

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs History Project

ROBERT J. WOZNAK

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INTERVIEW

[Note: Mr. Wozniak died before editing this interview.]

Q: This is the first session of an oral history interview with Robert J. Wozniak. It is December 6, 2001. This is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at the Foreign Service Institute. My name is Raymond Ewing. Bob, it is a pleasure to be talking with you about your Foreign Service career.

WOZNIAK: Thank you. It is good to be here.

Q: It looks to me like you entered into the Foreign Service of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in January 1963. I am wondering how you came to be interested in that and where did you live, and what was your background.

WOZNIAK: Ray, I had been working as a journalist after completing my university studies in 1960, a BA in political science at the University of Chicago. My intention had been to make a career in journalism. Quite by chance, a friend of mine who just entered into journalism too on graduation from Williams told me that he was going to take the Foreign Service exam. I said, "Well, that sounds like fun; I will take it with you." He didn't pass; I did, and ultimately wound up entering the USIA Foreign Service officer corps. It was the reserve officer corps at that time, back in the 60s. The reason I accepted the offer of assignment with the USIA was that at the time I was working for the Associated Press in Detroit. The bureau chief was a crusty old Ben Hecht front-page-type, Clint Brossier as I recall his name, who said to me when I told him that my ambition was to get to Washington and do some foreign assignment work for one or another news

agency, maybe the Associated Press, that after six or seven years of seasoning in Detroit or someplace else in the boonies that might be possible. I decided that I wasn't going to wait for that. So I took the Foreign Service offer more or less, I will have to admit, as a lark. I didn't intend a career when I entered. It wound up being a very satisfactory career from my point of view, and I am glad that I did it. But it was entirely a what is the word fortuitous, serendipitous kind of development.

Q: At the University of Chicago, you said your undergraduate major was political science. Were you particularly interested in international affairs?

WOZNIAK: Very much so. I was always a news freak, couldn't get enough of media reporting and world affairs, so the two interests came together, international affairs and journalism.

Q: And you had grown up in the Chicago area?

WOZNIAK: No, I was born in January 1935 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I hadn't lived there since leaving for naval service during the Korean War, well the conflict was over when I was released from the Navy in 1954. But from that time I pretty much lived in the Chicago area, studied at university there, worked for awhile for the city news bureau, and had a brief fling with public relations with Chicago Bell, Illinois Bell which was very unsatisfactory. I knew I wasn't cut out for private sector public affairs work, so I went back into journalism. I stayed in the Chicago area. I had family there. My baby brother still lives there. You know once I started a Foreign Service career, whenever I was in the States, Washington became home.

Q: When you were in the Navy which I guess was before undergraduate school because of the Korean War, did that actually take you to Korea?

WOZNIAK: No, I never got out of the States. I was a U.S. Naval reservist, went on active duty in 1952 as a 17 year old, knowing that I was going to be inducted the following year if I didn't make that move, and so I activated my reserve status, and in fact spent less than two years on active duty because the conflict had ended and they were downsizing the size of the military as rapidly as possible. They sent us home just in time to begin university studies in September of 1954 so I did actually only 22 months. My assignment was training and an assignment in Washington, DC of all places.

Q: So you had a previous experience in Washington DC. Did you stay in the Navy reserve for awhile?

WOZNIAK: No, when that eight year tenure expired I was out.

Q: So then you came to Washington in 1963 for your second time in Washington. You never traveled abroad at all?

WOZNIAK: Never had traveled abroad, no, other than Canada I suppose. If you grew up in Michigan, you almost had to go to Canada. No, I had never been abroad. Quite a difference from the circumstance of my children who were born abroad, who have visited as many countries as I have before they were even out of their teens. No, I was completely, what was the word, a provincial lad I guess. From the Midwest, that's right.

Q: Ok, so you came to Washington in early '63, for a period of training and orientation.

WOZNIAK: It was close to a year of training. At the time USIA officers were run through the FSI A-100 course. That was eight weeks at the time. We also had our own specialized USIA training. All told it came to about five months of in class experiences, at which time we were assigned to language training when that was appropriate. My memory fails and I don't recall that I asked for any particular part of the world, just send me where you need me. I was very astonished as always having been an admirer of the classic Greece, when I was told that I was being assigned to Greek language training which was very satisfactory, very pleasing to me. It is odd to walk in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle. What else could a young man want.

Q: Now the A-100 course that you did initially was together with State Department Foreign Service officers at the Foreign Service Institute. The specialized USIA public affairs training was somewhere else.

WOZNIAK: That's right. The A-100 course was in the old FSI in seedy Rosslyn before it became developed. That is where the A-100 course was conducted as I recall. Somewhere in the Department as well. The USIA training was in a funky old building which no longer exists next to the Corcoran Gallery opposite the Octagon building. That was where most of the USIA training went on at that time.

Q: Oh, yes, I remember that building.

WOZNIAK: It no longer exists.

Q: Well then when you began Greek language training you came back to the Foreign Service Institute, back to Rosslyn, or did you do that somewhere else?

WOZNIAK: Initially it was to be, no I am sorry, yes it was at the site of program but initially the training was done in that old building I mentioned to you. Then we moved over to the Rosslyn FSI building with a couple of teachers who are still there after all these years. Taki Sopunzis and Aliko, his wife. Taki moved on later. I don't know what he is doing now, but I believe he is a language supervisor for some languages other than Greek. His wife continued to be a Greek instructor for a long time, and they were really proud of all the fine Greek speakers they turned out over the years.

Q: So at the end of 1963 perhaps November, you went to Athens as its junior officer trainee.

WOZNIAK: My then wife and I stopped in Madrid on the way to Athens because we were going to meet an A-100 classmate, who had been assigned to Tangier. They couldn't make it, and we spent a weekend in Madrid on our own where we were approached by a Spaniard who recognized that we were clearly Americans. There weren't that many tourists on the street in Madrid at that time. He told us that our President had been assassinated. I thought he was a very bad joker until I saw the special editions of the Spanish newspapers being hawked on the streets. We sped on to Athens and that was the beginning of my career in the Foreign Service.

Q: So on November 22, 1963 you were in Madrid.

WOZNIAK: That is right, en route. It was a grim week to arrive at a post too.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about what you found at the post when you first arrived and what kind of responsibilities you were given? Were you strictly a trainee or were you given sort of a rotation of assignments, or how did it all work initially?

WOZNIAK: My first PAO (Public Affairs Officer), the guy who was sort of a legend in his own time, Vincent Joyce, devised a wonderful ten or twelve month long training program for me. I said, "You didn't do this just for me. You did it to impress the people back in Washington didn't you?" He said, "That was right," but it was an excellent program. He had me rotating through all the offices in the mission at the conclusion of which he asked me to stay on at the post as the assistant cultural affairs officer, which I did for the next four years. The reason for that being that Vince had run afoul of the Prime Minister's son who was assistant to the prime minister I think at the time but later was the prime minister of Greece for many years. They had a falling out over a Voice of America issue. VOA had transmitted in Greece as you probably know, and at the time, 1963, there was tension between Greece and Turkey. The Greeks were unhappy about the fact that we were broadcasting in Greek to Greeks from Greek soil. When Vince went off on home leave a few days later, the Greeks let it be known that they would welcome his not returning. So the next PAO who came was Don Taylor. He was succeeded by Abe Sirkin. Each time I went through a new PAO they would say you ought to be out of here, but you are my best Greek speaker, will you stay another year? And as I hadn't been planning a career, and I was having a great time in Greece, I agreed and wound up staying six years in Greece on my first assignment. It was probably almost a record, because I wasn't planning a career, and because I thought I was doing something good for the post. I was, I think, the best Greek speaker on the staff. I didn't mind. It turned out not to have been injurious to my career in the end because again, I had the good fortune to be swept up in the work of the post. You can't call it an old boy's net, because I wasn't an old boy yet. But I found favor with our boss in Washington who took me under his wing and moved me along, and ultimately convinced me that I should make a career of the Foreign Service.

Q: Now how did you come to be the best Greek speaker among the USIA officers at the

post? You only had four or five months of Greek.

WOZNIAK: About five months. But I threw myself into it. I guess the reason I was assigned to Greek speaking in the first place is I had a high MLAT score.

Q: MLAT. Modern language aptitude test.

WOZNIAK: Yes, I had a pretty high score in that. I guess they considered Greek a hard language. I am not sure it is really, not modern spoken Greek. If you wanted to be a really proficient Greek speaker then it gets hard because you need to master forms of formal Greek and approximations to classic Greek forms. But modern Greek is not that difficult. Well that is an aside. The point is I was thought to have the aptitude. I loved the idea of Greek and Greece, and I threw myself into it. I studied it assiduously, and I continued while I was at post.

Q: Did you take classes at post?

WOZNIAK: Sure, I had daily instruction as many of the younger officers in the embassy did. We had a large language teaching staff at the embassy in those days. But among my assignments as assistant cultural attaché was as youth affairs officer. While many of the university students and young political activists that I attempted to cultivate in those years spoke English, not all did, and so through some pretty intensive involvement with them, I had a chance to polish my Greek. It got to be pretty good. Ultimately they said about a 4-4 level (4 in speaking/4 in reading; 4 is professional level of proficiency). I don't know if that was true.

Q: Well, it is certainly very good. I don't know about 1963 but surely in the later years, Greek was still considered a hard language, and the standard course to bring somebody to a three level or professional level of competence was considered to be about nine months. You only had five months, and you really must have worked hard and took full advantage.

WOZNIAK: I must admit, I worked very hard at it.

Q: Were there other JOTs (Junior Officer Trainees) in Athens at that time?

WOZNIAK: Lots of them in the embassy, most of them rotating through the consular section. Some of them remained in the service as career officers. Some remain friends to this day. Other junior officers at USIA were there, not at the same time as I, but followed me, at least two or three more during my next five years as ACAO (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer), I helped shepherd along a number of USIA junior officers.

Q: Well let's talk a little bit about the general situation in Greece at the time, the atmospherics, or should we talk about either the embassy or the USIS component first. Which would you prefer?

WOZNIAK: Well, in all candor, so much time has elapsed since the period we are talking about, my memory being a sieve, I am not sure that I can throw a lot of useful light on this, besides which so much has been written about the period publicly and so much recorded in this oral history program by people who are much better positioned than I to tell you about the political relations in Greece, U.S. Greece, and Turkey, the Cyprus involvement in the 60s. I don't know that I can shed a lot of light about that.

Q: Why don't we talk a little bit more specifically about the public affairs aspect of U.S.-Greek relations at the time and the cultural areas as well that you were involved with? You did mention that one of your responsibilities was to cultivate, get to know, promising young potential political leaders. How did you figure out who to try to cultivate, or was it sort of a matter of targets of opportunity so to speak?

WOZNIAK: Yes, I think a lot of that characterization is not inaccurate. Again I am not sure I remember well, but I know one of the mechanisms we used early on was the international visitor program and the youth leader component of that. We had a large program at that time in Greece. The Greek student union was a natural target. So I went to them, sought them out, and over the next few years we would invite for brief visits to the United States, presidents and key officers in Greek student unions. Some of them went on to the kinds of careers that you had hoped for, as I found out many years later when I returned to Greece in the 80s as Public Affairs Officer. That was one way, and through them of course expanding the network of contacts. But it was mostly university students I was dealing with. A lot of it too were teenagers interested in American popular culture who were occasional visitors to the joint cultural center where I spent a lot of time. We had a large English speaking teaching program, a very active and good library, and a pretty active program of cultural events. That would draw them.

Q: Were you involved in programming cultural presentations?

WOZNIAK: Sure, very much so. I went through two CAO's in my tenure there. One was a professional musician, Dale Dayton who was the musical guru of USIA. The other was a quite different kind of guy, very brainy kind of guy, Ted Wertheim who was basically a scientist. Their interests were pre-focused. They asked me or expected me to carry all the other weight in the cultural section which I guess I did all right. It wasn't my preference you know, when Vince asked me to be the ACAO, I was disappointed because I had hoped the assistant information officer job would open up at the same time and would have fallen to me. He said, "I am sorry Bob, you are too young for that job." I was I think 28 or 29 at the time. I came into the service rather late. But it turned out to be a very happy assignment.

Q: You probably thought because of your background in journalism that working with the press and the other media was...

WOZNIAK: Otherwise as you undoubtedly know from your time, watching Greek affairs

in Washington and as ambassador in Cyprus, you probably know how irresponsible and maddening the Greek media can be. But even so.

Q: Now this is before the colonels took over, or I guess you were actually there when that happened.

WOZNIAK: I was there when that happened.

Q: We will talk about that in a few minutes. But in the period before that, did you feel that you had a real uphill fight to make America better known, better appreciated or was there a lot of receptivity to it?

WOZNIAK: The audience that I was supposed to be responsible for, primarily the youths there was a lot of unhappiness. Remember we were in the Vietnam struggle at the time. The leftist media and I must say the university students themselves seemed to be on the left which is supposed to be the case with young people I guess. Yes, it was a struggle. That and the Kennedy assassination which really tarred us, made it difficult the first few years. Even more so after the colonels came into power because of our ill advised approach to dealing with that problem.

Q: How about in the period before that. Were we seen as pro Turkish?

WOZNIAK: I think they saw us that way yes. Greeks have a propensity to look at the world in black and white terms. Either you love me or you hate me. If you don't love me, you must love my enemy. And we were pursuing an evenhanded policy in Turkish matters that was unsatisfactory. I suppose to the other side on the other side of the Aegean as well but certainly unsatisfactory to the Greeks.

