, very flighty, very, very erratic. Of course, Poppele was off in another world of his own. And Bob Button, when he finally took over, never got too involved. He was playing politics with Arthur Larson and various elements outside VOA. There wasn't much going on, and the sort of day-to-day watching of the store was left essentially to me and the policy office and to the small group of people who were the heads of the divisions, and so on.

Q: Well, after that initial arrival of Loomis, what was your relationship with him?

ZORTHIAN: We had a reasonable working relationship. I wasn't the easiest guy for him to live with, and the reverse is true. There were some strains. I regard Henry as a friend. I regarded him as a friend then, although we had some differences. I used to object to what I felt at times was his end-running me to go directly and give program instructions to the desks. Henry, I'm sure, felt this was his responsibility as director.

Q: Of course, he listened to the tapes in his car --

ZORTHIAN: He'd listen to tapes and then he would do notes, and at times, without meaning to, would contradict other guidance I had issued. And there were some, if not tension, at least points of contention. On the other hand, I think there was some mutual respect and learning to live together. And we did live together for two or three years. One reason for some of those strains was that obviously Henry intended to exercise authority more than other directors, and so that inevitably was some fencing in of me. This applied to engineering, too. Secondly, it was clear I wasn't going anywhere. In rank terms I was a GS-16, and there wasn't much chance they'd get a 17 for that job. There was no prospect than for a GS-17; those ranks were very hard to come by then. I wasn't going to move up to the deputy director's job. When the job opened up, a foreign service officer was moved in. I was also just tired of the job, to some extent, because the pressures were on very constantly. It was always under the gun for internal politics, internal policy issues.

So for all kinds of reasons, my wife and I decided -- and we had been encouraged to go overseas. There was that period then when people said if you want a career in USIA you had to be a foreign service officer; there was no future for civil service. So we decided to go overseas. The opening came up for deputy (PAO) in India, which was a big operation then. Bill Handley actually sold me on the job because he was going to go over there. I accepted that offer, and then Handley's assignment was changed. He became an ambassador somewhere. Bill Weathersby replace him. Bill Weathersby was director of personnel and had been the guy who actually got me in the foreign service. Then he became my boss in India.

And I had no regrets. I then had 13 years at the Voice, and most of that time I did not see myself as a permanent Voice official as Henry did. At that time Henry had the idea of the Director being a permanent or career assignment, non-partisan, not subject to turnover. That didn't work out, either, of course, and he ran into his own problems later. But there was certainly some resentment on my part at times. I guess with Henry coming in and putting limits on me and so on. But in hindsight, as I said, there was some mutual respect and we did work together, and I think Henry was a positive asset to the Voice -- gave it protection, fought the good fight in many places. Henry was, you know, an unreconstructed conservative. He thought Eisenhower was the greatest thing since Abe Lincoln, really. But he could put that political partisanship aside and try to keep the Voice going on the course I agreed with and endorsed.

Retrospective: Recollections of Events, Personalities, and Program Origins During a 15-year Career at VOA

Q: What are some of your particular memories of your period as program manager? Particular stories we covered, particular problems you had with policy relations with uptown, or whatever?

(A) Hungarian Revolution Programming

ZORTHIAN: Oh, we had many. The Hungarian revolution period was obviously a tough thing, where we were charged with -- and maybe with some justice -- not instigating the revolution but at least fanning it a bit.

Q: Henry Loomis said that he was in research at the time, and all the studies they did after the fact gave VOA a clean bill of health.

ZORTHIAN: A clean bill of health, perhaps, but some of the comments by U. S. officials we reported could have been interpreted as encouragement. We were a channel, a conduit, and those statements, whether by Dulles or someone else, may not have had the same effect if they had not gone over the air. This is where running objective news -- and in this case it was with enthusiasm -- really had a damaging effect, quite possibly, by, as I say, fanning the revolution, giving some weight to the impression that the U.S. was going to do something. It was not very clear what the U.S. was going to do. But remember, I had been in Hungary just before that. I'd been in Hungary in September.

Q: In what connection?

ZORTHIAN: As a VOA official. I had the first trip behind the Curtain for a VOA official, during that period of thaw after Stalin's death. The Poles wouldn't let me in, but I went to Prague, Budapest and Moscow. Those three countries gave official approval. In Bucharest I spent a weekend. I got off the train and they said, "You haven't got a visa, you've got to leave," and the next train was Monday or something. So I had been in Hungary just before the revolt, and gotten the feel of it. It was the only country where, when I talked to the ambassador, he went through that turning-the-radio-on bit to override the conversation. One of the great attractions of VOA was, I used to take, virtually one a year and sometimes twice, a trip overseas to our target areas. Just seeing the countries, talking to people in the field, getting some sense of what an audience was like was a great thing.

(B) Strains in Dealing With Division Chiefs

You asked earlier about relations with division chiefs. They varied. There were strains. The same thing Henry did subsequently about "I'm taking over," I had done as program manager to the division chiefs, who again were pretty much authorities unto themselves at various points. They had lacked leadership, they could do pretty much what they wanted. And for someone to come in -- particularly someone who hadn't been there all that long, and was a Johnny-come-lately in some of their eyes -- for some one to come in and start laying down some directive, some had a hard time swallowing it. Barmine probably symbolized that attitude. Barmine was the type who would stand up. Some of the others might not like it but they'd defer to it.

One of the great hassles I had with Barmine was over a fitness rating. In performance ratings, the practice then was you said something very innocuous, always complimentary; everyone was outstanding on all counts. They didn't have a damn meaning. Henry was trying to make them a little more meaningful. And I wrote one on Barmine. Barmine had

been a thorn in various people's sides for a long time. Henry sent the one I wrote back to me and said, "You've got to put in something about Barmine being difficult," or something. So I put in something that was relatively mild -- "Sometimes his convictions lead him to argue more than necessary," or "to be more difficult than he should be," or some such -- relatively mild. Barmine hit the roof. It became a literal civil service grievance case. I had to face a panel -- what was that fellow's name? Jim Thomas, who was head of the wireroom in IPS, on the technical side. I think he became deputy director later. He chaired the panel. My argument was, "It's not up to you to say whether my rating is valid or not. All you can decide is whether it's unreasonable, that it's so extreme that it's beyond reason." But they decided that that statement was not appropriate and had to be removed. And I must confess I was annoyed at Henry because he didn't stand up one bit on the God-damn thing. He disappeared when the challenge came.

But again, with Barmine there was also, on the other side of it, respect, sometimes grudging, but a respect nevertheless for the very strong powers of analysis he had. He was more balanced than most people gave him credit for, but his mannerism, that sort of Russian aloofness and brusqueness and almost arrogance, was misleading. But bringing, if you will, the desks into line, onto the mainstream of where we wanted the Voice to go, led to various strains. I used to have some intense exchanges with John Albert, and John was a guy I admired. He finally went over to Munich, as you know. John himself was an awful tough, determined, absolute boss, and he got into some headaches in Munich because of that. Other area went relatively well.

Q: What was the basis of the decision to change the Munich Radio Center to a Munich Program Center?

(C) Changing Munich Radio Center to Munich Program Center

ZORTHIAN: Well, the basic decision was made when I was program manager. It was out of hand; it was out of control. Aldo D'Alessandro was there running his own operation. It was much more extreme. It was the ideological thing that was simply out of hand. Dal was so committed, such a fanatic, if you will -- you couldn't talk three minutes with Dal without getting into an anti-Communist diatribe by him. And not that he was all that wrong about their motives and so on, but transforming that kind of militant ideology into broadcasting was just a throwback to the worst parts of the Cold War, and not the type of more moderate, rational approach to broadcasting and to commentary that we thought was important. So Munich, if you will, had been left behind, stayed where it had been in 1952 or earlier, did not progress, while VOA Washington was moving along a course of greater professionalism, greater balance and moderation. Finally the differences and the resistance in Munich to direction from headquarters was so great that I literally fired Dal, got him out of there. Jack Buckley was his administrative officer. Finally, I'll never forget, we had a drink one night -- I've forgotten the bar it was in -- in a Munich hotel where Dal and Jack Buckley came in and pleaded not to have him fired. I thought to myself. His whole life is involved in this. At this point, I saw a much more, if you will, quiet and sort of deferential Dal than the hard-nosed ideologue that I'd seen all the time.

Q: But it was clear to you that he was not going to change.

ZORTHIAN: He was incapable of changing. Dal worked with me later in Vietnam and he was still the same. And it was the right moment, the right time to get out. The exiles, the exile community that had manned much of VOA but intellectually and ideologically were getting, if you will, diluted by involvement in the U.S., living here and being exposed and were gradually getting Americanized, when they went back to Munich, reverted to form. Munich was such a hotbed for all the East European and Soviet exiles, and the VOA people there were right in the middle of it. At first they began to think of themselves as moderates compared to the others, the RFE gang. "We're the U.S. government," they said; "those fellows are real crazies." But gradually they changed. Then we had budget problems besides, and our facilities were improving; we didn't have to broadcast out of Munich. So we made the ultimate change to have a program center, feeding Washington, rather than an origination point.

