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

ELLEN BONEPARTH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: January 30, 2004

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Q: Now I have to ask where that name comes from. Because when somebody says it, you immediately think of a certain other gentleman from France. Any relation?

BONEPARTH: We always answer that by saying that it's illegitimate. No relation to France, Corsica, Italy.

Q: Baltimore?

BONEPARTH: The name was actually Ben Porat, which was the name of my Yiddish-speaking forebears who came here from Lithuania. And at Ellis Island, they took Ben Porat and translated it to Boneparth.

Q: Well, let's start with, when and where were you born?

BONEPARTH: I was born in New York City in 1945.

Q: Can you talk a little about on your father's side and then your mother's side, well you've already mentioned, where did the -- the family came from Lithuania?

BONEPARTH: Well all of my grandparents were born in Eastern Europe. I have one Romanian and Latvian set and two Lithuanians on the other side. But they all came to America at the end of the 19th century. So by the time I came along, we were pretty well assimilated.

Q: Did you have on your father's side any – where they came from – or family history of where they came from or what they were doing before they came?

BONEPARTH: I know quite little about my father's side, although they did go into business in New York City and did quite well. I know a lot more about my mother's side of the family. And they settled for some reason in Lebanon, Pennsylvania – my grandfather's family. And my great grandmother was a milliner and she sent four sons to university. My grandfather went to Columbia and Columbia Law School. So in one generation these people became part of the upper middle class. Educated upper middle class. It was quite remarkable.

Q: It really is, because there's usually a slower progression. On your father's side, what type of business was your grandfather in?

BONEPARTH: He had a furniture store and he was an auctioneer – my grandfather. And the furniture store was in Harlem. My father was initially in the business, but he really had a very strong entrepreneurial bent and he wanted to do his own thing, so he left the business and he was in a series of businesses all his life and was very successful.

Q: You grew up where, in New York?

BONEPARTH: Manhattan.

Q: How did you find it at that time?

BONEPARTH: I think it was a big village. I knew all of the doormen and all of the bus drivers on my route to school each day. I go back to the neighborhood and, not any longer, but until a few years ago, there were still people who recognized me. So I felt that the Upper East Side was kind of my little castle and I had a very sophisticated and urban upbringing. So that I think growing up in Manhattan prepares you to live anywhere in the world.

Q: Like Eloise?

BONEPARTH: A little bit like Eloise. I went to a very wonderful elite school called The Brearley. And I had a very intense, highly academic education which was probably the hardest academic experience I've ever had and after that high school experience, college and graduate school were pretty easy.

Q: Well, what was life like at home? Did you have brothers, sisters?

BONEPARTH: I had a younger brother and we were a family that was, I guess you would call us somewhat nouveau riche and striving to be cultured and intellectual, but kind of on the cusp – not quite there. My parents understood the value of education, sent us all always to the best schools. And really wanted to have us, expose us to the best milieu, but they were in the process of learning themselves about culture.

Q: A classmate of mine from college, Steve Birmingham, wrote a book called Our Crowd.

BONEPARTH: We weren't part of Our Crowd. We were more, we had much less distinguished roots, or much shorter-term roots. We were a family in transition over 60 or 70 years.

Q: On the cultural side, what sort of things were you interested in?

BONEPARTH: Well, my grandfather started standing on the sixth balcony at The Met listening to opera when he was in college and went probably all his life; he missed maybe a quarter of the Saturday afternoon performances. So he would take me with him. On the Saturdays that we didn't go to The Met, we went to the Columbia football games. Of course, we never won a game.

Q: Well Columbia had a very good team right after the war, didn't they – Sammy Baugh or something like that?

BONEPARTH: Well, by the time I started going, it had a horrible team and I don't ever remember having Columbia win a game.

Q: How about reading? Were you a reader.

BONEPARTH: Oh, yes, I think I consumed everything I could get my hands on and loved fiction. Read the classics for school. Had a very, very academic education so, you know, I was reading a lot of things that probably I haven't gone back to, but I'm glad I read once.

Q: Any books that sort of stick in your mind that you enjoyed, that you remember, that are important to you?

BONEPARTH: I remember a short story by Henry James that was called The Beast in the Jungle. And it was a very complex story but it was about a man who lived in fear all his life of something terrible happening to him and the story ends with him discovering that the terrible thing was that nothing ever happened to him and that became kind of my mantra for going out and experiencing things and not ending my life with nothing ever having happened.

Q: Grammar, elementary school was also private?

BONEPARTH: Yes, the same school – all the way through – from fifth grade to twelfth grade.

Q: What was the school like?

BONEPARTH: All girls, outstanding teachers, Scottish headmistress, heavy emphasis on language/writing, choice between Latin and Greek, probably weak in the sciences, but extraordinarily strong in the humanities and social sciences.

Q: Did you, considering your later career, did you get any feel for the international world?

BONEPARTH: Absolutely. I took current events in the seventh grade and probably knew I would study government and be part of the political science world at that age, because I was so fascinated. We had foreign student visitors, we had international students in the school because of the United Nations, so I think we had pretty good exposure. My parents also considered travel very important and I got to go to France after my senior year and spend a summer in France. It was things like that I think were very formative.

Q: Absolutely. How about in the society of the school, was there a divide between Jewish students and Christian students?

BONEPARTH: Yes, there was no divide in the course of a school day, but in the course of social life and the weekends, there were a lot of, there were some occasions, whether it

was coming out parties or clubs or so on, where the Jewish students didn't tend to be invited. They were not on the lists for the highly social activities.

Q: Well, there is also in New York quite an organized Jewish society. Is this Our Crowd or is this…

BONEPARTH: Well, there was a mix. I would say there were some Jewish students from the more elite backgrounds. There were some Jewish students from more middle class backgrounds. There seemed to be a sort of informal quota on how many Jewish students would be admitted. It was quite high in my year, and then it went back, and I always wondered about that. That, by the way, is no longer true, but it was true in the '60s.

Q: Well, Harvard had a, and I think that many of the eastern establishment schools had quotas. I think at one point they had them about Oriental students.

BONEPARTH: Well, we had some very, very distinguished families, Jewish families, like Barbara Tuchman's daughter, Jessica Tuchman, who's now the head of the Carnegie Endowment. So there were, it was a very elite school, and they chose the members of their elite from many places.

Q: Incidentally, religious-wise, where does your family fall?

BONEPARTH: We probably observed the minimum of religious activity. I did go to Sunday school at Temple Emanuel and I was confirmed, but I also had a strong exposure to Christian traditions through my friends and through the school, and that didn't bother my parents at all.

Q: Again though, we talked about international affairs, how about women's affairs? Were you as a kid observing the role of women as it was then and was this something that interested you?

BONEPARTH: I would say so. The teachers at my school were very strong role models and very supportive of women going on to higher education and having careers. And in contrast, my mother was kind of a housewife of the '50s. Well, she wasn't a housewife, because she didn't really do housewife activities, but she was a frustrated woman who should have been in the workforce but wasn't. And didn't really manage to fill her time with as meaningful activity as she could of, and she knew it. So, I had the contrast of what wasn't happening at home and the messages I was getting at school.

Q: What were your particular favorite courses, particularly by high school time?

BONEPARTH: I loved government. I loved language. I liked literature, history.

Q: Where did you, and by inference, your family, fall politically?

BONEPARTH: My parents always managed to offset each other, so if one went Republican, the other went Democrat. I would say my father was more conservative, being a businessman. My mother was more liberal. But I was far more liberal than my mother. I think from this school, I got exposed to progressive ideas early, and they really struck home.

Q: New York had been the home, particularly during the '30s, of a very strong, quite leftist, sometimes communist, sometimes socialist, with many particularly immigrant Jews involved in this. Had that died? Was that something that you got involved with?

BONEPARTH: It hadn't died, but we were just part of the small business, entrepreneurial class. We weren't part of the labor movement. My mother was very proud that she voted for Henry Wallace. But that was the extent of her radicalism. We were mostly people who were trying to succeed in business and climb up the ladder that way. Capitalists.

Q: You graduated from the school when?

BONEPARTH: '62.

Q: '62. Had the election of Kennedy made an impression on you?

BONEPARTH: Oh, absolutely. I remember wearing buttons and cheering him, and I think it was a very inspiring time for everybody of that age.

Q: Where were you pointed in school, I mean to college?

BONEPARTH: Where did I go to college? I went to Wellesley College.

Q: What directed you there?

BONEPARTH: Actually, I wanted to go to Radcliffe and because there were about six girls in my class that were applying to Radcliffe and all had very strong cases for getting in, I was directed to Wellesley. That was a big mistake because Wellesley was a very cloistered environment in those days and I had come from New York City, and had a lot of freedom and was very cosmopolitan but in college I was living in the countryside on a beautiful campus, but away from the action – not a very good thing for me.

Q: Well, you were at Wellesley from '62 to '66?

BONEPARTH: Mm hmm.

Q: You say it was cloistered. Did it have any connection with any other universities in the area?

BONEPARTH: No. That happened later on. When I say cloistered, there was very little

social action on campus. It was very difficult to get into Boston or Cambridge. We had very tight, strict parietal rules about hours and so on. To me, it felt more like a nunnery.

Q: You couldn't pull the "I'm going to the Boston Library routine"?

BONEPARTH: Oh, we had our devices for getting our freedom, but none of them were legal.

Q: I always think of the schools when looked at by the students, the libraries must have been swarming. My wife went to Boston University and she was always at the Boston Library. I mean, this is how you got around things.

BONEPARTH: Well, we had rules that if you stayed out overnight anywhere within eight miles of the campus, you had to have a written letter of permission from your parents. So, of course, every dormitory had a map with a compass drawing the eight-mile line and then all of the locations that you could go to beyond the eight-mile line in order to not break the rules.

Q: How did you find the academic life?

BONEPARTH: Very stimulating. Challenging. Inspired me to perform and I did.

Q: Did you concentrate on any particular areas of what you wanted to do, I mean, you mentioned government.

BONEPARTH: Well, I majored in political science. I think I took every political science course that I could. I also continued with French and history; they were my main interests.

Q: Were you beginning to send out feelers or find out about careers while you were in college?

BONEPARTH: Well, I thought I wanted to be a lawyer. I ended up getting married in the middle of my senior year to a young man who was a law student. And I made a very non-feminist decision not to go to law school, because I didn't want to compete with him. He was at Stanford Law School, and I was admitted to Stanford Law School, but I made the decision instead to get a PhD so that we would be on different tracks. So, I think it was a very poor decision on my part. However, I don't have any regrets, because I think I was much more suited to the academic life than I was to practicing law. It turned out to be the right decision for the wrong reason.

Q: In what field were you getting your PhD?

BONEPARTH: Political science.