Q: Did you spend most of your time in this early period in Athens or did you have a country wide mandate?

WOZNIAK: No, My training in my first year in that post included a month in Thessaloniki but at the time believe it or not, USIA had a three officer post in Thessaloniki. It no longer exists. We even had an office and a library and a Foreign Service national in Petros and one in Piraeus. No, my brief did not go beyond Athens.

Q: About how large was USIS in Athens?

WOZNIAK: Gee I guess it must have been about ten officers. It was very large and well funded. We had a lot of money for cultural programs. Those years it didn't come out of our pocket, it came out of the old cultural affairs budget. We would host at the Athens festival the New York Philharmonic, presentations of that caliber, and that size and that expense. There was money, and we had an effective program.

Q: Did you find those large and expensive cultural presentations were effective, well

received?

WOZNIAK: Oh yes absolutely. There is a propensity among Greeks looking for some justification for feeling superior to the United States, they would denigrate our culture. Greeks also have a very haughty attitude towards Greek Americans, at least during my time in any case. Sure, quality presentations of that kind did a lot to offset the stereotypical notions about what our culture and our offerings to the world might be.

Q: Were you involved in the Fulbright program or academic exchanges as well?

WOZNIAK: Peripherally. I wasn't directly involved. The Fulbright offices were next door to mine in the suite of offices in downtown Athens, but no I wasn't directly involved with the program. USIS was also very large.

Q: USIS was downtown, not in the embassy chancery. Was the chancery the same as it is now or did that come later?

WOZNIAK: Yes, but it was a beautiful chancery then. If you look at it today it is a quite unappetizing fortress for self explanatory reasons. Was the architect I.F. Stone? I don't recall but I think it was. He had in mind a monument expressing the openness and vigor of American society and it is a beautiful structure. It was completely open without fences or any kind of barriers. It was just a wonderful symbol of a free society. It still stands there today, but it is hard to see from any angle. USIS uses downtown wisely, a block from the parliament, a block from the university and very near most of the newspaper offices, the right place to be.

Q: I think it was Edward Durell Stone and the marble in his mind at least was the Parthenon...

WOZNIAK: That was part of the influence.

Q: Anything else we should say about the very early period before the colonels took over in 1967 about your time in Athens that you would want to recall?

WOZNIAK: I guess not really Ray, only that Greece prior to and Greece after the colonels were two very different places. Of course in the prior period there was a lot of political turmoil as you probably know. Public attention was focused on the disarray in the parliament and the conflict between the King and Andreas Papandreou. It was a sad time watching a democracy unravel. But it became very different post April, 1967, when democracy had unraveled. I didn't know Phillips Talbot who was the ambassador, very well. We were physically separated and certainly I was low down on the totem pole in his embassy, in his large machine as I could be. But I must say I was very impressed by one of his early cables, one of the first cables he sent after the colonels' coup d'etat. He said, "there are tanks in the streets of Athens and we should weep for the demise of democracy in Greece." I guess Talbot too had been criticized as being less than vigorous in trying to

fend off the coup in Greece, but no one expected it to come from the quarters it did come from, from these unknown colonels. In any case, in the post coup period, Greece was a very different place. A dismal place. Greek intellectuals in certain circles were being harassed by the fact that they now looked, as they readily said, indistinguishable from a banana republic run by illiterate, semi-literate and very ignorant fascistic colonels. The fact that we did not deal with the problem much more vigorously than we did, but in fact got in the Greek eyes, in bed with the colonels, made Greece a very different place. When I left two years later, I was much less reluctant to leave than would have been the case had there not been a coup d'etat. It was not a happy country.

Q: In the period before the coup d'etat there was certainly political turmoil as you say. Was this disarray in parliament and so on, were those conditions directly impacting on you and your work. I am partly asking did you anticipate there was about to be a coup?

WOZNIAK: Well it was widespread belief at least prior to the actual event that there was a coup brewing, and that it was going to be conducted by a cabal of generals, and that many were allegedly involved in the planning or at least aware of the planning. The colonels pre-empted that. Nobody that I know of knew these colonels or knew of their plans or knew of the possibility that such a thing was going to happen. There has been some speculation that lower level Greek American CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) operatives may have been aware of it and failed to inform U.S. authorities because for one or another reason they wished to see such a development occur or for whatever reason. That is only speculation. On the day of the coup, people had trouble getting to the chancery because most of us lived in the northern suburbs, at that time only a five or ten minute drive from the center or the embassy, but when you approached the chancery, you ran into one of the many roadblocks that the putschists had put up. I was driving in that morning alone, as I did most days, knowing that the Greeks in organizational terms are not the most efficient people in the world. They are brilliant individuals and very talented, very creative, but self admittedly they will tell you that organizationally they may lack something in terms of working as teams. I suspected that the roadblock wasn't impermeable, so I just went around the block, and I drove into the embassy.

Q: Without any further obstruction.

WOZNIAK: Without any further obstruction. There were no obstacles on any streets except the main arteries. Well, I got all the way down to Sinbad and Constitution Square to our offices, and of course there was nothing going on there. A couple of generals wandering in asking if we knew anything about what was going on. One or more of them asking for political asylum. I quickly got bored down there. The then junior officer trainee at USIA and I walked up to the chancery to see what was going on there.

Q: About a 20 minute walk or so?

WOZNIAK: Something like that, 20 maybe 25. And when we got up to the third floor, the ambassador's floor, at the far end of the corridor, who do I see but our then chief of

station in a military uniform. In my naiveté I went nuts. I said, “My god, is a KGB chauffeur the real head of our mission,” and here is our CIA station chief in his military uniform. Well I was quickly disabused of that supposition. But he was also stopped at the roadblock, but he didn’t speak Greek and he wasn’t perhaps as innovative as I was. He went home, I am told, that’s when he got into the uniform. The Greek CIA, KYP, advised him to don a uniform and get to town that way. I don’t know how he did it. It was a crazy experience.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about the day of the coup and what else happened to you? Was it pretty quiet after that?

WOZNIAK: Yes. The Greeks hunkered down. They were either embarrassed or frightened. They were concerned; they were in the dark. They didn’t know what was going on. That situation continued for a few days, and then it developed into what I will call a psychological malaise. The country was in a deep funk.

Q: And you described it previously as...

WOZNIAK: Dismal, in a word. And of course our Greek friends were very unhappy with us. Some of them cut us off, would have nothing to do with us. Once it became clear that we weren’t as alleged, privy to the colonels’ plans, it became clear that at the very minimum we were not prepared to squeeze them and get them to move more quickly to democracy than in fact happened.

Q: Earlier you talked about the ill advised support as perceived by...

WOZNIAK: As I recall. Again we are going back 35 years, is that right, 30 years. I am not sure I remember correctly, but I think a principal impetus for our failure to be tougher with the colonels was Admiral Zumwalt’s argument that we needed Piraeus as a port for the Sixth Fleet. As far as I know the State Department or no one else stood up to that contention and agreed to try to negotiate such an agreement with the Greeks. I think it was negotiated but was never implemented. I don’t think it ever became the home port.

But if Greece was important for that reason, and the Sixth Fleet of course was such a component of our Cold War strategies, in any case, that is one reason or maybe the principal reason why we didn’t get tougher with the colonels than we did.

Q: The other thing that happened in 1967 was a Middle East war. To what extent do you think that was a factor in the perceived importance of Greece?

WOZNIAK: I expect that is also the case.

Q: Well in terms of your work as assistant CAO, were you kind of encouraged to kind of keep it up doing the same things or did it become virtually impossible to do very much in terms of contacts with youth leaders, sending visitors to the United States.

WOZNIAK: I think I covered it. It didn't get a lot tougher, but it was a lot less satisfying. I don't know why but your question just triggered a memory I hadn't had in years. I think it must have been in the summer of '67, possibly '68 that the New York Philharmonic was coming to the Athens Festival. The Greeks were not buying tickets. They were boycotting. I think it was '67. I can remember having to go with the cultural affairs officer to the head of the Athens Festival and telling him that we didn't want to be embarrassed, and they didn't want to be embarrassed by an empty house, and would they pay for the house. That is how shameful things were for awhile in any case.

Q: So the orchestra came?

WOZNIAK: The orchestra came, the house was papered with freebies that the Athens Festival handed out to all their friends.

Q: To what extent were critics of U.S. policy in Washington, there were some members of Congress who spoke out against this support for the colonels, for the junta. There were certainly divisions within the Greek-American community about U.S. policy at the time. Some people had been very unhappy with the political turmoil or the influence of what they saw as leftists in the Greek political world, and this had restored order and that would allow time to create better conditions. To what extent did all of that affect anything you were doing in terms of visitors or otherwise?

WOZNIAK: I don't think it affected USIA work, but you raise a good point. I think that may have been one more element in why the U.S. adopted the approach to the colonels that it did. Greek-Americans tend to be a rather conservative community. You may recall our vice president at the time was Spiro Agnew (January 1969 – October 1973) who actually visited his family's birthplace sometime after I left Greece. I suppose the perceived support or at least lack of unhappiness with the elements in Greece among the Greek-American community may have contributed to State Department thinking about how we should deal with the colonels. I think that may well have been the case. Again I am surmising.

Q: Did you feel at the time, say from April of '67 until you left in December of '69 that U.S. policy toward Greece was ill advised or not, and if you did feel that way, did that really make a difference for you to do your job, to defend U.S. policy, to interpret it, to explain it to your contacts?

WOZNIAK: You want to stop the machine for a minute.
Can you repeat what you asked?

Q: Well I guess the question is if you and perhaps others in the mission were uncomfortable with elements of U.S. policy towards Greece privately or perhaps in conversation with each other. What difference did that make in terms of doing your work, doing your job, carrying out your responsibilities as far as Greeks were concerned?

WOZNIAK: Well it certainly complicated them. I have to say in all candor that although we were all enjoined, sworn to defend and support and articulate U.S. foreign policy positions, that none of those officers at the embassy or USIA who I esteemed, and that was most of them, were supportive of the U.S. foreign policy towards Greece in those years, or thought that it was supportable. We also thought that it was ill advised. Inevitably our best Greek friends knew what we really felt. The fact that we would work with or support or encourage private sector American activities that were intended to offset some of the debilitating effects of a fascist coup -- for example the Ford Foundation got very active in Greece in those years to augment and in fact supplant some of the work that USIA normally would have been doing there. So the signals to the Greeks was not one that the administration would have been pleased to know on the part of the embassy staff, but certainly Greek democrats, and that included most of the country, were led to understand that the embassy was not a monolith. It was taking instructions from the White House of course, but on the part of many of us it was a bitter pill.

Q: As I think you have already indicated, this was a period where the Johnson administration, Vietnam was a major preoccupation. The Cold War was there. We had interest in the Middle East. Human rights in specific countries whether they were Greece or anywhere else in the world, were not perhaps as high a priority as they had been at other periods in our recent history.

WOZNIAK: Well, we didn't have a human rights policy at the time. As a matter of fact my last PAO in Greece, Abe Sirkin, leaving Athens several years after I did, worked in the department in INR I guess, policy planning. I am not sure where, but he did a lot of the seminal work that led to the human rights policy that we finally adopted. No, there wasn't such a formal U.S. position at the time. [Editor: The State Department established the Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in April 1975 and began the annual Human Rights Report in 1977.]

Q: Let me ask you to step back for a second. To what extent did you have contact with Andreas Papandreou during this period?

WOZNIAK: None at all. I didn't know the man. On my later assignment I got to know his sons. One of them the current foreign minister quite well, but I never knew him.

Q: Now one of the things that happened the last year you were there was the United States' 1968 presidential election. I am wondering to what extent you were involved in things related to that in Greece? Was that used as sort of a way to hold up our attachment to democracy?

WOZNIAK: Absolutely. As always at president election time, the USIS post did set up a large election center on the grounds of the Grande Bretagne Hotel as I recall. I am almost certain it was there. The intention of course, was to signal that we were persuaded there was no other system other than democracy for ourselves or for Greece. I don't recall that

it was a very well attended function.

Q: Let's see, anything else about this initial first assignment to Athens that we should talk about?

WOZNIAK: Ray, let me look at my OERs (Officer Efficiency Reports).

Q: Well in December of 1969 you left after about six years. Where did you go next?

WOZNIAK: I thought that would be the time for me to jump ship and go back into journalism. I had no onward assignment as we were pushing for that summer. The area director for USIA NEA at the time, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus were still part of the Near East in those years, was a guy named Alan, it will come to me. He was a very bright, and very talented, very difficult guy if he didn't like you. But if he did, and he took a number of junior officers under his wing who he thought merited advancement, he was very good to you. When I told him that I was going to leave the Foreign Service, he said, "Please don't do that. Come to work for me in Washington. But I don't have a job for you right now, so why don't you go to university for a year." So I thought well, that is a good way to decompress and look over the horizon from that vantage point. I was to go to (the university of California at) Berkeley for Balkan studies. I agreed to that when he suggested a university studies program. No one in the Department or the U.S. bureaucracy as far as I knew was looking at the Balkans as an entity. It was time to train people to be able to do so. So I was to go to Berkeley which has a strong program in that area.