(D) VOA Personalities to Remember

Q: You've named a number of people that you worked with at the Voice, but who would you say are some of the most memorable characters or personalities that you worked with?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, you know, you've got to name a Barmine. You've got to name a John Albert. And I don't mean in negative terms. John had this great intensity and commitment, and he was a tough guy.

Q: John was the sharpest political mind I've ever known, in terms of East-West relations.

ZORTHIAN: That's right. John was. Barmine had a sharp political mind. Some of the desk chiefs stand out in my mind: a guy like Joe Gdynski; a guy like Paul Nadanyi. Now in central news, close friends and real friends -- although we'd often have some great arguments -- Jerry Theise and Bob Goldman were good, solid people. There was a whole gang there. The commitment of most of those people was just enormous, in terms of hours, in terms of dedication to the job, in terms of basic, firm beliefs about where the Voice should go and trying to effect it, and so on. To most of them -- it may be too strong a word -- but it still was a crusade; it was not just a nine-to-five job.

Now, some characters. Gene King was a character in his own right. Jack Poppele, Evelyn Eisenstadt. You know, you keep talking and they all come to mind. We had some people in that darn monitoring unit who were amazing people -- Bob Mayer. The head of the monitoring unit, what was his name --knew about 14 languages -- Bill Solzbacher. Howard Maier, in the commentary unit; Howard I worked with very closely. However was a great personality, and did some superb writing of broadcast. Norman Jacobs in Talks. A completely different type of a guy there was John Pauker. Len Reed. And the old gang; the Courlanders and Dorothy Crooks and Hal Berman and a lot of the ones we left

behind in New York. Dorothy was a favorite of mine. Boris -- it was Boris Daskaloff. No, not Daskaloff -- the Bulgarian, with the cavalryman mustache. He finally joined the central talks. I think his name was Dimitroff; these things go on. Hal Berman was a first-rate guy and a very talented journalist, newsman, and when he took on that Special English he just devoted himself to it, and did a great job. In his way, Willis Conover. Again, Willis has flaws like all of us, but a tremendous talent. John Wiggin was fey and difficult and temperamental, but he also had good programming ideas. Music USA was essentially his creation and idea. He and I started the program review board together, which became institutionalized. A lot of them are gone now, I guess.

(E) No Regrets on VOA Career

Q: You have no regrets about your VOA career?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, no. No, no. You know, any job in the fifties in that kind of thing had its frustrations and disappointments, but no, no. I look back at it with the benefit of -- I left VOA in '61; that is 27 years. Over the years one loses the bad points, but I look back at it with a good deal of nostalgia and pride. I also say to myself, we did achieve things. We did make progress. I don't mean we solved them all.

Q: Your influence on the Voice was certainly as great as any individual's.

ZORTHIAN: You know, 20 years later I'm in Armenia in '79, and I hear the Breakfast Show there. I forget where I was overseas, Cairo or somewhere, I heard the 20th anniversary of the Breakfast Show. You take some pride in that sort of thing: Hey, I started that! And it's nice to hear it. Do they still have the Breakfast Show? I think that's gone, isn't it?

Q: It's not called the Breakfast Show, but there's still a morning program, called "Morning."

ZORTHIAN: And the basic principle of a central news desk, and some consistency and cohesion in that news, and some standards -- again, it took a lot of effort, but that it was established and finally accepted and put into effect --

Q: Everybody in VOA knew how much effort you put into it. We'd see you leaving in the evening with your briefcases bulging with wire copy.

ZORTHIAN: A lot of people put effort in. I don't know how it is today. I get the impression it's much more of a job for people, not quite the same sense of commitment, but I don't know. Remember, Cliff, those were the years when America was riding a wave. We hadn't bumped into Vietnam yet. We were still in the John Kennedy mold -- pay any price, et cetera type of thing. We were still saving the world, and VOA was one of the cutting edges of that. You get a sense of being involved, of being part of a much

bigger role for this country and an important one, and so on. We've had the inevitable letdown in the past 20 years.

(F) Zorthian Earns Law Degree While Working at Voice

Q: At what point in your career did you get a law degree?

ZORTHIAN: I got it while I was at VOA. I'd always wanted to go to law school. I really wasn't certain how much I was going to stay with the government. Basically I wanted to be a journalist. In fact, when the Voice moved to Washington, I made a considerable effort with friends I had to join "Time," and came close to getting an offer. I never did. Finally got to the managing editor, Otto Feuerbringer, whom I got to know years later when I joined Time, Inc., on the business side, and used to kid him about it. He was then managing editor. But I thought I wanted a law course. One, it was available under the GI Bill; two, it was the type of training that I wanted; and three, I thought maybe I'd go into law and not continue in journalism. You aren't getting rich staying in journalism, and certainly not working for the government. Though as it turned out I never practiced in my life except for writing a will for Fred Galvan, who was one of our news editors. That's the only income I've earned from it. I went to night law school when I was working at VOA. I started in '49; I was in the English thing then. I took a term off to go to Korea, but as a result, to finish, I had to go the next two summers. So I went virtually solidly from the spring term of '51 until I graduated in '53.

Before we go on, let me pause and get on the record a couple of dates for you, just to fit things in from my viewpoint. I joined VOA January 14, 1947. I worked there through September that year. October first of '47 I went to CBS, when everything went over. We came back in October of '48, and then I was with VOA from then on. I was in the English section from October 1, '48 to February 1, '51, and that's when we developed Worldwide English news. But it was under the English section, and it stayed there afterwards. I went over to the central news service under Eric Halling, if you remember; I was the assistant chief of the news unit February 1, '51. October '52 I was appointed chief of the news service, and stayed there until November '55, almost three years. Then November '55 to January '57 I was assistant program manager for policy. And from January '57 to April '61 -- a little more than four years -- I was program manager. And then left May 1, 1961 and was transferred to the foreign service.

Q: You said earlier that you worked for Hal Berman in the central news desk, and now you say Eric Halling.

ZORTHIAN: Well, I've got to be accurate. Hal was an assistant news chief as was I, under Eric. Eric was the chief of the newsroom. But Hal had been chief of news before Eric but then had been switched with Eric.

Q: So you didn't literally switch jobs with Hal.

ZORTHIAN: No, we were sort of co-assistant chiefs. But he was much senior to me, and obviously much better versed in a lot of those things. I was curious, and looked at these old notes. I started as, I think it was, a GS-9 radio script writer. And just to contrast present times, January 14, 1947, the pay was $4,149.60. And that was not bad, because my newspaper pay was $50 a week.

Q: In the State Department as an intern, I was making $2,750 a year.

ZORTHIAN: Well, that doesn't surprise me. My final pay, incidentally, in the government was October 20, 1968, salary of $28,000 a year. And that was as an FSIO-1, which was next to the minister rank, which we (in USIA) finally got under the federal career legislation.

(G) Origins of Some of VOA Special Programs

Q: I want to go back and review the bidding on the origins of some of the programs that we mentioned in passing. How, for example, did Press Conference USA get started?

(1) Press Conferences USA

ZORTHIAN: Frankly, I do not remember the origins of that one. Bill McCrory was certainly in it if not from the very start certainly from very early in it. I think it was an obvious take-off on things like Meet the Press. But it's got to have started in the fifties.

Q: '58 -- I think both Press Conference and Issues in the News started in '58.

ZORTHIAN: All right. And there was nothing prior to it of that kind. We did not have that kind of free-wheeling give and take. What we did do, and as I noted it's one of the shows I used to do when I first joined, was a thing called Press Opinion, which was made up of excerpts of editorials. I remember I used to go through 30 or 40 newspapers. We'd try to get some variation in comment, although extremes were ruled out. And the other was Commentators' Digest, which had excerpts of radio broadcasts -- then radio, eventually I guess television got into it. And again we tried to get some variation. But we had some first-rate radio commentators in those late 40s, early 50s. Elmer Davis, Ed Murrow, H. V. Kaltenborn were still on then, if I remember. There was a whole range of them. Eric Sevareid used to broadcast regularly. Even a Fulton Lewis, who was obviously one of the more conservative ones.

(2) The Breakfast Show

Q: What about the Breakfast Show?

ZORTHIAN: The Breakfast Show was developed late in my time at VOA. If I remember correctly, it actually started after I left.

Q: It started in May of '61.

ZORTHIAN: All right. Well, I left May first. It developed out of a thought Burtt McKee had. He was a foreign service information officer assigned to VIA, was head of Worldwide English at that time, after Jerry Theise joined the Foreign Service and went to India. Burtt, who had been in radio in his early years, prior to USIA service, sort of had a mission of coming up with some imaginative or creative program. We had by then gone into a real Worldwide English schedule, and he came up with this thought of doing a breakfast show. We worked on it and worked on it, and finally put it in -- worked on it technically, the ability to put it out at the right time, and getting the cast together, and so on and so forth. Again, if you remember, at that time in U.S. radio there were a lot of morning talk shows and a sort of informal, more relaxes, less rigid, less departmentalized and segmented broadcasts.