Q: Can we just touch on political science. This would be in the late '60s. Because

political science today had become a, at least my definition, a sort of a peculiar thing, wedded to models and very much involved with statistics and all that.

BONEPARTH: That was a very big issue, because my undergraduate education at Wellesley was really the study of government, it was very institutionally based. It was focused on policy. And when I got to Stanford, I discovered that I was in the middle of the behavioral revolution.

Q; Stanford was a hotbed of this, wasn't it?

BONEPARTH: It was. I had to become a "numbers cruncher" overnight, which was not my inclination. I managed to learn just enough to get by and I do think that the study of political behavior is extremely interesting, but it was a difficult adjustment because I hadn't had any training at Wellesley for the kind of computer analysis and data research that we had to do as graduate students.

Q: What sort of things were you dealing with for your Ph.D.? What was your dissertation on?

BONEPARTH: It was interesting. I thought I was going to go into Soviet studies. I had taken three-and-a-half years of Russian as an undergraduate. And I got to Stanford and the Soviet specialist was on sabbatical. So I started taking courses in American government and by the time the specialist came back from sabbatical, I had made the decision not to do Soviet studies. Again, probably for the worst reasons. I couldn't imagine myself as a newlywed going off and doing research in the Soviet Union for a year. So that was another example of very unliberated thinking. But again, I think it turned out for the best, because American government has been my passion all my life and I think a much more interesting route, personally, for me than Soviet studies would have been.

Q: What is the background of your husband?

BONEPARTH: He was an undergraduate at Princeton. We met working on a political campaign in New York City for John Lindsay, who was running for mayor.

Q: On the Republican ticket, yes?

BONEPARTH: Yes. He became a Democrat after that.

Q: With your Ph.D., what was this going to lead to?

BONEPARTH: Oh, you asked me what my dissertation was all about. What happened was, about halfway through the doctoral program, I moved back to New York. My husband had graduated from law school, and he wanted to practice law in New York. So we moved back to New York, and we started living in Princeton and I needed to finish

some graduate courses, so I took them at Princeton. I was the first woman in the Politics Department at Princeton as a student. My official status was "incidental student", which was fairly accurate.

Q: Self-esteem was not a high point, I guess.

BONEPARTH: It was a very bizarre experience. When I would walk into a seminar, the male students would stand up, and so, I mean, it makes me sound ancient, but that's what it was like in the late '60s. But I ended up doing my dissertation – after finishing my coursework, I was kind of floundering, looking around for a dissertation topic, and I started working on a project that involved – it was a low-income credit union in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. And it was part of the Office of Economic Opportunity. So I was helping a group of Puerto Ricans in an anti-poverty program. And in the course of that, I met someone who was working with black businessmen. Then it turned out that my advisor at Stanford was doing a big project on black professionals, so I ended up writing my dissertation on the political and social group orientations of black businessmen.

Q: Did you come to any conclusion? I mean, this was an interesting time because this is a group that was really coming into its own, wasn't it?

BONEPARTH: Well it was the period of black capitalism. Everyone was talking about how the way of ending racial inequality was creating a black middle class and a black capitalist class. So I ended up intensively interviewing thirty entrepreneurs and thirty black executives in large corporations, and I was looking at the different pressures and politics of each group. And basically, what I discovered is that the entrepreneurs were a much better adjusted and successful group than the executives, who were in predominantly white corporations. Which wasn't terribly surprising. But the interviews and the material was very rich.

Q: Did you get involved in the Bedford-Stuyvesant settlement, or housing development?

BONEPARTH: No. I spent about a year working with that credit union, and it was an interesting experience, because the group wasn't very well monitored, and didn't get much assistance. There was a temptation to do things that were kind of against the rules, in terms of running a credit union. And I think I was a little bit disillusioned by the – I wouldn't go so far as to call it corruption – but say the illegal practices that some of the people in the credit union took to.

Q: Well, it's a fairly common phenomenon.

BONEPARTH: Yes. And I don't really fault the practitioners alone. They needed more support from the government in terms of how to operate, and they didn't get it.

Q: Did you get involved during this time in the situation in Vietnam and all that?

BONEPARTH: I wasn't an active protestor. I stopped paying my telephone tax for a while, hoping to get arrested, but that never happened. I certainly supported a lot of groups with money, but I was not a great marcher or whatever.

Q: Well now, during this time, did the Foreign Service, diplomacy, ever cross your path?

BONEPARTH: No, not at all. I never considered it. I went into academia, got my PhD, taught at Rutgers. First taught at Hunter College, then taught at Rutgers. When I got my PhD, my husband and I split up. He stayed on the East Coast and I went back to California and began teaching at San Jose State University, and spent eleven great years there. The Foreign Service came up when I took a sabbatical from San Jose State, and I was teaching at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I was really enjoying living overseas, and I met several consuls in Jerusalem and found their work fascinating. And discovered that they were quite heavily involved in the West Bank. These were not the U.S. consuls but other countries', and very knowledgeable. And I thought, this is really an interesting business. So at that time, I just kind of, out of curiosity looked at the State Department, at the Foreign Service, and discovered that there was a mid-career program, for women and minorities, an affirmative action program, to encourage women and minorities to make lateral transfers from their careers to State. And I applied.

Q: This was when?

BONEPARTH: This was 1984.

Q: Going back a bit to San Jose State. Where did the student body for San Jose come from?

BONEPARTH: It was a most fascinating mix. San Jose State was the largest public university in California at the time, and it had the oldest student body. We had a lot of returning veterans, from the Vietnam War. We had a lot of older women, who were wives of Silicon Valley executives, who had never finished college. We had a great ethnic mix, which has gotten richer and richer as more Southeast Asians settled in San Jose. So I just loved teaching there, because I was teaching people who were peers. I remember my first class in Women in Politics. I had two or three outstanding students, and one went on to have a major political career, and the other became my lawyer. So the returning women were really phenomenal for teaching.

Q: Were you during this time at San Jose, which would be during the late '70s and '80s.

BONEPARTH: Right. 1973 to 1984.

Q: How did you view the women's movement?

BONEPARTH: It was critical. That was the real reason the San Jose State experience was so fantastic for me. The women's studies movement was just breaking on the scene, and I

was recruited without any background to be coordinator of the women's studies program. And I suddenly started reading about women in other fields, and looking at the research, particularly in the field of political behavior, in my own field, and it opened up a whole world of intellect, of action, of radical thinking about institutions, particularly the university. I had a wonderful time. And my particular cohort of women's studies people helped found the National Women's Studies Association. So we were there from the beginning. And the town of San Jose, we used to call it the feminist capital of the world because it had the first woman mayor in a city over 500,000, majority on the city council, majority on the board of supervisors at the county level, and a number of women legislators in Sacramento. So it was a very active time politically and intellectually for me.

Q: One of the things, coming from an older generation, watching this. There were two movements sort of going on at the same time: the black studies and the women studies.

BONEPARTH: And Latino studies.

Q: And Latino studies. But I guess that would be a California phenomenon, almost.

BONEPARTH: Not really. I mean it was all through the Southwest.

Q: Well, did you find that there was a line between studying and advocating? I mean, this would be true in all of these things, but I've always looked with a certain curiosity: is somebody trying to recruit, or is somebody trying to essentially open minds?

BONEPARTH: Well, I think that the premise, in both ethnic studies and women's studies, is that you're starting with the recognition and acceptance that you're studying an oppressed group. That you're dealing with a study of oppression. And if you can't subscribe to that notion, then you don't belong in women's studies. But I don't think it was advocacy per se. And certainly there was room for people to argue and dissent, and I think we were very democratic. I don't think political correctness in those days was much of an issue. So it was a very alive time. But, if you didn't see the problem, then you didn't fit in the field.

Q: During part of that time, Ronald Reagan was governor, wasn't he? Did you see any reflection of his governorship at the university?

BONEPARTH: Oh, we couldn't miss it. He was a disaster for the universities in terms of our budgets, in terms of opposing affirmative action, so he had a direct impact on the university scene. But, you know, it went over well with some Californians and a lot of Americans.

Q: How did you find your department did in the university?

BONEPARTH: The Women's Studies Department?

Q: Yes.

BONEPARTH: Well, it had its challenges, from being new, from not being considered legitimate by a lot of the mainstream or more traditional faculty. But I think the biggest threat to the mainstream faculty was the idea that somehow the work they had done was lacking, because they hadn't considered gender perspectives and gender issues. So it took a lot of work to gain legitimacy. Fortunately we had a very powerful, diplomatic and talented group of women faculty, who really came together, and eventually fanned out into administrative positions in the university. I was one of them. So that we not only advocated, but we actually worked from the inside by being willing to serve the university as administrators, to do what we could for women and women's studies. So it was a challenging battle but we had a lot of success early on.

Q: What would you do with, say, the History Department? Because history departments, I think it's fair to say, were not particularly playing up the role of women in history?

BONEPARTH: You're absolutely right. But we had a woman historian who was the best teacher and one of the most prolific researchers in the department, who was not only able to teach a variety of her own courses, but to work with some of the other faculty, to help them incorporate materials on women. And I think we made a great deal of progress with a lot of historians, except the guy who taught military history. And he wouldn't have any of it. But today he couldn't get away with it, because women in the military have become the major issue.

Q: You went off to Hebrew University in Jerusalem. You did that when to when?

BONEPARTH: Well let's see. I went in '83 to Hebrew University, and I went back in '84 to Tel Aviv University. So I had part of two years in Israel.

Q: How did you find Israel at the time?

BONEPARTH: Certainly a lot more tolerable an environment than it is today. I was involved with a lot of people in the peace movement, a lot of people in the women's movement, a lot of artists. And there was, and still is, a subculture of very individualistic and creative people, and there is a left wing that never gets covered in the American media. And in those days, they were more competitive than they are now. But I still have hopes that the left and center will return to power.

Q: At the university, how was the Palestine situation, the Palestinians? How were they looked at by the universities? From your impression.

BONEPARTH: In Israel? Well, there was a definite dividing line between Israeli and Palestinian scholars. There were a few Israeli Arabs at Hebrew University, but they were Israeli citizens. There was a tiny bit of interaction between Israeli scholars and

Palestinians, but on the whole, I was disappointed to find that not just the university but even my personal friends accepted that there was this big divide and that they wouldn't be able to cross it. I actually worked, I ran a travel study program in Israel, in women's studies, and I worked very hard to bring Palestinian women and my students and Israeli women together. I received messages initially that it couldn't be done, but I went ahead and did it anyway, and we did have some very good encounters. And today, I would say that the women's groups in Israel are making a very strong effort to work with the Palestinian women's groups, and vice-versa, and there are some phenomenal coalitions of Israeli and Palestinian women. I think the women have crossed the divide in a much more significant way than the men.