When I went to Washington I was told by the training office that whoops, they had forgotten to send my transcript from the University of Chicago to Berkeley and Berkeley's admissions were closed, and sorry about that. So we scrambled around and found out that the University of Indiana had a similarly strong program, and they would accept a late application. I wound up going there. On arriving at Bloomington, in September 1969 which turned out to be a very satisfactory year for me in the end, I found that the husband and wife team, Yarovich, were on sabbatical. They were the heart and soul of the Balkan studies program for the University of Indiana. So I patched together a program of pertinent studies, including a year long seminar on international communism, Greek studies, modern and ancient Greek. It was a satisfactory year in the end.

But along the way, Alan called me from Washington and said that he was sorry that he had suggested coming to work for him in Washington the following summer. It wouldn't work because he needed to send me to Cyprus as PAO (Public Affairs Officer). Would I consider doing that? Someone who had been assigned to the post had jumped ship and he was hurrying around trying to find someone who was minimally qualified. Of course I jumped at the opportunity. It was almost unprecedented at the time. In fact it was unprecedented for a second tour officer to be given a PAO job anyplace. In fact I think I was probably the youngest ever to hold the job at the time. Now today it is very common for a much younger officer to be a PAO someplace. At that time it was not. USIA was

still heavily populated with those who had come into the agency and formed it in the immediate post World War II period. Old USIS kinds of wonderful characters. Anyway I wound up going to Cyprus in May of 1970 where I stayed for the next four years.

Q: Before we leave Indiana University in Bloomington, you pretty much described the kind of studies you did, but that was pretty much something you put together.

WOZNIAK: I had to. There was nothing else to do except spend a total academic year in whatever would be useful.

Q: You didn't look at the Balkans in terms of Yugoslavia or Bulgaria or anything more specific to any of the other parts of the area.

WOZNIAK: Yes, I have to go back and look at what I actually did do, Ray, but I did take a history course in Yugoslav affairs, but I don't know who taught it. Yes, I will patch that up when I can.

Q: So you went to Nicosia, to Cyprus in the summer of 1970 to be public affairs officer.

WOZNIAK: Yes, at the time, a quite fresh FSO-4, this is a grade two in this day and age. Is that, right?

Q: Yes.

WOZNIAK: I was a grade four when I went there.

Q: What sort of staff did you have? Were there other American officers or were you the only one?

WOZNIAK: Just prior to my arrival it had been a three officer post, believe it or not, with the departure of my predecessor it was trimmed back to two officers and an American administrative assistant/secretary. Fifteen Foreign Service nationals (FSNs), and I must say it was the most talented group of FSNs that I had ever encountered in my entire USIA career. They were wonderful. We just had a ball. We had a vigorous cultural program. There wasn't a whole lot we could do on the media side because the Greek Cypriot press is not in any case a very professional one. Not in those days in any case. Cyprus was such a different country in the 1970s than it is today. I visited Cyprus last year or earlier this year. It is utterly transformed. It is cosmopolitan, very rich and booming economy and society. That is even to a degree true of the north (Turkish Cyprus), but not to the degree that it is in Greek Cyprus. But when I went there in 1970 it was a sleepy provincial old colonial capital, Nicosia, and the rest of the country was very much the same. The press was small, it didn't have a lot of focus on anything except the Cyprus problem as seen through a narrow editorial eye. There wasn't a whole lot of scope for media work, though we could do some extraordinary things on occasion.

Once for example, Frank Shakespeare who was director of USIA at the time, and liked to think of himself as a great strategist, wanted to come and take a look at the confrontation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island. Unlike the kinds of travels that one has experienced since, Frank came alone with no security, no secretary, no support, no escort, and he stayed for four days. Well what do you do with the director of USIA for four days on a tiny little island? One of the things we did is we got him interviewed on Cypriot television, the director of which was an old friend, unfortunately now dead, a fine intellect and poet, interviewed for an hour on Greek Cypriot television. Imagine that in a society that didn't or hadn't paid a lot of attention to American policy positions listening to Frank Shakespeare talk for an hour about the Cold War, about the Greeks and Cyprus and every other issue that was current. It was a marvelous opportunity, but more often than not we were doing cultural stuff or policy related stuff in lecture and out the door formats.

Q: Where was USIS located in those days?

WOZNIAK: Right next door to the Cyprus museum. The USIA area director for NEA that I mentioned earlier, had ordered all USIA posts in his region to bring attention to themselves by super graphics, super-graphicing their office and all of their media output. So when I arrived in Cyprus, this wonderful old colonial building that USIS inherited was not painted in classic white but was painted in checkerboard and stripes, and the director of the museum, a big friend, made it clear to me that I could really ingratiate myself with him and with the Cypriot intelligentsia if I would tone down the garishness of the structure. So we returned it to its pristine white, and that is it, the start of a nice friendly relationship. It was a good location for USIS I said, and I think it has been there until very recently. It no longer exists, that old building.

Q: You mentioned that you had 15 Foreign Service national employees, Greek and Turkish Cypriot. Why don't you talk about the Turkish Cypriot audience that you had? Your background had been with Greek and served six years in Athens. Was that a problem for you at first?

WOZNIAK: I anticipated it might be a problem. It was certainly no secret to the Greek Cypriot community or the Turkish Cypriot community that I had spent all that time in Greece and was a Greek speaker. At that point I had never even set foot in Turkey. So one of the first things I did on arrival at post was arrange to visit my counterparts in Ankara and Istanbul. The reason was two fold, one to send a signal to the Turkish Cypriots, but also to see what I could filch from their programs that would be useful in programmatic terms in Cyprus. It was not really a problem with the Turkish Cypriot community. In those days before the Greek coup d'etat against Archbishop Makarios (July 15, 1974) and Turk incursions, they don't like the word invasion, into Cyprus in (July 20) 1974, prior to that the Turkish Cypriot community was hunkered down in enclaves, into which Greek Cypriots could not move. The Turkish Cypriots could move, and the Greek Cypriots welcomed it out of those enclaves and into the Greek held areas clearly. And so they were readily attended and did attend our cultural programs and visited our offices for other

purposes. We had a good working relationship with the Turkish Cypriot community.

Q: Did you make any conscious effort to arrange programs that created a broadened understanding between the two communities?

WOZNIAK: Oh, sure. That was a major thrust as it continues to this day of course as a USIA activity. Unlike in Athens, in Cyprus I was PAO as well as ex-officio chairman of the Fulbright commission board. Both USIA programs and the Fulbright programs were very much oriented toward exactly that purpose of bringing the two communities together.

Q: The membership of the Fulbright commission was from both communities?

WOZNIAK: That's right. Some of it remains as it was in my day, still there. When I visited Nicosia this last June, I had a lovely time with the Mayor who has been mayor all these years, and a vital member of the commission who was very helpful in helping me reach consensus between the Greek and Turk members of the commission with an eye to exactly what we are saying, bringing the two communities together and assuring that they participated equitably in the offerings of the Fulbright program.

Q: And you also tried in the international visitor program and several other programs to make sure there were Turkish Cypriot as well as Greek Cypriot representation.

WOZNIAK: Indeed, of course. One of the first things I did when I got to Cyprus was agree to the recommendation of my most senior Turkish Cypriot at that time, to let our library which is on the first floor of a two story colonial building, be used as a venue for the exposition of the works of a Turkish Cypriot artist. We did that, I think much to the astonishment of a lot of Greek Cypriots, but we did it and it was again another signal to the Turk Cypriots that they didn't have to think they had someone running USIA information and cultural programs that had a bias.

Q: Who was the ambassador, chief of mission at the time?

WOZNIAK: David Popper. David Popper [editor: Presented credentials July 18, 1969; departed post May 31, 1973] and Bill Crawford was the deputy chief of mission and later our ambassador to Cyprus [August 1974-1978], one of your predecessors. It was a great team. You know, some of my best friendships were formed in that Cyprus crucible of Foreign Service officers. Some of us have gone on to illustrious careers as ambassadors, but all agree that the most satisfying assignment in their entire career was Cyprus. It was a vibrant embassy full of energy and talent and we just had a ball, a great time.

Q: Now did you spend a fair amount of your energy on things related to the Cyprus problem per se or not really?

WOZNIAK: Not directly. I guess the closest I got to confrontation with that problem

would be in arguments with pro EOAK B [editor: Greek Cypriot paramilitary organization which supported union with Greece] journalists who were simply not persuaded that if they in fact realized their ambitions, they were going to bring down the wrath of the Turks on their heads and destroy the island's well-being. They didn't listen to such counsel, and it wasn't very hard to predict what would happen. But that is as close as I came to dealing with it directly, although I must say this is a very curious thing. I got to know reasonably well the notorious Nikos Sampson. The reason for that being my Greek Cypriot press aide was his sister-in-law. Her sister, a charming woman, Vera Sampson was married to Nikos and we found ourselves from time to time in social circumstances together. He was not an unattractive person personally, but he is not somebody you would want to run into on the street if you were on the wrong side of his political views.

Q: Was he pretty open about expressing them in this period of the early 70s?

WOZNIAK: You know in all candor I eschewed political conversation with Nikos other than those I was supposed to be portraying as a press officer. It was just too delicate of a circumstance to meet with him although he knew very well as did all of the EOKA B types that I knew. I don't think he was an EOKA B type, but he was swept into it by the putschists after the coup. But he certainly knew what U.S. positions were and what my position was on the Cyprus conflict. That is as far as it went.

Q: Was he a newspaper publisher?

WOZNIAK: Yes. He used to write a thing called Macchi which means battle, in a horse farm. He was a member of parliament at the time too. So he was a respected member of the community although he had a very checkered past and future.

Q: The checkered past went back to the previous EOKA...

WOZNIAK: That is right. When he was fingered by the British as being a gunman for assassinating any number of British soldiers on the streets of Nicosia.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there were a lot of journalists who favored or were sympathetic to EOKA B or were these people of a particular newspaper...

WOZNIAK: There had been a couple of newspapers. The South South, the New York Times of Cyprus, the Eleftheria, was the mainstay for those kinds of opinions but they were scattered around the rest of the journalistic community too. I think Greek Cypriots were much less sophisticated about the island and its problems and its place in world politics then than they are today. I am fairly confident that you would have a hard time getting a lot of support on the island for the notion of enosis today, but that wasn't the case in my time, although after this, the supporters of EOKA B or its ideology were few. I mean common sentiment on the island in the 70s would have been very tolerant of enosis if not a supporter. I don't think that is the case today.

Q: To what extent were the people that you are talking about, talking with in those days, who did support enosis, or union with Greece, was that primarily their focus, and to what extent was it anti-Makarios, or did the two kind of get mixed up together or was there a hope maybe that Makarios could be persuaded by pressure or political expression to adopt a more pro-enosis position?

WOZNIAK: That is a very difficult, very interesting question, and a very difficult one to answer, Ray. There were anti-Makarios sentiments of course, that you would readily find among the Greek Cypriot community. But he was a clever man, and I don't think that he could have been co-opted actively to pursue an enosis policy. I was called in once by the Turkish Cypriot chief of information, a very suave guy, perfect clipped British English, who said, "I would like you to listen to something." He played me a tape of a rally at the archbishopric where Makarios was haranguing the crowd, extolling the desirability and virtues of enosis, and the Turkish Cypriots thought they had a great propaganda coup by flaunting this tape. But that was Makarios' way of keeping the wolves at bay I think. Can you really believe that any more than Rauf Denktash today would be president of a self proclaimed state, that Makarios really would have wanted to see his position as the prominent third world leader of an independent state removed by enosis with Greece? No, I don't think so. I don't think he ever was...

Q: Or if he was in the 50s maybe.

WOZNIAK: Yes, maybe earlier, but having tasted the perks of power such as they were, and the ovations that would be paid to him as a third world leader at these meetings of third world types.

Q: He was one of the leaders of the non-aligned movement going way back. Did you have any direct contact with him, other than seeing him at public events and so on?

WOZNIAK: No, Poptical Stadrou who was his chief of staff was a very good friend of my senior Greek Cypriot FSN who would inevitably almost every day come into my office and say, "Shall we go up and have a cup of coffee with Poptical?" Because what he really wanted to be able to do is be able to brush up against the archbishop's robes. But I think we did that once or twice. I called on Makarios any number of times with prominent visitors. The ambassador didn't have any problem with my doing that as long as we didn't get into any policy issues, and we never did on such occasions. I have a number of photographs signed by the archbishop in red ink, which was his prerogative given to him by the Byzantine emperor with dignitaries like Frank Shakespeare and cultural figures like Telly Savalas and others that would come under our program auspices. They were always just cultural events, courtesy calls.

Q: So you had a lot of visitors.

WOZNIAK: A lot.

Q: Mostly people that were coming under USIA auspices or programs or people that just happened to come to Cyprus or were on the way somewhere else?

WOZNIAK: Most of them were brought there by us, although once in a while, we took up targets of opportunity. The most significant one that occurs to me is Buckminster Fuller who by chance was visiting a friend on the island. We got wind of it. He was leaving the next day. He agreed to lecture at the cultural center that night. We put out the word, there was no way of communicating about it except by radio. Cyprus radio could do that. We had the biggest crowd in the history of the cultural center that night on very short notice for a lecture and open session with Buckminster Fuller. That was I think one of the rare occasions at the time that what wasn't initiated by USIA. Most of the visitors came under our auspices.

Q: Have you pretty well covered the kinds of cultural programs that you did. There were exchanges, there were cultural presentations, visitors, lecturers. Not too much on the media side.

WOZNIAK: Yes because of the paucity of Greek Cypriot printed media. We worked much more closely with television and radio. We got a lot of programs through there I must say, but mostly soft stuff, the culture stuff.