Q: I thought the Breakfast Show was a great idea, and a great show -- except when it first started. I was in Munich and we were asked to comment. Well, the sound of the music was terrible, because it was being run live, as was the Voice. You could understand every word that Al Johnson or Phil Irwin said, but the music was distorted. So we rocketed back to Washington, saying, "What's happened?" I talked to an engineer over there, and he said, "When you go from dark to daylight on a west to east pattern, the frequency range is narrowed so that it distorts both the highs and the lows." So, after I got back, a couple of months later, they started pre-shipping the music parts of the program.

ZORTHIAN: I hadn't realized that. As I say, I had left by then. But like all shows, it had to find its niche. It had to work out the bugs. But it did, and I think it was a very healthy development. Then it went a little further after my time, under John Chancellor, when Dick Krolik came in and they went into the light touch. You know, in the 50s we developed the VOA signature, which we changed from Yankee Doodle Dandy to Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean, the first few notes.

Q: Over my objections.

ZORTHIAN: Ha! I remember. And now that's changed again.

Q: John Chancellor changed that back to Yankee Doodle.

ZORTHIAN: All right. And then we developed the VOA logo, which again I sort of worked out at my desk one day, and now that's become a lot more sophisticated.

Q: I liked the old one better.

ZORTHIAN: But these things evolve. All the sort of characteristics of an established radio system was what we were trying to put in, recognizing we had a political mission, if you will, in the broadest sense -- to be substantive but nevertheless trying to make it listenable. Remember, the media was growing in Europe and elsewhere, other media

including television, but even radio, domestic radio, and they were getting more and more listenable. And if we hadn't gone in that direction we just would have lost whatever audience we had.

(3) Special English

Q: What about Special English?

ZORTHIAN: Special English grew out of -- and I have to give Henry Loomis credit for the drive behind it -- Special English came out of Henry's thoughts, particularly listening to programs as he drove home, of thinking the English was a little too complicated. This sort of thing had been discussed before, even before Henry's time. We'd had some academic types advising us on the make-up of language, what we should do to make sure it's understood better by people with limited knowledge of English, and so on. The thought gradually grew. We used to broadcast very slowly, if you remember.

Q: Twelve lines a minute.

ZORTHIAN: Twelve lines a minute, in order to make comprehension easier. And we used to watch complicated words and Americanisms and the alphabet soup and things that would be incomprehensible to a foreign audience. Gradually this thought grew, that maybe we ought to do some broadcasts, particularly in areas where the knowledge of the English language was limited. The thing evolved, got a little more vetted out and analyzed and decided, and Henry finally said, "Let's go with it." Dick Borden, I think it was, started it off. About that time Hal Berman was returning; he had probably already returned in the Talks unit. Hal loved language, literally, and took great pride in it. It was just a natural. One of those bulbs went off, and I suggested that he get involved in it, and he did and then eventually took it over, and was just right for it. It was something he really put his heart and soul into. That too evolved, and has become, I gather, quite a special type of broadcast.

Q: Especially in China. It's just been miraculous in China.

ZORTHIAN: I don't know. I think the language lists that have been developed have been promoted in other ways. Are they being used for English teaching now?

Q: Some people are using them as teaching tools, yes, but we have always used them as a communications tool rather than a teaching tool. Do you have any other pride and joy from your time as program manager?

(4) Music USA

ZORTHIAN: I take great pride in pushing Music USA. I don't claim the origin of that idea; John Wiggin originated that one when we were still in New York. John was then deputy program manager; ultimately he became a special assistant. But John was a very

creative guy, and he found Willis Conover. That program started and was under jeopardy. What I do claim on that is rescuing it and moving it along. We had a great deal of pressure to et away from just quote jazz unquote for Music USA, and finally, with great reluctance on Willis's part at the time, we finally got him to do classical music at least one day a week. We gave him some assistance. The program built up and was obviously a great success. Willis was a very, very good talent for just that type of show. He was a bit of a prima donna but all talent is. And he's still there.

(5) The Forum Show

That's one show. I take pride in Forum, which again I don't want to claim the basic idea. I think it grew out of some discussions. I'm trying to think of who; he was a foreign service officer --

Q: Henry Loomis says it was Ted Wertime.

ZORTHIAN: I don't think so. Ted came later, that I'm sure of. What was his name?

Q: Walt Nichols started the first series.

ZORTHIAN: Right. He was the one who started the program. He was the one I worked with on it.

Q: I worked with him on the radio side.

ZORTHIAN: He was the one who developed it, and again was very highly encouraged and pushed, and I take pride in having pushed it. Now in one way it was very dull radio programming, just solid talk, and sometimes quite technical or quite philosophical and intellectual, but nevertheless it was one of the better things we did. It got very good reaction overseas, as you know. We promoted the text then, books came out, and so on.

Q: They were used as texts by some universities.

ZORTHIAN: That's right. It was one of the better things we did to show America's creative and intellectual capabilities. There was a certain amount of opposition to it as being dull, and I recognized and acknowledged that.

(6) American Theater of the Air

The American Theater of the Air I take great pride in. Eddie Goldberger, who stayed behind in New York, took that on, and he did some first-rate productions. Those tapes I think are probably still good. He did some of the classics of the American theater. I remember a long talk I had with William Saroyan once in Paris, trying to get permission for one of his plays. He had sort of taken refuge in Paris because he was having income tax problems. I thought I'd appeal to him on the basis of our both having Armenian

backgrounds. I remember when I called him, he said, "You think I'm going to say yes because you're Armenian!" He said, "You get Uncle Sam to straighten out my income tax problems!" He finally agreed, if I remember; we did a Saroyan play.

There was a whole series of shows there that had various ways of getting going, but I thought started giving the Voice a solid, professional base for broadcasting.

(H) Process of Getting Language Services Under Control

Q: You mentioned earlier the problems you had in dragging some of the language services kicking and screaming into the 20th century. How did you control or how did you supervise, how did you manage this conversion of the language services into the 20th century radio mold?

ZORTHIAN: Well, a number of means. One is the ground rules we set up. You had to follow central program services' news shows, which was more easily done when they moved over; it was still done by telephone when the newsroom was at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. Second was by constant reiteration at policy meetings in the morning, and by contact with the division chiefs and service chiefs. There was also the program review structure. That too was an instrument, if you will, not just of analysis of professional quality but also policy control. How well did they do it? And the news chief was part of the program review board to see how well they had adjusted. The rest, I guess, was just plain jawboning. Now, I have to say also that gradually the services changed. It was slow and difficult, but nevertheless --

I remember Paul Nadanyi when he was head of the Hungarian service. I used to get a big kick out of Paul. In the fifties if I'd see Paul in the hallway, I'd say, "How are things going, Paul?" and he'd say, "Oh, Kardos has done so and so and Stalin has done so and so," and he'd give me a long talk on Hungarian politics and what was going on behind the Curtain. I came back from Vietnam and ran into him one day and said, "How are things going, Paul?" and he said, "God, my daughter just graduated from university. I have a new grandchild." His whole perspective had changed. And this was inevitable. It was going to happen. So the desks changed. They got a little mellow. You know, part of the approach of the desks -- not all of it by any means -- part of the desks' feelings in this, if you will, Cold War, hard-nosed, quote anti-Communist unquote attitude was because they felt they were expected to be; that both Uncle Sam and all the political pressures in this country sort of demanded of them that they be this harsh -- plus obviously the political situation behind the Curtain. So a lot of things contributed.

Q: I was interested to learn from Alex Frenkley, who was from the very beginning in the Russian service -- he showed me the program elements that went into the first week's broadcasts, for example, and there was a lot of Americana in there, a lot of explanation of really basic institutions in the United States, and I was quite impressed. Right from the outset.

ZORTHIAN: We used to push that. Now, some junk went out in that process; that was inevitable. And every so often something would go out that was particularly embarrassing. And someone would leak it to someone in the media, or one of the pressure groups outside would leak it, and we'd have to answer and have all kinds of headaches. Those things came at a price, slowly, and they developed. Plus, the central program services' output improved, too, and became more acceptable, I think. Now, commentary: in theory they always used central talks, though sometimes on special subjects they would do their own. But the commentary changed gradually in tone, became more sophisticated, more rational, if you will. Not any less tough, but certainly stated. And the great genius of the round and mellow words of Ronald J. Dunlavey. Ron could turn one out in ten minutes.

Q: I found one of the old 15-inch disks up in the attic of the HEW Building, going back to '49, and here was a commentary by Ronald J. Dunlavey. I took it down and had it run off on one of those machines, and it could have been recorded the day before.

ZORTHIAN: You do remind me of those old acetate disks we used to have. This was literally the days before tape. Our equipment changed along the way, as you know. The portable tape recorder I took to Korea was battery-operated, very erratic, hard to figure out, and not very good. Finally the Uher came in and that was a good machine, although it was heavy. But you sure as hell never had anything like this (Panasonic hand-held tape recorder) at that stage.

Q: Any other particular memories of VOA that you have not got on the record?

ZORTHIAN: Well, there are lots of them. You know, there are memories of people, there are memories of specific flaps that you recall in certain situation. There is a memory of the headaches we used to have vis-a-vis policy and vis-a-vis the State Department; most of ours were with IOP, reflecting the State Department. But there are a lot of good memories, too, of a lot of committed people working pretty damn hard and trying to do a very conscientious job. That's one reason that darned McCarthy thing hurt so much, where the people were conscientious, were trying to do a good job. And to be charged as political traitors, if you will, was awfully hard to take. When you look back you forget some of the headaches, you forget some of the money problems.