Q: Was there at that time a feeling that the West Bank and Gaza, the people would always sort of be the way they were at that time, a sort of second class or a group that really wasn't going to develop its own major state or identity?

BONEPARTH: I don't think so. I mean, I think that this was in a period where the settlements hadn't really grown to the extent that they have now, and I think that a lot of people recognized that this was occupied territory, and that the occupation couldn't continue indefinitely. But this was a generation ago from now, and the problem is, that most Israelis today, say under the age of 40, have grown up with Israel being an occupier. And that, for them, is normality. Whereas when I was there in the early '80s, it wasn't normal to think of the West Bank as anything other than under occupation. But now there's a much larger proportion of Israelis, whether by age or ideology, who consider the West Bank an integral part of Israel.

Q: You were there after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, weren't you? How was Sharon looked upon about then?

BONEPARTH: Everyone thought he was finished. Look how wrong we were.

Q: Yes. At the two universities, did you find that the universities had their own political dynamics? I mean, were they to the left or not?

BONEPARTH: Well, I don't think the universities have ever been in the forefront of political protest in Israel. Certainly there were faculty who were very outspoken, and involved in different causes. So, for example, many of the faculty were involved with Peace Now. But basically, the universities were far more focused on intellectual achievement and accomplishment and competing with the Western world in terms of intellectual achievement. So I would say they weren't the hotbeds of political activism that you would expect.

Q: I would imagine that in women's studies you would find yourself going head-to-head with the religious establishment in Israel. Did that come about?

BONEPARTH: Well, actually, I was brought to Israel to teach the first Women in Politics

course at Hebrew University, and the second time I went I was doing research and I ended up writing a monograph that was titled In the Land of the Patriarchs: Women and Public Policy in Israel. And interestingly enough, while religious women are traditional in many ways, they also have some fairly non-traditional roles. For example, the men basically don't enter the workforce, they study at the yeshiva. So the women are often left to be the bread and butter of the family, and they have real employment needs. But at the same time they don't mix. So there was a lot of interesting activity around introducing computer work to religious women, and giving them opportunities for careers working at home. So it's not black and white.

Q: Looking at it as a political scientist, how did you find the yeshivas? Were they making much of a contribution to the intellectual environment or not?

BONEPARTH: The religious schools? I wouldn't know about that. I didn't spend much time following religion in Israel. There were orthodox women who were working hard to get rid of rabbinic law in family matters. The lack of civil law in family matters, and the fact that divorce and custody and all those issues – marriage – are still defined by the rabbis, is not only upsetting to the secular and left, but there are elements within orthodoxy – not very many – that oppose religious law. So if I had any contact at all with the yeshivas, it was with the more radical orthodox women within the religious movement.

Q: Did women's studies catch on?

BONEPARTH: Yes. They have very good scholarship coming out of Israel in women's studies.

Q: Well you left there when?

BONEPARTH: I left there in '84. I got into the Foreign Service.

Q: What brought you to the Foreign Service?

BONEPARTH: I had been living overseas in Israel. And I had, prior to that, run several programs in women's studies in the summer in Greece and Israel. Mostly Greece. I thought that I really wanted to live overseas, but I didn't want to be just another expatriate. I wanted to be somebody who could move in the political and social milieu, and be taken seriously, and I figured the best way to do that would be as an American diplomat.

Q: Before we leave Israel, within the body politic of the United States, a very important element is the Israeli lobby. It's not just people of Jewish background, but also conservatives, and it has played a very important role in American politics. Did you find yourself subscribing to this, I mean, seeing Israel as of equal allegiance, or was it a foreign country?

BONEPARTH: I guess I would say that my problem with the Israel lobby is that the attitude is more like Israel right or wrong, and I've found a lot more wrong with Israel in recent years than right. So I'm very much affiliated with the groups like the Jewish peace lobby, that are working to affect change in Israel, rather than to support the regime no matter what it does.

Q: I think this probably is a good place to pick it up the next time. We'll pick this up about how you got into the Foreign Service. This would be in when?

BONEPARTH: I came in in 1984.

Q: '84. So we'll pick it up at that time.

Q: Today is the 17th of February, 2004. Ellen, in 1984. How did you get into the Foreign Service?

BONEPARTH: I knew very little about it, but discovered, I don't recall exactly how, that there was an affirmative action program for women and minorities, to bring in people at mid-level so that the progress of women and minorities would be expedited. They wouldn't have to start at the bottom and it wouldn't take so many years for them to reach the top. So it was a mid-career program, and it sounded very interesting to me because it meant that I could start in working as an officer with some serious responsibilities without having to go up through the ranks, work the visa line and so on.

Q: What was the recruiting process? Did you take an oral exam or written or anything like that?

BONEPARTH: I took the Foreign Service exam just in the event I didn't get in through the mid-career program, to see how I would do, but as I recall, there was a very long written application, there was an interview, there were some tests, for the mid-career program.

Q: Do you recall any of the things that were asked of you, or the focus of it?

BONEPARTH: Well, I remember the oral interview fairly well. There were some questions that I had absolutely no idea what they were talking about. For example, there was a question about how many members there are in the NAM (in "the nam"). I didn't know the acronym stood for the Non-Aligned Movement.

Q: I would have thought of the National Association of Manufacturers.

BONEPARTH: That's exactly what I thought! So I had to ask for clarification. And they said "the Non-Aligned Movement", and at that point I had absolutely no idea. So I just went by process of deduction, I dropped down from however many members there were

in the UN (United Nations) by about 30 countries and came up with a number, and it was one off. But they way they responded to me when they told me the correct number, I couldn't tell whether I'd gotten a plus or a minus.

So basically, you know, I didn't feel terrific about the interview, but apparently it went well enough, because after the discussion, I was admitted. However, I must say that I was told much later by the officer (I don't want to say his name) who was in charge of the mid-career program, that the first time he sent out my application to the committee of three, they all rejected me unanimously. I had international experience that might not have been considered, by more conservative elements in the Foreign Service, appropriate. I had been running, at that time for five years, international travel studies programs, in various parts of the Mediterranean, and I had done a lot of work on women internationally. But apparently that didn't convince the first committee that I had any international experience. But this officer sent out my application again to another committee, and he told me they approved it unanimously. So it's really just the luck of the draw that I got in, because if the fellow in charge had not been interested in my application, it would have died in the first round.

Q: The process shows a little bit of hit or miss the way it worked. This is actually probably true of everyone, I mean, whether somebody takes an interest in your application or not.

BONEPARTH: Sure, but I also think that they didn't really have terribly clear criteria, nor were they looking for alternative backgrounds very much. They started this mid-career program, but they weren't totally committed to really opening it up, and I was just lucky that the second committee was very open.

Q: Well, when you came in, how did they absorb you? I mean, did they point you in a certain direction, what you were going to be doing?

BONEPARTH: I thought the process was not very good. For example, in the A100 class, I discovered the specialty of labor attaché. I had always been interested in labor issues, and I thought that would be an interesting way to go. The instructor in the class told me that that was a career killer, and to definitely not pursue labor affairs, because I would go nowhere in the Foreign Service if I were a labor attaché. I didn't take his advice. I went ahead and took the labor training, and I was very lucky that I got assigned to Harvard Business School, and I did three months at Harvard Business School studying international labor affairs in an international program. So it was a good thing I didn't take his advice. But I must say that the career development office (CDO), as it's known in the State Department, is often referred to as the "Career Destruction Office", and that was certainly my experience. I didn't take the advice of any of my CDOs, fortunately, because it wouldn't have been the best advice.

Q: Why did you focus on the labor attaché side?

BONEPARTH: I had been a political scientist, I'd worked on social issues, political issues in the whole field, public policy, labor law and labor issues, and employment issues, and economic issues were very interesting to me. I didn't want to be an economic officer, I wanted to be a political officer, but I had a strong background in international economics.

Q: When you started in on the labor side, the training and all, how important were the unions in this? At one time labor attachés were almost an adjunct of the labor unions, strongly controlled, but time had moved on. How was it at this point?

BONEPARTH: We had a number of meetings with leaders in the AFL (American Federation of Labor), but they didn't have any role in directing the program or propagandizing. It was really educational and informational. I did a week or two at AFL headquarters doing a short project, and it was interesting. I enjoyed it. What I didn't realize, when I took the assignment to Greece, was that the U.S. labor movement had been active in post-war Greece, during the civil war, and was not at all well regarded by the Greek labor movement because it was perceived as oppressing the left. So I actually came into a fairly sticky situation when I got assigned to Greece, but that's jumping ahead a little bit.

Q: At Harvard, you were there for 3 months, did that have any sort of thrust? I mean, what were they concentrating on?

BONEPARTH: We were at the Business School, so we were doing the standard case studies of international labor conflict. We learned a fair amount about the ILO (International Labour Organization). We had lectures from John Dunlop, who was the very famous professor of international labor law. So it was very broadening, in the sense that I got a real overview of international labor issues. I think I was the last person in the State Department to be able to go to that program. They no longer offered it after my year. But it was very stimulating. I enjoyed it a lot.

Q: When you got out of there, we're still in 1984?

BONEPARTH: Right. I can't remember the exact date. I remember it was winter.

Q: Right, so you're probably moving into 1985. So where were you assigned? What did they do with you?

BONEPARTH: Well that was a very interesting process, because there was a labor attaché's position open in Greece. And there was one open in Peru. I spoke Greek. I had spent a lot of time in Greece. I had contacts in Greece, and I very much wanted that position. But it was three months later, and I needed to do a short tour of duty somewhere in the Department for three months, if I were to be assigned to Greece. So the Department wanted to send me to Peru, which didn't make a whole lot of sense to me, since I didn't speak Spanish and I didn't know anything about Latin America.

So I set out to try and get the job in Athens. My career development officer told me that I absolutely could not have the job because, number one, it was too good a job for a first tour officer, and secondly, somebody who worked for Secretary Shultz had already been identified, although the panel had not yet met. So I was not pleased to hear that, and I didn't think it was right that I shouldn't have a chance to compete for the job.

I managed to locate the perfect short tour for me, which was working on the Nairobi Conference, the UN Conference on Women, since I had done a lot of work on women and development issues. The office that was running the conference was delighted to have me as the liaison officer between the Department and women's groups in America, which was the job I would have given my eye teeth to do. So that was a good match.

But the problem was, making the personnel panel open to me as a candidate for Greece. I remember going to see the office director for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, to try and plead my case. He had his feet up on the desk, and looked totally bored, with very negative body language. I did not get the feeling that he was really interested in hearing what I had to say. However, I just talked up a storm, and I told him all of the contacts I had in Greece already, and my Greek language background, and he started listening. He told me at the end of an hour, that when I had come in, he had viewed me as just an affirmative action interview that he had to do, but that after our talk, he believed I was a serious candidate for the job, and that he would support me on the panel. And he was of course a person who would play a very important role. So I went back to my career development officer and told him that I had gotten the support of the office director, and my CDO still refused to support me. He said, "Well, I won't support you even if he does". But, to make a long story short, I did get the job, and the fellow who worked for Shultz also got assigned to Athens in the political-military bureau. So there was room for both of us.