Q: Television in those days was a Greek Cypriot broadcasting one channel, just in the evening.

WOZNIAK: That's right.

Q: Was there any kind of Turkish language television, Turkish Cypriot?

WOZNIAK: Not in my time, no.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about what you particularly did with the Turkish Cypriot audience? Did you ever learn Turkish or have much contact with Denktash or other leading Turkish Cypriots?

WOZNIAK: No, I never had any contact with Denktash. He was at some cocktail parties, but I can't recall that there were very many instances where we did things, we intentionally eschewed doing things solely for one community or the other, so I can't say we did anything targeted at the Turkish Cypriot community exclusively. Nor did I have a lot of contact with its high level political leadership, although at the time, the president of the Cypriot community, the Turkish Cypriot community, was Fazil Kuchuk. Two things you asked. One did I make any effort to learn Turkish? Yes, I made an effort. One of my Foreign Service national staff had been a school teacher and we would have lessons. I learned maybe a hundred words. I found it just so much harder than any other language I had ever taken on, that I didn't make any effort to really become fluent in the language,

but I learned enough to be courteous and make sure that I didn't get lost and things of that nature. But that is as far as it went. Contact on that side at "cosmic" levels, one of our Turkish Cypriot drivers was discovered to be stealing gasoline from our vehicles. I monitored this for a period of time and when I had conclusive evidence that he was doing that, I sacked him. Well he wrote letters of remonstrance to everybody he could think of from the White House on down to his own community leadership and of course, the Queen of England. I spent a lot of time in the next weeks and months answering letters from all of these people. But I was also called in by Fazil Kuchuk one day to justify this. It was not an easy meeting. Employment in the Turkish Cypriot community at that time was limited and it was a vital question for them in economic terms to support families, to say nothing of the taint of having been sacked. Of course no one knew the reason he was sacked. I said I wouldn't discuss the reasons for it Mr. Vice President, but believe me I had cause. It was not an easy meeting, very awkward. He was looking to get the man reinstated or had some kind of justification for the action, and I was hamstrung at what I could tell him.

Q: Did you reinstate him?

WOZNIAK: No, no, I didn't. Can you imagine being called in by the head of the community, head of state today they would say, to...

Q: At that time, as you say he was vice president of a friendly republic.

WOZNIAK: He was indeed.

Q: Were most of your activities in this period in the capital city of Nicosia, or did you do other things around the island?

WOZNIAK: Mostly it was Nicosia, but we would get occasional programs to Famagusta and to Limassol. In the summer we had appropriate program offerings. We would take them to the ancient theater at Salamis which is a lot of fun. But most things did proceed in Nicosia on both sides of the green line.

Q: And you would do some things for them exclusively sometimes.

WOZNIAK: Sometimes, but most often they would if they were interested, they would come over the green line and attend our center or where ever they knew it was on the Greek Cypriot side. Sometimes we would take things over that would kind of surprise most people. Charley Wick came and said that Telly Savalas would be a great program opportunity for us. He was in fact in Cyprus. Telly came with six or seven others. Stayed a week. We had a Telly Savalas film festival. He wanted to go, I wanted him to go to the Turkish Cypriot side, and he did, and he was a major hit with the Turkish Cypriots. We have photographs of him in the press smoking with average Turkish Cypriots in the coffee shops of Nicosia. It was not common for us to do that kind of thing, to do things exclusively on the Turkish Cypriot side. Mostly it was on the Greek side of Nicosia.

Q: You said Charley Wick?

WOZNIAK: I think so. No it wasn't Charley Wick; it was Frank Shakespeare.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your interaction if any with UN peace keeping force, with United Nations representatives, with the other members of the diplomatic corps, international community?

WOZNIAK: You just reminded me of another Shakespeare story. In the early 70s, I can't say exactly when, in a State Department reorganization Cyprus was moved out of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) into the European Bureau along with Greece and Turkey. The director of the USIA European area who had inherited Greece, Turkey and Cyprus operations knew nothing about them, came out to see us. His name was Jay Gildner, a wonderful guy. I laid out the red carpet for him which included a call on the UN special representative and the head of the UN peace keeping force on the island. A great Indian figure named Krunchan, had a great mustache and a regal bearing. And helicopter tours of the Greek line, of the Green line and the mountain outposts dividing the two sides. Gildner was very impressed. He went back and told Frank Shakespeare's staff about his experience. Frank the great strategist said, I have got to do that. So that is when he came out.

One of the things we did when Frank was there was to get to call on Osorio-Tafall, the secretary general's special representative. He had Prem Chand the head of the military force, the peace keeping force, in the meeting, and so there was Frank and I and Osorio and Prem Chand. Frank, being interested in the military questions directed all of his early questions and statements in the discussion to Prem Chand. After about 15 minutes of this, he turned to Osorio and said, "And what do you do here?" At which time of course, I sank to the floor. No, I didn't have a lot of dealings with those guys. I would see them in social events and rare occasions such as the one I just cited, but otherwise that was the ambassador's turf.

Q: I don't know if USIA made the reorganization at the same time as the State Department. The State Department I believe, moved Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus into the European Bureau in 1974, not too long before the coup in Cyprus and the Turkish intervention.

WOZNIAK: Oh really. So you are saying they anticipated that move.

Q: That is what I guess, I am asking. It is possible that these things happened, Gildner's visit and Shakespeare's visit were in early '74 not long before you left.

WOZNIAK: It may have been early '74, but I don't think so, Ray. I will tell you why. In addition to the reasons I have indicated earlier about why I changed my mind about making the Foreign Service a career, there was another inducement. Not only were the

assignments wonderful, but the promotions were coming very fast. I made the old '3', which I guess is a career FSO-1 the year before I left Cyprus. I was always convinced that it was because Frank Shakespeare went to bat and said this is a good officer. In those days, the old boy network really worked, much more pointedly than it does today. I think directors of USIA could have had with that kind of influence, and I think that is pretty much what happened. I can't imagine why, otherwise I wouldn't have made that grade that quickly. Way before all of my other classmates in the USIA junior officer corps. So I think that USIA was moved into NEA earlier.

Q: Maybe a bit earlier, yes. Or they were perhaps anticipating the move.

WOZNIAK: That could be. A good deal of anticipating in advance of. That is very probable.

Q: To what extent in those days when you were there in the early 70s was Cyprus and Embassy Nicosia involved with things in the Middle East? Certainly in the 80s when I was there, we were very involved in what was going on in Beirut and to some extent elsewhere in the Middle East. Do you remember getting engaged much in hosting meetings or otherwise having to deal with things that were related to Arab-Israeli or Lebanese things?

WOZNIAK: Not a whole lot Ray. We were all concerned about Palestinian terrorism of course. That was in our consciousness, but the only instance that I can recall that is all relevant to your question came when the then DCM, who I think, must have been acting as chargé at the time called me one night at home at 11:00. "Hey, Bob, can you come on over. I need a witness. I want someone here with me." I didn't know what he was talking about. So I went over to his house. We had a couple of scotches and waited for his visitor, who turned out to be his counterpart at the British high commission. Bill had just gotten an instruction cable telling him to do this, to meet with his British counterpart and arrange for a green light for the use of Akrotiri airfield to conduct U-2 flights over the Sinai. That is as close as I ever got to any involvement with any of these issues. I remember that evening very well because Bill and I probably had three scotches before the evening was over, maybe one or two before the guy arrived or while he was there. He handled that meeting beautifully, and as he and I were saying good night, the Brits having left, I said, "Bill that was very instructive." He said, "The only instruction, but it is an important one is, if you go in knowing what you want, and the other guy doesn't, you are going to get it."

Q: That was Bill Crawford.

WOZNIAK: Bill Crawford, right. His secretary told me when I first got there, watch out for this guy. We call him the silver fox. He was good.

Q: That was probably at some point after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the Kissinger shuttle diplomacy that led to the disengagement in the Sinai. One of the aspects of that as

sort of a confidence building measure were the U-2 flights that went on for years and years from the British sovereign base in Cyprus. I am a little bit surprised at hearing you describe this that we were arranging that in Nicosia as opposed to directly with London. Because in a sense the embassy in Nicosia had nothing to do with those bases. They were sovereign British territory.

WOZNIAK: I don't remember all the details of it, especially of course it may have been some fine tuning I don't know,. Something that the local Brits had to be aware of and agree to. I just don't know. I don't recall.

Q: One other thing that occurs to me that in addition to a very different political situation was different from what it became in the summer of '74 was that for the embassy and USIA could use Nicosia International Airport for flights in and out. That would be about five minutes from where you were living?

WOZNIAK: Not more than ten. So that was like driving to Washington Reagan National Airport now if you live in Washington.

Q: And you would hear flights taking off over your house and so on.

WOZNIAK: Sure.

Q: Because when I was there it was Larnaca.

WOZNIAK: It still is and I guess it continues to be, although I take notice that just yesterday two community leaders met near Nicosia Airport. What an astonishing development that is.

Q: Is there anything else we should say about your time in Cyprus before we get to the events connected with your departure in '74 that we haven't covered yet?

WOZNIAK: Nothing comes to mind, Ray. I will do some homework.

Q: Okay. When did you leave?

WOZNIAK: Well, I was supposed to leave in the summer of 1974. Jay Gildner whose name I mentioned to you earlier asked me if I could accelerate that departure because the man I was replacing had to leave. I was going to work in Washington. The man I had to replace had to leave to prepare for his next assignment. So I wound up leaving in May, very reluctantly. My then wife and two children stayed behind, took a place in the village of Karmi, which was a charming village just below the Kyrenia ridge and over the beaches that were to be stormed by the Turkish forces in two months time. I was in Washington settling into my new routine when the flag went up in Cyprus on July 15 with a coup. I spent the next week or ten days at USIA in the daytime, and then I would go at night to the night shift at the task force at the State Department contributing what I could.

Daily reports and one thing or another. But for a week I didn't know what had happened to my family because there was no communication with the Turkish north other than watching what the Greek side of our embassy could observe. On the seventh day they called me from London. They had been evacuated by the Brits with all the other foreigners who chose to leave on the third day when there was a cease fire.

Q: After the Turkish army came on to the island.

WOZNIAK: That is right. Oddly enough they survived it without too much emotional trauma and shock. But it was not a pretty time. It was very frustrating for me because the minor contribution I could make on the task force was not very satisfying. I thought I could do more for their interests and to help people if I had been on the island as I should have been when it happened.

Q: But the time you left in May, that was approximately two months before Sampson and others supported by the Greeks from Athens started the coup. Was this something you were anticipating as you left or thinking probably you had heard lots of talk, that it probably really wouldn't happen?

WOZNIAK: Yes, it was exactly that. The rumor mill had been such for such a long time that one tended to discount the likelihood of such insanity, because it was insanity, and it was foreseeable insanity. It was not difficult to know exactly what would happen, but you couldn't convince the putschists of this. Or the putschist supporters of it. They were impervious to logic.

Q: I take it though overall you very much enjoyed your time as PAO in Nicosia and kept an affection from there on.

WOZNIAK: I do. In fact the first year I spent there I was not a very happy camper because I kept comparing the then very provincial, very rustic Nicosia and the rest of the island with my Athens experience. Of course that was totally incorrect comparison to make. When I started to accept the island on its own terms, I fell in love with it as most people do. The Cypriots are wonderful people on both sides of the green line. And it is a little paradise, Aphrodite's island after all. It is one of my favorite trips and I do keep connection with the island as do you as members of the Cyprus American Archeological Research Institute.

Q: It is probably the same procedure at least initially when you were there it was a pretty sleepy backwater, but it was also in terms of the Cypriots' perception.

We were talking about the perception of the foreign ministry of Cyprus at the time you arrived. You were, I think, beginning to describe a map that you saw when you made your initial call.

WOZNIAK: I can't remember if it was in the office of the director general or if it was in

the waiting room as you walked in to the foreign ministry, but in those days there was a huge map hanging on the wall of the world with Cyprus smack in the center of it. That is pretty much how the Greeks conceived of themselves and their importance. One reason why we couldn't do more effective work with the print media in the islands was they were concerned only with the Cyprus problem. Other issues got very little attention.

Q: Did you ever program somebody, a lecturer or otherwise to come to talk about something, cross cultural communication or whatever that was particularly focused on the problem of Cyprus between the two communities?

WOZNIAK: I don't think so. To the best of my memory, I don't think so.

Q: Later on occasionally we did, to talk about aspects of federalism or something with that in mind.

WOZNIAK: Oh yes, that kind of thing, yes I think we did. You know I don't know if it continued in your time there, but I inherited a function that was to be an annual thing. It wasn't much at the time, which was the foreign affairs workshop. You would bring in somebody as a centerpiece. One year it was I remember Lincoln Bloomfield. Another year I think it was the then editor of the International Herald Tribune. I can't remember now who I brought in the other two years of my four year tenure, but the only participants and attendees at this function were a few of us from the embassy and the foreign ministry. The foreign ministry would shut itself down for the day and we would spend the whole day, usually at the Cyprus Hilton Hotel over a discussion of relations, but that would involved discussions of Aegean questions etc. I have to go look at my files for that.

Q: Did that conference or workshop idea co-sponsored with the foreign ministry start in your time?

WOZNIAK: No, I inherited that. They had it going before, and the ambassador made it very clear to me in our first meeting that this was something he valued very much and he wanted to see the program institutionalized and continued.

