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

JAMES ALAN WILLIAMS

Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing

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[Note: This interview was not edited my Mr. Williams]

Q: This is an oral history interview with James A. Williams. It's the thirty first of October, 2003. Jim, it's good to be starting on Halloween for this conversation. This is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, and Jim this is our first session. I see that you were born in Washington, D.C. and a little bit later on you went to Princeton University. Did you grow up in Washington, or were you here as a war baby November of 1942?

WILLIAMS: I'm definitely a war baby. My father went into the Navy soon after Pearl Harbor and I was part of his insurance policy to make sure there would be another generation. I grew up in Arlington though. My father got out of the military when the war ended. He stayed in the Navy as a civilian management analyst, so essentially he worked at the Pentagon and at main Navy down on Constitution Avenue when I was growing up, and my brother and I grew up in Arlington, Virginia.

Q: Okay and you did go on to Princeton, class of 1964. Was it at Princeton, or even before, that you became interested in the Foreign Service?

WILLIAMS: I really became interested in the Foreign Service before Princeton. Living in the Washington metropolitan area you hear a lot, read a lot, breathe a lot of history, foreign policy, government affairs. So from a fairly early age I was interested in that. I majored in history and German literature at Princeton and wanted to have a career, either academics or foreign affairs that would enable me to continue that interest. And on the idiosyncratic side it just happened that my father and Graham Martin were college friends from Wake Forest. From the earliest I can remember my parents were in touch with Graham and Dot Martin, sending them care packages in Paris after World War II, corresponding with them when they were in Geneva and Thailand and Rome. So hearing about the Martins' adventures in the Foreign Service through perhaps a rose colored glass gave me a very early interest in that profession.

Q: Graham Martin was our ambassador in Italy when I first arrived there in 1970. Of course, then he went on to Vietnam and certainly he'd had a very distinguished career. I'd also known him a little bit when he was a special assistant to the undersecretary for economic affairs, Douglas Dillon, in the late fifties. After Princeton you did a little bit of graduate study.

WILLIAMS: I had a Fulbright scholarship for a year, for two semesters, at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, Germany. I spent two semesters there basically studying post-war German history, learning how to ski with my bride. We were married when we took that trip, and getting to meet a lot of people in Munich and renewing old contacts in Bonn which I had met the previous summer when I worked there on a scholarship.

Q: Not with the embassy in Bonn.

WILLIAMS: No, I was doing academic research. I got a scholarship from Princeton and lived across the river and worked in the SPD library on a project involving the elections for the German national assembly after World War I.

Q: Okay and when did you take the Foreign Service written examination? While you were in Munich or before?

WILLIAMS: No, I took the written exam that summer I lived in Germany and studied in Bonn. That was the summer after my junior year. It was given in some huge room at the embassy in Bonn. A lot of people took it. I took it and was fortunate to pass, although very narrowly because I was always a good test taker. That particular day I rushed through the math section and could not understand why nobody else had finished, and only three minutes before the bell rang did I turn the page over and discover there was a second page. And I raced to finish it, did not of course, and barely passed, or even flunked that portion of the exam. That was something the oral examiners asked me about when I had the oral exam.

Q: When and where did you have the oral?

WILLIAMS: I had the oral the summer after I graduated from Princeton, before we went to Munich, in Washington, D.C. and passed it. But the thing they zeroed in on early was why were my scores on the written test generally pretty good except for math which was atrocious. I had to tell them it was because I'd been too careless to look at the whole test before I put my pen down.

Q: Did you have to defer entry into the Foreign Service then to do the Fulbright in Munich, or did it all kind of work out, the timing the way you wanted it?

WILLIAMS: They allowed me to do that with some reluctance. That was another part of the grilling and the oral exam, just when did I plan to come into the Foreign Service if I passed the exam. Was I really an academic who wanted to go on to the academic track or was I serious about wanting to come into the Foreign Service? I think their questions pushed me to clarify my own thinking on that point, and tell them truthfully that I planned to come into the Foreign Service if I passed the test after my Fulbright in Munich.

Q: And I see you did come in September of 1965 at age 22 if my math is right.

WILLIAMS: That's right. That was not unusual at the time. Many of us were A.B. generalists with one or two years of post-graduate experience or as former Peace Corps volunteers. There were several of those. Some had masters degrees. There was only one Ph.D. in the class. He was the old man at 31, Ron Casagrande, a great guy. And it just worked out perfectly in terms of the timing. We came back on the ship. In those days you still took the ship to Europe and came back, at least the Fulbright grantees did. And we got off the ship in August and I came into the class that started sometime in September as I recall.

Q: And you had the usual A100 orientation course at the Foreign Service Institute and what happened after that? I see your first assignment was to Ankara, Turkey. Did you have any language training or other specific preparation for that?

WILLIAMS: Not at all. The A100 course was fairly straightforward. We visited various desks in the Department of State, including the German desk. We heard all kinds of lecturers, some good, some bad at the old Foreign Service Institute, and we had a fairly useful but short course in consular affairs, and that was the essence of my training. I had gotten off of language probation by passing the test in German since I had majored in German literature. I'd spent a summer in Germany. There was no language training, nor was there any request by me to go to Turkey. I, of course, wanted to go back to Germany and the system wisely decided not to send me there. When the announcements were made, you may recall the old style, for us at least, our class, we were in a windowless room and somebody like the DG (Director General - head of personnel) would come into the room and call out your last name. You would stand up in a more or less military brace and he would give you your assignment. You would say thank you sir and sit down. My name started with W I was at the end of the line. When he called out Williams I stood up and said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "Mr. Williams you are going to Izmir," and I said thank you sir and sat down without having a clue where Izmir was. I asked my wife where is Izmir and she said I don't know. Somebody behind us thankfully whispered he thought it was old Smyrna and I did know what Smyrna was so I quickly figured out I was going to Turkey. It was a country that I had never particularly studied or shown any interest in or shown any desire to visit, and the system sent me there, for which I am eternally grateful.

Q: And you actually did go to Izmir?

WILLIAMS: No, that's another story. We were going to Izmir, the assignment was announced so I assume that the director general made it. Normally that was it. So dutifully my wife and I wrote the letters of introduction to the consul general and his wife, it was Lew Schmidt and his wife. We wrote the letter saying how happy we were about our assignment, how much we looked forward to coming to Izmir. I got a fairly quick reply from Lew Schmidt saying that he was very happy to receive my letter, but that it was the first he had known of my assignment to Izmir, and on checking with Ankara he had discovered that the assignment had been changed to Ankara instead of Izmir. So, in fact, we went directly to Ankara as did our household effects and our car, and not to Izmir. Now the reason for that was very interesting. Unbeknownst to us, and certainly Lew Schmidt and his wife never told us this, we discovered later there had been some kind of scandal involving a key club and other things in Izmir. This had involved a number of people in the consulate, not the Schmidts. They were sent there to clean the mess up, but their predecessors and a whole lot of people there had been involved, or some of them had been involved in the Key Club. There were other goings on with the local community including expatriate Americans. The Inspector General had come in there and basically cleaned house, and I think they decided on reflection that this was not the kind of cauldron of temptation into which they wanted to commit a 22 year old junior officer and his bride. For reasons I suspect of prudence as well as personnel management, they aborted the decision to send us to Izmir, moved the position and us to Ankara instead.

Q: What was the position?

WILLIAMS: It was a central complement rotation job. In fact, Ankara is a huge embassy. Ankara had a wonderful set of people in those days. It's large they said so they can afford the luxury of training you, and they trained me in economic-commercial work, in consular work, in general services work, and so on. So that's what we did.

Q: So you rotated among those functions and got training and had some experience.

WILLIAMS: Had lots of experience, learned at each of them. The people who trained me were at least 20 years older than I was. Some were older still, but they were very nice to us. They took us in as they took in other junior officers. We were not the only ones in Ankara at the time. It was a very collegial and well-run post. I'll say it again because it deserves it. A very happy family and it treated its people well, and trained its junior officers very well. I didn't become an economic commercial officer, but I became much more literate in that field than I had ever been and I was grateful for that. The consular training had helped me a good deal for my rotation tour through the consular section, but as is the case with many junior officers I was largely under the tutelage of the senior locals in the consulate section.

Q: How long were you there? Two years?

WILLIAMS: It was a little over two years. Closer to two and a half years. We got there in early March of '66 as I recall and left sometime in July of '68. I was supposed to rotate through the other sections of the embassy. Political was the one I really wanted to get to. Mutual security affairs, political/military was also a possibility. Either would have been fine. The ambassador's office had a staff aide position. The incumbent got married, that was Sam Peale an old friend, got married and took an extended leave of absence for his honeymoon. They needed a quick fill-in so they yanked me out of I think the general services section where I was working, to become staff aide on fairly short notice. Sam and his wife, did not come back to Ankara. They went on to another assignment, and I wound up staying for the rest of my tour as staff aide to Parker Hart which was a wonderful job working for a great Foreign Service officer.

Q: He was the ambassador the whole time you were in Turkey?

WILLIAMS: He was. He had arrived about I think a year before we got there, succeeding Ray Hare, and he was there when we left. He and Mrs. Hart, Jane Hart, were two professionals who really took their job seriously, showed interest in their people, and tried to make the place a happy one.

Q: And who was the DCM?

WILLIAMS: The DCM was Ed Martin. There were in those days two Ed Martins in the Foreign Service. This was China Ed. Edwin W. Martin I think. He and his wife Emma Rose as I recall were both the children of American missionaries, and I believe both of them had been born in China or one of them had been born in China and one in what was then the Ottoman Empire but then went to China later. They had both had deep experience in China, spoke Chinese and this was I guess an out of area tour for Ed. He was the DCM.

Q: And you were the ambassador's staff aide for the better part of a year then?

WILLIAMS: I was the ambassador's staff aide for about 16 months. Our first three months there we lived in the DCM's residence because the DCM was on home leave and the embassy didn't want the residence vacant. One interesting thing that happened while we were there is that my wife was often at home. She was involved in many activities with the German American Women's Club and playing tennis, but usually she was home doing something and I was at the office. And while at home during the daytime she frequently noticed men coming in and out of the basement stairwell, going down to the basement and coming out. And sometimes when we would play ping pong in the basement in the evening we would hear door shutting in the basement and whispering, but never saw anybody. It was rather strange environment. Well it turned out after we left our brief sojourn at the DCM residence that the local cook was running a brothel in the basement of the DCM residence. The RSO shop finally did a number on him and rolled the whole thing up, fired the cook, and obviously put an end to the brothel. But for a while there we were living on top of a brothel and perhaps even giving, unwittingly of course, cover to it.

Q: Well I thought there would be some good story on Halloween and that's a good one. Good remembrance. Anything else you want to say about this first tour? Sounds like a very varied and interesting one for you. Anything about U.S.-Turkey relations in that period? '66 to '68.

WILLIAMS: It was in many ways an era of good feeling, even though it was coming to an end. Terrorism began soon after we left Turkey. I mean serious terrorism. When we lived there Turkey was essentially a safe country for tourists and foreign diplomats to travel in. This included the eastern provinces which is a sensitive area for the Turks because that's where the Kurds live. That's one reason the Peace Corps was first moved out of eastern Turkey and then tossed out of the whole country because of great sensitivity to what the Peace Corps volunteers may or may not have been doing with the Kurdish population out there. But essentially in our small VW beetle which was painted bright red, we could travel the length and breadth of the country alone in safety, except at night. You didn't travel at night, not because of terrorism or anything like that, but because shepherds and other native folk had a habit of sleeping on asphalt at night, or parking their flocks there. There were no road signs, reflectors, and you might have an unpleasant surprise rounding the corner and seeing the road ahead of you covered by two-footed or four-footed creatures. So generally it was not a good idea to drive in Turkey at night. On the whole U.S.-Turkish relations were under strain continually because of the Cyprus problem in that period. One of the continual refrains I heard when I was in Turkey traveling around to meet local officials as a consular officer, as a vice consul, was reference to the Lyndon Johnson letter of 1964 which was sent to keep Turkey from invading Cyprus essentially by threatening that Turkey, if it did so, could not invoke the NATO guarantee to protect it against a Russian reaction in defense of Archbishop Makarios' regime. And that letter achieved its purpose but rankled deeply and it was standard fare for every Turkish official who met with an American for years thereafter to make a regretful reference to the Johnson letter of 1964.

We went through the '67 crisis when I was there. That did not seriously impact Turkish-American relations at my level. As far as Ann and I were concerned life went on pretty much as normal. It was still fun to be with the Turks, to travel and meet Turks and so forth. The one thing we were all conscious of in those days and it became worse and worse and was one contributing factor I think to the terrorism that was directed against Americans, was the huge presence that we had, not just at the military and intelligence bases on the Black Sea and at Central Anatolia, but also the wealth of that presence and the gap in the standards of living and income levels between American officials and Turkish officials. That was a very obvious gap; it was a matter of continuing concern to Ambassador Hart and the management of embassy Ankara. We had something like 35,000 official Americans in Turkey in those days. That was mainly Air Force. And the problems arose when these young hot-blooded Americans would come into town to have a good time. We'd often run into difficulty in some of the bars in Izmir, Adana in the south, and in Istanbul. Occasionally soldiers from the sixth fleet would be tossed into the Bosporus when the fleet would come in for a visit. I think at the end of our tour or soon thereafter, Istanbul was declared off-limits for sixth fleet visits for a while because of that problem. As the urban terrorism took off in the late '60s we cut back even more on our interface between American military and Turkish officials. But on the whole, in the period we were there, the two and a half years we were there, the relations were good. I think they were managed very ably by Ambassador Hart and his team with a lot of good support from the Washington folks. The Turkish government of Sï¿½leyman Demirel was very proactive and actually pro-American. Demirel had been one of the early Eisenhower fellows as I recall. An engineer by training who had studied at least one year in the States. Spoke pretty good English and was open, or at least we thought he was, to the kind of economic reform ideas that the AID economic planners under Loy Jones and Jim Grant and others were pushing. He was open to those ideas. In the end of course, the Turkish economy proved resistant to that type of advice for some time. But Demirel and his team were a very receptive audience in those days. And working with them, even at my lowly level, was a pleasure.

Q: Was the issue of narcotics, poppy cultivation, becoming an irritant in U.S.-Turkish relations, or was that a little bit later.

WILLIAMS: It was becoming an irritant. Of course it became a much larger irritant later on. I think the DEA office was opened a few months before we left. But it had not become a major, major problem. It was becoming one, and everybody knew that. Turkey of course, under the single convention, is one of the few countries entitled to grow poppies legally, and that's part of the difficulty. It's a legal producer or poppies and cultivator of opium. The big problem arises with the diversion of a lot of that production into illicit channels.

Q: Okay. Anything else about the two and a half years in Turkey?

WILLIAMS: Yes. My wife and I had the great fortune of going to language school every day. Virtually every working day we were there. This was an AID run language school. Every morning I would start with an hour, sometimes an hour and a half of Turkish, and my wife would have a lesson later on in the day. There was enough money for this, enough teachers for this, and again because of the generous staffing of embassy Ankara, there was enough redundant manpower in the offices to allow the ones who wanted to learn the language to take the time off to do so. Our teachers were essentially contemporaries. Students, young professionals. Essentially our age, usually married. And many of them became friends. So they made very good friends as Turks tend to, and because we were so close in age and interests and so forth, we had a lot of fun with them. And I think that's one reason that their success in teaching Americans Turkish was very high. The language is not an Indo European one, but that school did very well in teaching Americans basic Turkish which is all it sought to do.

Q: Had you had any language training before leaving Washington, or only part-time while you were in Ankara?

WILLIAMS: No language training at all in Turkish. That was a matter of regret, but as I think I said before it's because I passed German. The system saw no need to train a newly vetted JO (junior officer) in an exotic language like Turkish. So I had to pick it up while I was there, but living in the culture, shopping in the culture, it was fairly easy to pick up enough Turkish to get by. The Turks are extremely tolerant of foreigners trying to speak their difficult tongue, and very flattered when foreigners make the effort to do so. So by the end of our tour we were speaking pretty good Turkish. Ann's was better than mine because she was more actively involved with school directors and teachers and other recipients of the largesse of the Turkish American Women's Cultural Society. I was involved more with bureaucrats and foreign ministry types and visitors to Ambassador Hart's office. But I tested out at 3+ 3+ when I came back.

Q: Okay. In the summer of 1968 then you were due for transfer, reassignment. Where did you go next?

WILLIAMS: I was assigned to the operations center. Again an assignment I had not sought or even thought of, but which turned out to be a very pleasant one indeed. It was an assignment to Washington, it was shift work which meant that you didn't work overtime, and you did your eight hours, maybe eight and a half and then went home. You worked mornings, you worked afternoons, and you worked nights on a rotational basis. It was a nice way to come back to Washington. In addition, my father had gotten ill and was diagnosed with colon cancer and so I needed some time to be with him and that gave me the ability to do so.

Q: I think probably a lot of people who have done these oral history interviews have had assignments to the operation center. I don't know if there's anything particularly unique about your experience there that we ought to cover. I think what you said already gives the picture of rotation, the 24 hour coverage of the op center.

WILLIAMS: Well there was nothing unique, but what I really enjoyed about it, aside from getting an overview of the voluminous traffic, substantive traffic that comes into the department every day and the op center gives you that, was the chance when I was editor in the second half of my tour there to write summaries of cables that went into the secretary of state and the principal deputies' twice daily reading file. It's quite a discipline to learn to boil down a complex cable into I think our rule was eight, maybe 10 lines of single spaced text. That's what we learned to do. It was very good training for the rest of my career in the service.

Q: Be able to write short.

WILLIAMS: Write short, and catch the spirit of it, and catch it in a way that gets your interest. Sometimes we would have competitions to have catchy titles in those summaries. We pushed the envelope sometimes and usually got away with it, not always.

Q: '68, '69 were of course an election year, change of administration, so you helped break in a new secretary of state.

WILLIAMS: Very tangentially. Frankly, the transition of administrations didn't affect what we were doing on our teams in the operations center. And I don't recall it affected any of the management of SSO although of course the SS leadership changed when Secretary Rogers' team came in. But the working relationships were essentially the same as far as I could tell, both as an assistant watch officer as well as an editor. That work did not change, nor did our liaison with the military and the intelligence community in the White House change. We still had the same kind of liaison relationships through posting of liaison officers in the National Military Command Center as well as in SSO and the use of the LDX, the Long Distance Xerography to send classified summaries, other documents among the White House, the Pentagon and State, and CIA I think.

Q: When Henry Kissinger came in as national security advisor that was not something that had a big impact on you as a watch officer?

WILLIAMS: No, it didn't. The transition was watched by all of us with great interest, but I don't recall at this point at least any impact on our daily work in SSO in the operations center.

Q: You were there about a year?

WILLIAMS: One year exactly, yes. I'm still an alumnus of it, subject to recall. At least I was until I retired.

Q: They could always bring you back.

WILLIAMS: They never did, but they always had that power.

Q: And where did you go after leaving the operations center?

WILLIAMS: In Spring, 1969, I started shopping around, and for the first time I think I started thinking somewhat seriously about where I wanted to go after the operations center. A colleague I had met, Harmon Kirby, at that time was the personnel officer for NEA, Near East South Asian affairs to which in those days Turkey, Greece and Cyprus belonged. So if I was anything in terms of a bureau man, I was an NEA man by virtue of my service in Ankara. And I went to Harmon and asked him what he thought I should do after the operations center. He gave me a very persuasive reply based on the need to establish a base, and what better place to have that base said Harmon than NEA. So he persuaded me to take a job in NEA/ARP which is the Arabian Peninsula Affairs office. I was the petroleum affairs reporting officer for the whole Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf. Not Iran or Iraq, but the Arabian Peninsula side of the Gulf. I followed David Newton who had the job and was a very difficult act to follow because he was not only a petroleum expert which I was not, he was an Arabist which I was not.

Q: Not either. So you were there for a year or so? What sort of things did you do in that capacity?

WILLIAMS: I spent a lot of time reading up on the petroleum issues, meeting with oil men from the major oil companies and the exploration companies who had come in to tell us what was happening or seek our political support for issues. Usually involving ARAMCO which was then the U.S. major producing company in Saudi Arabia, in Dhahran in the eastern province. Also spent a lot of time getting to know the Arabists in NEA. My strong impression was Arabists in those days ran that bureau and they were a fascinating group of people. Some of them were grizzled veterans of years in the desert in Muscat and exotic places like that. It was a very impressive fraternity, one which I seriously thought of trying to join by learning Arabic in that period, but ultimately decided not to because I didn't want to spend two years learning a language. I've occasionally regretted that decision, but I think it was the right one to make at the time. It was a very interesting experience. Joe Sisco was the head of NEA at the time, a very dynamic guy with a very strong front office. Stu Rockwell, Rodger Davies. We had very strong country directors, as they were called, in charge of the offices. Bill Brewer was my boss. First rate Arabist and officer. Talcott Seeley was across the hall running the Syria/Jordan/Iraq/Lebanon desk. Richard Parker was around doing the Egypt desk; Haywood Stackhouse ran the Arab/Israel affairs desk. So we had some very strong personalities and some very interesting discussions in the weekly staff meetings that I attended. I also at this time tried to learn French, or continue my efforts to learn French which went on for my whole life and never succeeded, by going to the early morning class at FSI. I finally had to give that up after about five months because I was just exhausted. Our first child had been born at the time and had colic which kept him up all night and kept us up all night, so there was no way I was going to be able to do my job, learn French, and help my wife with managing the colicky baby so French had to go.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time interacting with the economic bureau, with other agencies?

WILLIAMS: Spent a lot of time with a particular office in Economic Affairs, Fuels and Energy (FSE). Jim Akins was in charge, a wonderful genius really in terms of understanding the way the energy industry works. My counterpart was Warren Clark who was extremely helpful in educating me from about point 0 in terms of how petroleum works and what it's about. The only training I had for that job after I left the operations center was a week in Houston, or five days in Houston. They sent me to a conference sponsored by the American Petroleum Institute in Houston which basically exposed us to a lot of ideas from people in the industry, both oil and gas, as to how it works politically and economically. It was a useful introduction, especially for somebody like myself who had no prior experience in it.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time interacting with the Saudi embassy or other local embassies in Washington, or were things done primarily in the field?

WILLIAMS: Primarily in the field in those days. Hermann Eilts was the ambassador in Saudi and anybody who knows him knows it would be done mainly through the embassy because that's the way he wanted to run things, and he did it very well. I did have a contact at the Saudi embassy, Mohammed Madani, but it was really not a major contact. It was as much social as substantive because in those days we at least at the third secretary level did not do much business with the Saudi embassy. Much more productive contact, just because of the personalities involved, was the team of the Washington office of ARAMCO which, as I said, was the major producer in Saudi Arabia at the time, run by U.S. majors. John Pendleton ran the office and Robert Van Person was his deputy. They were essentially lobbyist and liaison folk between ARAMCO and key elements of the executive and legislative branches. Very able. They both knew the oil industry very well. Person was the child of missionaries who had grown up in the Arab world so he spoke fluent Arabic and understood the world very well. And Pendleton had spent time as a young man out of college in Turkey of all places, so we shared an interest in Turkey based on that.

Q: This was before OPEC, or had OPEC gotten started by then? It was certainly before the big price increase.

WILLIAMS: I believe OPEC had gotten started by then, but it had not flexed its muscle in any way.

Q: Were there major issues that you had to deal with, or was it more keeping track of developments, troubleshooting sort of role?

WILLIAMS: As I recall it was more troubleshooting than anything. I was usually the reporting officer or the note taker when they would come in to talk about things. Production levels, efforts by the Saudis to raise them, efforts by others maybe not to raise them so much. But I don't recall any of the specific issues too well. There was no big trouble in those days. It was a fairly smoothly functioning relationship between the Saudis and ARAMCO. Been going on for a long time. The oil issues that were more contentious usually involved the former sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf that were coming into independence once the British started pulling back from east of Suez. That was happening in the Gulf when I served in the NE/ARP. And the question then was where are the boundaries of these sheikdoms? The land boundaries had often not been demarcated. The maritime boundaries were subject to dispute, particularly with Iran which under the Shah in those days was very muscular in asserting claims not just to continental shelf, but to offshore islands such as Abu Musa and the Tunbs. The issues that involved more crisis-like scenarios usually involved as I said the sheikdoms, those islands, and the boundaries. Not so much ARAMCO itself.

Q: Was Yemen part of the area covered by the office?

WILLIAMS: Yes it was, and I can recall one or two discussions involving Yemen in those days. Usually not with oil. It was more the situation between Yemen and South Yemen because they were separate countries at the time and the South Yemen was quite radical socialist. Bill Eagleton had been our last principal officer in Aden as I recall and he was pulled out when I was in the NE/ARP. I remember when he came back. But the issues were more political and military between the two Adens, between the two Yemens, between South Yemen and Saudi Arabia, between South Yemen and Muscat, things like that. Oil was not a big part of that at all.

Q: I see your job description described you as an economic petroleum affairs officer. I assume that petroleum took up most of your time as opposed to other economic issues.

WILLIAMS: Virtually all of it. The other issue that took up a lot of time was a desalinization plant that was finally built in Jeddah on the Red Sea. The Office of Saline Waters in the Department of Interior under Stuart Udall in the Kennedy administration had a mandate which continued for many years thereafter to promote American desalinization technology worldwide. We persuaded the Saudis early on to buy into this, and they did. They had the money for it. And the plant was built by a consortium of companies, Europeans and others. Office of Saline Waters was the supervisor, reporting to the embassy in Jeddah under Hermann Eilts. But it had to deal with Dutch and British and German contractors and subcontractors in a consortium that the Saudis as I recall had put together. It was not a smoothly functioning operation; there were delays inevitably as there are in that part of the world. There were suspicions, backbiting, accusations, and one of my jobs was to trek over to the Department of Interior about once a week to hold the hand of the folks in the Office of Saline Waters who wanted to pull the plug on the whole thing because they were exasperated with the way those foreigners were not showing sufficient appreciation for our technology. In the end the plant was built. After I left NE/ARP it was completed and went online as now one of I think many desalinization plants the Saudis have. But it was the first in those days, sort of a demonstration case of U.S. technology in that part of the world. But it invoked a lot of neuralgic feelings in a lot of corners before it was over. And I like to think that my efforts and those of Bill Brewer and others in NE/ARP helped smooth things out, both with the Department of Interior and with the folks representing the U.S. government in Jeddah.

Q: Okay, how long were you in NE/ARP?

WILLIAMS: I recall it was a little over a year. Then I responded to a siren song that came from the seventh floor to go back up as staff aide to Undersecretary of State John Irwin. He had succeeded Elliot Richardson on fairly short notice in that job, and Richardson took his whole team with him, or most of them, and Irwin came in to get a whole new team. The staff aide to Richardson was an old friend from the op center, John Stempel, and John urged me to consider applying for the job of staff aide to Undersecretary Irwin. I was not that happy in NE/ARP because I found a lot of the work was frustrating. It involved terminology, names, family relationships in the Arab world that I was totally ignorant of and it was very difficult to get my mind around it. Having enjoyed immensely my time as a generalist aide in SSO, I thought it would be more fun to perhaps go back to the seventh floor as staff aide than to stay on in NE/ARP. So I was broken out of NE/ARP when Mr. Irwin picked me for that job, and went up to the seventh floor for two more years.

Q: You had also had experience as the staff aide to Ambassador Hart in Turkey.