(I) Working Out Scheduling for World Wide English

Another one I'm proud of, as you keep talking, is our solution for Worldwide English. We were under orders from George Allen to work out a worldwide schedule. I remember one night particularly, when George Jacobs and I and a couple of others -- Vestel Lott may have been in there -- sat and worked out a worldwide schedule. And our answer to regional was a double-track approach: Worldwide English worldwide would continue, and every so often certain transmitters would break off to carry English to Africa or English to Asia. George was virtually almost a genius and he worked out, when we got

the concept going, the transmitter allocations and changes and so on, and it went well. A lot of the seeds of what are now sort of accepted S.O.P over there were laid in that period.

Q: It's incredible to look at the schedule. Special English is still there. Forum is gone. The Breakfast Show has gone through a modification but is still basically that kind of show. Press Conference USA and Issues in the News are still on the air. Again, they've gone through metamorphoses.

ZORTHIAN: Sure, that's just natural. It should be. And the basic organizational structure is there.

Q: It's gone through several reorganizations in recent years.

ZORTHIAN: But, you know, the language desks and so on -- while this was going on there were various organizational changes that just made the thing more efficient.

1961: Zorthian Enters Foreign Service as Deputy PAO/India

Q: So after VOA, India.

ZORTHIAN: After VOA, India. We had three very exciting years in India -- our first foreign service post. India in many ways was an exciting country, in many ways a depressing country. I was deputy PAO. I was supposed to be deputy to Bill Handley, got over there, and Bill Handley was preempted for something else. He became ambassador to Mali and never showed up. John Lund, whom I replaced, left. Ken Bunce had already left. So I was acting PAO for about five or six months, till Bill Weathersby was selected, wrapped up his business, and got out there. We worked for John Kenneth Galbraith, who, again, if he liked you, was a very exciting guy to work with. Full of ideas, very difficult in some ways but also very stimulating. If he didn't like you, he was hell to work with. And he might not like you for all kinds of reasons: you were too tall or too fat, or you didn't comb your hair right or you wore the wrong ties, or he just didn't have much respect for your intellectual capabilities. But we got along fine. Bill Weathersby also got along fine with him. We had three good years in India. The family enjoyed it. India still had enough touches of the Rudyard Kipling era to be great for youngsters. Our children were quite young then. My wife enjoyed it. We traveled a lot in India. And I think we had a hell of a good program. One fortunate thing was, we didn't have budgetary problems because we had so many PL 480 rupees we didn't know what to do with them.

Q: What Henry Loomis used to call "funny money."

ZORTHIAN: Funny money. Well, it was great in India because we did all kinds of things -- book programs, university programs, all the conventional programs, big Fulbright program, English teaching. AID was founding universities. We had the one political crisis there of the China invasion of Ladakh, and that was a pretty exciting time. It was almost

the same time as the Cuban crisis here. But there's where the political connections of an ambassador help. John Kenneth Galbraith's ability to go directly to Kennedy got attention for India even in the middle of the Cuban crisis. And airborne assistance -- supplies, equipment, and so on -- arrived in India on big, impressive -- whatever they were -- C-141's, big impressive American transport planes, and of course impressed the hell out of the Indians.

We had a problem in India. The Bhopal steel mill had been turned down -- if I remember, under Dulles -- and that negative impact had to be recovered. Galbraith was very public conscious. He was used a good deal publicly, was respected by the Indians because he was a professor, because of his reputation in the economic field. So those were very good years. And many of our close USIA friends today came out of that period.

Early 1964: Zorthian Transferred to Saigon

Then in December, or maybe it was very early January, right after Christmas of '63, I suddenly got a telegram one night. I remember we were playing bridge at home Saturday night with Barry and Molly Reed, and Bill Weathersby knocked on the door and I said, "Oh-oh! Bill comes calling Saturday night, there's trouble." Well, he had my orders in hand, transferring me to Saigon. And I left within a month. I arrived in Saigon February 12th after a stopover in Bangkok. It was a direct transfer. Fortunately we were able to work it out where the family stayed in India. And since our replacements, Larry and Ruth Hall, weren't due in till June, Margaret stayed in the house we were in until the end of the school year. So I went to Saigon alone.

Troubled Mission in Saigon: Housecleaning of Mission Element Heads

There was certainly an operation going there -- people like Dave Sheppard and Ev Bumgardner and Doug Pike and quite a few others. The mission was a troubled mission, for all kinds of reasons. My predecessor, John Mecklin -- who was a lateral entry PAO from Time Magazine and wanted to get in a hitch of public service, was a very fine journalist and a very good guy; I got to know him much better later -- had been transferred by Ed Murrow as part of a whole housecleaning of the U.S. mission, which was in all kinds of difficulty with the press, with the Diem overthrow, the aftermath of that. So virtually every chief of agency was transferred, John among them. The AID chief was transferred. Paul Harkins remained as commander but Westy (Gen. Westmoreland) was brought in clearly to replace him in a few months. The CIA people were transferred. We got a whole new country team there very quickly, all within the space of -- Westmoreland, for instance, arrived two weeks before I did, left Vietnam four years later, one month before I did. Phil Habib came in fairly shortly to replace Mel Manfull as political counselor. Pierre da Silva came in for CIA. Jim Killen came in for AID, to replace Joe Brent. The whole thing turned over. Washington's decision was -- the situation there was deteriorating after Diem -- they'd bring in a whole new team and turn them loose on them.

Our USIS role in Vietnam was fairly confused. AID had its own communication program going, providing hardware and equipment and training. MACV (Military Advisory Command, Vietnam) had a political directorate operation going, modeled somewhat after the Kuomintang political operation in Taiwan. We had advisers from the British -- Bob Thompson and his team, including a fellow named Dennis Duncan, who was a specialist in "propaganda," working out of their Malaysian experience. There was all this talk about how to handle an insurgency, the combined political-military approach that was necessary.

This was still a "low-intensity" war at that period. Well, that first year in Vietnam was awfully rough. When I was assigned -- I still have the letter sent by Ed Murrow, it must be one of the last letters he sent before he left the Agency and subsequently died -- he said in so many words, "When I proposed you to Henry Cabot Lodge," who was then ambassador, "he was a little concerned about your lack of French," which I did not have; I had kitchen French but nothing fluent, but said he could live with that. "However," Murrow said, "you have to understand this clearly, that you will have nothing to do with the press. You will be director of USIS, he will handle the press himself, be his own press officer." And those were the ground rules under which I went in. "Zorthian, go do your USIA thing and keep your nose out of the press."

June, 1964: Zorthian Designated "Czar of Media Relations"

Well, our press relations at that point were horrible. Washington was quite concerned about that, and the new team was quite concerned about that. And despite the ground rules he set up, Lodge kept turning to me on press issues. And obviously I ended up communicating with journalists. By June, when we had a big conference in Honolulu, chaired by McNamara and Rusk, Westmoreland and Lodge jointly recommended that I be named "Czar of Media Relations," of information in Vietnam. Their recommendation was accepted. Remember, this was all in a low-intensity, a counter-insurgency situation. We had less than 20,000 Americans in country then, and those were largely logistical and support and advisory troops.

Q: Who originated that idea of giving you overall control -- the Ambassador?

ZORTHIAN: Well, I'm not sure. I guess the Ambassador did. I certainly didn't because I was in no position to do so. And Westmoreland did, to a certain extent. He had a military information guy, but the need for coordination was very clear. I guess the ultimate recommendation for that may well have come out of Washington. Bob Manning was Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs when I first got there. Bob is an old friend of mine. That decision in Hawaii was eventually endorsed, or adopted, or whatever the right word is, made statutory, by the NSC. As far as I know it's the one and only time the NSC put out a directive, naming me by name, saying I would be the chief public affairs adviser to the ambassador and COMUS MACV, and have the following responsibilities.

It gave me the guidance of maximum candor with minimum security, laid out ground rules. Now, I pretty well know Bob Manning wrote that because he moved from the State Department over to the White House as the coordinator of the whole media effort there. To some extent unfortunately, Bob got the offer of being editor of Atlantic magazine shortly thereafter and left, and he was never really replaced. So in the media relations hat, I ended up literally with five bosses, because I was authorized and responsible to five agencies. I'd get White House message, I'd get State Department, I'd get Defense Department, I'd get USIA, and even AID, all of whom had ideas, uncoordinated frequently.

Stateside Complaints Re USIA Officer Dealing with U.S. Press: Zorthian Seconded to the Department of State

Ultimately -- I guess it was almost a year later -- I finally got transferred, because there were complaints about a USIA man dealing with the American press -- Leonard Marks, I've never forgotten, went up before Fulbright, and when he was asked about the law that prohibited USIA from propagandizing the American people: "Were those people in Vietnam dealing with the American press?" He said, "no, absolutely not, USIA does not." Well, I was seconded to the State Department shortly after that, with the Agency reimbursing State for salary. But those were very intense days. Vietnam was collapsing. Militarily the South Vietnamese were losing as much as a battalion a week. The country was in danger of being split in two by the VC. Governments were coming and going. We had demonstrations in Saigon. We even had raids on some of the USIS libraries. It was a very difficult, intense period, where we were close to anarchy much of the time. And in the middle of all this, we were trying to set up the press operation and to coordinate it and make it effective and be honest.