Q: Well, it was still going on when I was there. Whether it continued all three years that I was there in the 1980s, I am not sure. I had sort of mixed feelings about it because I just wasn't sure that it was something that could be repeated every year to basically the same audience each time. But it was certainly something that was going on in that period. Okay, what else about Cyprus. Anything else you want to remember or recall at this point. You can certainly add anything you want later on.

WOZNIAK: No.

Q: Okay, so you went back to Washington. You worked in the European area of USIA. Jay Gildner you said was the assistant director.

WOZNIAK: He called me back earlier than I should have left Cyprus to Washington and then in fact I didn't take on that job at all. He asked me instead to watch USIA's basket three, as the jargon had it, basket three interests, cultural information issues that would be discussed in the conference instituting cooperation in the initial negotiations. That was not a very onerous task. I was also watching and backstopping our spokesman at the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) talks and our position at NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). I did that for about ten months until the CSCE negotiations wound up. Then I was a Greek Turkey desk officer for a year prior to Arabic studies.

Q: Did you actually go to Helsinki?

WOZNIAK: I went, yes. I went to the Helsinki conference for a couple of weeks both prior to and during the meetings itself to help the USIS post there with the media.

Q: So you were there when President Ford and Secretary Kissinger came to sign the final act with 34 other countries.

WOZNIAK: 34 other countries, right. Quite an event.

Q: You were there as the spokesman for the U.S. delegation?

WOZNIAK: No, no. I was just helping the post with the influx of journalists, with questions that came up that weren't addressed in the spokesman's meetings.

Q: In other words, when you were in Washington, you were pretty much backstopping U.S. NATO or the PAO there and MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction) and so on.

WOZNIAK: U.S. NATO, the spokesmen and MBFR, and of course liaison with the State Department desk that was directing our negotiating delegation at the CSCE talks, dealing with them in Washington on priming U.S. positions on cultural programs in the basket three area as it was called.

Q: And in the period, '75-'76, when you were desk officer for Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus at USIA, you were primarily again backstopping the three public affairs officers.

WOZNIAK: That is right. It was a standard USIA Washington desk officer assignment to support the posts and make sure their requirements are being met etc.

Q: It was certainly a period when our relations with all three countries were very complicated. A lot of things were happening after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus, the change of government in Greece, the Turkish arms embargo. Do you remember anything about those kinds of issues or not?

WOZNIAK: Not really.

Q: Then you say you went to Arabic language study. Where did you do that?

WOZNIAK: In Washington. Again about halfway through my second year in Washington at the Greece-Turkey-Cyprus desk, the director called me in and said another one of those crazy stories. An officer that had been assigned to go to Istanbul as branch PAO was not going to go. Would I consider going immediately? It was a job that I always had coveted and I was sorely tempted, but it was just the wrong time for many reasons, family reasons. I said that I would think about it over the weekend. On Monday he called me and asked, "Had I thought about it?" I said, "Yes, I can't do it." And another high flying USIA officer, ultimately later an ambassador leaned over his desk and said, "Bob, it is in the national interest," and I burst out laughing, and he never forgave me for that. So immediately I knew I was in trouble with him. I went immediately to see the director of our NEA office, a wonderful guy who said I should talk to him if I ever wanted back in the area. He agreed to send me to Damascus the following year if I would do a year of Arabic, and that is how that happened.

Q: This was I guess before the days of open assignments when you could express wants and preferences.

WOZNIAK: That's right. Well I told you that the old boy network used to work in USIA. I don't know if it still does, but it always worked to my advantage. I must say I was not one of its critics.

Q: So you did Arabic language starting at FSI for about a year.

WOZNIAK: Exactly ten months.

Q: Ten months. Got up to a good level?

WOZNIAK: Not really. It is an impossible language, and I was already at an advanced age at this point, Ray. People in their 40s don't acquire a language as hard as Arabic.

Q: I see this paper I am looking at says you also did French language studies before going to Damascus.

WOZNIAK: Yes, briefly, just to brush up the French that I already had. In fact I used the French more in Damascus than I did the Arabic, because the Arabic was not functional for business purposes at all.

Q: Could you read Arabic?

WOZNIAK: With great difficulty.

Q: So you went to Damascus in 1977.

WOZNIAK: '77 to '79.

Q: October. You want to talk a little bit about what the nature of the post was. You were the PAO, who was the ambassador?

WOZNIAK: Dick Murphy for the first year I was there, the first half of the tour and then Talcott Seelye after that. [editor: Murphy was ambassador from September 1974 to April 1978; Seelye was ambassador from September 1978 to August 1981]

Q: Both very strong Arabists and very experienced.

WOZNIAK: Both strong Arabists and wonderful guys. I must say that this was my second PAO assignment. There would be a number, a few more. The pattern was set. I was lucky enough, not only that as I indicated good assignments and rapid promotions, but I never worked for anyone that I didn't respect and admire as Ambassador or DCM. I had just the best track record, good luck in that regard. Both Murphy and Seelye were fabulous guys. And so were the DCMs. Bob Pelletreau, who later went on to be assistant secretary and ambassador to Egypt. I am running down, Ray, Let's stop.

Q: Okay, well, we can pick up and finish talking about Syria next time.

We are continuing with the foreign affairs oral history interview with Robert J. Wozniak. It is 13 February 2002. It has been about two months since our last conversation. Bob, I think we were just beginning to talk about your assignment as public affairs officer in Damascus. That was from 1977 to '79. Why don't you start off by talking just a little bit about the general state of relations between the United States and Syria at that point and the context in which you did your work.

WOZNIAK: Okay, well, I succeeded in the PAO role of Kenton Keith who had gone in at the resumption of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Syria in '74. He had the most fun, I think, because those were the years of shuttle diplomacy, and Henry Kissinger and his entourage were in town every other day. Things had slowed down a bit, quite a bit actually, during my two year tenure. The relationship was certainly distant. It was correct, but distant. Doing business with the Syrians was very difficult. We did manage in my time to negotiate what they insisted that we do which was a formalization of our cultural relationship in terms of all of the exchanges and other activities. That probably was I guess the most important thing that happened in my tenure there. The region was relatively quiet. I can't remember, when did the Israelis move into southern Lebanon? I thought that was during my time, but now I can't remember.

Q: They probably did. They went into Beirut in 1982, but they had been in southern

Lebanon before that.

WOZNIAK: Southern Lebanon. But other than that, things on the Golan between Israel and Syria were rather quiet except statements. So these were not those exciting quite frankly diplomatic and political times.

Q: The civil war had started in Lebanon.

WOZNIAK: Oh, yes, that was before I got there.

Q: Did it have any impact on you or your work?

WOZNIAK: Not really. It did mean that embassy Beirut wouldn't allow any of us to come in to visit because there would be an additional security burden. So one didn't get to Beirut during my time, although I did once. One could get to Stura in the mountains, and that was a breath of fresh air of course. Lebanon then in dire unhappy times was a freer place than Syria under a repressive government. But my then fiancée, now wife, and I went off on a trip to Cairo to visit friends at the embassy there and do a Nile tour, and were denied the right to fly back to Damascus from Cairo because of the break in diplomatic relations. This was 1978, Camp David time.

Q: You are saying you were denied because you were an American?

WOZNIAK: No, because all of the air traffic between Cairo and other Arab states was curtailed. The only way we could get back to Damascus was to go into Lebanon, and return to Damascus on land. The embassy agreed we could do that.

Q: So you flew into Beirut.

WOZNIAK: Flew to Beirut. Boulos Malik who was a legend in USIA Arab affairs was the PAO there and graciously allowed us to stay for a couple of days and showed us around the war ravaged city of Beirut. It was horrific, and scary, dicey because they were shooting all over the place. But Boulos was quite a character. He would drive us around the city day and night and show us where probably prudence indicated we shouldn't have been doing. I remember one day my wife and I were down at the Saint George looking at the devastation. The hotels across the street on the quay, what do they call that?

Q: The Corniche?

WOZNIAK: The Corniche were all gutted, bedding and furniture hanging out of windows. But lo and behold, the swimming pool at the Saint George, and the bar were open and functioning. And there were all your glamorous Beirutis hanging around with gold bracelets and bikinis. We were snapping pictures, and my wife had to go to the ladies room. I continued to photograph while she was gone. A guy who was working on his boat there at the marina walked up to me and while pretending not to be talking to me

at all seemed to look off in the distance. He said, “Put the camera away, fellow. The last time someone was out here taking photographs, he disappeared and no one knows where he is.”

Q: Let that be a gentle warning.

WOZNIAK: As long as the lady is here, you are taking pictures of her and so on, it is okay but otherwise don't do it. That is the only time we got into Lebanon, or into Beirut in any case. As I say for the rest of it, it was a pretty routine tour actually in Damascus.

Q: The overall sort of finality and the tension to some extent, did all that have an impact on the cultural situation in Syria, made it really hard for you to do very much in terms of outreach?

WOZNIAK: It certainly didn't help. I think the Syrians would have officially formally kept us at arms length in any case because of their presumption that we were not even handed in the Israeli-Syrian context. Certainly the events in Lebanon would have exacerbated those kinds of feelings, but they would have been there in any case.

Q: You didn't travel into Israel?

WOZNIAK: No.

Q: I assume you didn't, you made an effort not to show great interest in what was happening in Israel.

WOZNIAK: No, I wouldn't say that. No we gave kudos to Israel during my tenure there. I did visit on other occasions from Cyprus and other incarnations but not very much during the Syria days.

Q: The Soviets certainly played an important role in Syria during much of this period you were there. Did you have a sense that you were competing with the Soviet embassy or with your Soviet counterpart?

WOZNIAK: The Soviets had a massive cultural center in Damascus. They had very tight relations with the Syrians in those days. The putative cultural attaché, head of the center, a fellow named Vladimir, I can't remember his last name, one of the smoothest operators I have ever met in my life. His English was flawless, and his French. I believe he spoke Arabic. My Arabic was rudimentary. Vladimir cultivated me intensely. I think he thought he could turn me because I was a bachelor until meeting my wife who was from Syria. Syria like many other Arab countries was not the most hospitable place for bachelors, foreign bachelors for sure. I think he thought here is a guy I might be able to work on. I got to know him reasonably well as a result. He would call on me, and we ran into each other of course on the cocktail circuit. You know I am of Polish ancestry. I learned how to drink vodka and beer at my grandfather's knee. I remember one New Year's Eve at the

home of the British DCM, a guy named John Bunny who was a rock of a man. A Scotsman. He was in his kilts that New Years Eve. He was built like a tree. John and Vladimir and I were the last ones at the party at the punch bowl, well after midnight. Vladimir I think was hoping to see me drunk before he did. But he finally left and John Bunny took him to the door. He came back and said, "You won." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Vladimir is out lying on the lawn." Quite a character.

Q: Did the United States have an information center, a cultural center?

WOZNIAK: We had a small library and adjacent room that was used for film screenings and lectures and exhibits. It was small, modest, but very tastefully done, and popular I should say with young Syrians. It was Kenton Keith's creation. If he wasn't, he should have been proud of it.

Q: Were most of USIS efforts in Syria at that time concentrated on Damascus, or were you doing some things outside of the capital?

WOZNIAK: Almost exclusively in Damascus. No, we didn't have any program activity other than outreach to the visitor program and scholarship activities outside of Damascus. It was essentially capital city oriented.

Q: Did you travel to Aleppo?

WOZNIAK: Yes, but only really mostly for private tourist purposes.

Q: You mentioned the international visitor's program. Were you thoroughly able to select promising candidates on your own or did you have to clear it through the government?

WOZNIAK: Everything had to be cleared through the government. It was very difficult for my job. The Syrians kept tight control on all of our activities.

Q: Your ambassadors were very experienced Arabists.

WOZNIAK: Super guys. Murphy used to on occasion take me along when he had midnight chats with the minister of information, Esconder. A very smooth guy. The entire conversation would be in Arabic, and I had great difficulty following it, but he was gracious and kind to take me along.

Q: Did you pay any attention to Cyprus in this period? You had been there before. Cyprus really wasn't very far away. Cyprus was going through a difficult period still.

WOZNIAK: Only because of my personal interest. It didn't impinge on our affairs in Syria. Sure I followed things as close as I could.

Q: One of the things I think we overlooked when we were talking about your assignment

in Nicosia, and maybe this is the point to come back to it just for a minute is the relations between USIS and AKEL, the Communist Party of Cyprus. Were you paying much attention to AKEL at all when you were there, or was that sort of off limits?

WOZNIAK: I had virtually no contact with AKEL. I can't recall I ever met any of its principals.

Q: How about its newspaper?

WOZNIAK: It was not accessible to us for any kind of meaningful purpose, no.

Q: Okay, anything else about your assignment in Damascus that we can cover?

WOZNIAK: Not really Ray. As I told you it was largely a very routine, not easy, but a not very flashy period for USIS work. The best thing that happened to me there, of course, was meeting my lovely wife.

Q: But in terms of feeling any sense of accomplishment in your work or a challenge you could overcome it was pretty frustrating.

WOZNIAK: I can't see that I left or even today have any feeling that we made any contribution to American-Syrian relations. On personal levels yes, the Syrians are lovely people, and the Damascenes are cosmopolitan and industrious and smothered of course by a heavy handed government. But in terms of bilateral relations I don't think we made a bit of difference.

Q: Were Syrian contacts reluctant to meet with you, reluctant to come to your home, had to clear it with somebody?

WOZNIAK: Not really. I am sure that some had to had a government imprimatur to visit foreign homes, but that wasn't a problem. They could come and see us if they wanted and were invited.