Q: How'd you get past your career development officer?

BONEPARTH: Just persistence. Stubbornness. I don't think a younger person would have been so stubborn. But, you know, I was older than my career development officer, and I wasn't socialized to think that he was God, the way a lot of younger people thought their CDOs were. So I just pushed and pushed and pushed. I hustled. It was a good lesson, actually.

Q: It was a very good lesson. You were in Greece from when to when?

BONEPARTH: From '86 till the end of '89.

Q: Let's go back to the Nairobi thing. Could you tell me your impression of how this was set up? What you were doing and the results of this, the personalities?

BONEPARTH: Your audience is going to like this story, but this is true. I was assigned to staffing the delegation, and within three days I was fired. I was fired by the assistant

secretary for international organization affairs.

Q: Who was that?

BONEPARTH: He was a political appointee from the Reagan administration, and his first name was Greg, but I can't remember his last name. But the reason that I was fired is that Maureen Reagan was appointed as the head of delegation, the second day I was on the job.

Q: This is the president's daughter.

BONEPARTH: The president's daughter. And her secretary called over to me, and told me that they were releasing the names of the members of the delegation. And I didn't know anything about the procedures so I said, "Fine, I'll get right back to you." I asked around, and I was told that the Department needed at least a day, because all the members on the delegation had to be cleared by the members of Congress. I mean, their members of Congress had to clear them for appointment. That this was standard procedure for international delegations. So I called Maureen's secretary back and explained that we'd have to wait a day to do the press release, and she told me in no uncertain terms that we weren't going to wait. So I told her I'd get back to her. I checked again, and the Department told me that there was no way that we could release the names that same day. So I called her back and said, "I'm sorry, but it just can't be done." And she said to me, "I don't think you heard me." And I replied, "No, I think you didn't hear me", which was the kiss of death, because the next day I had been removed from my responsibility with the delegation.

The assistant secretary called me in, and I asked him what I had done, and he said, in a vague way, "Well, it's all the things that have happened and haven't happened." And I said, "Could you be a little more specific?" and he said, "Let's just leave it at that, and we're going to reassign you somewhere else in the bureau." And I said, "Well, that isn't really necessary. I'd be happy to go back to the Department personnel panel." And he clearly didn't want my firing to become public in the Department, so he said, "No, no, no", he'd take care of it – to come in on Monday. This was a Friday. So on Monday morning, I had another appointment with him, and he said that he was assigning me to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). And initially I was pleased, because I thought that meant I was going to Paris. But I said, "You know, I'm a little confused, because the U.S. isn't participating in UNESCO at the moment." And he said, "Well, yes that was true, but we still followed UNESCO affairs and I could sit somewhere in the Department and read the information coming out of UNESCO." Well that wasn't my idea of a real job, so I told him "thanks very much, but I don't think I really want to do that, and I'll be happy to go back to the panel". At that point he came up with another non-job, and I told him that wouldn't do either. Of course I was very nervous, because it's not pleasant to get fired from your first assignment, but I felt I was really misused and abused. He asked me what job I would want in the bureau, and I said there's only one place in the bureau that I would really want to work, and that

was the UN political section. And he said, "Well, you would be over complement there, because we're full." So I said, "Fine, let's go back to the panel," and he said, "I'll talk to you later in the day." Guess what? He found a position for me in the UN political section. I had a terrific three months. I had a great mentor, learned a lot about the UN. It stimulated my interest so much that I eventually requested to serve at USUN (United States Mission to the United Nations). The Nairobi experience taught me about the politicization of the Department, and interestingly enough I wasn't the only one fired. In short time, Maureen had fired everyone who was staffing the delegation, including a Republican woman who had been pulled out of retirement to head the delegation. And Maureen put her own staff in there, who did her bidding, and that was the story of the U.S. delegation to Nairobi.

Q: I take it, correct me on this, the motivation of the international organization chief was "don't mess with Maureen Reagan". I mean, the president's daughter, she had a reputation, a very strong reputation, of being a difficult, focused person. I mean, you did it her way or you went.

BONEPARTH: That's right. And he was a political appointee. He wasn't going to cross her. It could have gone a lot worse. I mean, we actually signed the final declaration. This isn't the place to tell Maureen Reagan stories, but there were some pretty awful stories.

Q: I'm not after Maureen Reagan, but I'm trying to capture some of the problems of, sort of dealing with delegations where somebody has a lot of power, and does it have any effect on how we conduct foreign relations?

BONEPARTH: It certainly does. Because on the one hand, the president's daughter gives a lot of visibility, and women certainly wanted visibility. But for political appointees to jump in and run the show at an international conference, is not exactly appropriate. And she did finally find some staff from the Department that she found acceptable. But I'm sure they were staff who were basically willing to take their marching orders from Maureen.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the conference came out?

BONEPARTH: I followed it from Washington. I don't remember now all the issues, but basically it avoided a lot of the politicization of the Copenhagen conference of 1980 which was a good thing. It broadened the definition of women's concerns to things like violence against women and so on, so it was a good conference, despite the leadership of the U.S. delegation.

Q: Well then, what were you doing as a political officer, on the UN affairs?

BONEPARTH: Well, since I was an extra person, I did whatever was left over. But, for example, the first assignment I had involved President Reagan visiting Bitburg. And I ended up writing an all-diplomatic-posts cable (which is not something you get to do for

your first cable, usually) giving posts instructions about how to handle the press, and the issues of Reagan's visit to Bitburg.

Q: Could you explain what the Bitburg issue is?

BONEPARTH: I don't really recall all that well what it was. Do you?

Q: Yes, basically, Kohl wanted the President to lay a wreath at a German cemetery. We said, fine. And they selected Bitburg. And then, after it was announced and all, some people, reporters, went and looked and found that there were SS buried there, as well as regular German troops, and this got played up, and there was a lot of heartburn. Reagan did go there, in a way to his credit, rather than getting chased away from it, and I think made some appropriate remarks that, you know, defused the issue. But it was a real hiccup in German-American relations for a while.

BONEPARTH: You are more articulate, but that's more or less what I remember. That it had to do with honoring Nazis, and we did finesse it through good public diplomacy, I guess.

Q: At that time, you were working in Washington?

BONEPARTH: Yes. I don't remember too much of what I did. I was only there three months. But I do remember being involved with transmitting instructions to the Security Council, to the U.S. Mission to the UN from the Department. Basically very often there was something important to do, because everybody else was assigned in their little cubbyhole, there were leftovers for me.

And I worked with a terrific guy named Milt Kovner. It was an unfortunate situation that had a nice silver lining for me.

Q: It gave you a taste for UN affairs.

BONEPARTH: Yes, it did. Definitely.

Q: Well, then, you're off to Greece. You took some Greek language training, and you went out there in what, '86 to '89? Who was the ambassador when you arrived out there?

BONEPARTH: He was my ambassador the whole time. Bob Keeley.

Q: Uh huh. Who was an old Greek hand.

BONEPARTH: Yes. He was raised in Greece. His father was a U.S. diplomat in Thessaloniki, and he was a terrific ambassador.

Q: Yes, he had a very distinguished career, and he worked under very dangerous

circumstances in Africa, too.

BONEPARTH: And Cambodia. In fact, I took the lead in nominating him for a Creative Dissent Award, which he did get.

Q: How would you describe the political situation in Greece in '86 when you got out there?

BONEPARTH: Well, it was actually very interesting. I took a little holiday in Israel before going to Athens, and on the flight from Tel Aviv to Athens, I picked up a Greek newspaper to practice my Greek, and it was just after the U.S. had bombed the harbors in Libya.

Q: Bombed Libya in reprisal for a bombing in Berlin.

BONEPARTH: Right. But the headline in Greek was "U.S. Terrorists". That kind of gave me a sense of what the atmosphere was in terms of the Greek press and U.S. diplomacy at the time. The Greek government was a socialist government under Andreas Papandreou. There was a great deal of rhetoric on both sides. The Reagan administration couldn't bear Papandreou, and Papandreou couldn't bear the Reagan administration, so the U.S. diplomats were very much in the middle.

Q: How did you find the embassy? Was the embassy a divided embassy? Did you find it a team, or how did you find it?

BONEPARTH: It's a very large embassy. It had a lot of regional representatives. It had a lot of people from different agencies. The political section and the country team worked quite well. But I would have to say that it was never an embassy that had very high morale. Most of the people didn't love Greece, contrary to my expectations. Fortunately, I was in a political section with people who were enthusiastic about being there, were good Greek speakers, and ready to immerse in the political culture of the capital. So from the point of view of my section, I had a marvelous time. But from the point of view of the embassy as a whole, I would say it was not a terribly happy post. There was a lot of complaining.

Q: I was consul-general there from '70 to '74 during the time of the colonels. There wasn't much sympathy either for our policy or the Greeks, quite frankly. I think it showed that. What about the labor movement? You had a left wing government, which would seem to imply that the labor movement was hand in glove with the regime.

BONEPARTH: Well not exactly. The labor movement was as fractured as Greek politics. Every political party had its labor federation, so there were Communists, there were socialists, there were conservative labor unions. The socialist ones were dominant, because the socialist party was in power, but the General Confederation of Labor didn't really work together to unite the labor movement. Sometimes you'd get freak strikes that,

you know, were conducted by one set of unions only for political purposes. I was very lucky because I had a foreign service national out of the labor movement who worked with me, and she and I have remained close friends over the years. But because she was known, I had entrée to, and because I spoke good Greek, I was able to meet with a lot of labor union leaders. They were very wary in the beginning, because someone from the American Embassy was suspect. And a labor attaché was often represented in the press as trying to subvert the labor movement, because that was the Greek experience in the civil war period, and post civil war period. Or at least that was their perception. But, over time, I think we won a lot of those folks over, and they were much more open by the end of my tour to talking and sharing their views and so on.

Then the labor minister was terrific guy named Gennimatas, who was very interested in new ideas. And even though he wasn't particularly pro-American, he always wanted to know what was going on in the labor policy field. So he was open to meeting with me.

Q: What were you trying to do with the labor movement?

BONEPARTH: Basically I was trying to report on what they were up to, and what their issues were. I spent a lot of time anticipating strikes and trying to figure out how long the strikes would run and their impact on U.S. economic interests. But also I was arguing that the U.S. labor movement wasn't trying to subvert the Greek labor movement; that we had a very diverse labor movement in America, and there were progressive forces, there were more middle-of-the-road forces, and that I was not part of an effort to destabilize Greece through the labor movement, which was their perception.