Q: You were addressing a multitude of audiences simultaneously.

ZORTHIAN: Oh, absolutely. And I kept my hat as director of USIS while also being in charge of this press operation. I had fairly quickly a deputy for press as well as a deputy for USIS. Harold Kaplan came out initially, spent about a year. He was followed by Jack Stuart, I guess. John McGowan came in. On that side eventually, Gene Rosenfeld. On the USIA side I ended up with, in my years, five different deputies. Dave Sheppard first, Bob Haney, then Harry Casler came in, Sandy Marlowe came in, and finally Keith Adamson were all deputies at USIS. And as the thing went along we had enormous numbers of Agency people come in.

Beginnings of the "Five O'Clock Follies"

I've never forgotten the start of the Five O'Clock Follies. Flying back that June from Honolulu to Saigon, I sat next to Frank McCullough, who was an old friend, "Time" bureau chief out there -- actually living in Hong Kong but spending most of his time down there. I said, "Frank, how am I going to tackle this damn thing? What do we do?"

The relations were bad. MACV had very little credibility. We didn't have that much, but I'd started being honest with these guys. He said, "There are a lot of things you can do. One is being honest." But he also said, "Have one time of day when you can be reached. One of the headaches here is that people can't get authentic sources, official sources, when they need them." So I looked around for the best time, and I finally announced to the media, "I will be in my office every day at 5 o'clock. If you try to reach me at any other time I may not be here, but remember, I will be in my office every day at 5 o'clock and available to answer any questions you have." And that literally is what happened. The first day maybe five guys showed up, and then it went down, and then it went up. About a month or so later, the MACV press officer changed. A guy named Lee Baker, Air Force, had been transferred, and they got a lieutenant colonel named Lou Breaux, who died recently. He came in, and I called over there and said, "Why don't you come on down?" MACV put out a daily release -- just put it out, never answered questions on it, unless someone took the initiative. "Bring that press release down with you, that press statement, and sit down on the couch next to me and be ready to answer if anything comes up on the military." Which he did. And this thing built up, and that eventually became the Five O'Clock Follies. Downstairs, when we redid USIS after one of these attacks and sacking of the building, we built an auditorium down there, and it got very formalized, institutionalized.

Q: What was the size of the group in those Follies?

ZORTHIAN: Initially, three or four. As it started to grow, then, some days 15, if there was a big crowd. The day the Brinks blew, on Christmas Eve, or Christmas week, of 1964, when the windows in our office blew out and blew glass all over us, there may have been ten, 15 in there. Eventually it grew out of my office, and I had enough other burdens so Harold Kaplan started taking it, and we moved into another office. Kappy started taking that on, and that became part of the deputy's job, the counselor for press affairs. It finally grew out of that temporary space, and we finally moved downstairs in due course.

Zorthian Begins Weekly Backgrounders Separate From "Five O'Clock Follies"

Then, as far as my own role goes, I shifted in this a year or so later to where, every Wednesday after lunch -- 2 o'clock if I remember it was -- I'd sit in my office and go on a background briefing with any journalist who wanted to be with me, and we'd get into all kinds of things. I'd go through the files, the cables, give them our evaluation. I did that, and the other thing I used to do, again growing out of that conversation with Frank, is have background briefings at my house, over a drink, inviting a certain number of journalists. It was not a wide open thing, it was by invitation. And I'd try to get the legitimate journalists. One of the problems in Vietnam was that we had a lot of what I called non-journalists, people who'd obtained a letter from their local editor -- I'm going to Vietnam, if I write anything I'll send it to you -- and the editor had given them a letter that forced us to give them credentials. Some of them were there only because they wanted PX privileges. So you had a lot of legitimate, good, first-rate journalists. You had

a lot of bad journalists. You had a lot of non-journalists. You had a lot of tourists posing as journalists. There were all kinds there. And you had the visiting firemen, who would be a burden.

Q: Name some of the people you considered the good journalists.

ZORTHIAN: Oh, Frank McCullough certainly was a very good one. Bob Shaplen was an excellent journalist. Of the younger day-to-day journalists, Neil Sheehan was a good journalist. David Halberstam only visited there while I was there. There was a period there when the older hands, World War Two vets, came in: Keyes Beech and Bob Hewitt. You know, as we'd go along, some of the younger journalists who came in winning their spurs there -- Morley Safer I always thought was a first-rate journalist. He was very heavily criticized, I know, for that Cam Ne thing, and if you look at that, his commentary is really not as bad as it was cracked up to be. Dan Rather was out there. There was a group of TV people who were sort of the field dogs. They'd go out with the cameras and look for the boom-boom. There were those who sat back and were much more thoughtful. Peter Grose of the New York Times, in his first years, was a good journalist there. And an awful lot of name journalists came out. The handling, care and feeding of visiting firemen was a major part of our job. As I go along, more names will come to mind. But there were also a lot of just half-baked, superficial and almost irresponsible journalists.

February, 1965: First Officially Sanctioned U.S. Combat Involvement; March, 1965, First American Ground Troops

But that first year was quite frantic. Then, in February -- and I once did a piece commemorating this, I couldn't get it printed -- the first American officially-sanctioned, or admitted, combat involvement came, when we had the air strike in North Vietnam. Shortly thereafter the first American troops came in -- March -- the Marine outfit that came in to Chu Lai, the base up there. By April or May, the 72nd Airborne came in. In June -- this is all 1965 -- there was another very significant Honolulu conference, and this much more secret, much more closely held, where the basic decision to bring in a big American presence was made. I remember Max Taylor giving a press conference, and questions were being raised, and he said something to the effect -- I've forgotten the exact words -- "We're recommending 100,000 men," or something like that, and he said, "We hear there's a figure of 300,000 -- absolutely not! There's no way we can ever justify or need 300,000 troops there." Well, as you know, we finally hit 550,00.

Confusion of "Propaganda" Output Responsibility Leads to Creation of JUSPAO

But through the spring of 1965, the other side of the house, the USIS, communications, propaganda side -- and I use propaganda here hopefully in the better sense of the word -- was still disjointed, still uncoordinated. The respective heads of the operations -- Ralph

Boyce of AID communications and a guy named Bob Bowen, lieutenant colonel in the military, headed up the MACV thing, and I began to meet periodically under the umbrella of the Mission Council, which was trying to pull the mission together. There had been competition, separatism and everything. Lodge, if you remember, left in June 1964, and Maxwell Taylor came in as ambassador. One of the tasks Maxwell Taylor had was to try to coordinate this mission. We evolved -- because the whole communications was disoriented, uncoordinated and sometimes contradictory -- we evolved the concept, by mutual agreement, that this all ought to be pulled together. I kept pressing: we've got to have coordination. We had a so-called Psychological Operations Committee, which I headed up. When I first got there I found them voting on policy. My first statement was, "There'll be no more voting. I'll make a decision, and if it's wrong it's wrong and I'll check with the powers that be. But this isn't a democracy we're operating here." Well, we evolved this concept of cohesion, of pulling together the whole thing, and that led to the concept of a joint U.S. public affairs office, a completely coordinated operation.

About that time, in March, Carl Rowan came out with Army chief of staff Harold Johnson, who was very receptive and very sensitive to this communications side of the business - the only chief of staff or top military man who came out on one of those visits and asked for a briefing on what USIS was doing -- and he came over and we briefed him. Carl, with Johnson's agreement, picked up on this idea of a joint operation, brought it back to Washington. The NSC approved it. And so we got another directive, organizing the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, with contributions from all five agencies: State, AID, the military -- MACV, USIS, and even CIA. We had a couple of CIA guys, divorced from their CIA duties, as their contribution to JUSPAO. The operation started informally, by Embassy announcement, in April, I believe, of '65. Formal institutional approval by Washington, with paperwork authorizing and all of that, started July first, '65.

Q: I'm confused, Barry, because I thought when you went back from Hawaii in June of --

JUSPAO Concept Overtaken by Events: Rapid Growth
of Military Involvement Splits Authority
Among JUSPAO, AID, and MACV

ZORTHIAN: That was the press side only. This was the USIS side, the communications side. And for the first time, all communication in Vietnam, from media relations to USIS activities to psychological operations -- anything dealing with communications -- came under one direction. I had two deputies. On one side was the press deputy; on the other side we had a JUSPAO deputy. Both those deputies, incidentally, were counselor level in rank terms. The great tragedy is that the JUSPAO concept, which grew out of the counter-insurgency, was overtaken by events almost before it started, because in came the conventional war units. MACV grew and grew and grew, and the tail started wagging the dog. Even on the civilian side, reorganization started almost that soon. By fall we had CORDS, or whatever they called it then. At this time, you see, we had three representatives in each province; we had a JUSPAO rep, and AID rep and a MACV rep, military rep, advising province chiefs -- this, in addition to the military units -- the

civilian side of the operation, if you will, the people side of the operation. Eventually, that was all taken over by CORDS and JUSPAO lost direct control of its province reps, of its field reps, and got instead a support role and a role of substantive direction, much the way the Joint Chiefs command the theater commands and the Army, Navy and Air Force all provide support and manpower and service policy direction.