Q: Okay, where did you go after Damascus?

WOZNIAK: Well, the first thing to do was come home and naturalize my Syrian born wife. Just as I was leaving the post I learned informally that I was to be assigned to Abidjan as PAO. This was pulled out of the blue because I hadn't bid on the job and had no knowledge that I was being considered for it.

John Reinhart was the director at the time. He was using senior officer assignments, I was not a senior officer. I had been promoted during my Syrian assignment to the old "2" which is I guess counselor now. But I certainly didn't consider myself a senior officer in terms of the director having paid attention to my particular assignment. But he was using senior assignments to weed out some of the more senior people that he didn't have a lot

of confidence in. Assign them to places they wouldn't go and then shunt them aside. So when I got to Washington I went to the director of personnel and said "I don't know what this is all about." She said, "Did you bid on the job?" I said, "No." She said, that she didn't know how it happened either in that case. I really don't know what happened. Speculation was that her deputy for Foreign Service assignments had slipped my name into contention and then I was selected for it. You know it would have been a wonderful place to go. It was the wrong time. I had a wife and a couple of kids from an earlier marriage who needed attending to, so I was looking for something that would allow her to work when naturalized and kids to visit and so on. Angie Garcia who was director of personnel at the time asked me if I had a considerable amount of home leave accumulated. I said, "I did." She said, "Well go use it until the dust settles and then we will find another assignment. She did, but it was the longest home leave on record I think, and a long honeymoon. My wife and I traveled around to introduce her to America. She had never been here. We wound up going to Brussels at U.S. NATO.

Q: The following summer.

WOZNIAK: Yes. It was in the summer after some French brush up.

Q: The public affairs officer at U.S. NATO is very different than Damascus or Cyprus.

WOZNIAK: Totally different. It was an exhilarating and taxing, demanding time. Totally unlike the prior experience in Syria. There, I think we did make a difference. 1980-83, the years that I was in Brussels were pretty much coterminous with what was called the intermediate range missile crisis that was driving deep fissures into the alliance. The deploying states, those that had committed to deploy these weapons to offset the Soviet SS-20 missile program, let's see, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany England, Italy, all had great domestic political problems as a result of this commitment they had made. So the European press, and the American press for that matter, were daily consumed with questions on how this program would go forward. What would happen to the alliance? Would it fracture, etc. I personally believed that the alliance would not fracture and that the program would go ahead, simply because I didn't see any of the deploying countries had any alternative. I didn't see any of them leaving the alliance or causing the alliance to fracture. But nonetheless, even if that ultimate result could be foreseen, public affairs had an important role to play indeed with media critics and answering media questions. I must say that the three years of being steeped in the arcana of missilery resulted in totally useless knowledge for all subsequent purposes in other assignments and in other aspects of life, but it was an exhilarating time.

Q: As I recall that period certainly the question of deployment was very important, but there was also a second track, a so-called dual track we were negotiating with the Soviets on the SS-20 side as well.

WOZNIAK: That is right. How did that resolve itself? After I left Damascus I can't recall.

Q: I think eventually an agreement was reached.

WOZNIAK: Well there was this famous walk in the woods, Paul Nitze and his counterpart and was an agreement reached? I can't recall.

Q: Well, why don't we go back and talk a little bit about how you went about this on the public affairs side with the critics, the media. I mean you were at NATO, an international organization, the headquarters. Obviously some journalists would come there, but there were journalists in Italy and in Britain. How did you work through the USIS programs in those countries?

WOZNIAK: We worked closely with all the public affairs officers and their information people in all the alliance countries, especially of course, in the deploying countries, but in all. There is a large and very professional correspondent corps in Brussels. They don't cover NATO exclusively. They cover EEC matters as well as NATO and bilateral interests. But I would deal with that corps on a daily basis, either answering their questions or briefing them or arranging for briefings with some of our heavy hitters in the mission. It was frequently visited by top U.S. government officials, state and DOD, who almost always would be available for backgrounders after attending meetings in Brussels. So those were the prodigious tools one used. But we also would host visits, arranged with the posts in the alliance, with the USIS posts in the alliance, by journalists, parliamentarians, scholars. Once a year we would mount a major two day symposium in one or another allied capital. Those were the tools that we used.

Q: And you worked closely with the public affairs people on the international staff, the NATO headquarters.

WOZNIAK: Sure. Several of them were American. Some we still see, good friends. Yes, but of course the international staff would plug the alliance position. They were not going to promote U.S. policies per se although in terms of the deployment issue they were one and the same.

Q: At that time NATO headquarters was in a building on the outskirts of Brussels, and the U.S. mission had kind of a wing or a part of that overall complex. Is that where you were located?

WOZNIAK: Yes. What did we have? Three floors I guess. We were on the first floor with the communications unit and the admin unit. The second floor was the ambassador and political section, econ officer. The third floor was entirely DOD. I agreed to stand a Marine watch once a year so the Marines could work off their hangovers from the Marine ball the prior day. I went into the mission on a Sunday afternoon for three or four hours. Bored reading, I decided to walk around the mission and see what was going on, if anything. I characterize the staffing of our mission as one that was full of fast dancers. Every guy who wore a uniform was shooting for his stars, first star. On Sunday afternoon

the first floor which was USIS except for communicators, was empty, second floor, the State Department floor was empty. The third floor was half full of DOD officers working at their desks.

Q: Sunday afternoon.

WOZNIAK: Hard at work in Brussels. Relentless. The work load was onerous. My wife, we were just newly married, later said after we left Brussels, it is a miracle our marriage hung together because she saw me so little in those three years. They were 10 hour days, 12 hour days every day.

Q: But a lot of that was the pressure of interacting with others in the mission, not so much that you had so many journalists.

WOZNIAK: No, but copious documentation one had to read and absorb coming in from capitals, from Washington, instructions, to say nothing of monitoring the media. We would look every morning at probably 20 European dailies, digest them, and have a summary ready for the ambassador's daily staff meeting which I think was at 9:00 in the morning.

Q: You had to get an early start.

WOZNIAK: This was in the day before faxes and Washington, Reggie Bartholomew and Richard Burt, and the Prince of Darkness, Richard Perle, all loved this document and wanted to have it in Washington.

Q: The press summary.

WOZNIAK: In the press summary, but we already were putting in two hours a day on it and to cast it into cable form would have taken another hour or so. So I resisted and offered to make it available by fax. There was only one fax in the mission. It belonged to the Department of Defense wing. That was something different. That fax machine was as big as the table we are sitting at, which is about a meter and a half in all directions, and which was only for I think it was told, only for classified use. No one in the mission knew what a fax was. Can you believe this is only 20 years ago.

Q: So a fair amount of what you were doing was in effect reporting, summarizing, analyzing.

WOZNIAK: Well, for the morning meeting you report to the ambassador's country team, the ambassador's staff meeting, what was on the media's mind and what we might do to deal with it. That was the first tranche of the day. Then one would see what one could do for the rest of the day.

Q: Did you travel a lot within NATO?

WOZNIAK: Quite a bit. We would of course go to all the ministerial meetings that took place outside of Brussels. On occasion I would also travel to other countries to participate in university seminars or things of that nature.

Q: Was television and that media pretty important in that regard?

WOZNIAK: Sure. We would always have television coverage of press conferences. And the NATO information services had those facilities in addition to those the networks would bring in. But you remind me that during my tenure there, Weinberger had been pressed by his ministerial colleagues to make available publicly some of the information that he would share with them in council about Soviet military programs.

Q: The threat.

WOZNIAK: The threat. They found the evidence he would present to them very compelling and wished they could present it to their publics. So the Department of Defense came up with the first of what would continue for a number of years to be a publication called Soviet Military Power. Charlie Wick who was the director of USIA at the time wanted to launch this thing with a big bang. So in 1982 or 1983 satellite communication for television was in its infancy. What later became WorldNet, the USIA TV capability to project information world wide got its start with the launching of Soviet Military Power which took place simultaneously in Washington and Brussels. In the Brussels headquarters in the large amphitheater briefing room. Putting that together was a pretty demanding task because no one had ever done anything like that to have television coverage from Brussels available throughout the continent and back here I suppose.

Q: When we think of defense, national security, arms control issues there seems to be always a tension between those who want to restrict dissemination of information because it is sensitive, because it might affect negotiation, and those who want to be very open, very public, make everything available to the public so that they can form decisions and so on. Was that the case in this period, or was there a very wide acceptance that the intermediate missile situation and crisis in Europe was essentially to a large extent a public affairs perception issue, and therefore it had to be primarily to a large extent waged at that level? Did you find people resisting that because it was too delicate or too sensitive? The public couldn't be trusted with too much information.

WOZNIAK: No, I don't think so. All of the players by that term I mean the key officials in our mission, and those who visited from Washington, were always eager, or always willing to make themselves available to meet either on background or in press conference circumstances with the media and be as candid as possible I think. Obviously there are aspects of diplomatic exchanges with allied counterparts and aspects of military capability that one couldn't get into, but those limitations aside, they were very supportive, recognizing as you just said, that it was largely a public perception issue and had to be dealt with.

Q: Just to go back again to some of the mechanics of the USIA-U.S. operation at NATO. You mentioned you were on the first floor, you were the public affairs officer. Were you there by yourself or did you have a staff? Could people walk in? Did you have a library or information center?

WOZNIAK: No. One of the joys of multilateral diplomacy is in that context, as was well said to me by my successor, Sam Burnett, one of the stars. He said you had no distractions to deal with the raw meat of foreign policy. The embassy in Brussels rendered us all administrative support. That included budget and personnel questions. It also had its own open door policy. There was a library and things of that kind for the Belgians and others that were made available to make use of those kinds of services. We had none of that, and of course there was no public access to us, only by invitation.

Q: Did you have an assistant?

WOZNIAK: Oh yes. When I got to post there were two other officers, a so-called deputy PAO or information officer and two American secretaries because the volume of classified, and it was almost all classified, correspondence, was enormous. In my time a fourth officer was added because when we launched for the first time one of those annual symposia. It was in Denmark the first time we did it; Washington liked it so much they wanted us to do more of it. They offered us, and we took a fourth officer to take on that kind of activity. I don't know what the size of the mission is today. I have no idea. It is probably reduced.

Q: You mentioned at the embassy in Brussels there was a library. Presumably there was a public affairs officer and a USIS program. Was there also one at the mission to the European communities?

WOZNIAK: They may have had, I am sure they did have a reference resource kind of library, but not anything as grand as at the embassy itself.

Q: Did you meet with your counterparts at the embassy and elsewhere regularly or were your areas of responsibility so different that there really weren't any problems in terms of overlap or conflict.

WOZNIAK: Except for the PAO to Belgium's concern about the deployment issue because Belgium was one of the deployment states, there wasn't a whole lot of overlap with his and the concerns of the PAO at the Common Market. But we would get together oh maybe every quarter for lunch and talk about in house concerns. But there was no real need to consult more frequently than that.

Q: Who was the U.S. representative to NATO.

WOZNIAK: Tapley Bennett. The late Tapley Bennett. [editor: Bennett served from April

1977 to March 1983]

Q: Was he there the whole time that you were there pretty much?

WOZNIAK: Yes. I had first known him, although he didn't remember me, in Athens when he was DCM, when I reported there for my first assignment. Bennett was the chief of mission for my entire three years at NATO. He was very unhappy when I told him I had been assigned to Athens. He said, "What you are leaving already? You are going to leave me before I leave?" But I simply had to go to Athens.

Q: Before we go on to Athens I need to ask you in addition to the missile issue in the three years you were there, do any other NATO issues stand out that were challenges or ones that you had to spend a lot of time and effort with the media or on the public dimension. I wonder about the Greek-Turkish issues that are always a strain on the NATO alliance.

WOZNIAK: Not that issue per se. I mean it was on the alliance's burner of course. More immediately it was the problem of Andreas Papandreou who was then prime minister of Greece and very disruptive of the business at NATO. I can't remember the details now, but at one ministerial meeting which he attended, it must have been a summit. It couldn't have been a summit. The summit wasn't there. He held a press conference that was very unhelpful. I can't remember the details of what the issues were at the time but he was just not a team player in the NATO context. Just heightening public awareness of how serious the overall Soviet military program was and the threat it posed.

Q: Now of course at this period in the early 80s the Soviets had recently gone into Afghanistan. Looking back now 20 years on, I think we realize the Soviet threat wasn't quite as great as it seemed at the time. Was there sort of any sense of that? That you were in a very momentous period as it turned out, the beginning of it.

WOZNIAK: The Soviet incursion into Afghanistan began before I got to Brussels. It was very much on the alliance's mind, certainly on the U.S. mind when I got there. We were boycotting the Moscow Olympics at the time. And you know I think there was a genuine apprehension that I could perceive in the mission that were the Soviets to succeed in Afghanistan, it was just a first step in dominating the region. In hindsight of course, as you say, knowing what the Afghan resistance was capable of, those fears were probably over stated, but they were real.

Q: When I was doing another oral history interview, the fellow recalled that Secretary Vance expressed concern in the fall of 1979 that we had indications that the Soviets might go into Afghanistan. Another of his colleagues, I think it might have been Lord Carrington who was then British foreign secretary said, "Well that would be great. We know Afghanistan. We have had experience there. If they go in there, it will be a terrible mistake and it will be the end of them." He was perhaps right.