WILLIAMS: That's right. I started specializing as a staff aide. There were plusses and minuses to it. I enjoyed everything I did in those capacities. It was very educational; it was a lot of fun. You didn't own anything in terms of issues, but you got to work the ball in various ways. The one who recruited me for the job with Undersecretary Irwin was really Nick Veliotes who was the senior aide and really set up the office for Mr. Irwin. Working with Nick and his team and with Mr. Irwin was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed every minute of it.

Q: You went there sometime in 1970.

WILLIAMS: '69.

Q: Let's see, you were in NE/ARP '69-'70 and then went to the undersecretary's office sometime in '70.

WILLIAMS: That's right.

Q: I think maybe where we ought to start is just to talk a little bit more about the way that office was structured. Mr. Irwin was basically number two in the State Department.

WILLIAMS: That's right; we called it undersecretary in those days.

Q: As opposed to undersecretary for political affairs or economic affairs.

WILLIAMS: There was an undersecretary for political affairs, for economic affairs, and for management, and there was an undersecretary, and that meant a lot of undersecretaries. But that was later changed to deputy secretary. But he was the number two under William Rogers, the secretary.

Q: Okay, you were talking about the way that Undersecretary Irwin's office was structured how many staff there was and how it had changed from the previous undersecretary Elliot Richardson.

WILLIAMS: Richardson had a large team that had spilled into offices adjacent to what was normally considered the undersecretary's suite. For whatever reason, Mr. Irwin decided to have a more conventional smaller office and it was really quite small; her had an executive secretary - career Foreign Service officer Velma Hein, as I recall - Nick Veliotes who ran the office as the senior assistant. I was the staff aide, there was only one staff aide, and each of us had a secretary so that's two more, and then there was an executive assistant who was a very bright lawyer from a New York firm, Scott Custer, who Mr. Irwin brought in. Irwin has been a lawyer with a prestigious New York firm for many years, was married to Jane Watson of the IBM Watsons and knew his way around New York very well. My recollection is he had known Scott or Scott's parents from before New York and took Scott aboard as his domestic political advisor and Scott had a secretary also. So that was essentially it. We worked very closely as an office and Mr. Irwin as an undersecretary with Art Hartman who was the head of the Policy Planning Office in those days, with Ron Spiers who was head of political military affairs and Tom Pickering and Cy Wise who were part of his team. And with Ted Eliot and the folks in the staff secretariat, who managed the paper flow. It was a well-run office and I think a very happy as well as productive one because of Nick's amazing ability to get people to work well together. And Mr. Irwin's overall influence. He was a very good man to work for. We had a lot of fun and we worked very, very hard.

Q: How did you interact or work, particularly with the secretary's office? Did Secretary Rogers have pretty much a similar set up? I suppose larger.

WILLIAMS: I don't remember too much about Rogers' office. I interacted somewhat usually directly with Rush Taylor who was my counterpart for most of those two years in Secretary Rogers' office. Nick and Scott had their interactions but I don't recall the names at this point. Surprisingly we didn't have that much interaction with Rogers' office as an office. It was more issue specific or personality driven. There was a lot more interaction between the office of the undersecretary when Irwin was there with Alexis Johnson's office; he was the undersecretary of political affairs with a fairly good-sized staff. With PEA which is what it was called we had a lot more daily interaction than with the secretary's office.

Q: Did Undersecretary Irwin have particular responsibilities or specialties that he worked on, as opposed to the secretary or the undersecretary for political affairs? Other principles?

WILLIAMS: There was not a clear division of labor. The main one I remember is that Rogers gave him responsibility for a Middle East oil crisis that broke out in those two years. It was a pricing issue, and I forget what triggered it exactly, but Secretary Rogers gave that to Mr. Irwin. Mr. Irwin of course had known in his earlier capacity the companies and their lawyers in New York who represented ARAMCO and the other U.S. oil majors. That was a major asset in terms of his ability to have credibility as well as street smarts in talking these issues in the region. He also relied heavily on Jim Akins whom he took along as his substantive petroleum advisor on dealing with the issues. That and the chairmanship of the board of the Foreign Service which was his responsibility. He spent a lot of time dealing with Bill Macomber, in the undersecretary for management's office, and others on the agenda for those meetings. Infrequently he would meet with some of the AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) folk, but Macomber and his staff, and I think there was even a specific office for the board of the Foreign Service, spent a lot of time with Mr. Irwin briefing him on the board of the Foreign Service issues.

Q: Did you travel with Undersecretary Irwin?

WILLIAMS: No I did not. I stayed back. I was the one who stayed back when Veliotes and Custer traveled. They liked to travel and I was happy to stay home and just get a breather when they were gone. I was the custodian of the paper flow so to speak through the staff secretariat and when they were gone the paper flow dried up significantly so I was able to get some down time. I did not travel with them.

Q: There had been a war in the Middle East..

WILLIAMS: There were things. King Hussein threw Black September out of Jordan when I was in Mr. Irwin's office.

Q: I guess I have to ask you about relations with the NSC (National Security Council), with Henry Kissinger. Was that something that occupied you or John Irwin, a lot, or was it pretty much left to the secretary's office and Rogers to try to cushion that?

WILLIAMS: I think it occupied or preoccupied most of the principals on the seventh floor and their staff. The NSC under Henry Kissinger was an extremely aggressive, forward-leaning operation, and they had the ability to issue these taskers. National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) I think is what it was called which sometimes Kissinger would sign, sometimes President Nixon would sign; it was the same thing. It meant that the White House was telling you to do something. And one way that Kissinger took charge of an issue would be by issuing an NSSM on something, let's say Middle East petroleum, and tasking the bureaucracy to produce reports on this study which would then be coordinated and discussed in the policy sense by committees that he would chair. There was a fair amount of frustration as I recall on the seventh floor by the ability of the NSC to do that successfully in most cases. In fact, one reason that Secretary Rogers was interested in sending Mr. Irwin on this trip to the Middle East was to reassert the State Department's leadership in this issue. I don't remember exactly when this decision was made, but it followed a series of disappointments and bruising discussions over the NSC's ability to take charge of issues and to win in the bureaucratic arena. And Rogers saw it as one way we could perhaps as an institution begin to reverse that would be to send Jack Irwin his able deputy to the Middle East to try to patch together the solution to the problem. Kissinger opposed that mission, privately at least. But in the end did nothing to block it as far as I know.

Q: Anything else that particularly comes to mind about your time in the undersecretary's office?

WILLIAMS: Perhaps because I had been a stickler for grammar when I was in school and university, and had been an editor in the operations center, I was struck by how much bad writing came up through the system. I made more than a few people mad with my red penciling with some of their product. I was told to do this by Nick and expected to produce a quality product. Because I had very high standards of grammar and syntax I took it upon myself to leave the red pencil things for redoing or just have them redone by my secretary. Unfortunately this was before the era of word processing so every time you red penciled something it had to be done from scratch because it had to be letter perfect if it was for the signature or action of the undersecretary. But there was a lot of sloppy writing. I'm not saying it was substantively bad, it was substantively usually right on the mark, but it was phrased in a way that would just make you cringe sometimes. So if I were doing this again I would more seriously consider trying to force the line officers who process that paper to do that job rather than do it myself. At the time I thought it would be quicker, and I probably had a really arrogant view it would be better if I did it myself and just made the decision. But it tended to draw me more than I should have been drawn I think in retrospect into the minutia of margins, of spelling, of grammar, and all. This is before we had spell check and other such fancy aids.

Q: When Secretary Rogers was traveling abroad; Mr. Irwin would be acting secretary. When that happened, did that change things for you and for the office significantly, or was it pretty much the same?

WILLIAMS: Well the paper flow increased significantly when that happened because we didn't delegate our normal work as Undersecretary Irwin's office, we just continued that plus the work that the secretary had to do, or that had to be done by the acting secretary in the secretary's absence. So the staff studies or the action folders that would come into us from Ted Eliot's shop next door increased significantly when Secretary Rogers was away and Mr. Irwin was acting. Maybe we had 50 percent more of that stuff. This did not last for a long period, but for a week, maybe 10 days that would be a huge extra amount of work.

Q: You continued to be the only staff assistant in that office throughout your entire time and what did that mean in terms of your working hours?

WILLIAMS: Well they were pretty long to the occasional disgruntlement of my wife who had a baby to take care of and wanted to see more of her husband and baby's daddy than she did. I was assigned to the job for one year and it was renewable. I renewed it for a second year because I liked the office, I liked the team there, I liked the issues, and I didn't see anything better to do in the department at that time. So for the two years that I was in there I was the only staff aide. But my secretaries and Nick's secretary, sometimes Nick, sometimes even Scott would pitch in occasionally when it got tough and help push things through. The proofreading and that sort of thing, the enforcing of deadlines was not that difficult. It was just the volume that sometimes got you. But it did require long hours. I would typically get in the office about 7:15, 7:30 and just as typically would get home about 7:15, 7:30 at night. So 12 hour days were the norm. Mr. Irwin worked even longer hours. He lived next door in the Watergate apartments so he had a very short commute, and was used to very, very long hours I think from his time in New York City as a lawyer.

Q: How about weekends?

WILLIAMS: Weekends as I recall, typically half days on Saturdays. I don't remember ever going in on a Sunday although sometimes as I recall Nick did and Mr. Irwin would have stuff brought out to him or sent by a courier anytime he wanted. On the weekends or when he was on vacation, but his immediate staff did not get involved in couriering stuff to him.

Q: Anything else about those two years?

WILLIAMS: Just that it was a lot of fun. One of my great blessings in the Foreign Service is I've really enjoyed all of my jobs. Some more than others as I've indicated, but it was usually a lot of fun, I can honestly say I was rarely bored and it's very important for me as a human being not to be bored. I value not being bored almost above everything else. And wonderful people to work with. I really enjoyed meeting all of the people from the bureaucracy whom I met when I was staff aide for Mr. Irwin. It really gave you an overview.

Q: Did you have a lot to do with bureau staff assistants or desk officers or were you pretty much dealing with people on the seventh floor so to speak?

WILLIAMS: Mainly the seventh floor, but sometimes depending on the issue I would get involved with bureau staff assistance or desk officers. It turned out that three or four times when I was with Mr. Irwin he had to make decisions involving Most Favored Nation status for Romania. And Ed Segall was the desk officer for Romania who worked that issue and wrote the memos and I would find myself dealing with Ed to clarify things. One of my jobs was to put little notes on top of the action memos giving an extra fillip of information or an extra aspect that I thought deserved comment to Mr. Irwin. And Ed or I would talk about it sometime when it would come up for the third or fourth time.

Q: It seems to me that Mr. Irwin was involved in a nationalization issue involving Peru. Do I remember that correctly?

WILLIAMS: Chile. This was the whole Ed Korry case and Allende, Frei and Allende. The nationalization of the Chilean copper industry and the destabilization of Chile after Allende was elected and the final coup that killed him. Mr. Irwin was involved as I recall when Ed Korry was the ambassador in Chile, writing very long and very literate cables on the politics of the copper industry there. I don't remember any specifics, I really don't, but I do remember that was a heavy consumer of his reading time and policy discussions because of what Korry was saying and what Allende's party was talking about doing or was doing, I don't remember specifically.

Q: Ok, anything else about your time there?

WILLIAMS: Well, the reason I left is Nick Veliotes who at some time just before he'd come there, had done a survey for the Department of Substantive Reporting Positions in the Foreign Service. I forget the reason he did that. He was tasked by somebody. But Nick is an extremely broad-gauged forward thinking supervisor. He said that he thought the best upcoming job for me would be a political reporting officer position in Nicosia which he had classified. It was a job reclassification study, that's what it was. He had been involved with that with a bunch of other people and had given a purview of all the substantive reporting jobs, political and economic, in the Foreign Service. He knew that one for some reason, or he remembered it for some reason and said that's the one you should do after you learn Greek. And as much as I had learned Turkish, had loved Turkey, I was enchanted with the idea of getting into Greece. I had always wanted to learn Greek and had barely learned Latin. I thought that was a very good idea. So essentially I got Nick to get Mr. Irwin to suggest to the personnel system that the staff aide James Williams should go into Greek language training and from there to the Greek language reporting position in embassy Nicosia. And that's what happened. It was wired much to the surprise and perhaps to the chagrin of David Popper who was the ambassador in Cyprus at the time. I doubt that he was consulted by Nick or Mr. Irwin on that, but he was gracious when I met him before I went out to post. He was very gracious, but it was a surprise to him. And it was a wired job; it took me many years before I understood the implications of that. I was just happy to see it happen because Nick and Mr. Irwin were going to make it happen.

Q: So after about four years in the department you spent a year doing Greek language training at the Foreign Service Institute and went to Cyprus.

WILLIAMS: That's right. The language training in those days in Greek was done by Tacchius and Aliki Soupounzious, a married couple from Athens who had been doing this then for probably 15 or 20 years. And continued for many years thereafter. They were probably put on this earth to teach Americans their language. They had phenomenal success rates in teaching Americans with all kinds of language aptitudes pretty fluent conversational Greek. Tacchius had many tricks to do that. Aliki was more literarily inclined, but they both managed to get tremendous efforts out of their students and very good results. So we had them both, Tacchius would start us with the fine points and the grammar and so on, and Aliki would bring in the literature later. But the two of them I thought were a very effective team. We had about eight or 10 people in the course, and some left after six months, some stayed for 10. I was asked at one point by the desk if I wanted to go out to Nicosia early after only six months and I said no because I was really learning the language and I thought it very important to have 10 months before I went out there.

Q: Was Ann able to do some Greek language study?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall that spouses had that option in those days. There were no spouses in the Greek course. They must have had it because I think there was a spouse in the Turkish course which was right next door to us at FSI at the time. But in the Greek course there were none, so Ann did not unfortunately get any Greek until she got out to Nicosia.

Q: In those days was there an area studies component to the language training?

WILLIAMS: There was. We met once every Tuesday afternoon I think to discuss assigned readings on Greek culture and history. It was very interesting because... I'm forgetting his name, he was chargï¿½ in Cairo... he was a Greek American from Chicago who that year was assigned to FSI and he led our discussions. Burgess, Don Burgess. Knew the Greek American scene very well having grown up in it in Chicago, but also knew a lot about the history of the culture of the old country. And it was very educational and a very useful complement to what we were learning in terms of the language. The two reinforce each other very well. It could have been done more intensively, I'm glad it wasn't because we could use the extra time depending on our preferences to either learn more vocabulary or read more history.

Q: Did you do anything in terms of area studies jointly with the Turkish language students, or was it all quite separate?

WILLIAMS: It was quite separate. There was a fair amount of rivalry between the two departments, Greeks and Turks being Greeks and Turks of course. I think it started with the teachers who were not unpleasant to each other but they were not that collegial sometimes. The students had no trouble getting along but there were no joint efforts, except I think once or twice we might have done a restaurant outing together. Oddly enough the restaurant outings or the field trips as Tacchius called them were very good ways to start getting a primitive vocabulary and some fluency because we would go to the old Astor restaurant downtown. I forget where it was but they had belly dancing some nights and they had a Greek menu and Greek speaking waiters. And we would in our best pidgin Greek order something. What we thought we were ordering we usually got. And talk about the belly dancers. And just in a very casual, relaxed way become comfortable with some of the vocabulary and the grammar. It was effective, that's all I can say.

Q: Were there others in the Greek language training who were also going to Cyprus, or were the others all going to Greece?

WILLIAMS: I was the only one going to Cyprus. In fact the job to which I was going was the only Greek language designated job in Cyprus at the time. I don't know if it was when you were there or not.

Q: I think we just had the one.

WILLIAMS: The others were going to Athens as deputy chief of station, as commercial officer, political officer and two were going to Thessaloniki as I recall. There was a USAA officer and a political officer. So it was a fairly mixed group. We didn't talk too much about Cyprus, either in Don Burgess' seminars or in the language instruction. We talked mainly about Greece and what it's like in Greece.

Q: But you went to Cyprus in what, the summer of 1973?

WILLIAMS: Summer of '73 we went there. I remember coming off the plane late at night from Frankfurt, there at the bottom were Mike Austrian who was my counterpart in the political section on the Turkish side, and Lindsay Grant the DCM and his wife Barry so it was a very nice welcome.

Q: Was David Popper still the ambassador?

WILLIAMS: No, he had moved on to Chile I think. At the time it was Bob McCloskey. He didn't stay very long because Kissinger kept pulling him back to do special things and finally pulled him back for good before he went on to Greece. When Bob would be pulled back to Washington, his wife Ann would stay in Nicosia because the girls were going to school and I think Ann, his wife, enjoyed Nicosia very much. So we saw a lot of them. In fact, we still laugh about the story that our lift van of effects from America caught hoof and mouth disease when it got to Turkey. At least that's what the Greek customs authorities said. So the ship with our lift van which had stopped in Izmir was not allowed by the Cypriot authorities to land in Famagusta because they were worried about hoof and mouth disease. And no question about it there was hoof and mouth disease in Turkey and the island of Cyprus then as now had a very fine vital sanitary record. They were not about to jeopardize it by importing some pathogen from Turkey. But the idea that a lift van would have it was a bit far fetched. In the lift van were our clothes, our son's toys. It went back to Baltimore and sat in the harbor until it could be loaded on another freighter which brought it to Cyprus not by way of a Turkish port but by other ports. So we finally got our winter clothes as I recall in the first half of December. It gets cold in Cyprus before then and so I remember borrowing Bob McCloskey's sweaters. I think Ann borrowed a few things from Ann McCloskey, other members of the community lent our son some stuff until our real things would arrive. We knew they would get there eventually but it took a long time.

Q: Okay and you were the Greek language political officer. Were you the head of the political section?

WILLIAMS: No, that was one of the unfortunate aspects of wiring the assignment the way it had been done. Mike Austrian and I were the same rank exactly. I think we'd even been promoted the same year. But he was senior at post, had been there a year or more when I got there and should have been by right the head of the section. De facto he was. I deferred to him more often than not because he knew the island and the politics and the situation much better than I did. At least the first year or so. But because we were the same rank he was not formally made Joe Lorenz's successor until the next year when he got promoted and I didn't. So then it was fairly easy to do that, but at that point we had the other problem of the Turkish invasion, the murder of Rodger Davies and so forth. So who was in charge of the political section didn't really matter. But no, Mike and I were more or less yoked to the same harness. I covered the Greek side, he the Turkish side. There was some overlap because Mike was very able and had been there a while and he covered some of the Greek side, and I had been in Turkey and spoke some Turkish so I tried to meet some of the Turkish Cypriot folks as well. But the sense of the division of labor was as it is today: one covers the Turkish Cypriot side and one the Greek Cypriot side.

Q: Your role though as the Greek language political officer was primarily with the Greek Cypriots.

WILLIAMS: Exactly. All those parties. And new parties and deputies.

Q: Was that what you did primarily? Work with politicians, members of parliament, deputies, did a lot of reporting? Was there an economic officer in the embassy as well?

WILLIAMS: Yes, economic and commercial work was done by Jay Graham. Cristalla was one of his assistants. Chris Yakabedes. And they had a small commercial library so that was a separate operation entirely. And I focused initially on the populations you mentioned to work on my Greek and to meet the people who were allegedly the movers and shakers in the Greek Cypriot community. I must say, on the Greek it was an effort because as you know Cypriots, Greek and Turkish in those days usually spoke the King's English and getting them to speak to you in Greek was a bit artificial. I had to insist in some cases. I became a bit of a pig about it because I really wanted to get my Greek under control. In some cases it worked, but most of them after a while were happy to play the game. Several contacts whom I used to see regularly were quite happy to speak Greek with me even though it was not the Greek they spoke on Cyprus of course. I spoke Athenian Greek. I frankly then and now cannot understand the Cypriot dialect. It's just too difficult and I never learned it. But they were happy to speak the Hoh Greek with me whenever I came calling. So yes, I would call the political leaders, the newspaper publishers who were often the same thing. This was in the day when EOKA led by Grivas was trying to unhorse or assassinate Makarios. They didn't care which. That was a matter of considerable interest to Washington as well as the embassy and the agency was also involved so anybody who'd get a handle of EOKA presumably was contributing to the national interest. Kikis was able to get me a meeting once with Kikos Constantino who was one of the deputies of EOKA. Very presentable guy who was very happy to speak to me in Greek and we had a very pleasant conversation in somebody's apartment about Makarios and the island and so forth. But he didn't reveal any secrets. This was my first time as a political officer, reporting officer. I was really learning my trade. And it took a little bit longer than I thought it would. I would have become a very good one if summer of '74 had gone differently.

Q: Maybe we ought to begin talking about the summer of '74. Maybe you want to first describe in general what happened and then maybe talk about to what extent this was anticipated or what sort of warnings there were and what happened in the period leading up to July of '74.

WILLIAMS: There was in effect a civil war going on in Cyprus when we got there between the government, the duly elected legitimate government of Archbishop Makarios and the EOKA-B organization led by George Grivas the hero of EOKA, and supported very clearly by the military junta that was then running Athens, the government of Greece. If you look at the reporting files which I did when I was studying Greek that year at FSI and when I got to post, if you look at the very thick files of the political section, easily most of it has to do with incident reporting. Bombs in mailboxes, bombs at police stations. Assassination attempts on country roads. There was a lot of this type of activity, designed deliberately to upset the regime of Makarios, and perhaps to stimulate some broad grassroots move to throw him out. It never succeeded. It was amateurish; it was rarely fatal although people did die when these things went off. One of my contacts was the deputy minister of agriculture who got in a car one morning and turned on the ignition and blew his legs off and died soon thereafter in the hospital. Car bombs were favored, but usually they were not fatal. The bombs at the police stations and the mailboxes and so on made more noise than anything, but they were duly reported. And so there was a lot of this stuff going on, not just in Nicosia, but all over the island. Essentially that fight on the island reflected a fight between Makarios and the Athens junta over some basic issues involving Hellenism, or the interest of the Greek world. The junta was not used to taking sass from anybody, being a bunch of military colonels essentially, one general. And Makarios as an elected president was not used to taking orders from a junta. It was a basic incompatibility of personalities and institutions. This had been going on as I recall for about two years when it culminated in the summer of '74. I don't remember exactly when Grivas was sent back to the island by the junta, or went back to the island and was supported by the junta, but it was sometime in the early '70s. There had been efforts by the junta to kill Makarios before the summer of '74. He was in a helicopter once taking off from some point in Nicosia and the helicopter came under fire. The pilot was killed, barely managed to land the helicopter, and Makarios walked away from it. When I was on the island in late '73 early '74 he was driving in his motorcade from the Pedieos to Nicosia and there was an ambush and some members of the motorcade were hit, he was not. But once again the effort had been to kill him. And there were other efforts of which we learned through intelligence sources and which thanks to very vigorous work by Ambassador Popper and others, we believe, were aborted because of our intervention. We told the Greeks we knew it and to back off, and for whatever reason they did. But after the Athens Polytechnic riots in November of '73 the Greek junta changed. The old guy who had been in charge since the coup of April '67 was thrown out, George Papadopoulos and succeeded by somebody who can best be described as a thug, Demetrius Ioannidis who was head of the Greek military police. Unlike Papadopoulos, Ioannidis was a much more secretive, remote personality who did not relish contact with foreigners and who hated Makarios apparently with a passion. So the level of violence directed by the junta against Makarios' regime ratcheted upwards significantly after Ioannidis took over. It has to be remembered that in those days the Greek government had major instruments of power on the island, first and foremost being the National Guard which is manned primarily by Greek Cypriot recruits, or draftees I forget which. But officered and commanded by people seconded from Athens from the regular Greek army. So the National Guard essentially was a Greek military arm on the island. That is indeed what the junta used to overthrow Makarios in July of '74. They also had the contingent, the LDIC under the London Zurich accords as the Turks do, but the Turks had nothing comparable to a national guard in those days. So as I recall, what happened, and this was reported by embassy Athens as well as by embassy Nicosia, the president of Greece was a former general named Gizikis who wrote Makarios a letter about things that Athens expected him to do in the interest of Hellenism and in the interest of following the dictates of the national center which is the euphemistic way that Athens described itself in those days. Athens was the national center. The phrase was the center decides and we execute. In other words we salute smartly and do whatever Athens tells us. And that was not the style of Archbishop Makarios, or indeed of many Greek Cypriots. Anyway, Makarios who was something of a high stakes gambler decided to publish the Gizikis letter, the demands, and his own reply which basically said I am an elected leader of Cypriot Hellenism and expect to be treated with more respect than you've shown me. And publishing those exchange of letters which he did in June apparently is what drove Ioannidis over the edge because the national guard launched a coup against Makarios in mid-July which was designed to kill him in the palace and seize the government. They succeeded in the second goal. They narrowly failed in the first. Makarios was able to escape through a tunnel from the presidential palace that went somewhere out back and hail a cab that took him to Paphos as I recall on the western side of the island. Took a few hours. And from there the British helicoptered him down to the sovereign base area from which he flew to London. But they did succeed in taking over the government, and the ministers of Makarios' regime were very quickly replaced with right wing types, EOKA-B types frankly most of whom I had never heard of and I think most of the people in the embassy had never heard of. They were essentially apolitical businessmen of some kind, not terribly successful, but reputable. But of a right wing persuasion considered to be sufficiently nationalist to be installed in those jobs. And the head of it all was of course the infamous Nikos Sampson who had made his bones by killing Turkish Cypriots and Greek officers and civilians during the EOKA period and the early crises of the early '60s on the island.

Q: Killed some British too I think.

WILLIAMS: He did. He assassinated (British servicemen) and I think he was caught and supposed to hang, and then it all ended when independence came. He was a thug and a murderer, but for whatever reason, one of the great mistakes that Greece ever made, they installed Sampson as the president. This was the red flag that brought the Turks in. In that brief period between the coup and the Turkish invasion or peace operation as Ankara likes to call it, Mike Austrian and I did our best to remeet some of our contacts at the foreign ministry who were on the America desk and Costa Spilavakes was one and there were a couple of others. We went by the foreign ministry just to see if they were alive because they were doing a horrible amount of shooting downtown. I remember driving to the foreign ministry over a road that was literally covered with casings of bullets that had been fired by I guess the National Guard or the defenders, Greek Cypriot defenders against the national guard a day or two before. And we were very happy to find our contacts alive and well in the foreign ministry. Doing nothing because they didn't know what their status was, but they were there and so we saw them. We were later chastised by Lindsay for that, he was the DCM at the time, for doing something that conveyed recognition of the regime that we had not yet decided to recognize. That had not been our thought when we went to see these folks, so we were never chastised by Washington and the recognition issue was mooted by the Turkish invasion and the collapse of the junta installed government of Sampson.

Q: Wasn't there some contact either by the chargï¿½ or maybe by you with the foreign minister in this five day period or so, who I think was the brother of ambassador of Nicos Dimitriou.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, it was Dimis Dimitriou. I think Rodger Davies had become ambassador just a few days earlier. He had arrived I think in early July just in time for the July Fourth reception at that old building we used to use. We had a lovely garden reception for him on July Fourth. But he had just arrived, just off the plane. And the foreign minister was Dimis Dimitriou, the brother of the ambassador in Washington, and I forget if he called Ambassador Davies or Davies called him, but there was a contact. A pragmatic one. I don't recall what the agenda was. It may have involved the issue of recognition. I just don't remember.

Q: But we certainly didn't consider that it was in fact recognition at all.

WILLIAMS: No. Nor did Mike and I consider that calling on people who had been in a shot up building raised the recognition issue. It was not really on our radar. One that I did on my own that I was never reprimanded for or praised for either, I tried to meet some of these new ministers and their deputies in the week of calm. And surprisingly enough I was able to talk to several of them. They were uniformly men of course. Modest business backgrounds. Had some education. All violent opponents of Makarios. Not people you would call crazies, but they certainly weren't people you would call ministers either. They just were put in these jobs by the National Guard or the EOKA-B gang on the island. And they all disappeared as far as I know without prejudice after the violence that followed, maybe they fled the island because they certainly didn't have much future on the Greek Cypriot side after all that happened.