Q: Speaking of the American labor movement, were you getting the feeling during this time of its clout decreasing?

BONEPARTH: Well, sure. It was the Reagan administration. I mean, the Reagan administration had a very clear mission to weaken the labor movement, and was very successful in doing so.

Q: Did this reflect itself at all in what you were doing?

BONEPARTH: I have to say that probably I spent 10% of my time on labor affairs. I was overwhelmingly consumed by my duties as political officer. I covered the Socialist Party, which, because it was in power meant that I was covering the government. We divided up the political section by political party, so with the beat of the Socialists, as long as they stayed in power, I was very consumed with covering the government. And I also covered Greece's role in the European Union, and there was a Greek presidency of the European Union in the years I was in Athens. So those were the issues that took the overwhelming proportion of my time.

Q: How did you find the Greek Socialist Party? What was it called?

BONEPARTH: PASOK.

Q: PASOK. Was it sort of viscerally anti-American, or not?

BONEPARTH: It was rhetorically anti-American. Although that seemed to taper off in the years that I was there. But it was a situation where there was a lot of bark and almost no bite. My role was to try to communicate to Washington not to take the rhetoric as the only aspect of the relationship. And that below the rhetoric we were having successful dealings. Not very successful, but relatively successful, dealing with the government. But Washington got upset by the rhetoric. The Reagan administration took it very personally, and so it was difficult to try and get Washington to see the side of Greece that we saw up close.

Q: When I was there, I think the thing that frustrated me – I wasn't in the political side of things, but running consular operations, but it's part of the country team – was how the Greeks, if something went wrong, it was always the Americans' fault. This is at a time when the colonels are running the place. There seemed to be, you know, readiness to blame somebody else for the troubles they had.

BONEPARTH: I think that's a third world phenomenon. I've talked to people who've served in a lot of third world countries, and there's this combination of envy and fear of the big powers running the show, and at the same time, you know, a strong desire to have influence with the big power. So it's a bit of an inferiority complex. But I don't think it's true anti-Americanism. I never met a Greek who didn't have a brother or cousin in Chicago. And I personally never experienced, in a personal way, anti-Americanism at all.

Q: I have to say, exactly the same. And eventually I always ended up having to worry about the relatives, the cousin or somebody in Chicago, about getting visas.

BONEPARTH: But I mean, I think we overreacted, consistently. I'll give you an example. The holiday of November 17 is the celebration of the students standing up to the junta in 1973, and it has been turned into an anti-American demonstration, where the students march on the embassy. One of the years I was there, the wife of the prime minister, who was American, decided to lead a candlelight vigil for peace to the American Embassy. And the reaction of the Embassy was, close down early, send everybody home, this is an incredibly dangerous activity. When in fact, it was a bunch of Greeks holding candles and holding hands standing outside the American Embassy. Had it been up to me, I would have gone out and joined them, and participated as an American diplomat in the peace vigil. Instead we turned it into a confrontational thing. I think we could have turned it into a rapprochement.

Q: This is a period where the Soviets are going through their slow, almost dissolution. Were the Soviets sort of seen as the balancing force to the Americans?

BONEPARTH: Not at all, not at all. I mean, the Soviet diplomats stayed in Athens, they

were posted there for eight years at a time, they knew everybody, they spoke excellent Greek. The small Greek Communist Party looked to the Soviets a little bit, but basically it was the European Union that was the counterforce to America. The Greek government at the time was committed to getting economic subsidies and infrastructure money and so on out of the European Union, at the same time that it was rhetorically criticizing the European Union. So, once again, it was that situation of bark and bite.

Q: Well, now, was there a patron within the European Union? Because I think of Kohl and the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) in Germany, I wouldn't think they'd be overly intrigued with the Greek government at that time. How about France? Was Mitterrand there?

BONEPARTH: Yes, I think Mitterrand was there.

Q: What I was wondering was, was there almost a sponsor of Greece?

BONEPARTH: No, Greece was very contrary. If the European Union hadn't taken its decisions by consensus, Greece would have been outvoted every time. And of course Greece used the European Union to knock Turkey, constantly. So, it was a very important platform as well as a source of economic support.

Q: During that time, were you looking at the Greek-Turkish relationship, as far as PASOK was going?

BONEPARTH: Well, you couldn't not, but that wasn't my beat. I didn't cover Aegean issues. But of course, they pervaded everything. Another very big issue at the time I was there was terrorism. Domestic terrorism, November 17th terrorist group. They actually murdered one of our officers while I was in Athens, a naval attaché.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Greeks were not doing enough to do something about the November 17th group?

BONEPARTH: Yes, there was. Definitely. And I think that was the real cause of our antagonistic relationship, was that they simply did not want to cooperate with the United States openly about anything. And there were a lot of conspiracy theories about how PASOK was protecting November 17th, that November 17th was actually a wing of the PASOK, and so on. But the same thing was true when New Democracy was in power. As we now know, when PASOK in its last couple of years did track down the perpetrators, and break open the November 17th conspiracy, none of the people were identified with PASOK.

Q: Who was the head of the political section when you were there?

BONEPARTH: A fellow named Greg Mattson.

Q: Was Greg Mattson and the political section and Bob Keeley, were they sort of in line?

BONEPARTH: Oh absolutely. Mattson had served in Greece before, he had a Greek wife, he spoke excellent Greek, he was extremely well connected and interested in Greek politics. So I think he shared the same passion for the place that we all did.

Q: Well, how did he operate? I mean, Keeley? Was he able to make any headway? Could he talk to Papandreou?

BONEPARTH: Oh, well, he and Papandreou were quite cordial. His real problem was with the opposition, with the New Democracy party. New Democracy put out the message that the embassy was very pro-PASOK.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Ellen Boneparth.

BONEPARTH: I never saw any evidence. I don't think we were biased in favor of PASOK. We interacted more with PASOK than New Democracy because PASOK was in the government – was the government. But because in his earlier professional years Keeley had formed relationships with some of the PASOK people, the press and New Democracy constantly brought up what they considered to be his partiality toward PASOK, but I don't think that it was true. I think he was a totally professional diplomat.

Q: Did you have a problem with, while you were there, it was Reagan almost the entire time? Did you have a problem with selling Ronald Reagan to the people you were dealing with? Was he sort of a monster?

BONEPARTH: Well, I don't think there would have been much to gain in trying to sell Ronald Reagan, because I wouldn't have persuaded anybody. So I think we just agreed not to discuss, I mean, we, informally of course, personally I had a lot of conversations about the U.S. government with people, but in my job there was kind of an agreement to just discuss the issues at hand and not get into U.S. politics or Greek politics.

Q: With the European Union, I've talked to people who have dealt with NATO have found that the Greeks spent all of their time keeping an eye on the Turks. And frankly, it was a disturbing force. Did you feel the Greeks were just using the European Union 1) to get money and 2) to stick it to the Turks? How were they working?

BONEPARTH: Well, I think the Greeks have a genuine fear of Turkey and are always conscious of the fact that their Aegean enemy has got six times their population, however many times their territory. Even the U.S. official policy as far as selling arms to Greece and Turkey was a ratio of seven-to-ten, which was a much higher ratio benefiting Greece than mere numbers would have suggested. So, the Greeks were very careful to cultivate the Greek lobby in America to keep the U.S. favorable. And I think that during the Reagan years one of the reasons we didn't have a major blow-up was that the president was always conscious of the Greek lobby and how far it could go in terms of putting

pressure on Greece. So the theme of the Aegean is always there.

Q: Was Cyprus, I realize you were doing domestically, but in Greece, international affairs that concern Greece are all domestic affairs. Was Cyprus a major issue?

BONEPARTH: It was always an issue. I think in the period I was there, the Greeks were using Cyprus, well, I don't think they had a sincere interest in resolving the problem. It was another way to get at Turkey. And so there was a lot of rhetoric about Cyprus. These days, I think Greece is very interested in resolving the problem, as is Turkey. But stirring up the pot was, we were always trying to keep the pot from boiling over, and the Greeks were always stirring it up.

Q: Did you in the political section feel the weight of the Greek lobby?

BONEPARTH: Sure. They came to visit often. And they wanted to protect Greece's interests in terms of military aid. They had a number of issues – some of them cultural – but most of them revolved around defense aid for Greece.

Q: What was our military situation vis-à-vis Greece at that time?

BONEPARTH: We were in the process of renegotiating the SOFA (the Status of Forces Agreement) that enabled us to maintain four bases. In the time that I was there, we closed down our bases and we moved out of Hellenikon Airport, so it was a big time in terms of disentanglement. The government said they wanted the U.S. out of Greece, but of course as soon as we agreed to go along with that and we closed our bases, they were concerned about the economic impact of losing the U.S. presence. Eventually, we only kept one base in Crete, Souda Bay.

Q: Was there a feeling that you were getting from our embassy that it was about time to get the hell out of Greece, that things were changing and it was no longer that important? Where we saying, "Let's get out of here?" Because this was happening at the Philippines at the time. At one point we couldn't live without our bases in the Philippines and all of a sudden we discovered that we could live very nicely without them and that they were a pain in the neck.

BONEPARTH: Well, Greece was important when the Soviet Union was a big threat, later. Strategically, Greece became far less important. So I think the time had come for our strategic purposes to cut down our presence. And since that was what the Greeks were demanding, it seemed logical to proceed with the negotiations, although Souda Bay in Crete remains an important base strategically in the Eastern Mediterranean. But the listening posts and the other things that we were doing were no longer very important in terms of covering Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you sense any disquiet on the part of Greek politicians that all of a sudden we were getting out where getting out meant that 1) they no longer had the U.S. to kick

around as much and 2) if we gave up those, we'd begin to take a look at the difference between Greece and Turkey. And when you take a look at the Greeks and the Turks, the only thing that keeps us happy with the Greeks is the Greek lobby.

BONEPARTH: I do think that the concern of what it would do to the U.S.-Greek relationship to pull out the bases was an underlying theme, particularly for New Democracy, which had more of a commitment to bilateral relationships than PASOK seemed to have. But I think that even underlying PASOK, there was the concern that if the bases aren't here, 1) we won't have the U.S. to kick around but 2) what will this do to our relative strength vis-à-vis Turkey. So, yes, you are right.

Q: Would you ever use this either overtly or subliminally in talking about Greek-American relations.

BONEPARTH: Well, I didn't because I wasn't in political-military. I wasn't covering the Aegean affairs. So I guess I'd have to defer on that one. I don't know if those types of arguments were used by others or not.

Q: Were there any political movements going on in Greece at the time that were of particular interest to us?