WOZNIAK: This is a question from me. What really brought down the Berlin wall? What really affected the collapse of the economies in the Soviet Union? I think the NATO successful implementation of a policy on intermediate missiles contributed to that. I think Afghanistan certainly contributed to that. But I guess really it was the Reagan military budget. We were just going to spend them into the ground. But Afghanistan certainly played a part too.

Q: Could you talk just maybe a few more words about the missile issue because I think that is one you were directly involved with. It was in the end a real show of alliance solidarity and determination.

WOZNIAK: Absolutely. Had the Soviets been successful in what was their attempt to split the alliance, divide us, it would have been a catastrophe for the West. Who knows, the Soviet Union as miserable as it would be might have continued to exist. It was imperative that the alliance cohere and proceed in a manner to reduce them. When the Soviets realized we were going to do that, then negotiations to back off mutually was possible. I guess the further lesson for the Soviets was that the alliance was going to be around, and they weren't going to be.

Q: And I think it was also the fact, the recognition that, as you have said before, the media, the way the public perceived it was almost as important as what the governments said.

WOZNIAK: Absolutely. I wasn't around when the decision was made on the missile deployment program, but I wonder if the deploying countries' governments realized the depth of the angst the program was going to create among the republics. I don't know if it did. But they were certainly consumed with dealing with that problem in my time there.

Q: And dealing with its various facets including the public dimension.

Okay, Bob, I think we are just about finished with your three year assignment from 1980 to '83 as PAO at U.S. NATO in Brussels. Is there anything else that ought to be said about that period?

WOZNIAK: Nothing that comes to mind. We hit the salient points I think.

Q: Okay, then in the summer of '83 you went back to Athens as public affairs officer. That was an assignment that obviously made a lot of sense, since you had served there before and were fluent in Greek. Was there anything special about how you came about getting that assignment?

WOZNIAK: Well I probably was at the time the best Greek speaker in USIA. I think I had mentioned in an earlier session that I had pretty assiduously thrown myself into the language during my first assignment there in the 60s. There were two other I think reasons why I got that assignment. In the late summer of 1982, there was a ministerial

meeting of NATO in Rome. My wife accompanied me there and after the meeting we went on to AFSOUTH in Naples and then to Athens on holiday. The DCM at the time in Athens had been political section chief at U.S. NATO for the first two years of my assignment there, Alan Berlind. Alan wanted me to come to Athens as PAO, but I didn't know the ambassador, Monteagle Stearns, and so he asked me to come by and let Monty make my acquaintance, so that he could make his own determination whether he wanted me to be his PAO or not. In fact he did. That is the reason why we wound up in Athens in the summer of '83.

Q: He was still ambassador when you got there.

WOZNIAK: Yes, he was, and for the next several years. [editor: Ambassador Stearns served from September 1981 to September 1985] Bob Keeley replaced Stearns in the summer of '85. [editor: Ambassador Keeley served from October 1985 to July 1989] The counselors of the embassy were gathered at the ambassadorial residence waiting for him to be brought in from the airport by the DCM. Bob came up to me and said that he had been looking at the staffing pattern in Washington before coming out and saw that I was due out in something like a year or year and a half. Wasn't that too short a time to work together? We had known each other in our first assignments in Athens together in the 60s. I said, "Charlie Wick just yesterday sent a circular cable out saying that there would be no extensions in non-hardship posts for anyone under any circumstances at any time." So it wasn't on. I couldn't be expected to stay longer than the original assignment. Bob said, "He would look into that." He sent Charlie a cable and Charlie turned it around and said, "Sure." I don't think Wick could ever say no to any ambassador. So I wound up staying five years. Half with Stearns and half of them with Bob Keeley.

Q: Well just for the record to correct Mr. Wick, Director Wick could certainly say no to an ambassador from a small country that had no clout, because he did say no to me when I was in Cyprus at the time when he was the director. And it was on a personnel question. He said no actually twice.

WOZNIAK: I am sorry about that, Ray.

Q: So you were in Greece '83 to '88 with two different ambassadors, Ambassador Stearns and Ambassador Keeley. So you had to deal with the Greek media.

WOZNIAK: Which is its own saga. Yes the Greek media are notoriously unreliable and irresponsible.

Q: Did you have much success would you say?

WOZNIAK: Not really. I don't know that anyone ever has. My first guru in the business was an old newsman, information officer in Athens. He used to say and everyone I know that has passed through the information officer incarnation in Athens would vouch for the fact that it is impossible to deal effectively with most of the Greek media. There are

responsible elements of course.

Q: So it was a question of responsibility that you could not really rely on them to be accurate to do what you were saying.

WOZNIAK: Certainly not. But you could rely on them to be outrageous, to exacerbate already bad circumstances, to distort and exaggerate, and to annoy, to go out of their way to annoy. I think I may have mentioned in our first session that we lived in a wonderful house that few people wished to live in because it had been the site of the first assassination of an American by 17 November, the notorious Greek terrorism group, or by an individual. No one knows. In a quarter century of its activities, he has never been identified. Few people wish to live in that house because Richard Welch had been shot there.

Q: 1975.

WOZNIAK: That's right, December, '75. Christmas Eve as I recall. Every year on the occasion of the anniversary of the Welch assassination, a weekly newspaper in Greece would publish a photo of the house and a map directing one to it. So this is the kind of irresponsibility. This did not make me feel very comfortable, or my wife.

Q: Did it inhibit your ability to do your work?

WOZNIAK: No. The whole mission of course, was very security conscious. You never got into a long time parked vehicle without looking underneath and that kind of thing. You kept an eagle eye in the rear view and side view mirrors of the cars you were driving. But no, it didn't.

Q: In terms of dealing with the press, you characterize the Greek press as others have as pretty irresponsible and difficult to deal with. Did you sort of make an effort to try to find a few people that were...

WOZNIAK: Sure. I had good friends in the media. I don't mean to say the entire press corps should be tarred with the kinds of characterization that I have just given you, because there are responsible elements, and very competent journalists as well. Probably many more today than in my time, but there were many more in the 1980s when I was there than in the 1960s. It is an aspect of Greek society that I think is maturing and growing.

Q: Was there much foreign press representation in Athens at that time?

WOZNIAK: Not really, no. The wire services were represented. A few journals had resident stringers, very good people. The Financial Times, the Washington Post, the New York Times, but most major newspapers were not written for spot coverage in their own staff. They would come in on special occasions.

Q: The New York Times based a correspondent there a few years before you were there. That individual had regional responsibility and was based in Athens. That was no longer the case when you were there?

WOZNIAK: I know who you are thinking of. He had left.

Q: Nicholas Gage.

WOZNIAK: He had left. He would come into Greece periodically but he was not resident there any longer.

Q: How big was the post at that point. You talked before about when you were there in the 60s. Had it grown, was it smaller?

WOZNIAK: A lot smaller. In the 60s there were branch posts in Thessaloniki and a reading room in Piraeus. The Piraeus function had long disappeared before I got back in the 80s. The post had gone from 12 or more officers, I don't know how many FSNs, to in my time as PAO I think seven or eight officers and 40 FSNs, something like that. It is much smaller again today. Much smaller.

Q: At the time you were there, was there a library or information center in Athens?

WOZNIAK: Yes. It was located in the bi-national center of the Hellenic American Union on which board I sat. Our library was in their building.

Q: Was it staffed by USIS?

WOZNIAK: USIS FSNs. No Americans were there.

Q: Even though it was in their building.

WOZNIAK: What do you mean?

Q: The Hellenic American...

WOZNIAK: No, the Hellenic American had its own library, mostly Greek titles, some English. The U.S. oriented materials that USIS libraries offer was staffed by our own people USIS officers.

Q: Was that at the same location, the two libraries together?

WOZNIAK: They were in the same building on different floors. In the 60s we had a resident librarian, American, who not only ran the library but a large book translation program. That was all gone in the 80s.

Q: You had the information officer who dealt with the press, and a CAO a cultural affairs officer who did the exchanges. Were there a fair number of cultural presentations that you brought to Greece?

WOZNIAK: A fair number. It was a program that was dying out in that period. Certainly not as grand as it had been in an earlier period when USIA could fund the travels of major symphonies or ballets. Still, some of that did happen but not nearly the intensity as it had been in the past. Still we had lots of cultural presentations. Some large at the Herodotus summer Athens festival. Some were modest.

Q: Were you aware, conscious that the Soviets were competing with you there, or was that something that was not really so much an issue?

WOZNIAK: No, that was not an issue in Athens in the 80s. There is of course, a Soviet sympathizing element and party in Greece, at the time but it was not another competition. The Soviets had no great appeal for the larger mass of Greeks.

Q: But I guess it was also a period where PASOK, the Greek Socialist Party, was very strong, had won the election before you got there or did that election take place after you...

WOZNIAK: They had won before I got there and were re-elected while I was there.

Q: Did that make it easier for you to do your work, or more difficult?

WOZNIAK: I would say more difficult because the government spokesman was a difficult character and the state controlled media, that is television and radio were difficult to deal with on anything except the placement of very soft cultural materials. But those would be the only limitations I think, other than dealing with the outrage that would appear in the press that was fed to it by one or another PASOK functionary.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were running after stories like that all the time?

WOZNIAK: A fair amount, yes.

Q: Did you try to set the record straight?

WOZNIAK: Yes, frequently did that, yes. More often than not, that was the task of my information officer and his assistant, but yes that was a major concern.

Q: Did you do a fair amount of public speaking in Greece or did the ambassador?

WOZNIAK: Not at all. Yes, the ambassador would do some speechifying, both Stearns and Keeley would be invited by the equivalent of Rotary clubs or the propeller club or the

American chamber of commerce, to give addresses, maybe a couple times a year max.

Q: So those would be fairly major significant events, but they wouldn't happen every week.

WOZNIAK: No, and care was taken to make sure that the opportunity was exploited and get a good message across about the constancy of Greek-American relations. Because these were troubled times, the PASOK period was not an easy time for bilateral relations as you know.

Q: Well, why don't you talk a little bit more about how that manifested, that difficulty. Was it mainly with Greece and NATO, Greece and the United States bilaterally, Greek-Turkish relations, all of the above?

WOZNIAK: All of the above, yes. I am really vague on details, Ray. What I would suggest is we come back to that point in the next session, and I will do some homework.

Q: Well, I think we are really interested in impressions and overall, not necessarily interested in a lot of details. I am interested in sort of how you spent your time and what your kind of priorities were, kind of a general way as opposed to necessarily discussing any of these in detail. Let me ask you coming back to the media again for a second. The private television and radio stations, I think they are pretty prevalent in Greece today, hadn't really started in the mid-80s when you were there?

WOZNIAK: No. It came shortly on the heels of my departure, but no. It was nascent in my time.

Q: They were beginning to talk about it.

WOZNIAK: I don't recall the television was operating at the time. Radio, yes.

Q: Antenna television?

WOZNIAK: No, that came later.

Q: You mentioned I think we talked about your own sort of involvement. You had some involvement with Andreas Papandreou on a personal level in the 60s.

WOZNIAK: No, I never knew the man. I knew his son and the current foreign minister who was not even in politics the last time I was at the embassy.

Q: In the 80s George, Jr., the younger wasn't around.

WOZNIAK: He may have been elected to parliament in my time there, but I think he was, yes, I think he was a deputy.

Q: Not somebody you would see?

WOZNIAK: Only socially. Nice fellow.

Q: Oh, yes. Of course born in the United States and raised here. His English is...

WOZNIAK: Very American, very decent guy.

Q: Okay. Was your office in the chancery or did you have...

WOZNIAK: No, USIS was and again is in an apartment building which is used as an annex right next to the embassy, across the street from the embassy. Some time after I left there was a budget minded ambassador, I can't remember which one, who tried to, also security minded, who tried to house all of the outlying functions of the embassy within the chancery itself. It didn't work. It was very cramped. I think USIS was in the basement. Not only was it unworkable from a space point of view, but being in the chancery meant that visitors found it almost inaccessible. It is now back where it was in my time.

Q: And the place where you had your offices was accessible to the Greeks.

WOZNIAK: We had security but it was not as heavy handed as at the embassy, and yes visitors were frequent and welcome.

Q: I am always interested in the visitors program and the process of selection. Do you remember anything about what your sort of strategy was at that time in getting people to go to the United States on the international visitor program, and did the Greek government have much influence in the selection?

WOZNIAK: No the government had no influence at all. It was entirely a discretionary matter in the hands of the mission-wide selection committee. Strategy, I don't think there is a strategy for the international visitor programs other than identifying key sectors of the society that one deals with in a bilateral context. Those with potential for rising to the top of their sphere of activity.

Q: And you can only judge that 15 or 20 years afterwards.

WOZNIAK: That's right. It is worth being reminded in this context that Andreas Papandreou was a Fulbright scholar. They identified a real comer.

Q: Who spent years in the United States.

WOZNIAK: That's right. Obviously you are focusing on areas of politics, journalism, academia, economics, labor affairs. Insofar as there is a strategy, that is it.

Q: Your previous assignment, as we have discussed, was at NATO. Greece is a member of NATO, had pretty much come fully back or was fully back into the alliance military side at this point. Did you feel like that should be one of the things that you would stress, trying to remind Greeks that they were part of NATO and the benefits as well as the responsibilities of membership.

WOZNIAK: That was a common theme I am sure.

Q: Greece was also at the time you were there becoming a member of the European Community, or just beginning to move in that direction.

WOZNIAK: Yes, there was negotiating. It came later.

Q: The United States wasn't really taking a position on that one way or the other except that we thought European integration was a good idea because it linked Greece to the wider community of democracies was good.