Q: You mentioned you had had some contact with Sampson during the period that the embassy was curious about EOKA-B. Did you see him in the subsequent period, or...?

WILLIAMS: No, after the Greek coup I never saw Sampson again. Earlier, I used to call on him fairly regularly. He was at the time the publisher of Mahi which was the Fox journalism if you will of Greek Cyprus at the time. It wasn't the most right wing, but it was sensationalist. He was one of my regular contacts, just as Nikos Koschish put out Agon, another right wing paper. There were lots of right wing papers on the island, all of which more or less opposed Makarios' policy. Makarios as a person, but not necessarily all of his policies. Sampson would usually be sitting at a huge desk when you went into his office with shelves that were lined with newspapers and magazines and books. I doubt he'd read many of them. But quite often, and I'm not joking, he would be looking at the centerfold of a Playboy magazine when you came in. I don't know if this was for my benefit as an American diplomat, or if that was his standard reading material. But he was totally unembarrassed about it, put it to the side, and then would talk rather freely about how he saw the political development within the Greek Cypriot community, or within Cyprus. All my contacts with Sampson were before the coup of July of '74 and none of them discussed the possibility of a coup nor of his involvement in it, so I was somewhat surprised when he was installed in that job. Even in the privacy of his office his hatred of Turkish Cypriots and his extreme Greek nationalism was quite manifest as it was in his speeches on the floor of the house which I used to listen to. Interestingly about Sampson is he had no formal education, poor fellow died a couple years ago, and his pronunciation of Greek would often be corrected by other Greeks in the house chamber, Savavache who would correct his emphasis or his choice of wording. So their contempt for his education was fairly clear.

Q: It was probably good Greek language practice for you to go to the debates and hear that discussion and recognize different dialects.

WILLIAMS: It was eye opening and totally uncompromising. The Greek Cypriots when they're speaking Greek for the record, as on the floor of the House, used in those days a fairly florid form of the language. Katharevousa only begins to capture what it was. It was tough going for somebody who'd had only 10 months at that point of training and had been on the island for about a year. You could eventually pick it up, but it was by no means simple, as easy to follow as the Greek that's now used in Greece. I think too in Cyprus, although I don't know how the minutes of the house were recorded.

Q: To what extent were you following, this is the period well before the coup in July. To what extent were you following the dialogue that was taking place between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities?

WILLIAMS: Very closely. Both Mike and I followed that as did the embassy. We would meet regularly with the UN (United Nations) Secretary General's special representative that was Osorio Tafafl for a long while and then it was somebody else. Usually Latin American diplomats with various supporting cast in the UN office and we would talk with the interlocutors Grays and Degtosh were their deputies, fairly regularly. All of us did. That was one of the main substantive focuses of the embassy's efforts in those years. The dialogue, what it was doing, when it would resume, why it would quit, getting the dialogue going, discussing the content of it was a big part of what we did.

Q: Did you have the sense that they had made considerable progress in the period shortly before the coup, or do you remember much about the status at that point?

WILLIAMS: I don't remember the details, but my sense is they had made considerable progress on a lot of the technical issues of government before the coup. It appeared that before my arrival on the island they had covered a lot of the ground in a very productive way. A lot of issues involving local government, the villages, labors, and the responses the federal government had been I thought concluded successfully.

Q: One of the issues about this period when you were there that comes up occasionally is whether the United States had clear warning of the plotting that was going on to stage a coup d'etat and whether we chose perhaps not to do anything about it. And I've heard the suggestion fairly recently that the embassy in Athens didn't want to act on these warnings for various reasons including crying wolf too often. There had been a lot of talk in the air for a long period of time why at that time say in June or early July of '74 it didn't seem to them that much more imminent than any other time. And that the embassy in Nicosia was kind of comfortable with that posture at least in part because there was a feeling that if there was going to be a coup the most logical time I think was projected to be September of '74 when there would be a normal rotation of the Greek officers of the Cyprus national guard and that if that would be kind of a time when they could perhaps kick the old cadre and bring new people at the same time and they would have a considerably greater strength. Do you remember anything about all of that that makes any sense particularly?

WILLIAMS: I'm sure speculation of something like the troop rotation period was in our reporting both with the guard on the Turkish side which also rotated troops as well as with the Greek side. It's quite possible, although I don't remember it now, that we did predict that September would be a more likely time for a coup because of the rotation of the Greek contingent of that time. But all of what was happening in early '74 came against the background of several years of violence and sometimes alarmist reporting by embassy Nicosia about what had happened, what EOKA-B had done, what Grivas had done. It may well be that the cumulative effect of that was to make it more difficult for the policy makers to see what was really changing, what had really changed with the departure of Papadopoulos and the advent of Ioannidis. I don't recall a significant ratcheting up of the violence. I can't recall the episodes post-November of '73, but in retrospect it's very clear that there was a shift to a harder line in Athens and therefore on the part of the National Guard and the EOKA-B on the island after Ioannidis took over. I can't say for sure whether we yelled wolf too much or not. I do know there was some ominous comments. Every time you sent one of these cables in that reported a police station or a mailbox had been blown up you'd have a final paragraph as a comment, this is a typical reporting officer's trick, and there were only so many comments you can make on this type of stuff. After a period of time the reader's eyes begin to glaze over. I think for a while that if you look at the chron files of Nicosia, go into the office of southern European affairs and took at the chron files of Nicosia versus the chron files of Athens, Nicosia's chron files were surprisingly larger in some respects in that period because of all this incidental reporting which in retrospect may not have contributed too much to the overall understanding in Washington of what was going on in the island, this chaff. I know there was a strong sense that our Ambassador Tasca in Athens was reluctant to get involved more with General Ioannidis than he already did, partly because of Ioannidis' position. He was in the background with his formal title of chief of military intelligence and Tasca was perhaps apocryphally saying I don't deal with cops, but for whatever reason there was this reluctance. And there was no smoking gun that I know of, or heard about, suggesting a coup was imminent until it really happened. We were so used to this constant peppering of violence by EOKA-B and so we didn't anticipate something big was coming until it really happened. I don't recall anybody predicting that in a timely way.

Q: You don't remember embassy Nicosia pressing hard in that particular period that something needed to be done?

WILLIAMS: I'm sure we pressed. I can't remember the specifics but I'm sure we pressed and when Rodger got there we probably continued pressing to have Washington lean harder on Greece to knock it off, because as far as we were concerned the only way to turn off greater violence was to persuade the junta in Athens to step down or step back. There was nothing we could do to Makarios that would reduce the scenario of great violence on the island. We certainly weren't going to counsel him to capitulate to what the junta was asking, and he didn't have in his own power the capability to turn it off. Athens did. And we always felt that, and I know we made recommendations, there was one notable cable that went out soon after Rodger got there making this comment that we really need to get Athens to step back or call off the dogs or tone it down, words to that effect. We didn't know what we were asking for concretely except that the tensions were getting a little higher. This was after the publication by Makarios of those letters which I remember using the phrase Makarios was challenging the self-esteem of Gizikis and by extension of Ioannidis by slapping them in the face by the publication of these letters. And to do that to assail the honor of these people that way, especially military people, is high stakes poker.

Q: And to do it publicly.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. That was gratuitous. But that was Makarios. He felt very strongly and...

Q: Did you meet with Makarios yourself?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Not privately of course. I only met him with a larger group twice. Once was when Rodger Davies presented credentials. I was introduced to him and I said in my best Katharevousa Greek, "Calimera makadiotata," which means good day your beatitude. And he'd been chatting in English with the American staff up till then. Rodger introduced us seriatim and I was about the fifth or sixth and he brightened and smiled and said, "Calimerasas". I saw him one other time at a ladies' function as I recall where I was just there as an observer. My wife was with a ladies' group and they were doing something and he was going down and talking to the ladies. He liked ladies as is well known, and he was as well known truly charismatic. There was something about his personality; he had the eyes, just the smarts that made him quite special.

Q: There were certainly times during the 1960s particularly where American officials were a little tired of Makarios and thought he was going to be the Cuba of the Mediterranean and so on. At the time, the first year you were there, the embassy got along well with him and whatever attitude changed somewhat would you say? That had existed previously.

WILLIAMS: I never saw any of that attitude at the embassy in Nicosia. I remember it though, as I said earlier, the phrase Red Mack. He was perceived by some quarters as the Castro of the Mediterranean who dallied with socialists and third world types and Bandung countries and all that. And all of that's true, but he was also a genuine nationalist and leader of his people and took that role very, very seriously. I think the proposals that were made by us in the sixties to solve the Cyprus crisis, one of them involved moving the Greek Cypriots to the island of Chios or Samos as I recall. Totally misunderstood the nature of Hellenism and of Cypriot Hellenism in particular. There's just no way you can uproot a people that's been there millennia and make them feel happy. It was a total nonstarter. We had good will. We wanted to solve the problem as we saw which was a problem between our two NATO allies to keep them from going at each other's throats, but some of those proposals in retrospect were not fully baked. I was not there when Popper was there, but I read the chron file including the notice with what I know of McCloskey who was there off and on for his eight month tenure, with Lindsay when he was chargï¿½, with Rodger Davies and his very brief tenure, the relations with Makarios and his government were very cordial. There was no badmouthing of the archbishop, will somebody rid me of this priest. There was none of that stuff in the country team or anywhere else. Perhaps that spirit had burned itself out.

Q: What of the themes of EOKA-B as it had been of EOKA in the fifties was of course enosis, the union of Cyprus with Greece. To what extent was that generally still supported in the Greek Cypriot political establishment that you had contact with?

WILLIAMS: Again, pre-July '74 there was profound support among many Greek Cypriots for enosis. It went far beyond the graffiti. When I was there all the walls were whitewashed and all the whitewash was defaced with usually blue slogans saying "Enosisi Monelisis", enosis the only solution. All these enosis Greek Cyprus slogans were all over. Now a small group of people could do that and no doubt did. But most of the Greek Cypriots that I talked to, former supreme court justice Fasiliades, Nikos Sampson, Cochis, even Clerides, if you asked them what they really wanted they would all say their first choice is enosis. And the realism would come when you'd say well what's really feasible here, and people like Clerides would say in those days, well we couldn't get it in London or Zurich and even though that's still our desire, this is also the public line of Makarios, we have to make this solution work. The London-Zurich solution which created the independence of the Republic of Cyprus. The answer to that from the right, and it was deeply felt, was that's a corrupt solution, unacceptable, a disgrace to Hellenism, and wrong. And the church was profoundly of that view, unanimously almost as far as I know it was unanimous. And almost all the center and right wing politicians I dealt with. AKEL the communist party was happy with the solution as it was. It was definitely not enosis in its rhetoric back then, but nobody, even AKEL as I recall in those days, would oppose enosis head on. It was an icon, a sacred thing for which people had sacrificed blood and treasure very recently. It was just something you didn't attack. But the commitment to it emotionally was real and profound, I thought. And the fear of it by the Turkish Cypriots was no less real and profound.

Q: Why don't we stop here Jim and pick up and finish more on Cyprus the next time.

We were in the middle of your assignment as political officer in Nicosia. You had had Greek language training before going to Cyprus, and that was a period from '73 to '75, and I think about the part we left off was the coup that took place against Archbishop Makarios on the 15th of July, 1974, a little over 30 years ago. So do you want to pick up from there?

WILLIAMS: As I recall it was early on a Monday morning when we had gathered for our daily staff meeting to go over what the local press was saying about us, about each other, about the Cyprus problem. We heard loud noises coming from the direction of the presidential palace downtown which was across the road from the foreign ministry. We quickly concluded things were seriously amiss down there and shortly had confirmation that a coup by the National Guard was underway. Needless to say we terminated our staff meeting and sent the first of several immediate messages back to Washington alerting the department and others to the fact that a coup was underway. We had followed for some time, and reported on, the growing tensions between the archbishop, President Makarios, and the Greek junta in Athens. It was essentially a civil war that started within the Greek community, within the community of Hellenism I should say between the demands of the Greek junta and the unwillingness of the democratically elected leader of the Cypriot people to knuckle under to the increasing demands from Athens. We had reported rather grimly the week before when Makarios sent his letter to President Phaedon Gizikis of Greece and essentially threw down the gauntlet saying he was a democratically elected of a historic people on the island of Cyprus and was not going to be treated like a satrap of a junta. Publishing that letter added insult to injury and we predicted at the time that would lead to further escalation of the already tense relations between Athens and Nicosia. Indeed it did.

Q: How much evidence did you have right away of the Greek army officers on the island of Cyprus involved with this, in support of this coup?

WILLIAMS: At the time, and to some extent that may still apply today, but certainly at that time, the national guard was officered entirely by officers sent from Athens and the commandant was seconded from the Greek army. So it was inconceivable that any significant unit of the National Guard could do anything, certainly like attacking the presidential palace, without the active leadership of the Greek officers from Athens. So once we concluded that the National Guard was involved in the attack on the presidential palace it was quite clear that this was the Athens junta at work through its officer corps on the island. As I recall the Greek brigade was also involved, the one that was stationed in under the London-Zurich agreements. I think the radio changed hands fairly quickly that morning, but within a few hours we had confirmation on the radio that the National Guard had liberated the island from Archbishop Makarios. A claim that was wildly inflated.

Q: There was a man named Nikos Sampson who I think you mentioned before who turned out to be the nominal leader of the coup makers. Did that become evident right away?

WILLIAMS: I think it was not until that evening, and my memory on the hours is a bit fuzzy, but I think it was that evening, maybe even the next morning that Sampson was installed on Cyprus in front of Cyprus TV cameras as the president of Cyprus. I had known Sampson in the course of my political reporting duties in the first year that I was on the island. He was at the time a publisher of a rather sensationalist rag called Mahi which in Greek means "The Battle". He had been a hero of the EOKA struggle who had distinguished himself by shooting British military and civilians in the back as I recall, and by also doing things against Turkish Cypriots. So he was a proven thug with a violent past, no particular education, I don't know where his money came from to buy Mahi, but it didn't take much to buy a newspaper on Cyprus in those days. But because of his reputation as a fierce Greek Cypriot nationalist, leader of the EOKA movement and someone who had boasted of what he had done against Turkish Cypriots in those earlier struggles installing Nikos Sampson as the president of Cyprus was very much like waving a red flag in front of the Turkish bull.

Q: And what happened to Archbishop Makarios in this initial period, and to what extent did you and the embassy have contact with him?

WILLIAMS: Well we had no contact with the archbishop that week, those first days I should say. Ambassador Davies had seen the archbishop I believe in the preceding week. He had only recently presented his credentials and I don't think he had more than one other meeting with the archbishop before the coup occurred on 15 July. What happened to the archbishop was he was a workaholic as always. He had come down from his mountain retreat in the Troodos and was hard at work in the presidential palace that morning. I think he was receiving a delegation of boy scouts or scouts of some kind, and when the shooting started he hustled them out of the palace and they were able to get out unscathed. Then as the palace took heavier and heavier fire he was able to doff some of his garments of office and walk out of the palace through a trench in the back that got him and an aide off the property. They hailed a cab and were taken to Paphos as I recall, which then was only about three hours drive from Nicosia. And in Paphos they somehow established contact with the British who flew the archbishop and his companion or companions down to Akrotiri I guess where he was safe.

Q: Now you mentioned the Turkish Cypriots in terms of their reaction to what was transpiring. Did you have contact with them, the embassy did, or what were they doing?

WILLIAMS: The Turkish Cypriots were not involved, at least directly, in the ongoing struggle within the ranks of Cypriot Hellenism as we called it as between the Greek junta and Archbishop Makarios and the Greek Cypriot community. We had very good contacts and coverage through Mike Austrian my colleague who was the Turkish language officer. Very active, very well-connected. I had a few contacts, but I was the Greek language officer and pretty busy on the Greek side. Mike was in touch through his embassy locals who worked in the office out of northern Nicosia. By crossing the green line himself several times in those first days he was able to stay in touch with the Turkish Cypriots just to ascertain what they were doing, what their reaction was. Essentially they were hunkering down, fearing the worst because it was a very violent struggle with artillery, tracer bullets, this and that. But they were not taking part in the fighting, nor were they, in Nicosia at least, the target of any Greek or Greek Cypriot hostilities as far as I recall.

Q: You mentioned you were very busy on the Greek side. What sorts of things were you doing in terms of contacts? Were you in touch with Sampson and his people, or dealing with the Makarios government? What could you do?

WILLIAMS: When Makarios fled, first of all the junta tried to kill him, there was no question they tried to kill him. The presidential palace was reduced to a flaming ruin within a few hours of the frontal assault by the forces of the national guard. But unfortunately, for the junta at least, it was not a complete assault because they left the back escape hatch open and Makarios was able to escape. We really had no contact with him.

Q: Do you think that was intentional that they allowed him to get out?

WILLIAMS: I've heard that speculation. I've never believed it. I think it would have been much easier to kill him because they hated him so much. And as it was, if they had let him go deliberately they should have known they were going to create a martyr situation for themselves and a rallying point against them which is what happened.

Q: So it may have been a matter of inefficiency, just not total coverage?

WILLIAMS: I think it was inefficiency. He was quick, he was very agile, and he was very lucky. He had more than nine lives I think. Makarios had tremendous luck and by chance found a cab that was willing to take him to Paphos as he came out of the escape hatch behind the palace. I have to say I never saw that trench or that escape hatch. I didn't even know it was there because that was not something of which I would have been aware normally. But obviously he did. So as I say I think the junta definitely tried to kill him. Once Makarios was gone, the junta initially announced over the radio that he was dead, "Makarios ina necrosa," I remember that rhythmic announcement every hour on the hour for a day and a half or so, until it was conclusively proven by his own broadcast either from Paphos or Akrotiri, it must have been from Paphos, that he was not dead. And then they had to retract that statement, but they had then deposed his government. The ministers stopped coming to the office, but the bureaucracy stayed in place. So essentially my contacts in the foreign office and elsewhere remained. Some of them went to work and I saw some of them. Just as a humorous aside I should say the question of recognition of this Sampson government didn't really arise immediately from Washington. It was a very short-lived government in any case. I don't know what Washington was doing, but for us, for me and for Mike Austrian, my colleague, the issue was we had a bunch of contacts below the political level which had fled; the contacts were still in place, so why not see them. And Mike and I went down to see a colleague of ours in the foreign ministry, Costas Pilovakios who had been the regular career diplomat in charge of the so-called Cyprus problem in dealing with western diplomats. We simply went down to see Costas and I remember walking over the thousands and thousands of shell casings that the national guard had expended in shooting its way through the gates of the presidential palace and around the foreign ministry which had been heavily fortified by Makarios defenders. In any case, walking over with our shell casings, seeing the pock marks in the foreign ministry building, I think the presidential palace was still smoldering, but Costas Pilovakios was there in his office sipping coffee and looking very normal. So we went in for a chat just to tell him we were glad he was ok, to discuss what had happened from his perspective. Then we went back and we were roughly chastised by the deputy chief of mission, Lindsay Grant, who thought we had committed a grievous sin of implicitly conveying recognition of the new government by talking to Costas. To be fair, Lindsay had a point; he was a China hand with a deep background in the nuances of recognition and non-recognition policy. And we had received no authorization from the embassy or Lindsay or certainly not from Washington to talk to Costas. But we took the chastisement to heart and did not see Costas again until as I recall the Sampson government was deposed, or quit.

Q: Did the embassy either Ambassador Davies or the DCM Lindsay Grant or you or Mike Austrian have contact with the new ministers? The Sampson appointed cabinet?

WILLIAMS: The ministers were announced very quickly after Sampson was installed in that ceremony on TV over which one of the defrocked bishops had presided, Bishop Chitian I believe. That's another story. The ministers were essentially unknown figures to us. We had no contact with them, certainly not at the political level. Many of them came out of the EOKA two movement which had been the sympathizers of the EOKA two movement. Many of them were businessmen. I don't recall they'd ever been to a July Fourth party or any other large function. And again in the absence of instructions or any counter-instructions, I set about to meet some of these folks in the next few days by calling on them in their office. Their offices were basically their private sector offices. They hadn't moved into the ministries yet. They hadn't taken charge of anything although they had been announced. As I say they seemed to be mainly from the private sector, businessmen of some kind. Fierce nationalists, Greek nationalists. EOKA enosis types. Hated Makarios. I'm not sure that their ties with Sampson were that close, but like him they had been installed by the junta for reasons that I never got into. So as far as I know the only contact, aside from possible contacts the agency might have had with its considerable assets in the south and the Greek Cypriot community, the only contact was the so-called ministers of the short lived Sampson government was me, essentially through courtesy calls on them in their office in the latter days of the week of July 15th.

Q: One of he ministers was as I recall the brother of the Cyprus ambassador to the United States.

WILLIAMS: Dimitriou. Let me amend what I said. He was in touch with his brother; it was Nicos Dimitriou and Dimis Dimitriou. I think Dimis was the minister wasn't he?

Q: Yes, and Nicos was the ambassador in Washington.

WILLIAMS: And through his brother, Dimis established contact with various levels in the State Department and I also think he talked directly with Ambassador Davies as the foreign minister. We had known Dimis Dimitriou. I had not, but he had been on our A-list I guess because of his status as a member of the Dimitriou family and a businessman. We were in touch with him. But the other ministers, at least the ones I met, have been ciphers before.

Q: Did you have any particular impressions of the ones that you called on?

WILLIAMS: No, just that they were professionals, young, strong nationalists. I had no sense of any great managerial ability or any sense of being members of a team. They had just been put into this job or had assumed this job after the coup and frankly seemed a little bit at loss how to make the best of it. Because as I say I did not call on any of them in the government offices but rather in their homes or at their private offices.

Q: When you say EOKA two is that the same thing as EOKA-B?

WILLIAMS: It is EOKA-B and I misspoke. It's EOKA-Beta, the second generation of the EOKA movement that Grivas founded and then...

Q: Do you want to say anything more about the role of the church in all of this, particularly in this period? Makarios was gone; he was the leader of the Church of Cyprus as well as the president of Cyprus.

WILLIAMS: He was the elected leader, the ethnarch of the Church of Cyprus, elected back in 1950 or '51 as I recall, and then subsequently elected several times to be president of the new Republic of Cyprus. A democratic sanctioned leader, definitely charismatic, highly intelligent, extremely lucky, sometimes a bit too clever perhaps. But he definitely controlled the Church of Cyprus. When I came to Cyprus in 1973, the church was in the middle of a schism. A number of the more conservative bishops had either been suborned by or become true believers in the role of Athens as the leader of Hellenism and they were trying to topple Makarios from his position as leader of the church. They convened a synod which under the rules of the Greek Orthodox Church they were able to do, and defrocked Makarios. This happened in the first half of '73 as I recall, before I got there. Makarios, not to be outdone, convened his own synod under the same rules and defrocked the three archbishops. These were Bishop Anthemos of Kition, Bishop Kyprianos of Kyrenia, and Bishop Gennadios of Paphos. Essentially he outmaneuvered these guys using their own rules, which were his rules. He was a member of the same church, and he had the better of it. It was quite a test of my FSI taught Greek to go through essentially ecclesiastical legalese and these documents where one side excommunicated the other. It was very clear, but I needed a lot of help to get through the translation. But the Greek Cypriot Orthodox church was clearly in the hands of Makarios after this happened. These three defrocked bishops remained defrocked, they had some local following, but no significant following among the archimandrites and abbots and others who led the church. Makarios ran the church as he ran the government, very effectively, and tolerated no opposition, certainly not opposition from leaders who were actually doing the work of the junta in Athens. So I don't recall what those defrocked bishops said if anything at the time of the coup. Certainly they would have had to welcome it since this was the national center by their lights acting against an archbishop whom they had tried to defrock. And I don't recall anything that the leaders of the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church said in support of Makarios, but probably there were expressions from the pulpit and elsewhere since he had tremendous support among the Greek Cypriot people.

Q: Want to say anything at this point in this coup period from July 15th? Succeeding few days, about the American community, about your families, about the embassy, to the extent you were involved with things related to that?

WILLIAMS: Naturally we were all concerned because for several days in Nicosia and elsewhere on the island there was active fighting. We used to watch the tracer bullets at night from the balcony of our apartment which was just a few blocks from the embassy. We certainly took precautions by advising people to stay inside, curtail their outside activities, and just to keep their heads down. I think we only had one casualty in the American community and that was accidental, where a piece of shrapnel from one of those missiles I guess wounded a young girl in the leg or the chest. It was not a life-threatening injury, but it was a serious one, and she was taken care of in the Nicosia hospital and then sent down to Akrotiri where the British had better facilities and also a more secure location. We were of course concerned for our families, but in the time before the Turkish intervention I don't recall that any of the families left the island although we certainly realized that was a real prospect that grew more imminent each day.

Q: The Turkish invasion took place on the 20th of July but presumably in the days before that there was fear that that was going to happen. Well-founded fear. Do you want to talk anything about that as far as you were involved? I know the State Department was doing various things, but I don't know to what extent you were involved on the island.

WILLIAMS: We were increasingly concerned with the installation of Sampson as the president of Cyprus by the Athens junta through the idea that the Turkish government would have to respond militarily to what it viewed as such a provocation. I think we said that in a number of cables back to Washington trying to lay it out that we had to really pull out all the stops to try to stop the Turkish invasion from happening. Joe Sisco was engaged actively in trying to do that as was the Secretary of State. Tom Boyatt said at one point, he may have said it to me in fact in the years nearly after this, that the embassy had not made a strong enough case in Washington with its cables to help him fight the fight in Washington. And he may be right. I can't recall what those cables said.

Q: Was that before the coup, or between the coup and the invasion?

WILLIAMS: No, I think it was the whole thing but it was also before the coup and after the coup before the invasion and then before the second phase too. I think Tom felt, and he was the very embattled and very diligent country director of Cyprus at the time, he just felt he had not gotten at critical times enough ammunition from the embassy. And I respect his point of view. I can't say whether it was right or wrong because I didn't have the Washington perspective at the time. We were trying to keep tabs on a lot of things. We talked about the concern for the families, the growing indications of a Turkish invasion, preparations by the junta and its national guard to defend against that invasion, and we wanted to make sure that Americans were hunkered down and not caught in the middle.

Q: To what extent in those few days between the coup and the invasion were there incidents of violence by Greek Cypriots directed at Turkish Cypriots? And to what extent did you know about that at the time?

WILLIAMS: There were a lot of rumors going around as always happens in Cyprus and the media and the press on both sides in both communities tended to fan those flames of depredations by the Greek Cypriots and Greeks against the Turkish Cypriot side and to some extent vice versa. I do not recall hearing of a specific case during that week. I do recall hearing after all this happened in the summer of '74 that the National Guard units outside of Nicosia had encircled several Turkish Cypriot enclaves. At the time, of course, the Turkish Cypriots were not concentrated in the northern part of the island as they are now. They were scattered in enclaves all over the island in the large cities such as Famagusta, Morphou, Paphos, Nicosia, Larnaca and so forth. Some of those had enclaves as they were called had been hotbeds of resistance by the Turkish fighters, the TMT and other groups, during the earlier phases of the Cyprus struggle. The Cyprus problem. And some of those areas were, according to several reports I heard, from pretty good sources, encircled by the National Guard in that first week. That would have been a prudential step to take by any armed force under the circumstances, even though the Turkish Cypriots had not been involved in the coup. Given the past history on the island of military fighting between the two communities that would have been a prudential step to take. Whether or not the National Guard went further than that, I do not know. I never heard of such a case.