USIA Becomes Disillusioned with JUSPAO Role

Within a year or so USIA became tired of the mission because it was drawing down people, it was drawing down money. They wanted out. They said so. There were a lot of elements in the Agency that said, "This is not our job, wartime propaganda." At any rate, JUSPAO got almost dated --the concept. You know, we kept talking about this coordinated, political and military, counter-insurgency war, and coordinated communications support effort, and it got almost dated by the time it got going. Although I will say over the years I think JUSPAO made some real contributions. I think there were many flaws in the operation, and certainly many people have criticized it. The tragedy to me is that the whole experience, if you will, has been forgotten and put aside. The Agency, when it did a 35th anniversary book, barely mentioned JUSPAO. There was one picture of Sam Dieli, and it simply said under it, "A member of JUSPAO" -- no recognition that this was something that was a very significant part of the Agency record and experience, that took a lot of its manpower, took a lot of its money, and had implications for its role generally.

But you had this pattern. As I say, I got there in early 1964. By June the press chore, on a coordinated basis, had been turned over to me. That first year was a frantic, hectic, chaotic year -- political, substantively -- in Vietnam. The spring of '65 came the concept of JUSPAO. That was accepted. It was put into operation during '65. By December there was some loosening of it. By December '66 the Agency was tired of the thing, wanted out. I've got a copy of a memo from Leonard Marks to the White House saying that in so many terms -- Dan Oleksiw being his point man on weakening it or cutting it down. Then going along for six or seven years, until I think it was officially dissolved in 1972, if I remember. Bob Lincoln would know that, I think. Bob was there. Or Alan Carter -- one of them -- I guess Bob sort of officially ended it and converted back to USIS.

There were a lot of problems, many, many gaps, shortcomings. But I'd also say -- and I don't think it's too self-serving a statement -- a lot of major contributions and lessons were learned.

Problems Encountered in Operating Under JUSPAO Concept

Q: Name some of your problems.

ZORTHIAN: Acceptance by all hands, who were used to traditional, institutionalized, Washington-based agencies -- to accepting a coordinated concept. Remember there was never this kind of coordination back in Washington, so that we were getting direction --

now I'm talking just about press -- from five different agencies with different interests. There was never that coordinated operation back here. Even though USIA was supposedly the executive agent, it did not pull together very much back here. So acceptance was difficult.

The problem -- and it's an eternal one -- between headquarters and giving direction to a field. The collateral responsibility problem. We had representatives out in the provinces that nominally and in fact were under CORDS but also turning to us for help.

Resources. The Agency and others made a lot of things available, and did put a lot of money into it, but there were times when even those were inadequate for the task in front of us. Now at the same time, I say, probably too much dependence on our part on product, to the mechanical approach, to counting effectiveness in the millions of leaflets we dropped rather than the substance -- the difficulty of affecting substance and actual programs. You and I have been in this business too long to think that you can engage in communication, engage in propaganda, if you want, in a vacuum. If the substance isn't there, the rest is going to be very inadequate.

Q: How did you try to measure the effectiveness of the operation in the provinces?

ZORTHIAN: Very difficult. One measurement was the return of Chieu Hois -- the people who returned from the VC. That obviously could be intensified by focusing all your effort on that, and there were times when we did. The ultimate test in the provinces was security at the hamlet level, the resistance of hamlet dwellers to VC influence. That was a very difficult thing. You could almost tell the whole story of the Vietnam war on that. That's what Bob Komer with his hamlet indexes, and so on, tried to do. All you could do was contribute to the overall effort, just as the economic program would contribute and military security would contribute. The ultimate test was: were those hamlets resisting VC influence? Were they secure enough? Did they support the government side? And that was a very difficult thing to measure, and to say it was one way or the other was very hard to judge. So you ended up -- this was like the war. It was so difficult to explain and measure the progress in this kind of a fluid war you ended up looking for statistics that you could quantify. So we got into body count issues, and also we got into, how many leaflets did you drop, how many movies did you put out, how many showings did you put on? Well, those obviously are just statistics and don't tell you what people are thinking.

Q: It also affected VOA. We went up to 18 hours a day of broadcasting in Vietnamese, and had no idea of what good it was doing.

ZORTHIAN: A most difficult thing, and I'm not sure ever resolved; a constant problem for the Agency generally.

Another problem was people, training of people. People came out there for 18 months, they got a quick smattering of Vietnamese -- in the early days they didn't even get that. Were they adaptable? Did they have aptitude for that kind of work? Would they want to

be there? Was there some enthusiasm, commitment? Now a lot of them had it. Some had it who weren't qualified. Some who were qualified didn't have it. But this was not, if you will, an elite corps trained for this purpose. A background in the Agency came closest of all the agencies, but still wasn't designed for this kind of a situation. The group of province reps I had at first were a great team, but then inevitably, in that kind of thing, as numbers grow you get dilution. But Fred Quinn and Rex Baer and Sam Dieli and John Scanlan -- that first group who came in were just first-rate officers. They helped set the thing up, they got it established, they functioned well. But they also were in a counter-insurgency situation, those early ones, more counter-insurgency than later when the conventional forces moved in. Part of our answer to problems was always: more, more; and I'm not sure that is the answer. Just as part of our answer to the war was: more, more. I'm not sure Americans are skilled enough, sophisticated enough in that kind of a situation to do it with an epee instead of a saber. We've got to go in and clump down five million tons of cement and bombs and PXs and the God-damnedest logistic tail you've ever seen, and try to just win it by weight. And that never worked -- never worked well.

Plus, you know, the ultimate problem was your relations and the performance of your allies, the Vietnamese. Who again weren't trained particularly for this kind of a war -- not the people we were dealing with, who tended to be by and large the urban Vietnamese, a lot of them northern Vietnamese, not very skilled particularly at communication with the hamlet. Obviously, some were, but an awful lot weren't. The competence of the government, the leadership presented, the issues of corruption, and so on -- all that diluted the effort. It would take a long, long analysis and evaluation to come up with final answers, but I think such evaluation is needed.

USIA Has Never Addressed Problem of How It Would Handle Another Counter-Insurgency Program If It Ever Arose

Still today, 20 years after I left, the U.S. government has not worked out standard operating procedures for low-intensity wars and how it would handle them. If we got into another such situation, is the Agency going to be the prime agency again? Will it take it on? If so, is it ready to? Has it given any thought to training and preparation? If it's not going to be, who is? Who ever it is, are they ready? Is the military still, in their training for psychological operations, emphasizing largely equipment -- mobile printing presses, mobile radio transmitters, all the rest of the equipment, the goodies? But how much of substance? How developed are our overall plans? Some of it's going on but not very much. We are not prepared, and the Agency isn't. I don't think the Agency has distilled a thing out of Vietnam -- which is a disappointment. Now, the military has tried some; they've done a certain amount of lessons out of Vietnam, they've done a certain amount of postmortems on it. But I don't think the Agency has, and I think the Agency essentially want to turn its back on it.

Well, perhaps so. All I say is, the last time we went into it, the only one that came close was the Agency, and so we were tapped. What's going to happen next time? And it's no

good to tell me there ain't going to be a next time, because there sure as hell may be. You know, we came close to it in the Gulf in some ways, and Central America is an area where we've done something. Now the CIA ended up doing the consultation down there, but the Agency has had some involvement in it. As a matter of fact, as far as that goes, I would even note that the Agency hasn't trained for media relations. There's no training for handling the press in our Agency except trial and error, on the spot in the middle of a situation. There's no preparation for it. And as far as I know, none of the training deals with the question of media relations.

Q: They have instituted media relations courses now, in which they're trying to teach people to deal with the press, the media in lively situations. That started recently. They bring in people to really throw zinging questions at them.

ZORTHIAN: Well, God bless, if they are. That has to be recent then. It sure didn't for a long time. It was like throwing the dice. A guy might be good at it or might not.

Well, JUSPAO obviously is close to my heart. I spent four of the good years of my life there, and I get a lot of thoughts on it and somehow I keep saying to myself, I'll write it all out, but I suspect that's not going to happen. On the personal side, I went till June of 1964 without the family. Then my family came to Saigon, after school ended in New Delhi, for a month. Then they took off on home leave, as did I a week or so later and met them in New York. And I wasn't here a week before I got a message from Maxwell Taylor saying, "Come back, you're required." So I went back to Vietnam. Margaret and the boys came out alone in time for the school year in September. They were there about five or six months, obviously not the healthiest situation. The kids used to go to school in a Navy bus with people riding shotgun up on the roof of it. And all civilians were evacuated in 1965 after the initial air strike. Families had a choice of where to go, and my family went to Baguio in the Philippines because of what was then regarded as the best American in Asia, the Brent School, and stayed there three and a half years. I used to get over there about once every other month, sometimes once every three months, a quick visit.

Q: This was high school age?