BONEPARTH: Well, the communists had split into a European communist and a post-Soviet group. And we had a hard-and-fast rule not to talk to the communists, which I found totally silly, as did our section. So we proceeded to have informal contacts with the European communists and I even made contact with some of the Soviet communist party types. But that was all part of communism imploding in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Q: Where would the Greek communist party put itself? You have the Euro communism which was coming out, but the Italians were practically autonomous. The French communists were almost a puppet of the Soviets. At that time, while you were there, where did you see the Greek communists?

BONEPARTH: Well, as I said, they had split – the pro-Soviets and the European communists – and they were competing a lot with each other for the same constituency. So they didn't grow in numbers, they didn't decrease in numbers. Their totals were the same but they were split. And the Euro-communists were fairly close to PASOK so there were times when there were alliances in municipal elections between the Euro-communists and the socialists.

Q: How about regionalism? Was it just an Athens-centered government?

BONEPARTH: No, the success of PASOK staying in power was that they did a great deal in the countryside in terms of providing social services, particularly medical services. And they got a lot of subsidies from the European Union for farmers. So when you went out into the countryside, you'd see building all over and people very content. I think the

big mistake that's been made since, is that the State Department, in its efforts to downsize, has cut travel money for officers to visit outside of the capital in many, many countries, and that's certainly true in Greece. We were fortunate; we still had travel money. And I love to travel so I took advantage of it whenever possible. And I'd come back with fairly positive reports of what was going on in the countryside. And when it came time to predict election results, my predictions were always right, because I had been out in the country and knew that the rural voters were quite happy with how they were faring under PASOK.

Q: At one time, and I don't know how it was when you were there, Greek politics were very personal. Party leaders had their own group. They were like a bunch of feudal lords. Was that still the case?

BONEPARTH: Oh, yes. The prime minister had a kitchen cabinet and had the central committee of the party, but he definitely worked with his own cadre of people that he trusted.

Q: Were there any issues during the time you were there, '86 to '89 in particular, that engaged our attention?

BONEPARTH: Well, we've covered a lot of issues. The bases, the European issues, Turkey, Cyprus. There was a very close call in terms of Greece and Turkey going to war when a Turkish ship started exploring for oil in the North Aegean, but I'm not going to go into the whole story. But at the end of my tour, it was a very unstable time, because Papandreou, who had been in power for a long time was being accused of participation in a financial scandal – had a five bypass, or quintuple, bypass operation on his heart and barely survived it; and dropped his wife to have an affair with an airline stewardess half his age. So by the end of my tour, people were calling me the Rona Barrett of the State Department, because I kept having to write gossip cables about what was going on with Andreas Papandreou.

Q: Was this the whole political society focusing in on Andreas Papandreou's problems?

BONEPARTH: Totally. I mean Greeks love gossip and they are very political people. So they always know what's going on. They follow the news very closely and they consume a great deal of personal politics.

Q: Did you find yourself sitting around late in the evening with the political types in the Kolonaki Square listening to the gossip? Was this part of your beat?

BONEPARTH: Absolutely. Probably it wasn't Kolonaki, because Kolonaki became a kind of a youth center, a yuppie place, where coffee cost too much. But the journalists would go to a lot of local tavernas and trade local gossip and that was a lot of fun. But it also got tiring.

Q: They have their siesta and we don't.

BONEPARTH: Well, we do, actually. My nickname in Athens was Doctor Overtime. That was satirical, because the "doctor" referred to my academic background, but the "overtime" referred to the fact that I generally made it out of the embassy by 6 o'clock every evening, because I'm a fast writer and I got my cables cleared quickly. And then I would go home and have a siesta until about 8 (o'clock) so that I could go out in the evening and get home by 1 or 2 (a.m.) and still be back at work at 8:30 the next morning. So I definitely did my siesta almost every evening.

Q: In that type of environment, it's almost essential.

BONEPARTH: I had kind of a double life – a work life and an evening job. And both of them were part of the job.

Q: Greek-American relations are always a tricky thing; this was not a minor job. How did you find the relationship with the desk at that time or the NSC or anything else – you know, Washington.

BONEPARTH: Well, I would say that the Office of South Eastern European Affairs was not terribly pleased with the embassy at all times. They thought that we were too pro-Greek – that we had "clientitis". And that we weren't doing an extraordinarily good job of representing American interests to the Greeks. I don't think that was true. I think that they had a certain kind of – not South Eastern Europe, per se, but the higher-ups – had a preconception of the kind of reporting they wanted, which today we'd probably call neocon. But anyway, it was certainly not predisposed to hear anything positive, so anytime we had anything positive to say, they considered us to be clients rather than independent diplomats. But we did get the message from time to time that we were soft-pedaling and that we needed to be tougher.

Q: Well, did you have the, I don't want to say problem, phenomenon of politicians of Greek descent, particularly, like Sarbanes and others, who would come out of Congress and be more Greek than the Greeks.

BONEPARTH: No, I would not say that. I think most of, Sarbanes in particular, but most of the Greek members of Congress understood the overall U.S. interests and weren't too philhellenic. It was more the Greek church groups and AHEPA, and the lobbyists – the genuine lobbyists, or the Greek lobbyists who threw their weight around, not members of Congress.

Q: How about the other embassies? Was there much consultation or was each embassy going their own way, particularly the European embassies?

BONEPARTH: We had by far the largest embassy in town and we knew a lot more about what was going on. So, I think the other embassies were very eager to pick our brains a

lot of the time. But occasionally, I mean, we were very close to the Brits and the Turkish embassy, but I don't think that played an enormous role in how we did the job. We had a lot of access to the Foreign Ministry. We didn't need to find out what was going on from other diplomats.

Q: The Greek media – was there any way of working with it or was it a creature unto itself?

BONEPARTH: I think there was a way to work with it, but I think you had to be very candid. You had to be direct with them. They didn't play by the same rules. I remember, for example, there was a left-wing gossip paper called Pondiki – I don't know if it was there when you were – which means "the mouse", and their favorite thing was trashing the U.S. embassy. It came out every Friday. Everyone in the embassy read it cover to cover, because it had a lot of good information in it. And the editor kept calling me a subversive for the right wing in terms of trying to destabilize the Greek labor movement. So finally I invited him to lunch and I said, "I'm not trying to change what you're printing. But I'd just like you to call me up for a comment when you run one of these nasty articles." And he said, "Well, we're not really interested in what you have to say." But, the harassment stopped. So, I think there were ways to deal with the press, but you had to be pretty assertive and confrontational with them.

Q: You are now and you have been before involved in the women's movement. How did you find the woman's situation in Greece at the time?

BONEPARTH: Well, it was kind of an exciting time because Margaret Papandreou was definitely a feminist and was organizing…

Q: And she's an American, well was an American…

BONEPARTH: Who became Greek

Q: Yes.

BONEPARTH: And as wife of the prime minister, she had a lot of impact in terms of being able to use the party organization, and particularly the women in the party organization. She kind of turned them around from just affiliates of men's groups into an independent feminist organization and there was a lot of social policy that passed in those years. Family policy, policy on work, policy on marriage and divorce, that she was directly responsible for. So it was a heady time. It was a real women's movement.

Q: How about at the university? Were there gender studies? Was there movement happening in that field?

BONEPARTH: They never set up specific departments, or at least in those days they didn't; I don't know if they have since. But there were people beginning to do research on

women, and so there was that type of ferment as well. Women's studies was taking off.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover – we may stop at this point maybe – about your time in Greece?

BONEPARTH: Well, I don't know if I've made it sound as positive and exhilarating as it was. But it was a great job at a great time with a great set of officers, and I certainly look back on that time as the best part of my career.

Q: Speaking of the officers, you were kind of the new girl on the block, I mean this was your first overseas thing. Did you find the fact that you came in as a mid-career officer and plunked in what many people considered a very good assignment, was there resentment or did you have people telling you how to do things or helping you along?

BONEPARTH: Certainly there was resentment, because I hadn't come up through the ranks and hadn't paid my dues, so to speak. That was their view. And I think that I had great luck in having a terrific supervisor and mentor. I had an ambassador that I totally admired. But once the Department admitted all of these people mid-career, they just let them sink or swim.

Q: This happened with the affirmative action program with particularly African-Americans, I mean an awful lot just sank.

BONEPARTH: Most of them left voluntarily, because the atmosphere was so unfriendly, and I pretty much went my own way and did my own thing, which of course, contributed to the resentment. So, I'm not saying that I didn't contribute to it. My evaluations, my employment personnel reports, were very strong, and if you just read about me as a performer in the section, you would have thought that I would have been promoted immediately. I did get early tenure. I got nominated for reporting awards, but I never got promoted. And if I had stayed in the service any longer, I would have brought a grievance against the Department. It was that informal resentment that I didn't really know how to handle and didn't do a very good job of handling and didn't get any help with.

Q: In '89 you left. When did you leave in '89?

BONEPARTH: In the fall of '89.

Q: Okay, really before all hell broke loose up in Germany and Czechoslovakia.

BONEPARTH: Yes, that wouldn't have been part of my job, but I moved on.

Q: Where did you go in '89?

BONEPARTH: I went to the U.S. mission to the UN (United Nations).

Q: Ellen, you were at the U.S. mission to the UN from when to when?

BONEPARTH: I arrived in the fall of 1990 and I was there until the winter of '92.

Q: What was your job?

BONEPARTH: I was in the political section and I was responsible for the African states, the Cyprus issue, and decolonization.

Q: Well, let's take decolonization. I was thinking about the League of Nations and its role. What was left to be decolonized by the time you got there?

BONEPARTH: Well, we still had the Pacific freely associated states, and at that time, I believe the Marshalls and…

Q: Micronesia?

BONEPARTH: Micronesia, the Federated States of Micronesia, had already worked out a relationship, but Palau was not a freely associated state. And our goal was to finish liberating the Pacific countries, while keeping them within the U.S. sphere of influence by working out, or keeping them as one of our Pacific allies, by working out a freely associated states status.

Q: Well, with Palau, was there a problem?

BONEPARTH: It turned out to be hysterically funny in a way. Palau was a problem because the Soviets were resisting anything we wanted to do in the Pacific. But, the Soviet Union was imploding and at that time it had become Russia…

Q: Well, it didn't become Russia until '92…

BONEPARTH: Okay, well, we were in the process.

Q: The wall was coming down…

BONEPARTH: The diplomats were much more amenable to working with us in the Trusteeship Council and the Security Council, because changing Palau's status had to be done by Security Council resolution. So we finally got agreement that we could move ahead with Palau, but the Cubans of all people resisted, just to make trouble. So here we were trying to get out of our colonial status and when we finally got it to the Security Council and it was December 23rd in the evening, the vote was 14-1, with the Cubans taking the ridiculous position that we should continue to maintain Palau as a territory when, in fact, all of their rhetoric was for liberation.

Q: Oh sure, Puerto Rico was the one cause they had always rallied behind.