Q: And you don't recall knowing about it during that period from the fifteenth of July till the twentieth.

WILLIAMS: Not at all. My attention was elsewhere. I don't recall that Mike Austrian who covered that community as well as anybody on the island, reported it. I just don't remember.

Q: Anything else you want to recall about that period of the coup as opposed to the Turkish invasion? Those five days or so, week.

WILLIAMS: Well, it was a wild and I have to say exciting time. As a young diplomat I had never been involved in a coup before, or at least been spectator of a coup. I certainly wasn't involved in it. And I found reporting on it and moving around as we were able to do quite freely in Nicosia to be exhilarating. In retrospect some of that movement was probably a little foolhardy. It certainly was riskier than at the time I was willing to accept. But it was an exhilarating time and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Q: The United Nations peacekeeping force was on the island, I'm wondering to what extent you had contact with them, you and representatives, other diplomats, or was that pretty much done by the ambassador and DCM?

WILLIAMS: Well we all did. UNFICYP as it was called, the UN forces in Cyprus, was blanketed by the embassies of America, Britain, a few others as well. I had regular contacts in the UNFICYP civilian side. Our defense attachï¿½ knew their military side. The ambassador and DCM knew the special representative of the secretary general who at the time I think was Osorio Tafall. It may have been somebody else. But one of the representatives was in contact with our ambassador. But UNFICYP had no mandate to intervene in this kind of situation, and studiously and successfully tried to avoid having its units which were deployed all over the island get involved in any of the fighting.

Q: Were you involved to any considerable extent with the British?

WILLIAMS: I had regular contacts with the British high commission, yes, not the SPAs or others. From the first day I got there it was clear to me and I'd been so advised by others that the British high commission knew more about what was going on in the island than probably anybody. My counterpart initially was David Beattie who went on to a very distinguished career in the British foreign service. He had been a classicist at Oxford or Cambridge, understood the Greeks, the Greek Cypriots, the British role in Cyprus, and was a wonderful source of information and support for me as I was getting my legs on the ground that first year. I also was a personal and professional colleague with Derek Day who also had a very distinguished career. Derek was the deputy high commissioner of the British high commission. So we were in close touch with them as to what was going on, what might happen, what we could do to head off a Turkish military response to the Greek coup of July 15th.

Q: Well that response came on the 20th of July, five days or so later. What do you remember about that from your perspective?

WILLIAMS: I remember it vividly. At the time, I was living and working in my office which was part of the complex that also contained the ambassador's residence. Our families had not yet been evacuated, my family, my wife Ann was pregnant at the time and threatening to miscarry. She was confined to bed at home. I was in constant touch with my family by phone, by walkie talkie and by walking down to see them. But most of my waking time and all of my sleeping time I spent those last few days in my office. And around 4:30 that morning of July 20, before first light, I got a call from Derek Day, the British deputy high commissioner who told me that Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit had just informed the British as co-guarantors of the London-Zurich Accords that the Turkish government was going to send a military force to Cyprus to undo what the Greek junta had done on July 15. It was quite clear and Derek's message did not require elaboration. The Turks were on the way is what it said. And when first light came about thirty minutes later the planes started coming overhead, we saw paratroops dropping, we heard antiaircraft fire, and we knew that the invasion was underway. We got our telegram message out soon after that phone call. Of course I informed the ambassador. We stayed of course in very close touch with the British embassy by phone because it was not safe to go out while the fighting was going on. I remember seeing all those parachutes coming down; it was like watching butterflies descend. Quite surreal. I'd never seen something like that before. Once in a while you'd see a parachute collapse and its occupant fall like a stone to the ground and you knew what had happened, but again it was just as if I was detached from it, watching it on a large, wide-angle screen.

Q: Was that particularly happening on the north side of Nicosia, the Turkish border?

WILLIAMS: The Turkish enclave of Nicosia was in the north and it sort of went up like a triangle toward the Kyrenia range, extended into the Kyrenia range as I recall, blocking the then only road over the Kyrenia range. One of the first concerns of the Turkish military was to strengthen the Turkish Cypriot presence, military capability in that enclave. So they paradropped a number of folks in while they were in the process of establishing a beach head on the northern shore at Kyrenia which was sort of due north from Nicosia. Needless to say, when that happened the fighting started early that morning, went on for several days. We had a number of people at our FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) station with their families who were caught smack dab in the middle on the north coast, west of Kyrenia as I recall. They were either at Karavas in their houses up on the beach in their beach houses. By the grace of God they all survived. Scared to death in many cases, especially the children. We were able to get them out during one of the ceasefires or lulls in fighting under UN convoy in the next few days. But it was a harrowing time for them and for those of us who knew about them in Nicosia.

Q: They were taken from Karavas to Nicosia or to an airport to fly out or how did...?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall how they immediately went. We got them down first to Nicosia and made sure they were alright and put them in some kind of housing. Of course we had plenty of room for them in various houses. I think most of them were evacuated as soon as it was practical to do so. Probably from Akrotiri.

Q: Why don't we talk for a minute just about the evacuation. Your family went then too. How soon after July 20th was that possible?

WILLIAMS: The fighting essentially was over in the north about the 23rd or 24th as I recall. Since we had profound reasons to believe that was simply a lull, that it would break out again any time, we decided to conduct a general evacuation. I think it was ordered from Washington, I don't recall specifically. There were Americans all over the island, but essentially most of them were in Nicosia. By this point, late that first week of the invasion, we had gathered many of them in Nicosia from the northern shore. There were retired Americans up there. Most of the Americans up north were not hurt as I recall, just scared out of their wits and we got them all down to Nicosia. At the same time we gathered Americans from elsewhere, archaeologists who were working in Kyrenia or elsewhere, their families. And we organized what I would describe in a letter to Dana Davies as a wagon train of cars and various vehicles that gathered at the American embassy on the 24th, 25th I don't remember exactly, of July. With UN escort the convoy drove down on the old road to Akrotiri from which they were going to be taken off to the waiting U.S. ships offshore and evacuated. That went very smoothly. As I say the fighting had stopped at least over Nicosia by this point. The Americans were not harassed; the Greek Cypriots still reeling from the shock of what had happened had not focused on the Americans or the foreigners. Primarily Americans, but also some other foreigners were in that convoy. But the Greek Cypriots were benign or indifferent. They had their own concerns. Many evacuees said they spent a miserable night on a sandfly-infested beach in Akrotiri before they got on the offshore vessel, but that was a small price to pay. My wife and son did not evacuate because of Ann's medical condition. As I said earlier she was about to miscarry, her gynecologist or obstetrician made the case quite convincingly that she was certainly going to miscarry if she was subjected to the rigors of a rough trip down to Akrotiri and staying on the beach. So with great reluctance Ambassador Davies agreed that Ann and Ben could stay behind, but on condition that they move into the residence where his staff could better take care of them. He just did not want to have them staying in the house we had after the evacuation occurred.

Q: The ambassador's residence then and later was essentially an apartment above the offices, but above the chancery, in the compound.

WILLIAMS: Within the compound, within the secure perimeter. Ann and Ben, who was four at the time, moved in. They had a nice little guest room in the residence. I was able to go see them every so often because I could walk up the stairs or take the elevator up. The elevator was kind of cranky, sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. I was young and able to take the stairs pretty quickly, it was about a five floor walkup as I recall. It was a big adventure for Ben. He was a four year old and he brought his bow and arrow with him and he was shooting at the planes that flew over, and for him it was a great adventure. Ann was confined to bed largely because of her medical condition, and was not happy about having to leave her house and her maid and all her stuff, but she recognized the wisdom of Rodger's decision and her own potential vulnerability in the house.

Q: She was essentially the only American family member that stayed, or were there a few others?

WILLIAMS: There may have been others. I think everybody else's family in the embassy at least, of the official community left by the time that convoy went south. Some may have gone before. But I think Ann and Ben were virtually the only members of that community who stayed behind after July 24.

Q: Anything else about the evacuation of the others? Were you involved with that or did the administrative officer handle it pretty much?

WILLIAMS: The others in the embassy, particularly the administrative officer, I guess that was Eddie Edwards, handled the logistics. Red Jessup the defense and army attachï¿½ handled the liaison with UNFICYP and with the Greek National Guard. Red had very good contacts throughout the military establishment of Cyprus. Turkish, Greek, Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, so forth. So others in the embassy did the liaison, did the organization. I was essentially a spectator saying goodbye to a lot of good friends whom I didn't expect to see again for a long while. Many of those folks went to Beirut which at the time was our safe haven. I guess almost all of them went to Beirut, at least initially. And then from there the expectation was that they would be able to come back to Cyprus fairly soon. That expectation did not pan out.

Q: The coup collapsed. Do you want to talk about that and how quickly that happened and to what extent you were involved with the Greek Cypriots who were involved on both sides?

WILLIAMS: The Sampson government just evaporated shortly after the Turkish invasion of July 20. I never saw again any of those civilian ministers on whom I had called the previous week. I don't think any of them, except perhaps the defense minister, had any role in defending the island against the Turkish forces that were invading. So essentially the Sampson government was a one week wonder. It came by the grace of the National Guard and Athens junta and it fell and departed just about as quickly. But the military side was another matter. That was well-organized. The National Guard, Greek officers, had fortified the northern part of the island to a fare-thee-well against the day when the Turks did come down in force. The Turks in the earlier phases of the Cypriot problem invaded somewhat with midnight landings, some overflights, some napalm in the early '60s and '64 I think. But the Greek Cypriots, and for that matter Athens knew that if the problem went on there was a high likelihood that the Turks would come in force. Against that contingency they had pillboxes well dug in and they were fierce fighters and they fought very well even though the Sampson government had disappeared. The military chain of command held and acquitted itself I'm told very well. Certainly the fighting was fierce and protracted for several days.

Q: Essentially it was all over by about the 24th of July?

WILLIAMS: The ceasefire was arranged by UNFICYP by that point. I think both sides were fairly worn out; the Greek Cypriots had killed a lot of Turks but had given up terrain in the north. Essentially the triangle that goes out from Nicosia to the northern shore on two sides. A lot of Greek Cypriots were becoming refugees in their own country and, Makarios liked to say, were fleeing the area for good reason. And the Turks having established several beachheads needed to consolidate their gain. So both sides had an interest in stopping the fighting. UNFICYP was material I think in arranging it. I think the diplomacy that we did, the British did with the Turks and Greeks also helped facilitate that, so I don't know when the ceasefire started. Probably about the 25th or 26th of July. Fighting stopped, but the refugees continued to move out of that area that the Turkish army was in the process of occupying.

Q: Why don't you go back to something you've said a couple of times. You called on several of the civilian ministers of the Nikos Sampson government after the coup. All the ministers? Two or three? Do you remember roughly?

WILLIAMS: There were only a few days to do this. I didn't know that at the time of course, and I was not trying to do every one of them in a short period of time, but I think I called probably on six, maybe seven. Not all of them. It was a full cabinet. They replaced every one as I recall of Makarios' ministers with their own person. I don't believe I called on all of them, that was my intention certainly.

Q: After July 20th as you say the coup kind of disappeared and those ministers were gone. Makarios was also gone. Do you want to talk about what happened and your experience with that part?

WILLIAMS: Makarios had been flown off the island by the British from their sovereign base area in Akrotiri to London a day or two after he had escaped from Nicosia, gone to Paphos and then come down to Akrotiri. There was the illegal government of Nikos Sampson installed by the junta which collapsed then soon after the invasion of July 20. And then the Cypriot constitution came into play. Glafkos Clerides who was the president of the house of representatives, very distinguished politician, lawyer, member of a very well-regarded family on the island, trained at the Inns of Court in London and so forth, by virtue of the constitution became the acting president of Cyprus in the absence of the archbishop. This was standard practice whenever the archbishop went overseas on a trip which he often did. Makarios liked to travel as president. Whenever the archbishop left the island, the president of the House of Representatives which was usually Clerides in those days became automatically the acting president with full powers until the archbishop returned. And this was the mechanism by which Clerides ascended to the presidency in the week of July 20; I don't recall exactly what day it was.

Q: And did Clerides then return the ministers that had served Makarios to office?

WILLIAMS: I believe the whole Makarios cabinet came back. Clerides had one or two very close associates he brought with him into the presidency because none of us knew at the time. The only significant contact whom I recall Clerides brought into office with him this time in contrast to what he had done before was Critolovas Cristoluhu who had been for years the head of the government printing office and an old EOKA fighter as well. Young man, but he'd been an EOKA fighter in the old days. The original EOKA. And a very, very close friend as he is today of Glafkos Clerides. Cris whom I knew well from my own contacts first year moved into the office with Clerides. They couldn't work out of the presidential palace because it was a smoking ruin, or by this time just a ruin, so they worked out of the PIO's office where Cristoluhu was.

Q: And you saw him frequently in this period?

WILLIAMS: I saw Cris or talked to him almost every day. We were on a first name basis as happens often with Greeks and Greek Cypriots. It's not hard. He was very bright, very responsive, very close to Clerides. I'd say I had as good a conduit to the presidency as anybody in the embassy, except perhaps the ambassador at that time. And the ambassador of course saw and talked with Clerides as often as he needed to, bearing in mind that Clerides had his hands full with the demands of the growing refugee population, uncertainties of a breakout, what would occur, how it could be prevented, and the effort to consolidate or to reestablish a stable system on the island.

Q: When you say a breakout you mean the Turks going beyond this initial wedge they had established from Nicosia to the north coast.

WILLIAMS: The terms of the ceasefire as negotiated by UNFICYP called for a stabilization of the perimeter that the Turkish forces had established and no material change in the military situation of either side. The hope was to prevent the Turks from upgrading their capabilities, bringing in more material, and to keep the Greek side from doing the same on its part of the island. Needless to say that hope was in vain. The Turks wanted the breathing space the ceasefire offered in large part in order to restock their supplies and to build up for the next phase of a military operation, what the military calls a breakout. And there was a constant stream of reports from the embassy, from Mike Austrian who covered it somewhat from the civilian side, from Red Jessup who covered it on the military side, from UNFICYP and others, and screams of protest from the Greeks and the Greek Cypriots about the very blatant military buildup the Turks conducted through the port of Kyrenia for the next few weeks after the ceasefire went into effect.

Q: What was the attitude toward the United States in this period? How did you feel about it in the embassy?

WILLIAMS: I don't think any of us at the time received a particular threat because of local feelings about America. There was always the view that the United States could stop Turkey if it wanted to. We had unwittingly reinforced that view by successfully stopping Turkey from invading Cyprus a number of times. We had the Johnson letter in 1964 when we told the Turkish government of Ismet Inonu if you get your ass in a crack with the Soviet Union by virtue of invading Cyprus, don't expect NATO to bail you out. It succeeded but the Turks never forgave us or forgot that letter. In 1967 we did it again when President Johnson sent Cyrus Vance to mediate between Turkey and Greece over a possible war that was going to break out because of something the national guard had done under Grivas, had done against the Turkish Cypriot villages in the south. In the early 1970s we intervened less dramatically but still effectively behind the scenes to try to calm some of the more dangerous aspects of the confrontation between the junta and Makarios. So we had done a lot and the Greek Cypriots knew that, and the Greeks knew that and the world knew that, to keep Turkey from invading Cyprus. It was not unreasonable therefore for Greek Cypriots and Greeks to expect in 1974 we would do the same thing. The fact that we were unable to do it despite Joe Sisco's and Henry Kissinger's efforts led many Greek Cypriots, and the irresponsible element especially, to conclude we hadn't tried hard enough and really didn't want to stop the Turks this time. And so there was a growing sentiment, although in the time of which we're speaking it wasn't yet dangerous, that the Americans were ultimately responsible for this by virtue of not having used the sixth fleet to interpose between Turkey and the island therefore stopping the invasion. We saw that in the paper, we heard it occasionally, but there were no demonstrations against us. Again, the Greek Cypriots in this first period after the invasion on July 20 were so preoccupied, understandably so, with their own concerns, their families, their properties, the uncertainties, the tragedies. The deaths, the rapes, the lootings, this sort of thing, that they really had not had time to focus on us. That came later.

Q: To what extent do you think in this early period was Glafkos Clerides in touch with Rauf Denktash the Turkish Cypriot leader. They had been the main negotiators in the period before the coup. I don't know if we talked before about how close they were to reaching an agreement, to what extent were you involved following that, or was that pretty much being done by others in the embassy.

WILLIAMS: Covered more by others than by me. I was somewhat involved because you couldn't in those days serve in the embassy in Nicosia without having some role in the Cyprus problem, in reporting. But no, they had come close a number of times to agreeing on the basic elements of the settlement that would put the Humpty Dumpty together again that had been created by the London-Zurich Accords. According to Clerides' memoirs at least, most times they failed because Makarios was just unwilling to make the leap of faith, to give up that much to the Turkish Cypriot side for his own reasons which we can get into if you want. Clerides and Denktash in those days had a healthy respect for each other. I think they always did. They had been colleagues at the bar, Clerides had been a defense attorney, Denktash had been Queen's Counsel. He had prosecuted, Clerides had defended. They were on the opposite side of issues that came into the British courts, but they knew each other as professionals and though of different ethnicity they respected each other. I have seen Denktash, for example, at receptions to which we used to invite them both before the coup, in the good old days so-called, speak fluent Greek with Clerides. He grew up speaking Greek as most Turkish Cypriots of his class did. I don't recall if Clerides speaks Turkish. He certainly knows some. But they got along well, they communicated well, even when the division came after '63. I don't remember specifically, but I'm very certain that Clerides reached out to Denktash through either intermediaries or phone call, or some way, after he became acting president in July of '74. Simply to try to reestablish the contact, reassure Denktash that he was going to do his best, and enlist Denktash's help in keeping his own wild men if possible under control. I don't know the substance of what they discussed, but I'm very certain that's what happened. With what effect I don't know.

Q: Ambassador Davies was very busy during this period with Clerides?

WILLIAMS: Indeed he was. With Clerides, with organizing the evacuation of the American community, at least presiding over it, and reassuring elements of the American community. That summer we had, by virtue of a decision that emerged from a long process in the intelligence community in Washington, civilianized a large part of the NSA operations on the island. There were two stations near Nicosia, Neomilia in the east and Yerolakkos in the north, both are now in the Turkish zone of Cyprus. Those are well-known listening spots. NSA ran them with military personnel for years. When I first got there they were naval personnel, but for whatever reason the decision had been made, fatefully as it turned out, to civilianize those operations early in the summer of 1974. So what we had was a bunch of civilians and their families show up in June, July and they really had not even gotten to their apartments or their houses when the lid blew off. So they were particularly panicked. Most of these folks were not military, at least not then, they had not served overseas, and they had not been briefed on what might happen in Cyprus; they had no experience with evacuation. There was a lot of panic, understandably, among some members of that community. Ambassador Davies met a number of times with them trying to calm them down, to assure them that an evacuation plan was in place and we would take care of them, they would be protected. The girl who was injured, whom I mentioned on the last tape, was in that community and Rodger spent a lot of time with that as well as talking to the government in Cyprus and talking to Washington.

Q: And that community was evacuated pretty much?

WILLIAMS: All. And they never came back of course because the station ceased to operate.

Q: But the military, the navy operators had all left just before that summer. Did some people see that as anticipation of what was going to happen?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall anybody saying that, nor do I recall reading it. I used to read the Greek Cypriot press in all its turgid glory pretty carefully. I don't remember that sort of thing. The numbers didn't change. In fact, if anything, they may have increased because of all the dependents. We're talking about a fairly large population that came in. I remember them in the pool at the Hilton hotel. A lot of them, they were loud. Too American I thought. But very clearly American, and looking forward to a very nice tour on an island in the Mediterranean.

Q: Ok, well you'd been anticipating the second Turkish invasion, Turkish breakout as it's called. Do you want to talk a little bit more about the period leading up to that and what happened at that time?

WILLIAMS: As I recall there was a steady buildup of Turkish troops and material in the beachhead that had been established which essentially linked the northern part of the northern coast of Cyprus to the Turkish enclave in Nicosia. That buildup continued fairly steadily for several weeks after the fighting stopped with the first ceasefire. The refugee situation continued to grow because there was a large Greek Cypriot population that had not been able to get out of that area before the ceasefire went in place. Of course, many Greek Cypriots still hoped that their citrus groves, their houses, their churches, their graveyards would be spared, that they would get them back and so they didn't want to leave. But as it became clear the Turkish buildup was relentless, more and more the Greek Cypriots started leaving. There were depredations as well by the Turkish troops. Some rapes. Desecration of church property and so on. Word of that got around and of course it made the Greek Cypriot population even more nervous. Those who were in the Karpas Peninsula, that long spit of land which is up toward the Gulf of Iskenderun, knew that if there was a breakout and Turkish troops moved east they would be likely cut off. So I think there was, even before the second breakout started in August, a movement by some Greek Cypriots in the Karpas Peninsula south, sort of preemptive evacuation lest they be cut off. So there were a lot of folks on the roads, a lot of uncertainty that we had to deal with, report on getting our own community out, which we did pretty much by the time of the convoy south to Akrotiri. There was a lot of diplomacy going on at this time in Geneva. We had the British convene the meeting of the guarantor powers in Geneva. Art Hartman was there; I think Joe Sisco was there. There was more shuttle diplomacy within Ankara and Athens trying to keep this thing from getting worse. Makarios was in London in direct contact with Clerides, with the Greek Diaspora.

Q: At some point he came to New York.

WILLIAMS: He did during the UN general assembly when there was a special debate. I think that was definitely after August. He did indeed. He was active in making statements against what the junta had done and then against what Turkey had done. It was a real mishmash. We in the embassy were trying to keep up with everything that was going on. But I think at the end of the day we really saw that buildup as unstoppable and for us it was just a question of when the breakout would occur. Red Jessup, the defense attachï¿½, used to brief us regularly at the staff meeting about how it would likely go. Both east and west, because the lines as drawn in that ceasefire were not really tenable. Nor did they, as we later confirmed, accord with the plans of the Turkish general staff to establish a larger presence in the northern part of the island, contingency plans for when the time came.

Q: To what extent during this period between roughly July 25, 26 and the breakout in August, to what extent was there violence directed at some of the Turkish Cyprian enclaves or villages that were well away from this Turkish controlled area?

WILLIAMS: The National Guard as I mentioned earlier had ringed some of the enclaves to prevent violence from the Turkish Cypriot side. There may have been some concern about reprisals from the Greek Cypriot side. I don't know that to be the case. But you heard more and more reports about it. I was not involved in any of those. Mike Austrian covered them, but we stared getting more reports and a lot of this was hearsay and rumor and magnification of hearsay and rumor. Really I can't recall specifically whether we ever confirmed there was any violence against the Turkish Cypriot enclaves outside the area of the Turkish establishment by the ceasefire. But I can say a lot of Turkish Cypriots were fearful of that, and I think there was a growing desire by some of the hotheads in the Greek Cypriot community for reprisals given what had been done to Hellenism, to their properties in the north.

Q: So why don't we come forward to the second Turkish intervention. That was on August 14.

WILLIAMS: It did not have for me the drama of the first one, because it had been so expected, much more so than the Turkish invasion of July 20th. Once the Turks established the beachhead and the buildup started and continued despite all our efforts to stop it, it was really just a question of when, and the when was we thought rather imminent. I don't recall how I got the word on August 14.

Somehow we got word, and I think the breakout occurred up north rather than in Nicosia, so the first violence was not immediately visible from where we were in the embassy. But it happened, it lasted a very short while, probably no longer than the first phase because at this point the National Guard emplacements had been destroyed. The National Guard had not had time to build new emplacements surrounding the Turkish beachhead area established by the ceasefire, and as you know it's essentially a plain on both directions east and west. So the Turkish army had pretty easy going when it broke out in both directions. Many Greek Cypriot refugees had started moving, really started moving after the second phase began on August 14. There were huge numbers of refugees heading south, including from Famagusta and Verosha, the suburb of Famagusta in the east, and the Turkish army in some cases had to overcome local resistance which wasn't too hard. In other cases they moved into a vacuum of an area that was not even populated much less defended. So it was a fairly easy progression in military terms at least for the Turkish army to take what was then the northern third of the island.

Q: At what point was Nicosia airport taken? Or at least made inoperable.

WILLIAMS: Nicosia airport was rendered inoperable by the first invasion as I recall. I don't think any planes came in and out of that airport after July 20, mainly because the runways had been pitted. There were wrecks on them, planes parked on runways had been destroyed by the Turkish jets. Stuff had fallen on them; there were caverns and craters in the runways. So I think from that point on the airport was not used as an airport. UNFICYP of course had a large presence in the airport, including in the tower. They were able to watch a lot of the fighting, the skirmishing in both the first phase and the second phase from that vantage. But the only thing that flew out of the airport after July 20 was helicopters as far as I recall.

Q: After the breakout August 14th the attitude shifted right away toward the United States?

WILLIAMS: As I'd explained before there was a growing attitude that the United States was ultimately responsible for this because it had not stopped Turkey inasmuch as America had stopped Turkey before. It seemed quite clear to the Greeks that it had chosen this time not to stop Turkey. This was the basic logic that was used. It was not an illogical position, but it overlooked some of the realities of what we were dealing with in Ankara at the time. And in Athens at the time. When those huge swarms of refugees came south, these were numbers that dwarfed what had come in the wake of the first invasion. I don't recall how many Greek Cypriots were ultimately declared displaced persons in their own country, or refugees in their own country as Makarios called them. Several hundred thousand probably. A lot of them came to Nicosia and set up temporary camps there with relatives, just in tents, whatever. It was a time of great confusion.

Q: I think they claimed 200,000, although that may have been later on because some went...

WILLIAMS: That could well be because they had 500,000 or more as the total population and so that number could well be correct which is vast. It indicates the size of the problem with which Clerides had to grapple in terms of taking care of these people. It was almost too much for any government to handle. This exodus of refugees or displaced persons or whatever you call them, concentrated in and around Nicosia. The first inkling I had that we really could be in trouble was when I went with the ambassador to see Clerides at the PIO office which was the office Clerides had chosen since there was no other place to go. The PIO office was a brick building on stilts as I recall. You parked under it. And there were huge numbers of civilians, refugees I guess, milling around when we drove up in the Cadillac with the flag flying. And they were not happy faces when they saw the car and the flag and us. There were shaken fists and gestures; I think one or two people hit the car. We had a police escort so we didn't think we were in any danger. It was becoming a mob, and it was clearly not friendly. So we got out, went in to see Clerides. I forget what the specific reason was for that call. I think we talked about the general security situation or the breakdown of security because of the refugees, the fact that the police force, what was left of it because of the coup and the fighting, was swamped, and what that might mean for security generally on the island. I don't recall specifically what we said, but we came back out and left. We got out of there as quickly as we could because the mob was getting bigger and as I said was just not friendly. Again, nobody was hurt, there were no rocks thrown or any other objects, but it was an ugly mood.