ZORTHIAN: No -- grammar school age. Actually, when they started high school, Greg came back a year before us to enter prep school here, at high school level. Steve never got to high school while we were overseas. He started that here. Well, then, finally, after Tet, which was a -- shock may not be the right word, but which was a sort of watershed event in Vietnam.

1968: Tet! The Vietnam Watershed. JUSPAO Declines

Q: It was certainly a shock in the United States.

ZORTHIAN: You know, it was clear my war was over, and we were entering a whole new phase and it was time for me to change. I stayed on for quite a while because Bunker

wanted me to. Ed Nickel came in to take over the USIS part of JUSPAO; he came in as director of JUSPAO. I became special assistant to the ambassador for press relations, with Gene Rosenfeld as my deputy. But that was a temporary set-up, and there was no doubt that one of those days I should have left. I was phasing out. At one point I was assigned to Japan. Alex Johnson, who had been deputy chief of mission in Vietnam, accepted me there as PAO, obviously without language. Then that backed off because Bunker asked me to stay on, and the Agency assigned me to Tufts for a year. I was supposed to go to Tufts for a year's residence.

Zorthian Receives Offer From "Time". Leaves USIA

While I was in Vietnam Jim Linen, president of Time, Inc., had come through. Margaret was over there on one of these big visits, because Vice President Humphrey was in town. They called over the wives; I was doing some official things. Jim Linen had always thought he had dinner with me. He hadn't; he had dinner with Margaret. But based on that, when he got back to New York he asked me if I were interested in a job with Time, Inc., and spelled out a prospect for me. I got back, and they confirmed the prospect. I didn't know where the hell to go. At one point, LBJ told Dean Rusk to give me an Embassy. He had asked me in Guam to stay on a year; I was supposed to be out of there. Well, when the President asks you, you don't say no. Subsequently, Westmoreland had offered me the IV Corps - the top civilian job there with the military under me -- a job John Vann finally got, incidentally. I didn't want to extend again. Margaret was getting restless; four years was enough, et cetera, and I was getting tired. Things had changed, and after Tet, as I say, my war was over. But there was nowhere to go. I didn't want to be a PAO for 20 more years. I was relatively young. In 1968 I was 48 years old. Time came in with a very good offer, so I decided to resign. Dick Schmidt said, "Well, stay on till we get the career legislation through, and retire as a career foreign service officer rather than a reserve or civil servant." So I stayed on a couple of months. I became special assistant to the director for those two months. It was a nominal job. I was cleaning up, doing reports, briefing, and so on. The legislation went through, and I was sworn in as FSIO-1, whatever the title, and then resigned the next week and left the Agency in October 1968. So it's been 20 years.

Zorthian's Status as Marine Corps Reserve Colonel
Helped Him in Relations with Military in Vietnam

Q: Did you find your military experience, your reserve status in the Marine Corps helpful in that military situation?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

Q: How so?

ZORTHIAN: Simply that I had been in the military and in the Marine Corps reserve -- I was promoted to colonel while I was in Vietnam, and Westmoreland pinned the colonel's eagles on me.

Q: I thought you were a colonel when you were at VOA.

ZORTHIAN: No, I was a lieutenant colonel then. This was chicken colonel. And he pinned it on, and the word was around. And, as I say, I understood the military, and with that knowledge that I'd been in service, there was a little more acceptance of it; I don't want to overstate it. Margaret lived on a military post -- or right off it -- in Baguio, right near the John Hay base. I'd go in through Clark. But just understanding their structure, understanding their approach to things, helped. I even did two weeks -- it didn't stretch to two week because it was cut short, but nevertheless I took two weeks active duty training in Vietnam, up in Danang. Taylor let me go up there. It lasted abut a week, a week and a half, before he called me back, but when Lou Walt commanded the Marines up there -- and particularly with the Marines, you know the old wheeze about "Once a Marine, always a Marine" -- they sort of accept you in the family. No, that was helpful. The military people I dealt with were essentially at the colonel level -- the head of information for MACV, the head of information for Vietnam Air, U.S. Air in Vietnam, for the Navy, for the Army. Eventually it became a one-star thing, Sy Sidle became head of information there. Incidentally, those last years, the military, simply because of its weight, kept getting further and further from direction of USIA and of me. By the time I left, that authority was never really restored. And as I understand, the subsequent people really just ran the civilian side of the press operation.

Basis of Growing USIA Disillusionment with JUSPAO Concept

Q: Well, how much of this decision by the Agency to reduce its involvement in the whole picture in Vietnam was affected by the natural course of events on the ground in Vietnam, or how much of it was a philosophical or substantive position taken here in Washington without regard to what was going on?

ZORTHIAN: Remember, the Agency reached that reluctance -- and I don't mean it was an abrupt cut-off but it was a gradual thing -- in December of '66 while the war was still building up and while U.S. forces were growing there. So the situation in Vietnam in '66, comparatively, was in better shape than subsequently. So the Agency's reluctance didn't grow out of the progress there. It may have grown to some extent out of the growth of the military, the fact that it became more of a conventional war, and the weight of the military, but I think most of it, my reading of it -- and Leonard Marks or Dan Oleksiw may have a different reading -- my reading of it was that the Agency got tired of the burden of the budget and manpower demands JUSPAO was making on it, and the extent it had to constrict operations elsewhere. And also faced internally a certain amount of pressure, saying, This is not our business. The cultural purists, if you will.

Q: When Shakespeare was in charge, Kent Crane was area director for the Far East, it seems to me that the Agency involvement in Vietnam was intense.

ZORTHIAN: Well, that may be, but that's later. I'm talking about a memo from Leonard Marks to the White House, saying, I want out! I don't mean they wanted completely out, but they certainly wanted to reduce it. Don't ever let them deny that, because I have it in writing, the memo to the White House. Now, whether after I left there were some new directives -- remember, what the heck, Frank came in in the beginning of 1969. Whether he restored that I don't know, but the fact on the ground is, JUSPAO was dismantled by '72 and it went back to USIS. And I don't know that the Agency at that time, at the end, had even the franchise for policy guidance in Vietnam. You see, among the other things we did, we had a policy unit that issued guidance in psychological operations to all elements. At one time it was headed by a military man, quite a bit, but Bill Stearman, for instance, did the guidance for and direction of the North Vietnamese effort. My feeling was, as I say, that the core of the opposition came from -- well, there was this feeling, that the nature of the effort had changed, almost before JUSPAO was created. But the core of the effort came from the demands JUSPAO was placing on the Agency -- money, people, and the image of the Agency, as a propaganda outfit as against a cultural, information outfit. And in that there was a good deal of reluctance, including many career officers.

Q: Well, some of us in VOA objected to the fact that we started putting on this program designed to reach North Vietnam, in which we would read the names of prisoners from North Vietnam. This was not a program. This was certainly not in the VOA pattern as a news and information source. But this was enthusiastically supported by the Agency uptown.

ZORTHIAN: Well, it began -- you know, LBJ was a very demanding guy. He'd say, Goddammit, get out there and ... But again I'd say, sure, I can see legitimate questions about that. But here's a situation where you need a tactical radio operation. Who's going to provide it the next time around? There's no preparation for that. And so they'll turn to VOA again.

Q: We turned that portable transmitter at Hue over to, I thought, the military, or to you people for whatever broadcasts you were making into the north, but that had nothing to do with VOA except for the title to the transmitter.

ZORTHIAN: Well, that was after my time. But if the military took it over I question the military's capability at that time of training to handle that kind of assignment. There just was not any readiness.

Q: You think we didn't learn anything from that experience.

ZORTHIAN: Oh, I think we learned a lot, but I'm not sure the Agency has ever distilled it and made it part of doctrine or adopted it or even looked at it. You were in the agency. Now, did you hear of any lessons being learned by the Agency, institutionally? No.

Personal Memories and Evaluations
of JUSPAO/Vietnam Experience

Q: What are some of the memories you have of that experience in JUSPAO, on the personal side -- except for the family situation?

ZORTHIAN: Oh, enormous. Once the families left... You know, someone say, "What price did you pay in Vietnam?" Obviously, the big price -- and it was a very real one -- was separation from family, with two sons in important, formative years -- the months and time you lost with them. Professionally, the job obviously was a very demanding and exciting one, a very intense one. You served in Vietnam seven days a week, 12 hours a day, if that's what the thing called for. And a lot of people did that kind of time. So the intensity is something; you were always absorbed in the job. There were very few breaks unless you got away over to Manila or somewhere else on a trip. And you know, those relationships, in that kind of an atmosphere, become very, very intense, very, very solid. Many, many of those journalists I regard as friends, see many of them today in Washington. A lot of them have grown up to become managing editors or editors. My relations with them were very close. Professionally, some of the jobs I've had since then sort of threw me in touch with them. But that's also true about Agency people, some of whom are gone --- John McGowan is gone, Sandy Marlowe's gone, Harry Casler's gone. A number of others who served out there I see every so often. Now, there's also frustration at what happened, at our inadequacies in implementing policy, in carrying it out. Our shortcomings in that regard, the flaws we had, the flaws our allies had. I was a believer then. I haven't changed my mind about the propriety or need for our actions. I think we carried it out very badly. We could have done much better with much fewer.