BONEPARTH: Well, I had great admiration for the Cuban ambassador who probably will succeed Castro because he's a very clever man. I can't remember his name right now. Do you recall it?

Q: No.

BONEPARTH: But clearly he had his marching orders to just be contrary to anything that the U.S. wanted to do. So he was fighting to keep Palau a colony and we were fighting to liberate it.

Q: So that was some of your decolonization thing. How about Cyprus? How did that play in the UN?

BONEPARTH: Well, as you probably know, the UN through its own Cyprus officers, kept trying to get talks going between the two sides and an agreement. And every six months the security council had to reauthorize the troops which were on the green line between Greek Cyprus and Northern Cyprus. So it was actually a very interesting time, because Cyprus had a leader by the name of George Vassiliou who was not tied to either of the major parties, he was actually a communist and very interested in coming to agreement. And I think if Denktash had gotten more of a push from the Turks, it would have been the perfect time. Since then, as you probably know, the Turks have been much more amenable. The Turks have been putting pressure on Denktash, but the Greeks have gotten much more hard-line. So, it's ongoing, endless, interminable.

Q: Did we find ourselves sort of caught? Was the Greek lobby a problem for our delegation?

BONEPARTH: Well, the Greeks are always active on Cyprus, but the Turks are also active on Cyprus. It's not an easy issue and I think it's pretty much generational. I think when this generation of leaders dies off, there will be an accommodation. But it's kind of strange that all of these other countries have worked out their regional issues, except for the Middle East.

Q: Well, Denktash and who is the Greek leader? – they had gone to school together, but it all revolved around…

BONEPARTH: Well, I think for a long time the Turks and the Greeks were using Cyprus to keep each other at bay, but once they decided they no longer had an interest in that, it's unfortunate that there wasn't enough flexibility in the leadership, in the local leadership on the island, to move forward.

Q: Who was the head of, well who was our ambassador to the UN at this time?

BONEPARTH: Tom Pickering.

Q: How did you find Tom?

BONEPARTH: All business, although charming. Encyclopedic mind. Always strategizing. Well respected and regarded. He initiated the use of the cell phone at the UN. I have to laugh because everyone at the UN was so impressed with his instant communications, but in those days, cell phones were about a foot long and didn't fit into your pocket. You had to carry them as a heavy piece of equipment. And my image of Pickering is crossing First Avenue on the way to the UN with his cell phone to his ear. Today he would look absolutely ridiculous.

Q: On the African side, what was going on?

BONEPARTH: Not much.

Q: By this time South Africa, had that made its change? It didn't really do it until Clinton came in and that would have been '92, I guess.

BONEPARTH: Yes, I mean Mandela was definitely not in power. But the rhetoric of the Reagan administration was that we were promoting democracy in Africa. And, in fact, there were some interesting examples in central African countries in terms of moving away from one-party regimes and opening up press opportunities and so on. But I will never forget going to a conference in Washington for all of the chiefs of missions of all of the African states at the Department. There were two days of discussions about opportunities for promoting democracy in Africa, and the speaker at the end of the conference was Brent Scowcroft who was the National Security Advisor. He got up on the stage and everybody was very excited to hear what he had to say about Africa, and he announced that he knew he was supposed to speak about Africa, but instead he was going to address the really exciting issue of the day, which was the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. And then he proceeded to talk about Eastern Europe for an hour. You've never seen more disappointed ambassadors in your life, because they thought they were finally getting some attention for their countries and their continent, and in fact, they got very short shrift from the administration. But of course, this had been true in almost every administration.

Q: Were we still in the period of constructive engagement in South Africa?

BONEPARTH: We were, although South Africa wasn't a big issue at the UN. Our interest at the UN was in collecting votes and because there are 51 African countries at the time, I spent a lot of time trying to persuade African countries to vote with us in order to keep our total numbers up. And of course, we were interested in some of the health and economic development and environmental issues in South Africa, but at the UN at least, we weren't very engaged in talking about African domestic politics or regime change or any of that.

Q: How did you find operating in the United Nations? Was this a new role for you?

BONEPARTH: Pretty much. I must say that I found it pretty exhilarating, because there was the world at your fingertips and you could meet and talk to anybody. And most countries send their best diplomats to the UN after Washington, so you would meet very impressive people. The UN takes a very bad rap from conservatives in America for overspending and being incompetent and being ideological, but I'm very impressed with it as an institution. What happened to me that was the most interesting is that, even though I wasn't covering the Middle East, I was substituting, or back-up for the fellow who did do the Middle East in our section. He was on vacation on August 1st 1991 when Saddam Hussein crossed into Kuwait.

Q: Oh boy.

BONEPARTH: So all of a sudden I had a lot of high-level and high-powered work to do around the Iraq-Kuwait war, I stayed involved in it throughout the fall – even after the vacationing officer came back – because we needed extra staffers. And I think that we passed a total of six UN resolutions at that point in time in the Security Council on how to build the international coalition, how to impose sanctions, and how to phrase the language for an ultimate military intervention.

Q: When the news first hit, how did the various people in the different countries react? Where there different camps?

BONEPARTH: I think the initial reaction was shock. We called our second invasion of Iraq "shock and awe", but the first one was really shock and awe, because it was such a clear invasion of another country's sovereignty. It didn't make for lines; there was just a lot of backroom jockeying about how far countries were willing to go in opposing Saddam Hussein and how much could be accomplished without a military invasion. But I think there was a real, kind of consensus, that the UN had to act because it was a clear case of violating national sovereignty.

Q: What were you getting from, particularly the French and the Russians?

BONEPARTH: Well, they were certainly a strong force for imposing sanctions and building an international coalition, but I think they were right, so I wouldn't call them a problem. They weren't willing to give us unilateral opportunities to respond.

Q: Were we talking about unilateral or was it primarily multilateral?

BONEPARTH: Well, what we were talking and what we were doing, I've learned since, were different. After working very hard for six months to build an international coalition, I then read a book by Carl Bernstein, of Woodward and Bernstein, called The Commanders and it traced the actions of the administration and the National Security Council from August on. It was real clear to me after reading that, that what we were

doing at the UN was buying time for the U.S. military to get its ducks in a row, so to speak, for an invasion – to do the logistics, to get the troops and the materiel and whatever over to the Middle East. And I felt very disillusioned. I didn't think on the part of the U.S., there was a true commitment to finding non-violent solutions to the problem. I think we were just passing resolutions and building up a coalition to buy time for an ultimate invasion.

Q: At the time, were you seeing any opportunity for Saddam Hussein to pull out?

BONEPARTH: Well, I wasn't in conversations with Saddam Hussein, nor did I see the highest level intelligence. Certainly he wasn't showing a whole lot of flexibility. I mean he was basically playing a very clever game of dragging it all out. But I don't think we exhausted all opportunities to use third countries, to impose different kinds of sanctions. For example, I had the idea that we should get the UN to resolve that for every day that the Iraqis didn't cooperate with the no-fly zone or various other things or that they maintained the invasion, we would fine them a huge amount of money that would come out of their oil, ultimately out of their oil revenues. So I think there were other things we could have done. I don't think anybody has really thought very creatively about sanctions. They were imposed very badly, as we're learning now, and there was a lot of corruption in the process. But I personally did not think that we had to go to war in January when we did.

Q: Were there other countries that were taking the line of, "Let's hold off. Let's try sanctions."?

BONEPARTH: Well, I think that most of the Arab states were pretty uncomfortable with – especially Jordan, Turkey – with an invasion. I think that they just weren't strong enough to oppose the U.S. and the Saudis and the Israelis.

Q: What was your impression of the work of the Israeli delegation there. I think it would be very difficult, since they're surrounded by, as in real life, by a lot of Arab countries who have relations with them of hating their guts.

BONEPARTH: Yes, well they definitely were in a very difficult position, because they had their own survival at stake. The Israelis were balancing their own survival and the threat of chemical and biological weapons being dropped on them by Saddam Hussein on the one hand, and pressure to stay out of the whole conflict from the U.S. so that we wouldn't lose the support of the Arab countries in the coalition. I think the Israelis were remarkably responsible given some of their county's actions since in not engaging directly in any military conflict and being willing to take the consequences of an attack by Saddam Hussein.

Q: Were you running around trying to get African countries, other ones, to support our action.

BONEPARTH: Yes. Of course, the most important Africans were the ones on the Security Council. But I think everyone at the mission at that time was doing a lot of work explaining to all of the countries on their beat what we were trying to accomplish and to build support for a coalition.

Q: I've often wondered, people who have worked at the United Nations saying they are going out to persuade votes and all that, but I would think that almost any vote in the UN would be dictated by the home government.

BONEPARTH: Sometimes countries don't act, or permanent representatives wait for instructions, but sometimes they don't. And especially if it's a small African country on a different time zone when there's more knowledge in New York than in Bamako or in Mauritania than there is in the home country. The communications aren't that good, so they have a lot of freedom. The people I was talking to had some freedom.

Q: How did you find the staff of the UN – our staff?

BONEPARTH: The U.S. staff at the mission?

Q: Uh huh.

BONEPARTH: Oh, terrific. There were a lot of civil servants there. The foreign service people were the same as foreign service everywhere, in and out, some of them great and some of them not so good. The UN is a place where you need a lot of institutional memory and you need a lot of parliamentary expertise, and we had some very good staff people who had been there for 20 years.

Q: How was it living in New York? I would have thought that this would be difficult.

BONEPARTH: It was. Some of the positions at the UN received housing, but Jesse Helms was of a mind to punish U.S. diplomats for being U.S. diplomats, and he passed a regulation that the positions at the UN were the same as living in the United States and you shouldn't get a housing allowance, so I had to pay for my own housing. And because we worked very late at night, I wasn't willing to take a subway out to Brooklyn at midnight, so I ended up spending beyond my paycheck just to survive. And I left the UN – ultimately, I curtailed early – because I couldn't afford, I mean it was costing me a huge amount of money to work there.

Q: Were you seeing the same sort of attrition happening to other people there.

BONEPARTH: Yes. There were other people who also curtailed for the same reason.

Q: How could some people survive under this?

BONEPARTH: Well, they either had two incomes or other sources of income. And of

course, the senior diplomats had housing. It was just the mid-level people, some of whom had housing, but not all.

Q: When you left there, had the war started?

BONEPARTH: Yes.

Q: Was there a feeling among your colleagues and yourself that maybe we shouldn't have done this at this point or not?

BONEPARTH: I think most people were supportive. I was in the minority of people who thought that we should have continued to try and find an alternate resolution.

Q: Were there any other sources of people or institutions saying that we should let sanctions take their course that you were aware of?

BONEPARTH: Only the peace groups. I was actually making the transition back to Washington at that point, so I can't speak authoritatively, but I remember as a member of various organizations receiving a lot of mail and information about their positions. But, on the whole, bombs over Baghdad were very popular.