The second phase started on the 14th, this was probably 17th or 18th. It was several days before the 19th of August. We reported that, I think there was anecdotal evidence or anecdotal comment from others in the embassy who had seen or experienced similar things in smaller scale, but we didn't change our modus operandi on the island or in Nicosia really. We maintained our contacts, we traveled widely, I remember once Mike Austrian and I got in the car. We were both cowboys but I have to say Mike was more of one and I think he would quickly agree if he were still alive, God rest his soul. We got in the car, he was driving, and we decided to go and tour some of the suburbs in Nicosia that were affected by the fighting. We didn't cross any checkpoints, but we went up very close to them, looked around, and saw where the new points had been established and did a windshield tour of these areas and came back, and Mike did a quick report. But what we didn't notice until the general services officer or somebody pointed out, was that our car had acquired a new hole in the passenger door. It was a bullet hole. We hadn't heard the shot and we certainly had not been aware that a bullet - or some projectile with the diameter of a bullet - had hit the car, but it happened. As I say, there was a strange sense which psychologists could probably explain much better than I can, that we were invincible. We saw all this violence and tracer bullets and tanks and walked over shell casings and knew that people were dying, that refugees were being uprooted, that young women were being raped. All this and that. We saw it and yet, at least speaking for myself, did not think this was really going to happen to us. Because we were diplomats, we had this great commanding overview, we had immunity, we spoke the languages. And until August 19 that was right. We weren't being reckless in the sense of telling the mob to bring it on, but we were going out, pushing the envelope, doing what we thought was our job to go out and see and report.

Q: Were you the driver or the passenger on that trip?

WILLIAMS: I think Mike was the driver. He was a better driver than I was.

Q: It was on the passenger's side.

WILLIAMS: It was on the passenger's side, but again I don't recall how close it was to where I was sitting, but it was too close for comfort. We continued to go out though. That hole, from whatever source, everybody thought it was a bullet, we never found the bullet though, didn't change our way of doing things.

Q: Did you go with Ambassador Davies on a number of his calls during this period, or was this kind of an unusual one with Clerides?

WILLIAMS: Lindsay Grant, the DCM, had left sometime after the first invasion, after the coup because his time was up. Another DCM had been chosen by Rodger, but had not yet arrived. We were without a DCM, but we had an acting DCM. I forget who that was. And Rodger assumed, quite reasonably, that since the projected gap was only a few weeks there was no reason to keep Lindsay from having his vacation to Scotland preparatory to his new job in Washington, so he let Lindsay go. And I was the Greek language officer and the logical one to go to the meetings with Clerides which of course were conducted in English. Clerides' English is better than mine. But Mike could have done it if I was tied up. There were several people who could have done that, but usually, from the few experiences we had in these weeks I often went with Rodger as the note taker. And I knew Cristobulu who was the chief of staff of Clerides which was a big plus too.

Q: And he was often in the meetings with Clerides?

WILLIAMS: Always.

Q: Okay, you want to come on to the 19th of August?

WILLIAMS: Well, the 19th of August we were in a staff meeting in the morning. It was a weekday. I distinctly remember at the staff meeting that it had been reported that there was going to be a demonstration of some kind. This was something that would routinely be reported if you knew about a demonstration. The police had told the RSO (Regional Security Officer) or something, somebody got word there was going to be a demonstration. And that was all that was said. We said oh yes, okay, that's fine.

Q: A demonstration at the embassy?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall that it was at the embassy. I think it was a demonstration away from the embassy, but the point was made that these were volatile times, get a demonstration together 10 blocks away they could come this way. I think somebody did connect those two dots. But we didn't spend any time talking about precautions or preparations. We had a plan, the Marines had certainly been briefed and trained and updated in their duties if something should happen. And until this point there had been as far as I know no overt attack, even by a rock throwing kid, against the compound where we were. Our cars and our houses had been evacuated by this point, were intact. There'd been no looting, no vandalism. Shaken fists perhaps and ugly gestures, but nothing else.

Q: The embassy at the time was surrounded by barbed wire wall? No.

WILLIAMS: We had the fence topped by barbed wire, I don't know if it was concertina or something else. But there was the iron picket fence and the barbed wire on top, and I think that went all the way around. Back in the back where the parking lot was there was a gate that was a little easier to get through. Essentially our strongest defense was in the front and on the sides. So again we're all working and living in this very tight place. I think coming back to something to which I alluded earlier, after the second invasion some of the Greek Cypriots including Milteades, Cristobulu, the PIO from Makarios and now Clerides, wound up for a while living in the compound. They were deathly afraid of what might happen to them if the Turks should get them. And they moved in. They sort of arrived at the gate with an aide or a family member. These weren't large numbers, but the ambassador made the decision to let them in, put them in some ground floor office somewhere which unfortunately had a telephone in it which they started using. So we had to restrict their phone privileges, establish rules of conduct for them while they were in this anomalous situation on the ground. So we had this population too. Cristobulu's one, there were a couple of them, maybe eight or 10 people, I don't remember. But not a large number. But still, an element of foreigners you had to be aware of since they weren't FSNs. They were there as refugees, but you know, whatever.. And I think they were there when the thing went down on the 19th of August. Johnny Cristafilis, an interesting anecdote, he had been the foreign minister of Makarios and again of Clerides. And as I recall, we had met him socially, very charming guy, like Clerides, London trained, a barrister, very distinguished, good family, married to a lovely woman from South Africa, Marvel, also Greek. He was foreign minister and he was scared to death when the Turks came to the island the first time. It was either after the first invasion or the second invasion when he was in his most panicky mode. I don't recall is Cristfidis called me at the embassy or not. He wanted help. He did not, however, unlike Cristabulu wind up as a refugee in the chancery, but he was scared and I think that was a genuine fear, a very understandable one given the history of Greeks and Turks in that part of the world. In any case, morning of August 19, sunny day, cloudless skies, as it almost always is in Cyprus, and I think it was around 9:30 or 10:00 I don't remember. There was a rumble you could hear, a large number of people. I'd only heard that once before in my life and that was when Ann and I were in Adana, Turkey at the consulate and the consulate was stoned by a mob. I think I mentioned that in an earlier session, 1966 that was. You never forget that once you hear it. And I heard it, and everybody else heard it. We thought the demonstration had been approved by the police or whomever some ways away. But it was a large mob. A large crowd. It wasn't a mob yet. I think the focus of the discussion was criticism of the Americans for what had happened to them, what had been done to them, what they had suffered. And somehow, and I don't know how because I wasn't there, the crowd started moving toward the embassy. At this point, I think it gained a lot of hangers-on and other elements who might not have been in the original demonstration at all. By the time it reached the embassy, which was in about 10 minutes, they were throwing rocks and other things at the chancery. So we immediately had the Marines and everybody else shove the wooden shutters so the glass would be protected, close the gate, get the teargas canisters ready, and prepare to stave off what we thought was going to be an unfettered demonstration, but that was about all.

Q: Stave off in the sense that they would actually come over the fence?

WILLIAMS: Keep them from coming over if they tried. The Marines had instructions on what to do. They could get over, it was possible to get over, but I don't recall that anybody did. Again, I was inside as everybody else was, and not looking outside, or trying not to. The plan called us to gather in the central hallway. The ambassador's office was shuttered and he and his secretaries came in the central hallway. The rest of us were in the central hallway on the second floor. The FSNs were there. It was very crowded. The air conditioning held up for us, so it wasn't too hot, but it was a little sticky. And our offices which had been on either side of that hallway, particularly that was facing the front, were sort of exposed to the brunt of the mob's wrath we thought. At some point, shooting started. I remember hearing pops or whatever, but did not think anything of it because I didn't know what it was, and I'd never heard shots fired in anger. I don't know how many shots were fired. Several pierced the water tanks on the roof because they were leaking. Again, there was no central direction, put your hands down and put your hands behind your head and hunker down. We were milling around.

Q: Could you tell where the shots were being fired from?

WILLIAMS: I could not. It was in the context of a lot of roar. Rocks hitting the embassy. You could hear the rocks. Occasionally a shutter would crack and you'd hear glass break. We had no reason to think that we were going to be hurt, because we were in the central corridor, the shutters were shut, the windows were shut, the doors were shut, and we were in the safe area that had been declared as such. So at some point, I think before the popping started, I decided to go up on the roof of the ambassador's residence, the patio with bamboo screening on the inside of the metal gratings outside. And Mike and I, the two cowboys, went up to there to see what was going on. Better observation. We thought that might be useful since we couldn't look through the shutters because it was too dangerous and we weren't supposed to be in those rooms anyway. Nobody said we could not go up to the patio and look down. And we thought we'd be high enough there anyway. So I went up. The first thing I saw, looking over the balcony toward the mob, was it did not fill the whole area. At that time there was the street and a parking lot where various cars including mine were, and beyond that was an embassy guest house where we had lived for about six months when we first got to Cyprus. But the mob filled maybe half that area. I can't say how many. Several hundred, maybe more. I don't recall it was that huge. But I do recall seeing my car in flames. They torched the cars, and then I saw the gas tank explode and the back end raised and came down. I'd never seen that before. I actually thought it was kind of neat, even though at the time I didn't know how I was going to get around without a car. Once again, I'm looking at a mob now that is throwing rocks, attacking the embassy, torching the cars. And there was some popping. I still did not make the connection. Somebody must have been watching over me that day.

It was also on American TV by the way, my mother was watching that.

Q: Probably not wise in those days.

WILLIAMS: No. But she watched it that same day. Anyway, I thought that was pretty neat, I'd never seen a car blow up, and this was a mob. I'd done that in Adana, maybe a little bit larger, but that was it. So I went back to the backside of the balcony. There was another in the back area looking down on the parking lot behind the embassy. For some reason, there was no mob there, but the Marines had thrown out tear gas, I guess as a precautionary measure. Maybe that's why there was nobody there. But I do remember looking over that area and smelling this funny thing and then taking a very deep breath to see what it was. It was C2 or whatever the agent they were using. Never been teargassed before, or since, but I went down on my hands and knees and was just totally disabled. It was very effective teargas. It had risen the four or five stories that were between, because it was deployed on the ground. And it came back up, got me. So at this point I'm crawling on my hands and knees, trying to get back to the staircase that goes down to a landing where there's a sink. I knew I could wash out my eyes and clear my mouth and just get control of myself. And as I was crawling back, whoever had the heavy artillery, the large caliber weapon down there, opened up on the patio. And I could actually hear the bamboo ripping as the bullets came through it. It was a huge roar. He must have sprayed the building, because it seemed like a train. It got louder and louder as it came right toward me and it went past me. I'm down on my hands and knees, the bullets are passing harmlessly overhead and ripping through that bamboo. Again, I haven't been hurt, but at this point I'm in the fetal position on the staircase trying to keep myself from getting hurt.

Q: Where was Mike Austrian?

WILLIAMS: I'll come to him. I didn't know where he was exactly, but he has an amusing story too. I get down to the landing, get my eyes clear so I can see and I can breathe, and I'm able to get back up, go back up to the patio to see where Mike is. There were also some Marines over there with teargas canisters. In fact, they may have been the ones that threw the teargas canister down, but I don't know that, the one that got me. But they did have teargas canisters to use for mob control. And Mike had asked while I was looking at my car or whatever if he could help. And the Marines said sure and handed him a canister of this stuff. I never used one but it apparently has a rip-off thing like a beer can.

Q: Grenade?

WILLIAMS: Something like that, but it rips off and the stuff comes out very quickly, and Mike was a strong guy but he was having trouble pulling off the release tab. So he put the canister between his legs and pulled it off at which point the full force of that agent virtually scalded his crotch and his front and his face. It was like a white brush had been painted over him. And he was in agony. He was also blinded. He was on his hands and knees, and the Marines, there were two Marines out there. They were so astounded they were laughing uproariously at this poor creature because nobody had ever done something that dumb before, even at Camp Lejeune, and they'd never seen that before. Neither had I. So I get up, my eyes are restored, I can breathe, I see Mike screaming and yelling, hopping around and clutching his groin in great pain, I take him by the scruff of the neck, down the steps to the basin, wash his face out, get him so he can now take care of himself, and get him taken care of.

Q: Do you think the shots were fired at the patio at the top of the residence because they had seen the Marines up there doing the teargas?

WILLIAMS: It's the same time the shots were fired at the ambassador's office. I think there were two shooters. There would have had to be because the ones that came in from the side, his office, were way over there, and this shot was up here. And I always thought, and my memory's a little hazy on some of this, but the rounds that came into the office of Ambassador Davies were concentrated in the area of his office where his desk was. The rounds that came into the other side of the building where the residence was were concentrated on the patio and I think some at the window of his bedroom. I think that's right, though I'm not sure of it. So whether or not they fired at the patio because they saw a Marine or because they thought the ambassador was up there or because they saw me or whatever, I really don't know. But there were a lot of bullets that came up there. I always thought it was an effort to get the ambassador because of the way the bullets had come in. By sheer dumb luck they did get him. It was a blind bullet came in through the shutter, the glass and the partition in his office and came down into the corridor where he was standing and they shot him through the heart.

Q: He was in the central hall?

WILLIAMS: He was, and he was dead before he hit the ground. Another bullet came in and ripped off the top of the skull of Tony Varnava, a Maronite local in the admin section, and she was dead instantly. And a steel jacket of one of the bullets that came in landed up in the thigh of Jay Graham the economic officer. Those were the only causalities from the rounds. One of the older locals may have had a heart attack. Everybody else was intact but was scared to death.

Q: Tony Varnava had gone to Ambassador Davies' help?

WILLIAMS: She had. She had been very close to him and she saw him fall. I was not down there, but those who were say she saw him fall and bent down to catch him and as she did her head was ripped open by the bullet, so they both fell.

Q: You say the window that the shots came through had the partitions closed?

WILLIAMS: Yes, the windows were appropriately shuttered.

Q: Okay, we're continuing off the day of August 19, 1974.

WILLIAMS: So the bullets did not have to go through significant physical barriers to get to the Americans in the central corridor. I have no way of knowing whether the shooter or shooters knew that we would be huddled in that corridor as a safe place, but the wooden shutter over the window, the single pane of glass and the partition on the door of the wall of the office were not very thick. Of course, steel-jacketed rounds of that caliber. But it was a blind shot that got the ambassador, no question about that. Tony was an incidental casualty, God rest her soul, and Jay Graham was also unlucky with that minor wound in his thigh.

Q: The demonstration meanwhile was continuing although these people shooting were probably in another building?

WILLIAMS: They were not in another building; they were on the periphery of the crowd in both cases. One of them was wearing the uniform of a Greek Cypriot policeman as I recall, although the weapon he used was not in the standard arms of the Greek Cypriot police. They were in the crowd on the periphery, but not in adjacent buildings. There was some more shooting of handguns I guess. I think though, soon after the heavy stuff came in and killed the ambassador, they couldn't know at that time they killed the ambassador, and hit the side where Mike and I and the Marines were, soon thereafter as I recall, maybe 20 or 30 minutes, time was really very strange as experienced in that day, the crowd started to disperse. Either its anger had been spent or the Greek Cypriot police had started to come in sufficient numbers to control it. Because what the Greek Cypriot authorities had approved as a demonstration had quickly gotten way out of hand and had to be stopped. I don't know who was calling, our phones were still intact, I don't know who called whom. I certainly was not calling anybody because I could still barely see, Mike wasn't. But somehow Clerides was alerted about the attack on the embassy, and Clerides and Cristobulu came. There was teargas in the front as well. It must have been all around the periphery because I remember Clerides came up those stairs wearing a gas mask as did Cristobulu. And he saw Rodger lying on the floor and I remember he ripped the gas mask off and his face was contorted in anguish. It was just unbelievable how grief stricken and surprised he was to see that. Because even though their association had been fairly brief since Rodger had arrived as ambassador, I think there was a lot of respect there. I don't think anybody thought that the tragic events of that summer were going to lead to the assassination, or the murder, of Ambassador Davies. So Clerides I think knelt down beside Rodger very briefly to assure himself that he was dead, and then because we were still in a very chaotic situation where even his security could not be guaranteed, he and his staff left to go back to the office. We of course had to tell Washington what had happened. We had to work with the Greek Cypriots to reestablish our security because we had no idea what was still out there waiting for us. I remember telling Cristobulu. Cris and I were talking about it that night. This was the night of the 19th of August. I told him we needed to have a lot more police security than we'd gotten. At this stage the Clerides government was supposed to give us everything we asked for, so I said give us everything. Give us fixed post, give us snipers on the roof against the mob, give us everything. I don't know what I specifically asked for. But it was yes sir, yes sir three bags full; they did give us tremendous presence around the chancery. There were no more demonstrations, certainly no more mobs against the embassy. And I don't really remember how long that protection lasted.

It took a long while for the teargas to disperse. Mike of course reeked of it because it was in his pores. He really had second degree burns that got better as you came up from the crotch toward the face. Fortunately it didn't start in his face or he would have been blinded. And having staff meetings with him in close quarters was no pleasant experience because he couldn't help it. Even after showering he still stank of C2.

Q: The two of you came down from the patio from the roof soon after the ambassador was hit?

WILLIAMS: Fairly soon. There was a tremendous confusion and walkie talkie chatter which Ann heard. I forgot to mention, a couple days before the 19th Ann had told Rodger she and Ben just wanted to go back to our house. There'd been no demonstrations at that point, the house was okay, and we thought Maria our maid would show up. With great reluctance, maybe it was the night before, Rodger let her go home. So Ann and Ben were not there when this happened, they were at home. But they were in radio or walkie talkie contact with us and they heard over that system this tremendous jumble of screams and yells and confusion. A British neighbor had called Ann and said that from her balcony she could see smoke coming from the American embassy and maybe Ann ought to find out what was going on. So when Ann tuned in the walkie talkie all she got was this confusion. Didn't know what had happened to any of us at that point.

So we came down fairly soon after Rodger... we heard the ambassador had been shot, we'd heard yells either on the radio from the Marines or something that the ambassador had been hit. So we went down, and there was this tremendous milling about and yells and screams, and teargas everywhere. And lying on the floor where he'd fallen was Rodger and next to him was Tony and Jay Graham was standing with a trickle of blood coming down his thigh and looking very shocked as many people were. Shell-shocked, literally, as to what had happened. I remember I knelt down to Rodger and I just said, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador," and I couldn't say anything else because he was clearly gone. I think it had gone right through his heart so there was no question about saving him.

Q: Besides Clerides coming, I assume a doctor came?

WILLIAMS: I don't recall medical personnel coming. We had some medically trained folk. EMT qualified, probably from the Marines and elsewhere who hustled Jay off to treatment and quickly realized that nothing could be done for Tony and Rodger. I don't remember any other medical people coming.

Q: Who was in charge of the embassy?

WILLIAMS: Well this was the awkward point and something I remembered for the rest of my career. We were officially without a DCM because Rodger had chosen not to designate an acting DCM. The reasonable expectation that the new DCM would be there in just a few weeks, so... it was a reasonable expectation at the time. But it was a difficult situation because in fact the senior Foreign Service person by rank was Eddie Edwards who had been very close to Tony Varnava and was himself shell-shocked and not able to think clearly as he himself I think would admit. At least in the first few days after August 19. But for whatever reason, Eddie is also African American, he felt very strongly and said so in this mini staff meeting we had in the vault where the air conditioning was not working, that he should be the chargï¿½ because he was the senior person in rank. And there was argument and discussion about that. It wasn't the finest hour for any of us, I don't think, but I finally decided that the only way to solve this was to agree that rank should prevail and that Mike or I would go with Eddie whenever he had to do business. So we basically voted that Eddie would be the chargï¿½. I don't think all members of the country team accepted that. But it was such a confused time it really didn't matter almost, because we were all doing our own thing and in very close contact with Washington as well. So whenever Eddie had to go, we would have to go ask Clerides for something, this was before Dean Brown got there, there was only one or two meetings with Clerides, no more than that. Maybe just one. I went with Eddie. We prepped him, we had the list, he would ask for whatever we needed. Clerides of course would give it; there was no question about that. At one point somehow the victims were mentioned and Eddie briefly broke down because as I say he and Tony had been very, very close. But on the whole I thought, and I don't mean to sound condescending at all, he was an admin officer who had done admin work his whole career in the military and the Foreign Service; he had never done work of this kind, under these circumstances. Given what had happened I thought he did pretty well, and it was only a brief period and he had strong support from Mike, from me, from others. So it was a team that went to see Clerides and a team that dealt with the other officials of the UNFICYP and the Greek Cypriot government.

Q: Ambassador Davies did not have any family of his own at post?

WILLIAMS: He did. Dana is the daughter and John is her younger brother, and they had briefly come to post with Rodger and Ms. T the family cat. Rodger's wife had died tragically after a long struggle with brain cancer just that year. And so one of the reasons he wanted to go overseas and come to Cyprus was to get away from Washington and the intense environment he'd been working and living in there, and also get away from, I think, some of the memories of Sally and what she'd gone through in the last years of her life. And Nicosia was going to be a way for the family to replenish itself, just relax and recover a bit. And tragically it did not work out that way. So John and Dana had been in the convoy that went south to Akrotiri in late July and were in Beirut, and had to be told what had happened to their father on August 19th.

Q: Let me ask you about Ann and Ben at this point. They were back home, did they stay there?

WILLIAMS: No, they were there when it happened and Ann was very concerned about me of course and others in the embassy because she had no idea if any of us were alive or who had been shot. She knew somebody had been shot, but from the squawking over the walkie talkie it was just not clear. I was able to talk to her a few hours later, say I was alright, tell her briefly what had happened. And then she decided on her own that she and Ben were going to have to make some defensive preparations because there was no way of knowing if the mob would regroup and come after the houses. Some Greek Cypriots certainly knew we were in the house, but it was a low profile. Any case, Ann told Ben as a way of keeping him from worrying and to occupy his fertile four year old mind they were going to have to boil water and pour it on the heads of people who came to the house to try to do them harm. Ben thought that was a great plan so he and Ann put huge kettles of water on the stove, propane fired stove and they fired up all the burners, and the water was starting to simmer when there was a loud knock at the door downstairs. Somebody in a very English accent, sort of Cockney type accent asked to be let in. Ann and Ben had barricaded chairs. We had a house on stilts with a marble foyer and a walkup; they had barricaded chairs at the top of the staircase so it would prevent people from getting into them, at least quickly. But the water was only simmering, it wasn't boiling. So whoever it was, some guy said let us in and Ann said no we're not going to let you in, and back and forth. This is what she's told me, I was not there, but I've heard the story many times. And she told Ben to keep turning the flames up, give it more juice to get the water ready, because they thought it was a Greek Cypriot or somebody like that. And finally she asked, "Who are you people?" Because she knew there were several folks milling around down there. And he said, " We're Canadians." And she said, "What's the capital of Canada?" Putting them to the test, because if he was a Greek Cypriot he wouldn't know that. And then she thought, what is the capital of Canada? And there was some more comment, apparently this trooper, turned out to be an UNFICYP trooper made a comment to one of his mates that who is this nutcase? And he said it in such an idiomatic way that Ann said that can't be a Greek Cypriot and pushed the buzzer to let him in. As soon as the door opened when she pushed the buzzer from up top, these armed UNFICYP troops swarmed in with their rifles drawn and tried to come get the bad guys and they came up the stairs and moved the chairs and established that Ann and Ben were ok and they were not in any danger. And Ann said why are you here? And they said we've left our post and the only reason we're here is some crazy Greek Cypriot lady told us that you were being attacked and so we came to help. And that crazy Greek Cypriot lady was Maria our maid who had fled the house when the embassy was stormed. Ann told her to leave. She wanted to stay but Ann said no, you better get out of here because if they come this way they could hurt you too. So Maria left, but on the way out was apparently able to flag down an UNFICYP patrol and divert them to the house with all kinds of stories. So the leader, these were Canadian UNFICYP troops and the leader of the group said we can't leave you here, but we can't take you with us either yet. So he said we'll take you to your neighbor. The neighbors lived across the driveway in another house like ours. And they'd been very good friends of ours and had sort of adopted Ben. They had no children of their own. He'd been a judge.

Q: British?

WILLIAMS: No, Greek Cypriot. Court trained, impeccable English. But they had lost vast citrus groves in Famagusta or somewhere and seen what had happened with themselves in great fury over what America had not done to stop this horrible desecration of their island. I'm drawing a blank on their surname. It was Laura and Antinoches. Anyway, Antinoches was not there when the UNFICYP troops took Ann and Ben over. Ann had about two minutes to pack what she needed so she took her passport, pictures, and family silver and Ben took his Matchbox cars in his little case and that was it. So the UNFICYP troops took them over to Gregoriades I think it was, over to their apartment, knocked on the door, Laura appears, and the UNFICYP captain says what they want to do, and Laura said something to the effect that the Bible says to forgive even worst enemy and in that spirit I will let them come in, at which point Ann's redheaded nature asserted itself and she said, "Like hell you will," and started to go back home. So the UNFICYP people literally shoved Ann and Ben into Laura's apartment, shut the door and left. And I won't bother you with all the ends and odds. They worked out a modus vivendi. Laura took Ben to bake cookies in the kitchen, left Ann alone so she wouldn't have to argue with her, just avoid her, and that was fine with Ann too. So they stayed there until sometime that evening. This would have been late morning on the 19th. So sometime late afternoon or evening an UNFICYP vehicle came to pick them up and took them from the apartment down to the officer's club which was on the airport road and that was within a secure perimeter. So this was preparatory to their being evacuated because at that point there was no question that they would have to be evacuated.

Q: And this was a UN officers' club?

WILLIAMS: UNFICYP. UN or Canadian. But it seemed that everybody was Canadian there from what I saw and what Ann said.

Q: In the Nicosia sector.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, on the way to the airport on the left, it was a big building on stilts as you went to the airport, and it was an officers' club and they put Ann in the bed of the commandant because that was the only bed they had there I think. And Ben was sort of adopted as a mascot by these young troops who took him around to all the slot machines, and over the course of the next five or six hours Ben played slot machines and won lots of money, and they told him, "Every time you win you have to stand the house for drinks, buy drinks for the house," which he did. Around 12 or one that morning they brought him back to Ann, he was on some soldier's shoulders with two bags of coins, his winnings, and looking very bleary eyed from too much Coke, otherwise not much worse for the wear.

Q: How much of all of this does he remember?

WILLIAMS: He remembers it pretty well because he was almost five. A month later he was five. And it was exciting stuff for him. He had all these big brother playmates, the Marine guards and then his big brother playmates from all around, he had all these Canadian troops. And he won and could buy drinks for all his friends.

Q: Ann and Ben were eventually flown out then by helicopter?

WILLIAMS: We worked this out over phone calls with Washington that night; the president sent a plane to bring back the ambassador's body. It was the same plane that brought back the embassy staff from Beirut. That went to Beirut, picked up the kids and the other embassy staff who were still there, then came to Cyprus to Akrotiri to pick up the ambassador's body. Stopped to refuel, in Shannon and then back home. That was the plan, and through talking with Art Hartman who was at the time the Assistant Secretary of EUR, and somebody else, I convinced them to let Ann and Ben come on that plane and go all the way back to America. That was approved fairly quickly actually, didn't take too much argument. And the ambassador's body was prepared for flight at the Nicosia general hospital. The death certificate said he'd been killed by a stray bullet. Maybe that's forensically correct, but it was not correct. When the plane did go and pick up the two kids and the cat in Beirut, it came to Akrotiri and then the issue was to get Ann and Ben and the casket down to Akrotiri, so an UNFICYP helicopter was arranged. They brought Rodger's casket to the UNFICYP wherever the helipad was. I don't recall right now. I was there and went down to Akrotiri with them on that chopper. Ann was brought out on a stretcher. She was still bedridden. Ben came on his own. There were some troops. It was one of these very military helicopters so there was no door. It was very, very loud and there was some guy hanging on a cable looking out with a gun to make sure nobody was going to shoot the helicopter from down there on the ground, because we were flying fairly low. But we got to Akrotiri with no problem at all. So I had a short while to say goodbye to Ann. This was on the 20th of August. I said goodbye to her and Ben, knowing they were going to be flown back to the States. And I guess I came back to Nicosia by the same helicopter. I don't remember. Dean Brown had meanwhile arrived at Akrotiri. He was the one who Washington sent out to take charge of the embassy until more permanent leadership could be sent in.