WOZNIAK: You said it very well. That is exactly right.

Q: What else should we talk about in terms of your assignment to Athens, '83 to '88? You obviously enjoyed it.

WOZNIAK: Yes. Greeks are a challenge. They are lots of fun. Even when they are your antagonists, they are fun because they are quick. They are bright and it is a test. But it is impossible not to like Greece on its own terms for its physical and natural beauties. But it is also true that it is very easy to become acquainted with Greeks. They are very quickly and easily made friends and good friends. So, yes, we had a good time.

Q: One of the other challenges in Athens for an official American diplomat is that the United States values its bilateral relationship and its alliance relationship with Greece. Greece is important in terms of U.S. military and so on, but we also value our relationship with Turkey. We are not going to choose Greece over Turkey in a war. And we are also unable to solve the Cyprus problem. We have never felt that we alone can do it. Was that difficult sometimes, explaining and defending U.S. policy?

WOZNIAK: That is one of the core difficulties of public affairs in the Greek-American bilateral context. Trying to get Greeks to understand why we had to be even handed.

Q: How would you go about doing that other than just talking about it, explaining it, trying to get them to see things from our point of view?

WOZNIAK: That is all you can do. I am sorry, I am wiped out. I am really getting tired I think.

Q: Okay, well, we can stop here. Let me ask you one more question and we can wrap up

on Athens. At the time you were there, the U.S. military were still very present in Greece. It still is but at that time we had an air force base at the international airport or next to it in Athens at Hellenikon. Did issues related to the bases, U.S. military personnel, was that something you had to spend a lot of time working on to the extent problems arose?

WOZNIAK: Sure. None of those things I was going to solve of course. A negotiator would come out to Athens and the talks, we would try to help, but the public aspects, sure. And you know, you used the term base, and that was one of our bete noirs. It wasn't a base. It was never a base. We used the same strip, airstrips that commercial flights out of Hellenikon used. There was an American air station there, and other facilities at Suda Bay and other areas outside of Athens.

Q: But when something happened at that facility or the station, air station. Say, if an airman did something off duty that he or she shouldn't have, got into trouble with the Greek authorities, and it became a matter in the newspapers. Is that something you would work on in terms of setting the record straight, or would the U.S. air force have their own public affairs people that would take care of it?

WOZNIAK: No they would work it through us in developing talking points and the line to use in dealing with whatever the incident was. You can be sure that no matter how minor the incident was the Greek press would distort it and blow it up, and assume the pose of the outraged local denizens who were being maltreated by the jack booted American military.

Q: Now there were negotiations going on that you mentioned about the time you were there, particularly in the earlier period for a new defense agreement relating to our use of facilities in Greece and I think Ambassador Reg Bartholomew was the principal negotiator. You said those were tightly held, and I think they were. But occasionally there would be speculation in the press about issues relating to those. Or the Greek negotiators would let things get into the press as a way of influencing the negotiations. That was not something that you as public affairs officer spent much time on.

WOZNIAK: I don't think so. I have no recollection of it.

Q: Okay. All right, anything else about Greece, or should we stop here?

WOZNIAK: Let's stop here because I am running out of steam.

Q: This is a foreign affairs oral history interview with Robert Wozniak. It is September 29, 2003. Bob I realize it has been more than 18 months since our last conversation. We were talking about your period as public affairs officer in Athens from 1983 to '88, and I think we pretty well finished most of the things we wanted to talk about. I think one thing you mentioned to me though after we finished is that you wanted to say a word or two

about some of your staff, particularly I think the cultural affairs officer Harriet Elam. I don't know if there are others that you want to mention.

WOZNIAK: I can't imagine what I had in mind that I wanted to say particularly. Harriet went on to a very illustrious career. No, I don't know what I had in mind when I made that remark other than to say that I felt very well served by both the FSO and the FSN staff at USIS Athens.

Q: Maybe you were thinking that her illustrious career is probably because she got a good start working with you.

WOZNIAK: Well she had a good start before she came to me. I think she had worked for the first ambassador we both worked for in Athens which was Monteagle Stearns. I think they had worked together in the Cote d'Ivoire if I remember correctly. As a matter of fact he asked for her to come to Athens as his cultural affairs officer. That served me very well. She was excellent in the job. Other than that, I don't know what I had in mind to say.

Q: One of the things that happens in Athens a lot is there are a lot of visitors, Congressional delegations and so on. Did you spend a lot of time taking care of...

WOZNIAK: No, not particularly. We were not burdened with that. The USIS staff was not, no.

Q: Anything else. I appreciate it has been a long interval since we talked about it, and you will want to perhaps add some things when you go over the transcript. Maybe we should move on.

WOZNIAK: I think so.

Q: You came back to Washington for a couple of years after Athens?

WOZNIAK: Yes, less than a couple of years. I expected to do a three or a four year tour in Washington on leaving Athens, and it didn't quite work out. The job that I was supposed to go to was that of public affairs counselor to the undersecretary of defense for political affairs.

Q: Well I think there was supposed to be an exchange program between USIA and the defense department and it was in abeyance.

WOZNIAK: No it was not in abeyance. It was a contractual agreement between two agencies for that position to be filled by a USIA officer. You want to stop the tape, Ray, so I can think for a minute. So we don't waste all that tape. This is 1988.

Q: So you didn't do that; what did you do?

WOZNIAK: Was 1988 a presidential election year?

Q: It was.

WOZNIAK: Okay, now I remember. That was the first George Bush election victory, that's right. If you remember he wanted Senator John Tower to be his secretary of defense. If you remember that rather unsavory confirmation history that was involved with his unsuccessful nomination to the position of defense secretary. That dragged on for months. DOD not knowing who would be filling the key positions under the secretary of defense asked that USIA hold me until their politically appointed principals would be in place. That dragged on from month to month to month. So I was pretty much treading water, marking time in our policy plans office at USIA when a job that was very attractive to me suddenly came open. That was the deputy director of the publications division of USIA, which did all the magazines at the time and special publications, that were keyed to major events.

Fortunately the then director of that office was known to me. It was a very big office at the time with hundreds of writers and editors, graphics artists, printers, a big printing plant in Mexico at the time and in Manila. It was a major management job. I was very eager to have it. Having just missed by one number, one slot promotion to FSO minister-counselor when I was in Athens, I thought this management job is going to get it for me. The director of that office wanted me and so the assignment was switched, and I went to work for him, thinking that it would be two or three years in that job, and it was a lot of fun. We devised a major reorganization plan with a lot of economies to be realized. When the office of Foreign Service personnel called me and said that there was a sudden opening in Rabat for the counselor for public affairs position. I had once bid on the job before. Would I want to renew the bid? I felt very awkward about that having just moved into my present job, but after talking with my boss and with my wife, I told personnel yes, reactivate the bid. The senior assignments panel selected me. What I didn't know at the time was that they did so rejecting the nominee of the area director.

Q: That became a problem later on.

WOZNIAK: That became a very serious problem later on.

Q: Morocco was probably of interest to you because of some of your previous assignments, Syria.

WOZNIAK: It was very much attractive to us. Me, because I had a smattering of Arabic and a taste of assignment in the Arab world. My wife was half Arab; she was born in Syria.

Q: You had some French.

WOZNIAK: And some French, yes. Morocco of course was a wonderful country, with a rich and interesting history. And it was a critical friend to the United States then and now in the context of Middle East politics and policies. So yes it was very attractive to me for all of those reasons.

Q: So you went there in the summer of 1990, right after Iraq's August 2 invasion of Kuwait.

WOZNIAK: No. I arrived interestingly enough before the war, before Desert Storm [editor: The Desert Storm air campaign began on January 17, 1991 and the ground campaign began on February 23] while the Iraqis were still sitting in Kuwait. I arrived one day after major riots in the city of Fez. They were connected to developments in the Near East. They were domestic in nature, but the embassy was of course, consumed with security concerns at the time. That undoubtedly fed the thinking of Washington several weeks later on the eve of Desert Storm when it was determined that Morocco along with most other, not all but most other Near East NEA countries, should evacuate so-called non essential personnel. So I arrived I think probably a week or two weeks before Christmas, left for four or five days at Christmas time to go and fetch my family who did not join me on the trip to Morocco. They stopped in Germany to visit friends and family. I fetched them, brought them to Morocco. They were with me for about two weeks I think, when they were evacuated. It was a very curious time.

Having just arrived I didn't know any Moroccans to speak of, and certainly no friends. My experience however was no different from other Americans who had been there for some time whose Arabic and French were probably better than mine and led to a lot of acquaintances and friendships. Moroccans are very affable, easy, tolerant people, but they were not at all pleased. They were exercised by the notion of Western powers going to war with a brother, Arab brethren. There was no social contact, and only the most essential business contact with Moroccans during the course of the war which of course was very short, but the evacuation of personnel continued for several months after that. And the atmosphere, the quality of interaction with Moroccans warmed up slowly thereafter. I think, I would like to think, I did think, and I still think that USIS Rabat had a major role in turning things around and returning Moroccan-American relations to the warmth and mutually beneficial cooperation that has characterized them historically.

I said that because we were able to capitalize on some developments that lent themselves to public affairs exploitation. The Secretary of State Baker visited, for example (August 3, 4, 1991). I have to go back and look at my papers, but as I recall, the late King Hassan visited the U.S. shortly thereafter. A book on American-Moroccan relations which had been on the shelf for a long time was ready for publication and needed a little seed money to get it to press. We did that. There were a couple of other deals which I don't recall right now, 13 years. But the media were just chock-a-bloc with up beat stuff about Morocco and the United States. Those opportunities lent themselves to accelerating the pace which the relationship might return to normality I think.

Q: Well that is very interesting because certainly that was a major blow, a major hurdle, a major challenge from the war and the immediate aftermath throughout the entire region. If things returned to normal fairly easily and fairly quickly in Morocco, I think it was probably the exception rather than the rule, because I don't think that happened too many other places as quickly as it apparently did there.

WOZNIAK: I think you are right. Of course we are also building on the Moroccan notion that it is only a body of water that separates us. We are really geographic neighbors and understand each other and have common interests. A solid foundation.

Q: So you were able to resume the work with the press, the library exchanges fairly quickly.

WOZNIAK: Yes, immediately. During the tense period, I can recall two meetings that exemplified the polarity of these two experiences, the normal one with the Moroccans and the abnormal one during the war period. As the PAO, I was a member with the CAO of the Moroccan-American educational commission, the Fulbright activity, which was chaired by the then rector of the University of Rabat. An elegant intellectual who normally had very fond feelings towards Americans and American education as indicated by the fact that he had this position and valued it because he made sure that it worked to Morocco's advantage in terms of scholarship awards in the right fields etc. Willy nilly we had to have several meetings of the board during the Desert Storm period, and I can tell you they were icy. Just really formal and distant and there was nothing, no grace, no graciousness to characterize them. In that same period, then Ambassador Mike Ussery (WHO SERVED FROM January 1989 to January 1992), a political appointee by President Bush, did take me on a number of ministerial calls to meet with officialdom that was important to USIA activities. The then minister of cultural affairs who subsequently was an ambassador to the United States and is now the foreign minister, a man who was educated in the United States and speaks English better than I, that meeting was almost unique in that he conducted himself in that meeting and in subsequent ones as if the war was not impacting on any of our interests and concerns and that it was a transitory thing. We became very good friends from the get go. I think we remain so. But that was a rare occasion.

Q: Well it was a difficult period for Ambassador Ussery and for you and for everybody until things began to sort out and normalize, and as you say in Morocco sooner rather than later as it turned out.

WOZNIAK: I guess that is right, as I indicated.

Q: So you were there just a couple of years from '92?

WOZNIAK: A very short time, less than two years. That is the story I am not sure we should get into.

Q: Well, I think maybe this is a good point to stop. You finished up your career and retired.

WOZNIAK: Well, I came back to Washington and for a brief while I was radioactive.

Q: Okay, so you came back from Rabat and went to the Voice of America.

WOZNIAK: Yes, the director of engineering who was concerned about some current and some upcoming negotiations both to renew the current agreements with a number of governments, governing the operation of Voice of America radio stations in Europe and Asia, around the world. He persuaded Personnel that he needed a Foreign Service officer position as a counselor for negotiations, both for renewing the current contracts and agreements and for new ones that might be foreseen down the road. So I took that position. In point of fact I did very little other than counsel in Washington because ironically the officer who had been my boss in the press and publications division who was a very senior, a Foreign Service officer, served the Voice of America at one point as its deputy director, was then retired and made himself available for not actually employed ad hoc assignments. This man is a good friend. I don't mind saying he is an 800 pound gorilla. He was able to and no doubt did a better job than I could have actually lead a couple of negotiating teams during my tenure in Washington. My role was defined to counseling and doing work in Washington itself. I never got into any negotiations.

Q: One of the important VOA stations is in Morocco.

WOZNIAK: That unit was in place, but there were others that had to be renewed and new ones to be carved out. Especially when ancillary radio activities began to be added to the Board of Governors for International Broadcasting in Radio Free Asia and radio and television Marti.

Q: Okay, so you finished that and retired in 1993?

WOZNIAK: Actually it was early '96.

Q: '96, okay. So you were in Washington several years, but not doing very much of substance.

WOZNIAK: Not really.

Q: Well, Bob, I have enjoyed this conversation, spread out over a period of time.

WOZNIAK: Several years.

Q: Thank you, and we will stop here.

End of interview