Q: What did you do then, you say you were transferred?

BONEPARTH: I came back to DC to work in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

Q: This is again as a civil servant.

BONEPARTH: No, I'm still in the Foreign Service.

Q: What were you doing at INR?

BONEPARTH: I was the analyst for France and the Benelux countries. I was analyzing all of the intelligence that State had access to and working up regular reporting on those countries for the president's daily briefing.

Q: I was talking last, late last week, to Shirley Barnes, who is the Director of Western European Affairs and she was saying that every time she went to a staff meeting the question was, "What are the French up to now?" under the assumption that whatever we were going to do, the French were going to try to stymie this. Was this sort of a focus of what you were doing, or what were you working on?

BONEPARTH: Mitterrand was prime minister, so having a socialist who was outspoken and not very collegial with the United States was a great source of aggravation to the State Department. So I guess I saw my role at trying to distinguish between the bark and

the bite. And I had experience with this, since I had been in the same position when I was in Greece, trying to interpret Papandreou's politics. And so I wrote fairly, I thought, good analytical, and not terribly rhetorical pieces about France, but there seems to be an appetite in the Department for turning France into some kind of real antagonist, so my work always got ratcheted up in terms of its emotional tone.

Q: What were you seeing going on in France?

BONEPARTH: Well, the French were doing things that socialists do. They were giving workers shorter work weeks. I mean, I didn't find anything that they were doing so egregious. And they certainly were, at that point, openly opposing us in Iraq, although of course they did have a great interest in maintaining their relationship with Iraq.

Q: What about Africa, because Mitterrand's son had some close, rather dubious ties to some African countries?

BONEPARTH: I don't think I knew that at the time. I was only in INR for six months, and that wasn't one of the stories I recall covering.

Q: How did you find the input of the embassy at that time? What was going on in France?

BONEPARTH: You know, oddly enough, some of the best information came out of reading the French press and the FBIS articles and talking to the analysts that put together, I don't even remember what FBIS stands for…

Q: Foreign Broadcast Information Service. They basically pick out foreign broadcasts, open broadcasts, and translate and put them out.

BONEPARTH: Well, I found the open source material just as useful, if not more so. I mean, the French have very good journalists and commentators. And I didn't find the embassy reporting anywhere near as interesting as what we would get from the French press.

Q: How about the CIA? Did they make much of a contribution?

BONEPARTH: They did. I would say that their analysts were quite good. I was impressed with them. Especially in terms of knowing who people were; their bio stuff was very good. The thing that was really disappointing was that to be in INR, you need an extra clearance and then you get to see the National Security Agency's intelligence, known as SigIns (Signals Intelligence), and that was always at least three days late. So, whatever use it might have had in terms of writing up analyses was overcome by the fact that the conversation, or whatever it was you were listening in on, was always overtaken by events.

Q: How did you find cooperation or joint efforts with the European Bureau, the French desk?

BONEPARTH: The European Bureau was quite collegial and we worked very closely together, and I think that was because of the leadership of our director, Bo Miller. We had a lot of interesting people, and you know, I think that if I had discovered the Bureau of Intelligence and Research earlier on in my career, I would have had a longer Foreign Service career, because I was really challenged by the intellectual work. And as an academic who came into the State Department and was frustrated by the lack of in-depth discussion about foreign policy and the lack of interest in all of the historical, social and economic issues, I was constantly reading and talking to people in INR and having exciting conversations about the world. And that was the only place in the State Department where I really found that.

Q: Yes, I found it very hard to think of times when I really had in-depth intellectual discussions with anyone.

BONEPARTH: Did you ever serve in INR?

Q: Yes.

BONEPARTH: And that didn't do it?

Q: Yes, but I was only there, I did the Horn of Africa and I came to the conclusion that everybody else did that Somalia was up for grabs to whomever paid the most money could have it, and of course it went back and forth and took their time between the east and the west. So, what did you do after about six months?

BONEPARTH: I quit.

Q: If this was beginning to intrigue you, why did you quit?

BONEPARTH: I had been planning to quit earlier. I knew that I wasn't going to have a long-term career in the Foreign Service. I was not willing to remold my personality and my "world view" to fit the Foreign Service, and that was clearly the only way that I could have made it in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, when you say "world view", where did you find the misfit?

BONEPARTH: It had to do with the fact that I truly believed that we should be considering a wide range of alternatives with respect to our stance with the rest of the world, and open to new ideas, and creative and responsive. And what I found was basically a policy that was formulated to fit the needs of the administration in power. Now I sound a bit naïve when I say that that surprised me. It didn't totally surprise me. But the extent to which policy was dictated by, let's say, outmoded ideas of power

politics, I thought, and domestic political needs, did surprise me.

Q: So you left there in…?

BONEPARTH: I left there in ’92, June, summer of ’92.

Q: ’92. So then what did you do?

BONEPARTH: I went back to academia.

Q: Where?

BONEPARTH: In Hawaii.

Q: Aha! What were you doing in Hawaii?

BONEPARTH: I went back to teaching initially. I taught political science for a semester and I ended up with a job as the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Hawaii in Hilo, on the Big Island.

Q: What did the dean do?

BONEPARTH: The dean ran the academic program for the entire university, which was a small university. But it was an interesting job, because I had only worked in the field of social science before that, and suddenly I was responsible for natural science and business and humanities.

Q: How did you find academic meetings? I just finished talking to someone who said that he had been a teacher for a while at the University of Indiana and after that he found that government meetings were appalling, had nothing, but that academic meetings were much worse. I don’t know. I haven’t ever gotten involved in academic meetings.

BONEPARTH: Well, I think they’re probably at opposite ends of the spectrum. I think at the State Department there was probably too little discussion and too little participation, and in academia, under the guise of collegiality, there was endless discussion and endless participation. So, it would have been nice to have found a happy medium.

Q: And how long did you do that?

BONEPARTH: I did that for almost three years.

Q: Did foreign affairs intrude on your…

BONEPARTH: Oh, absolutely. In fact, at that time I got married to a Foreign Service officer by the name of Jim Wilkinson, who was one of our ambassadors at the UN, where

we met. And he was working as the political advisor to the commander in chief of the Pacific in Honolulu. But when Jim retired, we team-taught some courses on the UN and on Southeast Asian politics at the University of Hawaii, so I spent a lot of time bringing the real-life experience of being a diplomat into the classroom and I think it improved my teaching incredibly.

Q: Where were the students coming from then to attend that university?

BONEPARTH: It was a strange combination. Some were local and a lot of them had either native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander backgrounds. Some of them were just looking for a small, liberal arts college and were from the mainland. Some were from Honolulu. We had a fair number of foreign students from around the Pacific Rim. It was an interesting mix.

Q: While you were there, did you feel somewhat isolated from the events in Washington and other places?

BONEPARTH: Well, I think the whole Hawaii culture is very parochial. One of the things I tried to do in terms of changing the curriculum and opening up opportunities for students was to do exactly that – to bring them in contact with federal government, with opportunities for internships in Washington, for international exchanges, for conferencing. I always encouraged students who graduated from our university to go to graduate school on the mainland – not to limit themselves to Hawaii.

Q: And after that?

BONEPARTH: After that, Jim and I retired to Greece. We bought an old olive oil factory, an olive press, that was over 150 years old. We restored it into a beautiful home on a Greek island.

Q: Which one was that?

BONEPARTH: The island of Aegina.

Q: I know it well. I went to the prison quite often.

BONEPARTH: Oh, you did! Well, the prison is now a mall. A galleria. (laughing)

Q: I was consul-general in Athens in the '70s and we had one guy who was there who was accused and found guilty of murdering two Greek sailors. Something very dubious; they never found the bodies. The Greeks thought he did it, though, so there he was. And we had a few others who were there for the usual – marijuana.

BONEPARTH: I thought you were talking, because the prison was used by the junta to hold a lot of communists. That was a badge of honor in Greek society if you had been

kept in prison in Aegina.

Q: I'd see people in court at Alos; that's where the junta ended up.

BONEPARTH: Still are.

Q: How did you find being Americans living on a Greek island? I've talked to many Greek-Americans who have gone back and had a pretty rough time. They were considered cash cows. It wasn't the most welcoming environment, at least the people I talked to.

BONEPARTH: Certainly there is some of that. And we had, for example, a conflict with a neighbor over a property line.

Q: They keep moving it? (laughing)

BONEPARTH: Not quite the thief in the night. But that was so frustrating, it made me homicidal. And since I couldn't actually kill the guy, I ended up writing a murder mystery in which I killed him. And it is available online; it's called Death at the Olive Press. But we were helped by the fact that we spoke Greek and that we knew Greece very well. So I think we knew what to expect. Of course there are always surprises. In particular, in the house building business, the Greeks do so much under-the-table that you either have to be aware of, or participate in, that it's a little bit frustrating.

Q: Watching the weekend building on building sites in Athens; it was destroying the city as an interesting place. I was talking to the colonels, and they didn't do anything about it either.

BONEPARTH: Well, of course, we had to be holier than God. But when it came to getting our final registration, we ended up bribing the inspector, just like everybody else. We didn't do it directly, we did it through our architect, but it was the only way you were going to get your permit.

Q: So how did the business go?

BONEPARTH: The…?

Q: The oil business.

BONEPARTH: Well, we didn't go into the oil business, but we kept every artifact, every piece of equipment. We turned it into a home, and we ended up with a living room that had a huge millstone, a cistern that went 25 feet into the ground, a screw press, and people came from all over to see this olive oil factory which was also our home.

Q: How long did you stay there?

BONEPARTH: We only stayed in Greece that first year, and then we started dividing our time between Hawaii and Greece, but it turned out that Jim didn't like living in Greece, and I didn't like living in Hawaii. So after about six or seven years, we sold both homes and moved to California.

Q: When did you come back here to Washington?

BONEPARTH: I came back to Washington in September 2003.

Q: And you have to explain what you're doing now.

BONEPARTH: I'm the director for policy and programs for the National Council of Women's Organizations, which is a coalition of over 200 women's organizations. I work on public policy, advocacy, education, political mobilization; coalition building is my main job.

Q: Are there any issues that particularly engage your organization?

BONEPARTH: We cover a wide gamut of issues. We provide support to smaller organizations and we work with larger organizations. But any women's issue you can think of, including global women's issues, we're involved with. We sometimes pick up our own issues. So, for example, at the moment I'm working on health issues – women and diabetes. And I'm also working on teaching Iraqi women coalition building, hopefully with a grant from the State Department, although after all I've said about the State Department, if they ever read this interview, they won't give me the grant. (laughing)

Q: Okay, well, Ellen, I think that will take care of this. Great.

End of interview