Q: So Eddie Edwards was really in charge only for 24 hours or so.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it seemed longer than that at the time. Probably closer to 48 because I think he was still doing stuff. But yes, very short period of time.

Q: And Dean Brown was sent out to take charge of the embassy as you said. He was retired at the time?

WILLIAMS: No, I think he was undersecretary for management at the time. He came out as a temporary ambassador on the 20th of August. Washington knew we had no DCM and I think it must have known we were having trouble cohering as a country team because there was no natural leader there. It was very wise that they sent out somebody like Dean Brown who took charge instantly, no question about that. And typed his own messages actually. Did his own thing. The old Foreign Service way.

Q: Roughly how long was he there?

WILLIAMS: Lindsay was ordered back out of Scotland. They found him in some fjord in Scotland fishing or something. Lindsay was a great naturalist and genuinely enjoyed it. Very good at it. They tracked him down in some remote area of northern Scotland, got him on a British military plane to come down to Akrotiri, and so roughly about the same time, I don't remember in what order he showed up. Again, on a TDY basis until a regular DCM could get there. That was the idea that Washington had. In the end, Lindsay and Dean Brown did not work together that long. I think what happened was that Dean Brown decided that Lindsay could leave fairly soon before the regular ambassador got out, because at that point we knew that Bill Crawford would be coming and Brown decided there was no point to hold Lindsay. So as I recall, Lindsay left to go take up his job in Washington. Brown stayed around until Crawford got there and then Crawford's DCM came in soon thereafter.

Q: Ambassador Bill Crawford had been previously the DCM in Nicosia, before you were there I think.

WILLIAMS: He was DCM before we were there. He and Ginger came back from Yemen where he was serving as ambassador several times in our first year there because they loved Cyprus, they had a beach house up in Kyrenia, Totlasu rather, and they had many, many friends on the island.

Q: Came back on leave during that period. Do you remember when he came back then as ambassador to Cyprus?

WILLIAMS: It would have been in September it seems to me, or October. Dean Brown was not there more than a few weeks as I recall. I don't precisely remember.

Q: Dean Brown's main mandate during that period was security...

WILLIAMS: Well, security, to get the embassy working again as a team, to establish good relations with the Clerides government. Just put things back together again, because it was perceived, I think correctly, that things needed putting back together in the embassy. And Dean Brown was a very tough and able guy who did that.

Q: And you continued to do your political...

WILLIAMS: Actually, I probably did more for Dean Brown than I'd done for Rodger, because I was in the fortunate position, as was Mike Austrian, of being well-versed in Cyprus at this point. Knowing the language of the Greeks' side, able to translate for him, and there were a lot of communiquï¿½s and stuff that I translated for him. And being physically intact and mentally intact from what had happened on the 19th of August. Several folks had to be evacuated after that because they were not just shell-shocked, they were seriously troubled and it would have been cruel and unkind and unwise to keep them there in that condition. So Mike and I and Red Jessup and the station chief were the core group that stayed on. We by great luck kept our wits and our bodies intact and we had contacts so Dean Brown used us very, very heavily.

Q: He did not have any particular background in Cyprus. Obviously, very experienced senior officer.

WILLIAMS: Very experienced guy, no particular background in Cyprus though he did have experience in the Middle East I guess. Maybe he had gotten over to Cyprus at some point. I really don't know.

Q: He was in Jordan in 1970 wasn't he when Black September?

WILLIAMS: I think you're right. He was a joy to work for, a good leader in a difficult time. Dave Gremlin was another one; he was the PAO and had a lot of experience in Cyprus too. So Brown essentially had a cadre of five or six people who really knew the place, had their marbles, were unafraid and could advise him well. And he was very good about seeking advice.

Q: So Bill Crawford came, a new DCM came, who was that?

WILLIAMS: Fred Brown came down. I don't remember how Bill had picked Fred. Rodger's DCM never made it because that assignment was aborted. I don't even remember who it was, frankly. But Fred Brown came and he and Bill were a good team.

Q: You stayed there until summer of '75, a year later.

WILLIAMS: That's right. That's a somewhat sore point between my wife and me because Ann wanted to get me out of that hellhole as she described it often, after she was evacuated back to the States. She and Ben wound up living with my mother in Arlington for almost a year, and the expectation was for months and months that the families would come back very soon. Once the fighting stopped, the second round, the ceasefire lines were established and UNFICYP established the perimeter, the expectation was the families would start coming back fairly soon. As I recall they didn't start coming back until the first quarter, maybe the second quarter of '75. It took a long time.

Q: You had a daughter that was born.

WILLIAMS: Ann was pregnant, I went back in November to see how she and Ben were doing, to see mother and everything was fine. Then Laura, our daughter, was born on January 19, 1975 and I got back for that just a few hours before.

Coincidentally, the day Laura was born the headline story in the Post with pictures was of the next Greek Cypriot demonstration that attacked the embassy, and this time they torched the place. They got into the back parking lot where the motor pool was, set fire to some of the lower offices and cars, nobody was hurt. Certainly nobody was shot, thank God, but it was an ugly reminder of how volatile the situation still was. I think that headline that greeted Ann when Laura was born sort of convinced her that she was never going back to the island with her children. I decided with great reluctance that I would curtail, because at this point I had about 18 months to go. I was on a three year assignment. The government invested a lot of money in training me for a year in Greek, so I asked to curtail to basically anyplace that came up. But pending that, I had to go back to the island. And I did. I must say, Crawford's reaction was interesting. He was not pleased, since understandably he didn't want to lose one of his key people in a difficult time. He thought it was unprofessional and told me so. And said he had thought about disciplining me, but decided not to. And having said that, we then had I thought a very good professional relationship for the rest of my tour there which was almost six months. When we encountered each other subsequently, we stayed friends even though he was very, very unhappy.

Q: So you came back out of Cyprus twice?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, in November and January. I was working to get another job somewhere, and I was sort of desperate to get anywhere out of Cyprus just so I could get the family together. It had to be an accompanied post, and what came up was an economic/commercial job in Bonn. that was the job I got, replacing Joe Winder in the summer of 1975 which meant that I was in Cyprus until roughly early July, after the July Fourth party and then left and flew to Frankfurt and met Ann and the children there and then we went up to Bonn.

Q: We're picking up the oral history interview with James Williams on the 22nd of October 2004, and Jim we pretty much completed your discussion of being a political officer in Nicosia from '73 to '75. And then you were assigned I believe to Bonn? What did you do there?

WILLIAMS: I was assigned to Bonn initially as an economic/commercial officer to what was then called the general economic policy section. GEP, as was the acronym. I had had only a few months of economic/commercial experience. That was during my time as a central complement rotational officer in embassy Ankara. So my credentials for that assignment were fairly thin. So, as part of my in-processing when I was back on leave in January of '75, I went over to the Department of Commerce to meet their EUR folk and show them I didn't have two heads, or whatever it was I was supposed to show them. Anyways, apparently they had no objection to my assignment; we pledged a good working relationship which we had, so I went on to Bonn to be a member of the economic/commercial section.

Q: And as I recall you explained that this was actually a direct transfer and that there was also an opportunity for your family to rejoin you after they had been separated?

WILLIAMS: That's correct. Ann and I had decided when Laura was born, on the day that another mob had hit the embassy in Nicosia, that going back to Nicosia with a family in the near future was not a very smart thing to do, even if the department allowed it. And indeed the families began to return as I recall in the spring of '75. At that point, when Laura was born in January of '75 I still had a year and a half to go. And so I asked for curtailment and direct transfer to some point that would be more family friendly. And by good luck and the assistance of some friends the job in Bonn was identified and my assignment to Nicosia was broken. This did not for obvious reasons go down very well with the ambassador in Nicosia, Bill Crawford, who thought he was losing an important member of his team at a critical time. It was a critical time. He listened to my reasons; I don't think he ever agreed with them but he never opposed to curtailment or the transfer.

Q: So in Bonn you became an economic officer?

WILLIAMS: In Bonn I became an economic officer. The economic section job to which I had been assigned had been held by John Winder, who had left some months earlier.

The job itself was primarily energy. This was in the post-OPEC embargo era when IEA - the International Energy Agency - had been inaugurated and was very much in the ascendancy. There was a lot of interest in Washington and the energy portfolio was fairly interesting at the time. I knew very little about energy so I had a learning curve to go through. My contacts were primarily the ministry of energy, natural resources, there were some other contacts as I recall in the ministry of industry. And perhaps the ministry of foreign affairs when it came to dealing with OPEC and IEA. But as I learned after I got into the job a bit, what had happened when Joe Winder left some months before I got there in the summer of '75, his job had been picked apart and certain parts of it had been transferred to others who were hungry, as they say, for more work. And once I got the energy portfolio down - it took me a few months, maybe six or seven months - I quickly started looking for other things to do.

Ed Crawley, who was the head of the overall economic part of the embassy which included a whole lot of other agencies such as the DEA, the IRS and others, would give me jobs from time to time. I was asked to write speeches for Ambassador Hillenbrand which took a lot of time, and it was nice to get the attention of being a speech writer, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do. My contacts in the Ministry of Energy were first rate people, I really enjoyed working with them, and I stayed in touch with them for years after that. But as I had fancied myself a political officer from the start of my career - I had never really done political work except for my abbreviated tour in Nicosia - I looked for an opportunity to move over to the political section. That opportunity came unexpectedly when a member of the political section had to curtail for health reasons, so in November of '76 he left very suddenly, and I was offered the job.

Unfortunately this was not done through channels. Ed Crawley had heard about it after the decision was made and after I'd accepted, and it was a painful lesson for me - I should've known better - I had to explain to Ed what had happened. He was gracious, though he didn't like it, but he graciously let me go and did not object to the transfer. So in November of '76 at Embassy Bonn I was once again a political officer.

Q: And that was arranged at Embassy Bonn without much involvement from Washington?

WILLIAMS: I don't know what Washington's involvement was because there was no powerful central personnel system at this time; I'm sure Washington was informed, because the billet that I was moved into was unencumbered when Jack Hurley left and my billet had to be filled by somebody else from Washington. But basically the switch was made at embassy Bonn.

Q: And what sort of political work did you do in the political section at Bonn beginning November of '76?

WILLIAMS: Well I was the junior member of a two man section dedicated to the internal political affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany. As the title implies it's a federal system so politics is very important at the state level. There was a lot of travel involved to the so called youth political wing - it's like young republicans, young democrats - but they meet every year. They're well financed, and these organizations were very assiduous in hosting foreign diplomatic observers who were invited to view what they had to do and say because they were the rising generation of politicians in Germany. For example, the current chancellor was one of the young socialist leaders towards the end of my tour there. There were others who came up through the ranks of the young union. The free democrats, the youth branch and so on.

Bill Bodde was my boss for the first part of my tour in internal affairs, until the summer of '77 and then Vlad Lehovich came and for the balance of my tour the next two years - Vlad and I were the domestic affairs unit. It was a lot of fun. The travel was fun because we would go together to the large political congresses of the SPD, the CVU. We didn't cover the CSU, the Bavarian equivalent of the Christian Democratic Union, led by Franz Joseph Strauss. That was done and guarded very jealously by the consulate general in Munich. Harry Gilmore did that at the time and he and I were very close colleagues. My only experiences with Franz Joseph Strauss unfortunately were as observer in the Federal Parliament (Bundestag). Even in that late phase of his career he could give some of the best speeches of any member of the Bundestag. In fact, Strauss was so good, so extemporaneously good, and so witty, and so pithy, that even the backbenchers of the SPD who normally - always - hated his politics, admired his rhetorical art and would laugh and even applaud at some of his wittier sallies. It was a lot of fun to listen to, sometimes hard to follow, but essentially we reported on what the German politicians were doing in their congress, what the main debates were, whether it was missiles, or defense, or budget, or taxation or whatever. Political scandals that came up. We had a reporting plan to be sure.

But most of the stuff we assigned ourselves - it was our choice. It wasn't to meet some plan, so a lot of the stuff - as politics tends to be - was ad hoc; a scandal, an opening caused by a death, a change of coalition partner, whatever. It was a lot of fun. Largely because of the subject matter, which inherently interested me, largely because of the freedom we had - we had a budget, a modest budget, that allowed Bill Bodde and me, Vlad and me, sometimes just me alone when it was a young political group, to travel, to spend several days with the German political groups and to really develop fantastic contacts. This helped considerably when the time came to schedule a visit to Bonn by President Carter.

Brzezinski came often. A few folk came from Washington. We had scheduled quite a few folks from Germany to Washington, it was a lot of fun.

Q; And your German was good enough to do all of this?

WILLIAMS: Fortunately I'd minored in German and I'd studied the language seriously since high school and through college and came in with a 3 + 3+ it was tested at 5/5 in my home leave during the summer of '77 - that was the days when the testers at FSI were perhaps more quickly dazzled than they are today, or feeling more generous. But in any case my German was very good, and stayed very good, got even better for the whole tour.

Q: Were you the control officer for some of these visits? Or were you just with others in the embassy involved with them?

WILLIAMS: It would depend. For example, I had a contact in the Federal Chancellor's office which was kind of like the NSC only it handled both domestic and foreign issues. It was a contact I had inherited from somebody. He was sort of in the third echelon below the chancellor, but one of the chancellor's closer associates. So, for example, when Carter's visit was being set up, I was the liaison to arrange logistics, to include intelligence support, that is make sure we had secure rooms for our intelligence services. So that helped me develop my vocabulary in the intelligence field which was not too full before then.

But there were visit by the IPU - the Inter Parliamentary Union - the IPU had one of it's quadrennial meetings in Bonn in '78, I believe, or late '77. Our delegation was led by Senator Robert Stafford from Vermont. It was a bipartisan delegation of ten members, House and Senate, and as many staffers and more. I was the sole control officer for that group and covered everything from making sure the arrangements at the hotel were acceptable to handling any particular issues they had. They were a self sufficient delegation, they had their own liquor and their own control room and this and that but I was the one from the embassy to make sure nothing went wrong.

There were certain other visitors that came - I can't remember them all now - but we had a fairly busy time with visitors. Sometimes we would grouse to ourselves - only half seriously - about how we thought we were a travel bureau, but it goes with the turf and it added ultimately to the enjoyment and the success of our work there.

Q: The Federal Republic of Germany was certainly an important ally, an important country to the United States, Berlin, throughout western Europe in the period you were there...did you have the sense that agencies in Washington were really interested in the domestic political doings that you were reporting on? I'm sure they were at the times of elections, and things like that but some of the future leaders and some of the detail...did you have the feeling sometimes that you were sending something to the files?

WILLIAMS: If not to the files certainly to a limited number of desk officers in the agency and at State. Perhaps in the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) who followed the Federal republic of Germany closely. We didn't often get feedback or comment or request for information on our basic reporting on what the SPD had done in its congress in Hamburg or what the Bundestag debate on taxation really meant for the stability of the government of Helmut Schmidt. However, he had a very narrow majority for the bulk of the time I was there. After the federal election of '76 he governed essentially with a five vote majority, which in American circumstances would be almost impossible. But given the party whips and the effectiveness of party discipline over all parties in Germany, it worked. But what that meant is that Schmidt often had to satisfy the so-called rebels within the ranks of the SPD - these were backbenchers of no particular consequence who saw an opportunity to get a few headlines and sort of exploit a situation for their own benefit, and they did.

That situation and the prospect that Schmidt might lose a vote on some key issue because of these guys made Washington a little bit more interested in some of this stuff. But your basic point is correct - there wasn't a whole lot of expressed interest, at least to me, on issues that we reported on with one major exception. There were other exceptions but the one that really sticks in my mind favorable was the debate the German people and their representatives in the Bundestag had for over a year when the issue of the abolition of the death penalty - I'm sorry, the issue of the law came up that provides for life in prison. I've got this wrong. Under German law, there was no death penalty first of all.

But there was the possibility of giving life in prison for Nazi criminals if they were prosecuted within initially a 20 year period and then a 30 year period. The issue was the statute of limitations that affected the penalties for Nazi crimes. I was in Germany in this political job from '77 to '79. At that point the 30 year statute of limitations on capital crimes in the Nazi period was about to run out. Because it started running several years after the war ended. At that time there were still a few trials underway of minor officials from Auschwitz, from other camps, though the witnesses, the survivors, the people who took part in the proceedings were old and memories were fading. There were still enough of them alive to be of consequence, and there was a broad feeling among certain members of the German people, and more importantly, a large number of American people, who felt that justice should be done here, and not allowed to be thwarted because the statute of limitations had run out.

We did not have such a statute of limitations in America. So one of the initial things to explain to our reading audience back in Washington - which on this issue was very large - because of the political dynamics of holocaust issues in America - was that the German system was different, why it was different, and what the options were. The decision to essentially abolish the statute of limitations on murder, which is what it came down to, murder in the broadest sense, was a political one. There was a substantial body of opinion in Germany, including in Schmidt's own party, which opposed any further tampering with the statute of limitations, on the grounds that that is what the Nazi's had done with the law books in their times. And therefore, once laws had been passed they should not be changed for essentially political ends, even though the stated objective was a worthy one.

So it was a debate of principle, a very passionate debate on both sides, and one in which a number of people came from Washington, or from America, to express their concern to the Chancellor and to the political leaders of Germany. I was the embassy liaison with theses groups. I remember one group; it was an interfaith group, with the head of the anti-defamation league, the NAACP, labor leaders, about ten or fifteen distinguished Americans, most of whose names I'd read about in the papers but I'd never met before. They came as part of a bipartisan interfaith delegation to express their concern to chancellor Schmidt - who spoke fluent English.

And he spent easily an hour of time with them, discussing the issue, his own personal views, the politics of it, and without committing himself to the outcome said he could assure them it would be an outcome of integrity. And in the end I think they left, more or less satisfied that they had been heard. When the vote finally came, the Bundestag did vote to abolish the statute of limitations on murder. But over a period of, I would say, four months, maybe longer, this was an issue on the front page of the German press, it was something we reported on almost every week. there were special reports written on it based on our reporting, sometimes they would quote it verbatim - I was rather amused about that - without giving us credit. I chided my friend John Maypother who did that once, but I mention it just to indicate the degree of interest back here in an issue that was far more than just a German domestic political decision.

So at the end of the day the statute was abolished on that particular crime and that meant that any Nazi criminal from the third Reich, no matter how ancient or feeble, could be captured and prosecuted if evidence was found to deduce his guilt during the third Reich. This was a victory more of principle than of practicality. I think the number of trials that followed the abolition were very very few.

Q: Was the Schmidt government in coalition with the free democrats?

WILLIAMS: They were indeed. And that coalition was under some strain because they'd been in power - they'd been together - for some time since the free democrats had switched to coalition with the SPD. There were always conservative members of the FDP who wanted to go back to their earlier coalition with the CSU, but Hans-Dietrich Genscher who was the head of the FDP and the foreign minister, and Schmidt managed to keep the wild men in both their parties under control , and keep the coalition going for the whole time I was there.

Q: And during this period I think in Italy and in Rome and in London, political sections with several officers covering the domestic political situation tended to specialize, so in London I think there was someone who did the conservatives, someone else who did the Labor party, and I think that was true in Rome. That was not true in Bonn?

WILLIAMS: That was not true in Bonn. We discussed that several times, but essentially, even though our political section was large, there were only two of us who did domestic affairs. We thought - this decision was made before I got there and I think it was a good one, we certainly affirmed it any number of times - that was better for Bill and me, and later Vlad and me to be acceptable and known and welcome in all the parties and their youth groups rather than to be specialized in one or the other. And it worked out fine.

Q: Now you did tend to mainly connect with the three main parties, CDU, SPD and the free democrats, what about the small parties both the left - the communists - and the far right?

WILLIAMS: We had no dealings with the communists, or whatever their name was at the time. With the Greens we had some dealings, particularly after they entered the state parliament. We did meet with a few of the greens. I think we even went to their national convention once, again on invitation. And that was fun, but they were quite different from the other groups, deliberately so, they were also a bit more awkward with our status, and how to deal with us as members of the so-called capitalist, imperialist NATO class. But on a whole our relations were cordial and I had a lot more to do with them in Berlin, and we'll get to that later.

There's one more issue I should have mentioned, that really was at least as neuralgic and explosive in Germany and watched as carefully in Washington as was the debate on the statute of limitations on murder. That was the whole question of terrorism. The Baader-Meinhof gang was still active, or at least members of it were, even though Baader and Meinhof had been arrested. Some of their adherents were still active. There was a lot of clear sympathy for and support for radical revolutionary groups in the German intellectual class and elite groups. And there was a lot of violence, because there were individuals - not many of these folks - but they were very good at what they did. When I was there, rode up on a motorcycle with a friend one day and machine gunned the solicitor general of the Republic of Germany in the car with his driver. Killed him. Hanns Martin Schleyer who was the head of chamber of commerce was kidnapped and in broad daylight in Cologne by one of these groups and murdered, several weeks later before the federal authorities could find them.

And the German reaction to this type of terrorism, which was also going on at Italy at the time too, they had Red Brigades and there'd been other groups in Ireland, in Spain, the ETA, these groups seemed to for awhile have a sort of Robin Hood-esque quality to them. They were invincible, the authorities could not catch them, they got bad people who prosecuted left wingers or represented the imperialist class. And it was really difficult for the Germans to come to grips with this. Finally they did catch these people and put them away. But even when they put them away there was trouble because in Stammheim Prison, which is the maximum security prison that was built in Stuttgart in southwest Germany, to take care of these people, to house them, several prisoners were able to coordinate their own suicide on the same night without anybody aware of it or able to stop them. So these suicides raised a great human cry, debates in the Bundestag, demands for investigation, it was really something.

And there was a lot of interest back here on just what is this going to mean because the German self-confidence seemed to be shaken by all this. They didn't know how to deal with these people even when they captured them. They didn't know how to deal with them: to keep them alive, to prosecute them, to keep them in jail doing their penance, and there was a lot of soul searching and hand wringing about just what all of this meant for the republic of Germany.

We had to take precaution at the embassy because we were targets too. There was initial surveillance that I knew of, even though I was not in the security or intelligence part of the embassy of the embassy compound. That led us to increase some of our precautions against that. There were later efforts to shoot rockets after I left Bonn. In the early 80s, there was an effort to shoot a rocket into the embassy compound from across the Rhine. I don't recall what happened in that effort but it was made by these groups. They were dangerous people. And there was a concern in some quarters in Germany and in Washington that the government might overreact and impose martial law or the equivalent of it in trying to get the domestic security situation under control.

At one point after Schleyer was abducted and murdered in a rather grisly fashion and more threats were made there were actually armored vehicles and tanks on the street of Bonn, in the government compound and near the main embassies. And that was a sight that I don't think had ever been seen in Bonn before. It brought back very unpleasant memories of the not-too-distant past. A lot of Germans worried about it. It made the front page of the Times, caused a swath of difficulties for the Germans, internationally, including the United States. So reporting on that and trying to make sense of it in terms of what it really meant to the Germans, how the Germans sized it up, how they were reacting. That was a big part of what I did, and not just what I did but what Dick Smyser the political counselor, Vlad Lehovich my boss, the ambassador, Walt Stoessel and Frank Munoz his DCM and all of us, and the intelligence services too, were all reporting on this with our contacts and from our perspectives. It was a major issue for I'd say most of the '77 - '79 period I was there.

Q: Okay. Anything else we should say about Bonn? There was an election in '76 but you weren't in the political section then.

WILLIAMS: No, no.

Q: So you weren't there in the political section for a major election?

WILLIAMS: No but we certainly followed it. Our son was five years old at the time and we lived in the suburb of Bonn which essentially had garden apartments and a few houses and lots of kids. So even though Ben went to the American school, learned in English, he played in German, with German playmates. So one day he came home singing a song, I forget the tune and I forget the lyrics, but essentially it was an SPD election song, because that part of the Rhineland was very SPD. Very red as they said.

And so it was an SPD election campaign song against the Americans. So Ben, though he spoke German, didn't quite understand the import of what he was singing although he had the tune down right and he and the kids were singing happily along. So Ann had to explain to him what the song was and when she talked to his friends she said "You really want us to leave?" and they said "No, no no we don't mean you" so they were a little vignettes like that. But that was all personal, not professional and it was not part of the political team.

Q: Now you had been previously in Cyprus, served in Turkey, and Germans were kind of involved in that part of Europe, during the period you were there. But you weren't involved at all yourself? There was an external part of the political section that did get involved.

WILLIAMS: Right. Mike _____ and his deputy, they had a two man section also, who covered essentially the foreign ministry. As well as it could be covered by anybody; we had out hands full with the political parties. It was a clear division of labor. We had a two man section for the political military issues liaison with the ministry of defense and to some extent the armed forces. In the last year I was there we got a DOD (Department of Defense) colleague who was detailed to us. A civilian from OSD who was detailed to us to help with the reporting effort. And he reported through embassy channels but this was one of the handful of positions created world wide when SECDEF and SECSTATE agreed to do it.

Q: And there was somebody in the political section that spent all their time on issues related to Berlin?

WILLIAMS: There were two people. There was a lawyer, Peter Funge, Jim Whitlock, and a head deputy - there were four people - because the deputy political councilor Bob German did a lot of Berlin, but not exclusively, and there was a political councilor. So we had a fairly extensive section. A number of locals who did translation for us, we had a clipping service, we had a fellow Irving Gross who had a room full of cabinets full of clippings he made, and pasted them in the center of a nice piece of paper with annotations of date and publication. He was a tremendous resource because at the drop of a hat he'd get you biographic information, factual information of what happened when, and gossip information. He was very useful as a resource.

I had a colleague who took me to the Bundestag. He knew everybody in the Bundestag and everybody knew him and he could open any door there and it was very helpful.

Q: You mentioned before being present for some of the sessions of the Bundestag. Was that something you did regularly?

WILLIAMS: Well the Bundestag met several days most weeks. There was summer breaks and Easter breaks and Christmas breaks but we had the calendar so several days a week they'd be in session. And depending on what the topic was, we would go and sit in the tribunes upstairs and listen to it. This was something I didn't have to do all the time but I enjoyed it, particularly when someone like Strauss was going to speak, or the chancellor, or Willy Brandt who was first rate.

_____ was the fellow who had started as a communist, switched over to the SPD after he had a falling out with Stalin and had risen to become the head of the SPD caucus in the Bundestag. And he was called Uncle Herbert, with good reason. He had a vicious temper, and tongue, he didn't hesitate to discipline members who got out of line, and he knew every issue backward and forwards. So nobody was going to cross him.

But he was also, perhaps with Schmidt and Brandt, the only one in the Bundestag who was as gifted oratorical as Franz Joseph Strauss. And occasionally when they would speak on the same issue, taking entirely different sides, and alluding to each other's position in the most caustic way, it was both a political and rhetorical pleasure just to listen to them go at it. So I enjoyed that very much. It took a lot of time, obviously. There's no speed up on those debates, and they would go on for hours, but I learned a lot about Germany and German politics that way. And I developed tremendous admiration for some of these war horses of the main parties.

Q: Did the Bundestag operate through committees? Were you involved with the committees or more with the body as a whole?

WILLIAMS: Oddly enough I only attended plenary sessions; I could only attend plenary sessions.

Q: Ok, Jim you wanted to say a few words about President Carter's visit?