Q: You're talking about the total effort, not just JUSPAO.
ZORTHIAN: The total effort. At the same time, I recognize the price paid. But remember, sitting in Saigon, you're not quite as conscious of that. I don't think I was fully conscious of the price being paid until April of 1968, after Tet -- when, by the way, I'd gone on record to Phil Habib, Bill Depew and George Carver, who came out as an inspection team, saying, "We've got to get the hell out of here. We go to the Vietnamese and say, 'Shape up or we're shipping out,' and if they don't do it, let's get out." That's not hindsight, because the failure of the Vietnamese was very visible then. But as I came out here, I left Saigon under curfew, darkened at night, car dark and so on, driving from the residence out to Tan Son Nhut airport, flew in one of those darkened planes, the things that McNamara set up, one of the KC tanker jobs that had been converted with bunks and so on. Flew dark, and we stopped in Honolulu so there was some daylight then, landed in Washington in the dark. And there was a curfew on here. It didn't look any different from Saigon. That was the Martin Luther King period. That obviously comes as quite a set-back.

Then I went up to New England to visit Greg, who had just started in Andover. I took two or three days off, and stopped off in Boston and saw Ken Galbraith. He invited me to

dinner that night, and there were a number of people there -- Dave Halberstam, among others. I guess I didn't realize till that dinner how deep the criticism and opposition in the U.S. was. You know, you read some about it in the clippings you'd get from the States, but the intensity of that opposition was just enormous. And the price that was being paid! Here was my son, fresh back, already demonstrating against it, as whatever he was, a freshman in high school. So the price we paid was enormous and therefore I began to feel that what we were trying to do in Vietnam probably wasn't worth the cost at home. But I'm also very disappointed that we didn't do it better in Vietnam. And I don't know that, again, our structure, our approach to these problems is any more sophisticated or skilled today than it was then. Maybe. I think we lost whatever accumulated backlog of knowledge and skills we had. And what have we done with it? Twenty years now, we have very few people in this government who know counter-insurgency, are ready to deal with it, or have any real thoughts about it. Sure, there's some skill left. Now, you can't stay prepared for that forever, but you can spend some time dusting off the lessons, keeping them up to date, keeping them alive. And we haven't.

Of course, one of the sharp memories is the people looking over your shoulder. I see Hubert Humphrey in that picture on my wall and remember his visit. Well, brushing against people like that, seeing them for a day or two under intense conditions, is a very good experience -- at least, impressive, in what you see. People don't realize how much of this country came through Vietnam. We had 7,000 official visitors one year. A lot of them were military, but nevertheless many, many civilians came in.

Q: How did you get your regular work done?

ZORTHIAN: You did it only because you worked 12 to 18 hours a day. There was no other way. It was good that the families were out of the way, because we couldn't have done any work. Put aside the personal danger; you couldn't have spent any time with the family. There were some first-rate people involved there who devoted an awful lot to it, put an awful lot into it. The frustration of feeling -- you know, all this crap about "the press lost the war" -- bunk. We lost the war in Vietnam, not the press.

Now, you can make an argument that in a backhanded sort of way we won, that the 55,000 lives did not all go in vain. Because we bought ten years, if you will, for South Asia. And those ten years were important ones in getting the surrounding governments to get their roots in and then to establish themselves. In South Asia, in many ways -- with the exception of Vietnam, where you had all the boat people coming out, and Cambodia, Indochina -- but Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and so on -- not the Philippines recently -- in many ways is one of the more peaceful areas of the world. We've had fewer problems there, with the exception of the Philippines. So there are arguments to be made, but overall, I guess, there's some -- pride may be the wrong word, but some satisfaction in having done a job, feeling you contributed, playing a role in what was a critical event in our lifetime, our generation, being very much part of it. And at the same time, a sort of frustration and very real disappointment -- in not having it be successful. So you get ambivalent about it.

Q: You have expressed regret over the fact that there is not an organized memory, as it were, of that experience, to learn from it. Would you recommend to the U.S. Information Agency, or to the U.S. government as a whole, today, that some kind of institutionalized look at that period be undertaken?

ZORTHIAN: I'd certainly recommend that the U.S. government do some contingency planning for low-intensity conflicts. The military is doing something, but I'm talking about overall, including civilian agencies. And in the field of communications, if the decision is that USIA is the prospective principal agency in that field, then that USIA undertake such a study, yes. Some agency of government should do it. I just get the feeling, as I say, that most often the civilian agencies have just sort of brushed it under the rug, and if it happened tomorrow would be caught again short in capability, resources and knowledge. They'd reinvent the wheel.

Q: Is there anything we haven't covered that you want to get on the record?

ZORTHIAN: I don't know, Cliff. Off the top of my head, no. You know, you can keep talking about all kinds of things. There are some great people in our agency of that period. That kind of situation, what became a conventional war, brings out principal qualities in some people. Some of them were cowboys, there's no doubt. A lot of them weren't particularly happy to be there but did one hell of a job, just determined to do it. Many of them went back to more conventional assignments, and I'm not sure came out that well. It's hard to follow that act, professionally. Some have done it, I guess, but many of them have put in their time and retired since without, I think, ever reaching that degree of intensity in their professional lives.

Q: Is that why you decided to go ahead and retire?

ZORTHIAN: To some extent, yeah. What do you do, afterwards?

Q: You said you didn't want to be a PAO for 20 years.

ZORTHIAN: You go to Japan, a perfectly important post and so on. But you sit there for three years as PAO in a fairly conventional operation, and you say, "Geez, what the hell am I doing here?" So you end up leaving, and try to find a new career that's satisfying. Well, there are all kinds of reasons. One was that I had two kids to educate. You didn't educate kids in college -- even in those days, let alone today at $20,000 a year -- at private schools on a government salary. Not easily, at least. So all kinds of things entered into it.

I was going to tell you about the ambassadorship. LBJ told Rusk to make me an ambassador, with Leonard Marks there. Rusk was not one of my greater fans. I'm not sure I had too many fans in this press relations job. He was reported to have said at a staff meeting at the State Department about that time when my name came up, "That's one of those sons of bitches who thinks the public has a right to know." That sort of puts the

wrong twist on my efforts. The military didn't particularly like the way I was open with the press; I'm not sure they didn't think I was just creating headaches for them out there. AID and CIA may not have been in the loop. So there were very few guys back here cheering me on. Nevertheless, LBJ wanted me, the ambassadors for whom I worked were supporters. My relations with them always were good. Anyway, LBJ told Rusk to give me an embassy.

Finally one day Leonard Marks called and said, "I've got an embassy for you, Barry." This was over the overseas phone, which we weren't quite used to, so you'd shout to make sure you were heard. I said, "Where, Leonard?" and he said, "Niger," and I said, "Oh, Jesus." I said, "You mean Nigeria, don't you?" Which was not all that attractive either. He said, "No, no, Niger." I said, "Wait a minute, Leonard." And I raced upstairs and pulled out an atlas and looked, and there was a big place that said "Niger" but I noticed it also said "desert" in most of it. And then I noticed that little strip of green. I said, "Leonard, I've got to check with Margaret. I'll call you back," I check it out. It has a little sliver of green along the river, the Niger River, three million people, virtually all starving. But it was Rusk's ultimate revenge, because it was one of the few countries in the world without a single daily newspaper. I told Margaret, "You don't want to go to Niger, do you?" and she said, "Not after India and Saigon." So I called Leonard and said, "Margaret won't do it" -- I must admit, I cowardly put it on her and said, "Margaret won't take it." But that was Rusk's thing. And with the State Department attitude in those days, reflecting what they thought about that post, the guy who got the job finally was an R-3 from AID who was black. This, in State Department eyes, is really the bottom of the ladder. If I'd had a reasonable post I might have stayed in. That was a disappointment, and it was obvious I wasn't going anywhere in State. So we gave up on that one, and did decide pretty much to get out.

I have no regrets. You know, you pay a price, jumping around, but no real regrets. I had not intense, close relations with LBJ but came close to him, saw him closely in action many times, a few times directly, and some of the exchanges with him certainly stay in my mind. One of them Bob Donovan reports in the book he did on Truman and Johnson. And there are various memories that come back. I've stayed in reasonably close touch with a guy like Westmoreland, Bunker I've stayed in touch with. I was very lucky in the Foreign Service, with five literally great ambassadors, each in his own way. I served with John Kenneth Galbraith, with Chester Bowles, with Henry Cabot Lodge, with Ellsworth Bunker, and with Max Taylor. That's quite a roster. None of them career; even Bunker wasn't. Then as career people we had Alex Johnson and Sam Berger, who were top-flight, and Bill Porter, who died not long ago. So it was a very impressive group of people to serve with, and I think in many ways the best the country has to offer. So there is satisfaction in that kind of experience. I've often thought about writing a book, and never got around to it. When I first came back I had a couple of five-figure offers, a $20,000 advance, and so on. Frank Stanton at CBS was working on that. But the book they wanted was not the one I wanted to write. They wanted a kiss-and-tell book, "How I Lied to the Press in Vietnam" type of book, and there was no sense in doing that. If I'd gone to Tufts

I'd probably have done the book. Instead I went to "Time" and just got involved there very quickly.

Q: Thank you very much, Barry.

End of interview