WILLIAMS: Jimmy Carter came to Bonn in the last year we were there. I think it was in the summer. And I was involved in setting up that visit, helping a large team, obviously, do that. It was an interesting visit because it was widely believed and I think with good reason, that Chancellor Schmidt and President Carter did not like each other. You'd read all kinds of gossip in the German papers that obviously came from some source in the federal chancery about Schmidt's acerbic comments one way or the other. But at the end of the day, the visit went, as far as I recall, very well. There were no fireworks. Ann and I were involved in one particular aspect of the visit. Carter, being a very religious man, wanted to attend church services on Sunday and he was there on a Sunday, and it so happened that our community, the American community in Plittersdorf, had an American church built in New England style with a steeple, white wood and brick. Ann and I were regular members of the congregation and we were part of the liaison team with Russ Montfort the minister to make sure the visit went well. Basically, Carter came in, sat down through the whole service, and then went out and shook hands with the congregation after it was over. It was a very nice service, I forget what the sermon was, but everybody was very happy, the church was packed to the rafters which it wasn't always.

Q: Sometimes he reads the scripture or even gives the lesson.

WILLIAMS: I don't think he had any role as I recall. He came in and sat down and Ann was in one of the back rows and some fellow with a huge satchel came in and sat down next to her and she was very aware of security and had no idea who this guy was. He was in civilian dress and he had a satchel which was bulging. She didn't know what in the hell it was, and finally she nudged somebody from the Secret Service from our own security office and said what is this guy with his bag over here. It was the President's physician with his medicaments Carter might have needed. Carter didn't need any medication.

Q: I thought you were going to say it was the nuclear codes.

WILLIAMS: No, it wasn't the package; this was a doctor as it turned out. Carter, who has wonderful interpersonal skills, and Mrs. Carter, and Amy who was there, spent a lot of time shaking hands with the congregation. Amy at one point took our daughter Laura's hand and walked with her around a bit, we have a picture of that. And years later when I was in Athens and President and Mrs. Carter came there for another reason, we showed them that picture of Amy and Laura from Bonn in the late '70s and they autographed it for us. We reminisced a bit about the visit, so that was a lot of fun.

Q: Alright, anything else?

WILLIAMS: Well a big part of my off-duty time in Bonn was the tennis committee of the American Club on the Rhine. The whole time we had an embassy in Bonn and had the residential area in Plittersdorf we had essentially a country club which was part of that Plittersdorf complex which had swimming pool and tennis courts, and for the last two or three years of my tour in Bonn I was the chairman of the tennis committee which meant setting up tennis tournaments, sometimes officiating at, in which I discovered the hard way is a lot more difficult than it looks on TV. Making line calls that the players don't like is not always easy. But it was quite an education in how to run a committee, how to set up a banquet where the ambassador came, because he was an avid tennis player, and Mrs. Stoessel was too. That added to the overall pleasure that we had. I think from the point of view of the overall enjoyment of the whole family I guess the total experience professional and personal, Bonn would be one of the top parts of our Foreign Service career. That was great.

Q: Being involved with the tennis committee sounds better, I've done a number of these oral history interviews where there was an experience being a member of the school board of the American school and that was often very difficult and heavy responsibility. This sounded like very responsible and some difficulty, but probably a lot of fun too.

WILLIAMS: There was rarely difficulty. The only problem we had was a rather embarrassing one. As I said we had an annual banquet to award trophies to those who'd won the club tournament in various divisions, and the first year I did that I assumed that the staff from the club would have the names engraved properly on the trophies, but when I made the awards I discovered that virtually every name had been misspelled. So I had to make the presentations and then go back after the ceremony and get the trophies back to have the name plates done correctly. After that, we checked the names before they went to the engraver.

Q: Ok, you left Bonn in '79, where did you go then?

WILLIAMS: Left in '79, at this point I'd been abroad since '76; I'd been out of real work in Washington since '72 when I started Greek language training. I had a chance to go to Prague as DCM. I hope I'm not being indiscrete in revealing that Frank Meehan who had been designated the ambassador in Prague wanted me to do that, or was kind enough to ask me to do that. Frank may have appreciated much better than I did the difficulties that would cause, because as I said I had no real sub-seventh floor experience in the department at that point and even worse I was one grade junior for the job, so it was a stretch. The system said no despite Frank's best efforts. I felt wonderful, flattered by being asked by that fellow because he was such a phenomenal person as well as a representative of our country, but it didn't work out that we went to Prague. It was probably for the best I have to say, although at the time I was a bit sore that Washington didn't see the wisdom of Ambassador Meehan's choice. He got a very fine DCM as it turned out, Byron Morton, who was of grade, and actually I think had served in Eastern Europe before. So we came back to Washington and I was assigned to EUR/SE.

I was assigned to be the Cyprus desk officer in EUR/SE, the Office of Southern European Affairs. Ed Dillery was in charge of it and Bob Pugh, later Geoff Ogden was the deputy. There were two Turkish desk officers, two Greek desk officers, and one Cyprus desk officer, two people in the front office of SC and then several secretaries. This was my first real experience working in the Department of State below the seventh floor. Up on the seventh floor I'd done essentially staff work, asking others for something, telling others what to do, but I'd never really done what I would call serious work at the country officer level. And as I had served in Cyprus I knew quite a bit about it at that time and it was not hard to pick up the portfolio for Cyprus and EUR/SE. One of the first issues we had to deal with was whether to allow into the United States for medical treatment Nicos Sampson who had been installed by the junta as the president of Cyprus when Makarios had escaped by the skin of his teeth and with his life in 1974. Sampson at the time the request was pending was suffering from a horribly debilitating disease which is caused by parasites that get into your system and cause enormous benign tumors in all parts of the body including the vital organs, the heart and so forth. It was not so much disfiguring as disabling and very painful, and it does sooner or later lead to death. So we apparently had some treatment or treatment centers in America that could handle this disease and his other ailments. And as I recall, Kyprianou the president of Cyprus, asked us to let him in. I wrote a memo to George Vest, this was the first thing I ever wrote I think for SE. Basically saying that we don't owe anybody this favor, that Sampson could get treatment in France where he was staying or somewhere else. He was kind of a Flying Dutchman at that point. He hadn't yet been allowed to go back to Cyprus, he was clearly sick, but just as clearly there were other treatment centers available, so my recommendation was no. Ed signed it off, it went up. I don't recall what the final decision was, but this experience on the desk brought me into very close contact with members of the Cyprus embassy. Some of them I saw later when they were in Bonn, Andreas Nicolaides was briefly in the embassy in Washington but went later to Bonn as ambassador.

Q: He was in Washington quite a while.

WILLIAMS: Came back as ambassador to Washington, then he was ambassador in Bonn, and I saw him in Bonn when I was passing through once or twice as coordinator. I enjoy working with the Cyprus embassy folk. To some extent I dealt with the Greek and Turkish embassy although not quite so much for obvious reasons, but just learning how the bureaucracy works in terms of the budget cycle, in terms of the aid requests, in terms of the importance and the power of the domestic groups that are concerned with Cyprus and Greece. Everything from AHEPA to the Pan-Cypriot Federation and the other groups that were around at the time. We saw them all and quite a bit of some of them. I think I only spent about five months on the Cyprus desk. It was a busy time. The Kyprianou/Sampson issue sticks out in my mind as the main thing. There were probably some others. But the Turkish desk had a sudden vacancy. Having also served in Turkey and realizing that that was a bigger job because it had a secretary and a deputy, I applied for it and I moved over. And for the next two and a half years I was the senior Turkish desk officer in SE. It was a very busy time for reasons of military aid, economic aid, the effort to stabilize the economy of Turkey, periodic rumblings about the military. There was a coup in 1980 and there was terrorism. The first thing I had to deal with when I moved over, and it was December of '79, it was the immediate aftermath of the assassination of four American contractors in Istanbul by Dev Sol or one of the leftist Turkish terrorist groups. These people were somewhat similar to Baader Meinhof, left wing in orientation, highly organized, compartmentalized, very ideological, and they had enough bench strength so that even when the Turkish police rolled up some of their cells, there were others to do the work. So the quick issue I had to deal with was the assassination of these four contractors and what that meant or didn't mean for the bilateral relationship.

Q: One issue that I'd like to hear what you have to say on, and I don't want to take things out of sequence, but at the time of the military takeover in 1980 and there had been terrorism, there was lots of concern about the situation in Turkey, do you want to say what you remember about that event and the U.S. reaction to it. It was late in the Carter administration. Were we terribly upset that the military demolished the democratic process in Turkey and so on? Maybe talk a little bit about the period before it too.

WILLIAMS: There was a steady worsening of the domestic situation in Turkey starting in the late '70s when Sï¿½leyman Demirel came back to power. It wasn't because it was Demirel but it was just because these left wing terrorist groups were getting out of hand in the sense they were killing more and more people and creating more and more sense of panic and disorder in Turkey. This unease of course was noticed by the Turkish military which historically has viewed itself and been viewed by the Turkish people as the guardian of the Ataturk legacy. The situation affected schools, it affected universities, it affected economic areas. There was hardly an area of Turkish life that was not to some extent compromised by this terrorism. Just one personal comment: our language teachers from Ankara who had taught Ann and me Turkish in the late '60s left Turkey at that time in '79 and came to the States. They left essentially because they were worried about their children. It was so unsafe. Even their young child who was in primary school, the primary schools were not entirely safe from the random violence or the targeted violence of the terrorist groups. It was a time of tremendous unease and danger for many people. Turks in the cities especially. Much less so in the countryside. I don't recall if martial law was used in that period, though in some provinces for much of the '80s and '90s martial law was in effect. There was no Kurdish issue at this time. This was not an issue of Kurdish separatism or Kurdish unrest at all. This was an issue of left wing anarchistic terror against the state and against the Turkish people. Against that background I, by sheer dumb luck, happened to be in Ankara on consultations September 11 or 12, whatever day it was 1980 when the coup happened. I was staying at the residence and Ambassador Spain knocked on my door early that morning and said I could sleep in and take my time because we wouldn't be going down to the embassy for a while, there had been a coup. But when we did go down the hill from ï¿½ankaya where the residence is located, to the embassy, there were no cars in the streets, there was a tank here or there, but there were a lot of people walking around and they looked quite happy and relaxed. This is Ankara now, I'm not going to generalize beyond that, but it was a pretty big hunk of people, looked quite pleased that the military, thank God, had arrived to put things right. Relieved and happy. We didn't interview them, this is a very impressionistic statement, and could be challenged by people who looked at it more scientifically, but the sense was, and this was also the sense that other people on the country team had, of relief that at last the Turkish military had acted and stepped in and would impose order and bring the terrorists under control. As I recall, that's pretty much what happened. They did use martial law; they did bring the terrorism under control. They did set in motion, largely prodded by us, a process to restore democracy, but with a constitution that gave the military tremendously central importance in national security and main affairs of state. Our reaction in Washington was certainly not one of condemnation. I think there was a lot of understanding and sympathy for what the Turks had been going through, and given the fact that the military had already overrun the government several times before, and had restored democracy, there was a reasonable expectation that it would do so again. I remember Larry Eagleburger was the assistant secretary for EUR soon after this happened.

Q: Not until 1981. He was ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time. George Vest was assistant secretary during this period.

WILLIAMS: I distinctly remember meeting with Eagleburger. I'm confusing my dates perhaps, but essentially Ambassador Elekdag who was the Turkish ambassador for many years in Washington came in with his talking cards. He always had his points on three by five or four by seven cards and started making excuses, explaining how democracy would soon be restored. And it was either Eagleburger or Secretary Haig or both who in effect said don't worry about that, we understand what you did and we understand that you have a plan to in effect restore democracy when conditions are right. So there was no real pressure from Washington as far as I can recall, despite the official tut-tutting about what happened to democracy. But there was a deep understanding for the reasons it had happened and as I said a reasonable expectation that the Turkish military would restore both order and democracy in due course.

Q: What you just said is basically my recollection as well. I happened to be in Bonn at the time on September 12th I think it was of 1980 and had arrived I think from Berlin the night before and was staying at the DCM's residence and was quite surprised at breakfast to find out what had happened in Turkey, and then Jack Seymour came to pick me up and we went over to the foreign ministry. Of course, with the time difference with Washington it was a little hard to consult with people, but the German foreign ministry was very interested in what our reaction would probably be, and I think as I recall describing it more or less along the lines of what you just said. That yes, we always preferred democracy, but we were confident and things had gotten very bad in Turkey and this was not a big surprise and we would probably be somewhat understanding of it.

WILLIAMS: I recall now the specific issue with Secretary Haig. I had conflated two meetings. When Haig became Secretary of State early in '81, this would have been the end of January, early February. Early in his tenure, Elekdag came up for a meeting and in that meeting, his first with the new Secretary of State of the new administration, Elekdag started to explain how the Turkish military planned to restore democracy, anticipating that this is what his audience would want to hear. My deputy was in that meeting, Larry Benedict I think it was. Larry said it was quite striking. Before Elekdag could get through one card, and he had quite a few of them, Haig essentially cut him off and said don't worry about it, we trust you. And Elekdag was very surprised because he'd been expecting to get a little more effusive encouragement to go back to democracy. Haig, having dealt with the Turkish military as NATO Commander and intimately involved in some of their dealings with the Greeks and the effort to bring Greece back into the military wing of NATO, Haig knew these folks, General Ebren and the others, and had full confidence in them. He wanted to assure Elekdag he didn't need to go through the motions of talking about restoration of democracy. So he didn't. Elekdag talked about something else.

Q: What were some of the other issues that you dealt with as country director for Turkey in this period?

WILLIAMS: Turkish aid levels were a hardy perennial. I never did learn our own budget cycle very well. I remember that Eric Grayfelt who coordinated these things for the various desks in EUR would come by; it seemed earlier and earlier each year, with a request to start jetting up papers for presentation. How much money for economic assistance, how much for military assistance. The Turkish debt issue was a constant problem. My deputy tended to cover this more than I did, but as I recall there were several efforts by the Paris club to reschedule Turkish debt which had been done before. We crossed a new threshold however when we rescheduled already once before rescheduled debt from previously rescheduled debt. So PRD, previously rescheduled debt, rescheduling became the watch word and we had a lot of meetings with Elekdag on doing that. I think at the end of the day we did it. I don't remember the numbers, but because of Turkey's central importance to us, to the alliance, to that part of the Mediterranean, those strategic considerations overrode shall we say financial orthodoxy and I think the trade treaty went along finally.

Q: As I recall, one of the reasons why we were as confident of Turkey and what the military would do was that they retained Turgut Ozal as kind of the chief economic officer as he had been in previous government. And I know I had some meetings with him in Paris and in Washington. Do you remember anything about that?

WILLIAMS: Just that he was retained and that was an important element of continuity and as you say confidence. Demirel had installed him as an economic advisor with some power. I think those powers in his portfolio were enhanced significantly when the military came in, but I had no particular dealings with him, unfortunately.

Q: U.S. military facilities in Turkey had presumably gone back into operation, back to normal, after the congressional Turkish arms embargo was lifted in '78. Were you involved in status of forces negotiations or any kind of base negotiations with Turkey?

WILLIAMS: Not really. Don Gelber as I recall was our main negotiator for the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, the DECA.

Q: And he was in the embassy at Ankara at the time.

WILLIAMS: Was in the embassy at the time and came back regularly which is where I'm at, to debrief essentially. But that was handled on a different level. I'm sure Ed and probably Bob Pugh and Geoff Ogden were much more involved than I was. But I did not do base negotiations directly. I do remember the debriefs which were extensive and I seem to recall that that DECA was used as the model for the Greek DECA. There were two DECAs were there not in that period?

Q: There were, in parallel more or less. Any other issues with Turkey that you were...

WILLIAMS: Economic assistance I mentioned, military assistance. The Turks had a charming way through Ambassador Elekdag in particular, voicing their expectation that you would give them certain amounts, and it was put in the declarative sense which did not go down well initially with those that did not know the Turks. But in fact they got substantial assistance from us in those years. One year we actually gave them more than they had asked for. I don't remember why. And they never made that mistake again. They constantly upped the ante so we are always under their expectations and therefore we were in the position of owing them something by their lights. It sounds like I'm making fun of them, and I am to a certain degree, but I thoroughly enjoyed working with the Turkish embassy. It was a very professional group. Elekdag was one of the best ambassadors I've ever seen in any country. I think his tenure here was very successful. There was one issue too which I should mention, which sounds like I'm echoing my Bonn comments, but it's true, that is terrorism which I started to mention before. Terrorism was of course a concern in Turkey. Unfortunately on my watch it became a concern in the United States with respect to Turkish diplomats. I think in the early '70s a deranged elderly Armenian in California had murdered two Turkish consuls in their office and he was I believe a survivor of the Armenian genocide or the son of somebody who had survived it, but had very direct memories of that experience. And this had never happened before, and we were shocked and the Turks were shocked. As I recall that old man was sent to jail for the rest of his life. For whatever reason, at this point I can't remember what the reason was, the Armenian community in the third generation in the States, members of it was radicalized in the late '70s and there was a group called ASALA, the secret army for the liberation of Armenia. There were two essentially Armenian groups with terrorist wings in the United States. One of them assassinated a Turkish consul general and his driver I believe in Los Angeles when I was a desk officer, and this fellow was caught, his name was Sosoonian. He was caught rather quickly; he was prosecuted and sent to life in prison. I think he's still there. That search, that prosecution, that trial, that conviction, were very closely watched by the Turks as an indication of how seriously we took the problem of terrorism that affected them. We worked out a system that was followed so closely, this was before e-mail. Our embassy had to have almost day to day real time input to keep up with the Turks who were getting it from their people in Washington and out in California about what was going on with the trial. I forget how we did it exactly, but somehow we got daily reports from the courtroom or from lawyers following the case for us. We didn't have Greta Van Susteren but we had somebody talking to us who was a lawyer who could give us a sense of things. Maybe somebody in the Justice Department. And I would then send an official and formal night note to Dick Bone the DCM in Ankara to give him the latest up to date. There was no CNN; there was no broadcast coverage that would compete with that. So he had by the next morning more information than anybody else in the embassy probably and certainly enough to deal with the Turks in the foreign ministry who were hammering on us daily about what are you going to do about Sosoonian, what are you going to do about Sosoonian. That we hoped would be the end of it. Unfortunately, about a year later, another Turk was killed in Boston. This was the honorary consul. I forget the name. But he was killed by an Armenian, third generation from the genocide. I don't know the name this time. But that person too was caught and convicted and sent to jail. Once again demarches by the Turkish ambassador had to be dealt with, demarches in Ankara had to be dealt with, and real time information on the status of the trial. So that took a lot of time. And there was another component to it because the Turks quite rightly said and our own people in DS (Diplomatic security) concluded that the Turks had other enemies too. A Cypriot once tried something just after the Cyprus disaster of '74. So there were various groups of people in this country and elsewhere who would try to get them. There was also a serious case of Armenian terrorism against Turks in Europe. In Vienna, in Paris and elsewhere they were successful in assassinating Turkish ambassadors and other officials. So the Turks were in a sort of understandable paranoia about what this meant and they were demanding all kinds of protection. And we as a matter of prudence thought it necessary to give them some extra protection. And that came down to the issue which is where I was so heavily involved with DS and the treasury, of installing fixed posts at the Turkish embassy and to some extent to Turkish consular positions in the United States. The Treasury ran the uniformed division of the Secret Service and that was the body in Washington tasked with providing fixed posts. It's something that no security service likes to do because it's very manpower intensive. It's 24 hours a day, just chews up people. It's seven days a week. And the initial reaction was no, no, no, but we kept going back to them and then we finally overruled the Secret Service. I think it required the Deputy Secretary of State talking to his colleague in Treasury before it was finally done. When the dam was broken we got the fixed post at the Turkish embassy and I think it's still there. I think DS might have had to do this at their consulates elsewhere in the United States, so that was visible, tangible proof of our seriousness about terrorism and our determination to give the Turks some extra protection. A lot of people said at the time, and this may be true, that's not the most efficient use of manpower in terms of combating terrorism. On the other hand, it's a very basic part of reassuring the protectee that you're serious and that he can do his work normally. So getting that done I think was probably the largest single issue I had on my last year on the desk there.

Q: Besides the tragic incidents of Turkish diplomats being killed by terrorists there certainly over the years has been pressure by the Armenian American community and Armenians elsewhere to encourage Turkey to accept responsibility for what happened in 1915. Congressional resolutions, something at the Holocaust Museum. Did that sort of thing come up while you were on the desk, or was that later?

WILLIAMS: It was always there. It was part of the discussion because as soon as you start talking about Armenian terrorism the reasons for it come up and the past is dredged out, and the obstinate refusal of the Turkish governments to open the archives or to even express regret let alone apologize was always, always there. But I would say that the political discussion on this subject was virulent at the time because of the murders. I mean that made it difficult to have a dispassionate discussion with the Turks, or even with some of the Armenian American leadership about what was involved in the Turkish relationship. I remember, and there was a lot of pressure against Turkey, and justifiable pressure, for its refusal to come clean or to open the archives or to allow a dispassionate examination of the record. The Republic of Turkey was the legal successor to the Ottoman government and the government in power in World War I, and it certainly was not responsible for what had been done. But it seemed to take the position, and I think this is the case of many Turkish governments and maybe to this day, that if you accept responsibility by saying you're sorry, you open yourself up to potential claims for reparations either monetary or territory or both and they just didn't want to go down that road because that would be domestically difficult in Turkey. I had several experiences with this and I lost a few feathers in both. One of our efforts to promote the bilateral relationship, which I saw as one of my duties on the Turkish desk, was to host or to have the Turkish folkloric ballet perform in the United States. This was something that USIS (United States Information Service) had scheduled, it was cultural exchange. This was the national folkloric ballet of Turkey doing essentially folk dances which are not unlike those you see in Greece and other parts of the Middle East, Cyprus. But they were Turks and they were doing Turkish dances, and their name was Turkish Folkloric Ballet. The impresario initially scheduled them to do four appearances in California, I think a couple in Chicago, New York, Boston, and finally in the Kennedy Center at Washington. The pressure from the Armenian American community and other communities against those appearances was so great that one by one the insurers started threatening to cancel their policies and the owners of the theaters and the other establishments started backing out. We couldn't obviously tell any of these folks what to do as the Department of State, but we thought it important to appeal to the political leadership in California at least to try to let this performance go forward on the grounds of cultural exchange and not to give into terrorism as we would do. This type of political pressure as we put it, we didn't call it terrorism outright. So I, as full of my enthusiasm as I always was, drafted a set of I thought very persuasive talking points for the deputy secretary. The secretary was not available and Larry Eagleburger didn't want to bother him, but for Judge Clark, Deputy Secretary, to use with the Governor of California who as luck would have it was named Deukmejian.

Q: And Clark had a very strong California connection.

WILLIAMS: Clark was a Californian and knew his way around politics there. He might not know much about foreign policy but his mother had raised no fool when it came to domestic policy and politics. He understood that very well. In any case, we did the talking points. This was an important issue because the Turkish ambassador had been demarching all over town about it. The Turks had been raised with our embassy in Ankara, and as a matter of principle we really felt the Turkish Folkloric Ballet should be allowed to perform. But both the cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco and the local backers had said no. The proposal was that Judge Clark call George Deukmejian, Governor Deukmejian and make the case on political grounds. To use suasion with his community, with his people in California, all Californians, to let these performances go ahead. I was asked to join Larry Eagleburger in Judge Clark's office. Never met Judge Clark before though I'd heard a lot about him. So Larry gave him the memo. I don't think the judge had read it. He told the judge in several senses what it was about and gave him the memo, and Clark had the call put through to Governor Deukmejian. I was sitting there taking notes because I thought that was my responsibility. Judge Clark picks up the phone, talks to the governor, had a little small talk, and then he says to the governor, there's one of my people here who wants to raise an issue with you, at which point he hands the phone to me. So I get on the phone. There was no warning on this. I was coming into the conversation cold, and Deukmejian, I don't know if he knew what the subject was or not because Clark had certainly given him no indication of what it was. So I start reading my own talking points to the governor of California and there was silence. I don't know how he looked or what he was doing or who else was on the line, but I went through all my talking points and asked for his cooperation as I thought Judge Clark was going to do. And as I recall, Deukmejian was courteous but he basically said he resented this effort to tell the people of California how to think about Turkey and what to do about the ballet, and that he just didn't think he could do anything about it or words to that effect. So that was the bottom line. So I felt like a stupid fool because I thought I'd wasted my time and his and Judge Clark's. But it was a lesson to me also in how things worked and how Murphy's Law can occur. So at the end of the day the appearances were all canceled except for the Kennedy Center, which did go on. That was the only one. Every other one the impresario backed out because the insurance wouldn't cover it, or the owners of the theater didn't want to put their facilities at risk for riot or bombing or incident or unfavorable publicity. There was just too much downside potential to the entrepreneurs and private sector and public sector folk. After this fiasco with Governor Deukmejian, I called in my capacity as senior Turkish desk officer in the Department of State, then Mayor Diane Feinstein of San Francisco, and asked her to be helpful, figuring that with a name like that she would perhaps be more inclined to be helpful. I would say she engaged more on the issue and professed sympathy, but also told me very clearly there was nothing she could do to overrule that decision or to resist the pressures for the decision to cancel the Turkish Folkloric Ballet. So even I struck out. But the performance in the Kennedy Center, perhaps for all these reasons, was well-attended. The concert hall was full. It was an enthusiastic audience; it was a stellar performance of folkloric dance. This was really impressive, the costuming, the agility, the grace of these dancers. And as it was their only appearance in a program that initially called for eight or 10 performances across the whole country, we wanted to make it special and they did too. And it was a very magical evening. But I'll never cease regretting that we couldn't do better on that cultural field, but again it was a lesson on how things work. You can't treat culture or politics or anything in isolation. It all is ultimately subject to other concerns.

Q: I'd like to come back for just a second to the aid levels for Turkey. One of the things I don't think you mentioned and maybe we should say just a word about is this whole question of the ten to seven ratio that Turkey would receive ten dollars and Greece would receive seven. No matter what the Turkish level was, that also set the Greek level. That might have been the case in the time that they got more than the Turks had asked for, that really Greece wanted more and therefore we wound up giving more to Turkey than they had asked for. Do you remember much about the ratio and how that came to be and how important that was at the time you were on the desk?

WILLIAMS: Well it was important because the Turks resented the hell out of it and they were very up front in telling us that. They essentially saw the ten to seven ratio, which was an undertaking reached in the negotiation of the Greek version of the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, as a brake on their ability to milk us for resources. The Greeks were not trying to push their levels up because they understood correctly that their lower level could push the Turkish levels down. The Turks argued that their needs, which were so far greater than those of the Greeks, were not being met adequately by us because of the braking effect of ten to seven. So it was a constant element of resentment in the discussion. That's the main thing I remember about it.

Q: You've talked about the Turkish embassy in Washington, Ambassador Elekdag, why don't you talk a little bit about your relations, how you handled Ambassador Jim Spain and then Ambassador Robert Strausz-Hupe who I think became ambassador while you were on the desk.

WILLIAMS: Jim Spain was my first ambassador. Ron Spiers had just left. Dennis Kux was the chargï¿½ for a while. We were involved in getting Jim Spain confirmed and sent out to Ankara. As it turned out he was virtually a lame duck because when the Republicans won, Strausz-Hupe was tapped to be the next ambassador to Turkey. And I don't recall how long Jim Spain's tour was. But the issue with Spain in which I was only slightly involved was his confirmation. He had had an earlier career as an analyst for the CIA and there was some concern in Washington that if the Turks found out about this it might prejudice his success as chief of mission in Ankara. It might even lead them to deny his appointment. So there was a lot of discussion about it. Spain mentions in his memoir even, I think it was finally resolved when Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary of State, was persuaded to call Ambassador Elekdag and over the phone discuss Ambassador Spain's biography to see if any neuralgic reaction occurred. At the end of the day the Turks said fine, come ahead as I recall. It was not a problem. But for a while in Washington we thought it would be.

Q: He had served in Turkey before hadn't he?

WILLIAMS: He'd been DCM. But that had not come up. This was in context of his confirmation and that was the concern. No, he'd had a very successful tour as DCM and knew Turkey well. So that was the main thing. I stayed with him once when I was there on consultations. That was during the coup of the fall of 1980. He was heavily involved in pushing the idea of a... the question was how could America best commemorate the centennial of Mustafa Kemal Atatï¿½rk's birth which was a very big issue in Turkey, but understandably not in many other countries and certainly not in the United States of America. And we discussed a lot of things, from a postage stamp to this, that or the other. I think in the end it was a very modest commemoration and I don't recall what it was, but Jim had a lot of ideas on that as he did on many things. And we tried all of them including the stamp, but discovered that the lead time for stamps is pretty long unless you're a former President of the United States. Again the politics of it was such it was clear we could not get a stamp through the Citizen's Advisory Committee even with enough lead time. There was some work with Jim as I recall, but I don't remember much more than that. Then when Ambassador Strausz-Hupe came he was in no great hurry to get out which surprised me a bit. He spent a fair amount of time consulting to Washington. As with Jim Spain I had a good relationship with Ambassador Strausz-Hupe. We made heavy use of the OI channel and less of the phone to keep each other informed officially in the formal channel. The only difficulty I had with him sometimes was that he had a habit of going out in a rather proconsul-like fashion giving press conferences. This was under the military government, giving press conferences on issues for which we had not had a chance to prepare him. Sometimes he would put his foot in it because he was uninformed so we had to help him walk that particular cat back. But that was the main issue I had with him.

Q: Okay we're continuing the foreign affairs Oral History interview with James A. Williams. It's the 4th of November 2004. And Jim, I think we're just about finished with your period at the Turkish desk, which ended about 1982. Was there any sort of last words you'd like to make about that period?

WILLIAMS: Well that was my three year tour on the desk. I'd been the desk officer for Cyprus and then most of the time for Turkey. I think it was a wonderful introduction to how the bureaucracy works, the budget process in terms of the military, and the economic assistance request clearance issues and so forth. And that was a very useful lesson for me, a very intense one, but I enjoyed it enormously.

Q: Ok, and where did you go from the southern European office of the European bureau?

WILLIAMS: I convinced myself I was suffering from burnout and I needed to do something different. And so I had heard for years from friends about the virtues of taking a year off at the National War College or similar institution and I thought that would be a good way to decompress from EUR/SE and look around for something else. So I applied for National War College training and was fortunate enough to get it.

Q: I think in this oral history program we've had lots of people that have described the National War College as a State Department student. Is there anything particularly that strikes you from your year that you'd want to talk about?

WILLIAMS: Well, it was a very different era. There was no degree program at the National War College. Essentially you could do as much or, for many, as little as you wanted in a course of study there. Two semesters. And it was a chance to really broaden yourself or just do something totally different. Many people made different choices and they were all apparently good choices. I found my classmates, certainly from the State Department contingent, but more particularly from the larger military contingents, to be quite impressive, with very different experiences in Vietnam in particular, but not just there. And so I think in terms of the cross-fertilization of the civilian and military components of government it was a very useful experience for all of us. As there was no final exam, no semester exam, no term paper until the end, no degree program, there was really no academic pressure to do all the heavy reading which was indeed very heavy, about 1,000 pages a week as I recall.

Q: What trip did you take in the spring?

WILLIAMS: Oh yes, one of the big attractions to the year at the War College was the famous trip. I got Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar, Algeria and Morocco. Actually I think we did it in that order. And it was a great time because I had never been to any of those places before. It had been years since anybody from the National War College in that capacity had been to Algeria. We were the first group since I think relations had been severed in the '67 war. They treated us very well, gave us excellent briefings. It was a good learning experience, also good cultural experience. We bonded well.

Q: It was probably in part possible in 1983 because of the strong role that the Algerians had played in ending the Tehran hostage crisis at the beginning of 1981. Did you finish your point about Algeria?

WILLIAMS: That may well have been the decisive factor. We were never told what the reason really was, except that the Algerians wanted a better relationship with us and this was one way of showing it, and we wanted a better relationship with them. There was no terrorism in Algiers at the time. We didn't go outside of the capital city. I must say the briefings they gave us which were usually in French but translated were very high quality. They seemed to go out of their way to do well by us since they were aware we were the first National War College team to come there to their country in 15, 20 years.

Q: Ok, so you finished the National War College, where then did you go?

WILLIAMS: I still wanted to be in Washington and looked at a number of jobs in Washington. On the German desk in particular I was hung up for much of my career with the idea that I should be a German affairs expert. Sometimes I succeeded, sometimes I didn't. This time I did not. But my former boss from EUR/SE, Ed Dillery, had been meanwhile moved over to lead the Office of United Nations Political Affairs, IOUNP in bureaucratese, and offered me a chance to come over as his deputy, succeeding Phil Wilcox. And so that wasn't my first choice for reasons I've stated, but it turned out to be a very good choice when I went over in the summer of 1983.

Q: So I know that IOUNP deals with political issues in the United Nations system and sends instructions to the U.S. representative to the United Nations who I think was Jeane Kirkpatrick at the time. Tell us a little bit about what your responsibilities in that office were, and what kind of issues did you deal with?

WILLIAMS: I was the deputy, but brand new to UN affairs in every respect. I'd only worked on multilateral issues in my foreign service career through a sort of bilateral focus, how the Germans were feeling about things, how the Turks were feeling about things, but I'd never done multilateral issues per se so I had a lot to learn. One of the things we did as you said was to send instructions to USUN, our United Nations mission, on how to vote on issues in the Security Council primarily, but also in the general assembly. Jeane Kirkpatrick was our permanent representative at the time, and she really did not like getting instructions that she had not approved. So, in effect we pre-cleared her instructions in the back channel, and when she said it was alright to "instruct" her in that way we sent the cable front channel. That was a learning experience too, so I think it's safe to say that Ambassador Kirkpatrick, by the time I got there, never received an instruction in the front channel she didn't like and if she got one in the back channel it never saw the light of day.

Q: There was an office in the State Department sort of connecting her to the State Department, I guess working for her. How did you interact with that office?

WILLIAMS: Quite closely. The office of the permanent representative in those days was right across the hall from IOUNP so it was not uncommon for Alan Gerson who was one of her close collaborators or Harvey Feldman to come down from New York, spend a few days there, and then regularly every few hours walk across to talk to us about an issue. Often a Middle Eastern issue which was something about which they were very concerned because in those days, even more so than today, a large number of resolutions in the general assembly and a large number of issues in the security council concerned Israel, or more particularly, efforts to stigmatize Israel, or demonize Israel, one way or the other. And they were very diligent in working with us and with NEA and other parts of the State Department to make sure we had the appropriate response.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary and the deputy?

WILLIAMS: The assistant secretary when I got there was Gregory Newell who at that time was the youngest assistant secretary ever in IO and perhaps in the Department of State. He was barely 30 years old. He'd come over from the White House as an advance man, a protï¿½gï¿½e of Mike Deaver. Very meticulous, hard-working guy. He was, however, sort of a Johnny One Note. Being very politically attuned, he had sized up the situation with respect to UNESCO even before he came over. He had decided the way to make his mark was to take the United States demonstratively out of UNESCO because of the corruption and alleged incompetence of the then Secretary General of UNESCO. M'Bow was from Senegal. There was no question that M'Bow was incompetent and UNESCO had done things it shouldn't have done in a budgetary sense. Still, it caused quite a stir for the United States to walk out of UNESCO, having done the same thing with regard to the ILO a few years before. And a large part of our first year was spent explaining that decision to other countries. At one point I accompanied Greg Newell as sort of his note taker and bag carrier on a trip to a number of countries in the Middle East, including Iraq where we went allegedly for consultations on the whole range of UN issues, but 90 percent of it concerned the UNESCO decision.

Q: So your office was quite involved with the decision to withdraw from UNESCO? Because there was another part of IO that dealt with UNESCO.

WILLIAMS: We were involved with the political blowback on it. I think the decision really was made by Greg himself. There was an office, or still is an office, for UNESCO affairs and IO, separate from IOUNP. But the decision itself quickly became a political issue, it was handled in the course of our routine consultations bilaterally and otherwise with a wide range of governments, so yes we were heavily involved with defending that decision.

Q: We might just note here that the first administration of George W. Bush has taken the United States back into UNESCO and we're now full members again.

WILLIAMS: As we should be, and I think we also, thanks to the first administration of George W. Bush, paid off all of our arrearages which were another legacy from Ambassador Kirkpatrick's stage. She was very effective in working with selected Republican senators to pass legislation in effect holding back or threatening to hold back U.S. contributions to the UN, obligatory contributions, against the day when the UN agency reformed in terms of budgetary discipline or transparency, whatever. And those holdbacks amounted to quite a huge arrearage by the time we started paying them off.

Q: Are there any other major policy issues that you particularly remember or that you were personally involved with that took up a lot of energy and time?

WILLIAMS: There were whole clusters of issues as we call them, involving Israel and southern Africa in those days, Namibia in particular. In each general assembly you could count on five or six or eight resolutions bundled together criticizing what was going on in Namibia, what South Africa had done, what Israel was doing in the occupied territories and elsewhere, and in Jerusalem. Those issues were hardy perennials on the agenda of the general assembly. We were heavily involved each year in preparing for the pre-general assembly consultations whereby we sent out bilateral teams to consult in capitals and in the course of debate of those issues in the fall we had to send a lot of instructions worldwide to capitals to get our points across. This involved obviously a lot of paper going out. Often it went out very late at night and we had to send some of it, unfortunately by immediate cable which meant somebody had to be woken up in many capitals, and that inevitably led to some very frank discussion with members of SS which controlled the outflow of cables. So that too was a lesson. UNESCO, Arab-Israel, South Africa, those were the big ones that we dealt with. I also had a certain role as headhunter, recruiter to fill vacancies, both civil service and Foreign Service vacancies in the office. In those days IOUNP had about 23 or 25 people. I believe it's a little smaller now. A lot of secretaries, almost all of them civil service, or half of them civil service, and a few permanent civil service members such as Ernie Grigg who had served in New York with the USUN and had come down to Washington, had been in the foreign service, but was really a UN expert par excellence and he was a point of continuity for all of us foreign service types who sail through UNP.

Q: And you had to work closely with all sorts of other parts of the department.

WILLIAMS: Yes indeed. Particularly when the Secretary of State went up to New York for the general debate that kicks off each fall's general assembly. We had to do all kinds of briefing him around and cleared him with respect to geographic bureaus. We had a wide range of issues on the agenda. The general assembly involving the committees. Everything from arms control to disarmament to human rights to budget management, to the standard political issues. So in the course of clearing cables on the consultation worldwide and then on the debate and in some cases on the vote, we dealt with most of the other bureaus of the Department of State.

Q: You mention one trip with Assistant Secretary Newell to the Middle East. Was there a lot of other travel involved during this? You were there three years?

WILLIAMS: I was there three years. My initial reaction to the work of UN-ery as we called it was one of horror, to be appalled. I felt like my hands were dirty sometimes because I just was so unused to the experience. I told Ed Dillery that, and he said it would get better, and he was right. Because once I got used to it and got into it, I began to like it. But it was an adjustment. For me a big adjustment coming from the world of bilateral affairs to deal with this very different world of multilateral affairs. I went over each fall, I forget which month, I think it was September, to US to NATO to consult with my NATO counterparts on UN issues. There was a tradition and perhaps it exists today, of annual consultations on UN issues in the context of the NATO political discussions. And experts came from capitals, in most cases from all the countries including Washington, to cover the agenda. It was a one day exercise which was useful for me. I enjoyed the experience. And I guess the Europeans found it somewhat useful to hear from Washington what we were doing.

Q: And this was done just before the general assembly.

WILLIAMS: Just before it started as I recall. It seems that would make it early September, late August. I'm sure that's the time frame.

Q: Any other highlights of your time in UNP?

WILLIAMS: It was an interesting lesson for me in the interplay of foreign policy, or multilateral policy, and domestic policy. The Reagan administration, perhaps following the example of its predecessors, parked a lot of its personnel baggage in IO. There were several in addition to Greg Newell the assistant secretary. There were others who were sandwiched in the bureaucracy of IO who could come from the White House because they had to be placed somewhere and I gather the White House didn't want them in the White House. So they put them in the policy shop or the planning shop or whatever shop it was of IO. And these people were not without influence. Very quirky sometimes, very definite Reaganauts, that is right wing Republican. But you could talk to them. Their overseas experience was not great, but they had a very definite point of view and they were listened to by certain members of the administration including Greg Newell. This situation was exacerbated when Alan Keyes succeeded Greg Newell. You recall he was a protï¿½gï¿½e of Jeane Kirkpatrick who yanked him out of FSO obscurity. I think he was a mid-career officer in India when she found him, and promoted him to be one of our ambassadors in New York. And then when Greg Newell left and I was still in IOUNP, Alan Keyes came down to succeed him. Unlike Greg, who was very politically attuned, Alan Keyes was much more ideological and intellectually aggressive than Greg had been. I think he was far less effective bureaucratically. He didn't mind making enemies or making waves. Greg had sort of a single-minded focus on UNESCO and a very rigorous template of five approaches by which every meeting was conducted. Alan was much more free form and wide-ranging, intellectual sometimes. He was a Harvard graduate. Harvard Ph.D. actually. But it wasn't as much fun. And as I say there was a decidedly ideological cast to the bureau, to its decisions when he was there. For example, one thing he tried to do and failed was to assert that as IO was the bureau responsible for multilateral diplomacy, NATO should come under it because NATO was a supremely multilateral organization. Needless to say, the colleagues in EUR and RPM did not take kindly to that assertion. Still, it was fought all the way to the Senate floor and there was unwillingness or an inability to compromise and to clear things which meant that everything had to be carried out to the Senate floor. IO would not agree, could not agree, the other bureaus would not accept our position, and so I think it was just a much more difficult bureaucratic environment with the approach that Alan took.

Q: Did Ed Dillery stay as office director your whole time in UN political affairs?

WILLIAMS: No, Ed left about the time Alan came in a normal rotation. I forget where Ed went.

Q: He became ambassador to Fiji at some point.

WILLIAMS: There may have been some intermediate place that he went, but that was his ultimate destination, you're right. And Milt Covener came down the last year I was there. I shouldn't say down, I forget where Milt had been. He'd been in Moscow; he was an EUR hand, an economist and so forth.

Q: Policy and planning staff possibly?

WILLIAMS: He may have been there; he had also been in Athens as economic counselor and DCM. And Milt was there for my third and final year in IOUNP. He too was getting a bath of reality in the multilateral world as I had gotten two years before. He was bemused by it as I was, but unfortunately he had to deal with the new atmosphere that Alan and his team created, whereas I think in all honesty dealing with Greg Newell and his people was much easier. But the bureau was really Alan when he was there. He was that large a personality, an ego. Sort of consumed everything else. That said, I found him interesting. I've never seen a more brilliant person, or a quirkier one. It's a strange combination.

Q: Well he later went on to be a candidate for president, a candidate for the Senate in Illinois.

WILLIAMS: Yes, a man for all seasons.

Q: He may turn out to be something else in the future. We'll see. You mention the secretary's participation in the opening period of the general assembly and so on. How about the undersecretary for political affairs. Was he quite involved in the issues of your office throughout this period?

WILLIAMS: The Middle Eastern issues very often. I think we often dealt with the p staff for certain issues. I don't recall specific cases when he got involved, but generally speaking the Middle East was one set of issues he did get involved in. The southern African issues were Chet Crocker's preserve and didn't go really up to the Senate floor in my recollection. But generally the Middle Eastern ones did. One other big issue which we did throughout my time there which Jeane Kirkpatrick launched was the so-called voting practices report. It's an annual report issued by IO, but really written by USUN which selects 10 key votes and how every member of the UN voted on those votes compared to us and then the whole range of other votes. Basically just see how other countries lined up with us in coincidence of votes. Well, not surprisingly, very few countries had a high coincidence of votes with us, because the issues of the agenda of the general assembly were highly politicized against Israel, against South Africa, against the developed world or to put it another way, for the liberation movements, for the human rights groups, for the redistribution efforts through UNCTAD and so forth. So by definition the agenda was somewhat contentious and only a few countries, Israel was one, Britain another, would line up with us on a regular basis more often than 50 percent of the time. But putting out this report, which happened for the first time in 1984 I believe, caused a real stir. Very few delegations professed to believe that we took their votes in the general assembly and the UN family seriously, and when they saw in black on white how poorly they were doing by our standards, they were somewhat taken aback. But we refined the report of ethnologies as we got on it that came better and we used that report and that coincidence figure in our bilateral discussions with every member of the general assembly for the rest of my time in IO and I think we still do it. For example, when the Secretary of State was going to sit down with the foreign minister of, let's say, Senegal, one of the issues that Secretary Shultz would be primed to discuss would be our coincidence of voting, or lack of same. The approach would be, Mr. Minister we share a lot of values in common, but can't we do better than this, whatever the figure was, in terms of our voting. And it was designed to put the other side a bit on the defensive and hopefully to elicit a change in voting practices. I don't think, truth to tell, that there was a significant change in any country's voting practices unless a coup occurred and the administration changed that way. But we used that tool more and more in my last two years in IOUNP.

Q: You mentioned Secretary of State George Shultz. He was secretary throughout the period you were in IOUNP. Was he involved in your issues a lot, were you involved with him much?

WILLIAMS: The only regular involvement was the annual trek up to the general assembly, and Shultz I think went up for about a week or 10 days. He spent a good amount of time up there. The general debate usually lasted about three weeks and he I think more than some secretaries of state, spent a good amount of time on that. Not just he, but particularly he. So we had the secretary, sometimes his deputy, sometimes P, but more often than not it was Secretary Shultz.

Q: Given your previous assignment and my interest, I guess I should maybe finally ask, was Cyprus a big issue for you in IOUNP ever?

WILLIAMS: No, only when the mandate for the UN forces in Cyprus, UNFICYP was renewed every six months by the Security Council. Once or twice there was a hiccup on this because of the funding or some policy issue or some complaint by Turkey or by the government of Cyprus. But it was not a big issue. It was a hardy perennial but not a big issue in terms of what we did in IOUNP. But it was a matter of interest to me too, because of my previous association with it. One other interesting thing I should note in terms of the interplay of foreign and domestic policy is that the Reagan administration including the president himself ideologically liked to beat up on the United Nations. It was a convenient whipping boy; you could kick them in the shin and they wouldn't kick back. And this played well to a certain part of their constituency. On the other hand, Ronald Reagan was also a very pragmatic person and a very pragmatic showman and he knew that there were few platforms better than that of the general assembly in the fall in New York. And so I don't believe President Reagan missed a single chance to go up there in the general debate, address the multitudes, have a magnificent photo op for Mike Deaver and his people to capture for the world media, and then to have what we call brief encounters on the parquet. Mix and mingle or grip and grin with selected leaders who would have maybe five minutes of standup discussion with him. These were all carefully orchestrated events, designed less for substance I think than for show, but also did project the image of an engaged president mixing with other leaders of the world, and I think it served his base well. So there's this curious dichotomy in the mindset of that administration, as perhaps with every administration. But particularly the Reaganites were hardcore. Some of them very much against the UN. Alan Keyes for example. And yet their president never missed a chance to go up there. I think he made the right decision.

Q: To what extent was your office involved with the White House, or particularly with the National Security Council staff?

WILLIAMS: We worked through SS on these presidential events, not with the National Security Council staff. I don't recall ever talking to anybody in the National Security Council. It went through SS, often on a very intense back and forth, but the choreography of those events was fairly routine and not difficult to do. We dealt only though in our own chain of command, not with the White House.

Q: How about with instructions or policy issues, resolutions and so on? Could your office pretty much work indirectly with USUN, pretty much send instructions, or did you need to clear those with the NSC, or any other agencies?

WILLIAMS: Rarely with the NSC. If it was the standard political consultations on the issues in the UN family, the clearances in the Department of State sufficed. If it was something like the World Conference on Women which occurred every five years and one year Maureen Reagan, the president's daughter, was the head of our delegation, then obviously we cleared it with the NSC. One of the night notes I got to write after that conference ended was to tell the president in first person terms that his daughter had been able to achieve something that had eluded the U.S. government for 15 or 20 years. We actually got a resolution on one of the thornier issues on the agenda. It may have been family planning. But Maureen Reagan had the good fortune to preside over a victory in that form for the U.S. and it was something of which we were very proud because our office had been involved, as had other offices in the department and in the NSC, in putting that position together.

Q: Did you ever serve as political officer or political advisor on any delegation to one of these special conferences?

WILLIAMS: Never had the pleasure.

Q: To what extent was your office involved with the secretary general or any other senior staff of the UN or other agencies, or staffing? Placing Americans. Or was that done by somebody else in the International Organizations bureau?

WILLIAMS: There is another office in IO that handles placement of Americans. We were very concerned about the number of Soviet nationals in positions of influence in the UN system. We made a strong effort, I think we still do, to place good Americans in similar or better positions, but IOUNP was not really involved in doing that per se, but we certainly were aware of it. When Vernon Walters came in as permanent representative succeeding Jeane Kirkpatrick, it seemed to me we put more of an emphasis on that. I'm not sure if Ambassador Walters was the reason, but I do remember getting more heavily involved in IOUNP at that time. It was a matter of longstanding concern. Another issue related to it was the number of Soviet and Chinese and hostile country nationals at the UN, and the geographic limitations under which they were allowed to operate by the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). The Libyans for example could only go 25 miles from ground zero at UN plaza. It was a very complicated procedure for getting permission to go outside that authorized circle. Our office had a civil servant named Frank Provin who had excellent ties with the bureau, with diplomatic security, with others, and he was the one who generally coordinated through UNP the U.S. position on those issues. There were issues involving travel, there were issues involving failure to pay rent, harassment claims and so forth, so there was the sort of unseemly aspect of diplomacy, but a very real one.

Q: Did you get involved in any changes of policy in that area, or not really in your time?

WILLIAMS: No. It was a growing concern of which I became increasingly aware by the security bureaucracy of first of all the number of these Chinese in particular, Soviet nationals in the country, and where they all were and what they were all doing. But I don't recall a major policy issue.

Q: You mentioned that General Vernon Dick Walters succeeded Jeane Kirkpatrick. That was at a time you were still in the office. Any other differences affecting IOUNP from that change, in New York?

WILLIAMS: Well, the relationship with USUN up in New York I think became more collegial or less testy. There was always a tension between us and USUN when Ambassador Kirkpatrick was there because they ran roughshod over us thanks to her political power, and they didn't mind doing it. I won't say they had a choice, but I will say it was more pleasant dealing with the Walters team after Walters came aboard, so that was the main atmospheric change, more than a policy change.

Q: Ok, anything else about IOUNP or should we proceed to your next assignment?

WILLIAMS: No, I think that covers it.

Q: Where did you go from that office?

WILLIAMS: I started looking around in the fall of '85 for overseas jobs, primarily DCMships because the prevailing wisdom was to get over the threshold into the senior service you really had to have a DCMship or something with broad management experience overseas in addition to whatever credits you've piled up at home. Then one day I looked at my inbox and there was a cable listing the available jobs. In the middle was a job in Berlin which had never been there before and by great good luck I got my name into the hopper for that job, talked to John Kornblum on the phone, he was the minister in Berlin at the time. I got the job and we went off to Berlin in the summer of 1986.

Q: And what was the job?

WILLIAMS: The job was political advisor which is a misnomer. It did indeed give political advice, but essentially it was the number 2 position in the State Department component of what was basically an occupation regime for Berlin, or for the western sectors of Berlin depending on how you look at it. We had a large mission in Berlin with a very large budget, funded by the bundestag, the so-called occupation cost budget, and the mission was subordinate to its chief of mission who was in Bonn. I did not know much about Berlinery as we called it when I went to Berlin. I had spent a lot of time in German affairs, and when I was in Bonn, I guess because I was so taken with the small town in Germany approach of Bonn, I deliberately stayed away from the big city of Berlin. I only went up once for an SPD convention which I enjoyed. I had been in Berlin before as a tourist, but I found the city too big and just not to my liking. Certainly not with a family. Well it turned out I was wrong on that as I was on many things. Berlin was a great place for a family, especially when you had the resources available that the American sector did. As I said, these were all, except for salaries, almost all paid for by the bundestag through a budget that was passed each year for the Allied occupation, or the Allied at cost expenditures in Berlin. The French, the British, and we were subsidized that way. Both the civilians and the military components, to a very high degree. We were also part of, as I said, an occupation regime, formally speaking. The army ran the American sector of Berlin. We were in the chain of command there to some extent. And to some extent they were in ours. For example, the senior army person in Berlin had four hats, one of which was DCM of U.S. embassy Bonn in Berlin. Now it was a hat that had not been worn ever as far as I knew, certainly not in recent memory. But he was the senior military official in Berlin. He was the commandant of the American sector in Berlin, senior army official in Berlin, and the deputy chief of mission in Berlin. That took some getting used to.

Q: Why don't you come then to where the United States mission in Berlin fit in, both in terms of the military and vis-ï¿½-vis the embassy in Bonn.

WILLIAMS: Our job essentially was to advise the commandant and his staff on a whole range of issues, political, economic, and public safety which meant security. We had counterparts in the military. There was also a large air force component there, mainly at Tempelhof Air Force Base which had played such a key role in our victory during the Berlin blockade in '48, '49. But we liaised with the army and the air force, mainly with the army, and with Berliners on intelligence collection, security, economic development, handling refugees, debriefing refugees from the east, running operations against the Soviets in the western sectors of Berlin. The Soviets had a large presence in Berlin. Both the embassy in East Berlin and certain Soviet missions that were authorized by the Quadripartite Agreement in West Berlin. We and the British and French were very diligent in working to confront whatever mischief the Soviets would carry out from the other side. Those missions, those establishments. We had a liaison also with our chief of mission in Bonn and there was as we discussed last time a Bonn group staffed down in the embassy which dealt with Berlin. So-called Bonn group. It was our counterparts from the British and French embassies, plus the German government through the foreign ministry that comprised the Bonn group in Bonn. And we were frequently in touch with them. I would say, obviously because we were physically located within the U.S. commandant's headquarters, obviously our daily exchange was far more intimate with the U.S. military in Berlin and with the Berlin authorities than with Bonn. But we had to keep both informed. And this sometimes required a bit of delicate dancing.

Q: And you also had to do a fair amount of liaison with the other two western powers in Berlin and perhaps with the Soviets as well, in Berlin?

WILLIAMS: Exactly so. We had a lot of interaction with the British and French. There was a whole network of message traffic classified up to the secret level which we used. We exchanged notes, opinions, gossip; we met for lunch once a month. We saw each other on our national days. There was intimate exchange with the British and French. To my great surprise the exchange that each of us in our own capacities had with our Soviet colleague who was an official of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin was almost as intense. We shared a responsibility; the four powers did, for the safe management of Berlin as a whole, in particular for the management of the access routes and the air routes to and from Berlin. Nobody wanted to have any trouble in Berlin, that had been very clear since the Quadripartite Agreement had been signed back in the early '70s. A big part of my job, my British and French counterparts' job and my Soviet colleague's job, was to make sure there was no trouble in Berlin, so that when, inevitably, there was an incident at the border, somebody got shot or something encroached, a concrete truck smashed against a building, or there was a complaint about a waterway or a dam, or a plane crashed or whatever, we would consult about it and if necessary the Allied chair for the month, we rotated chairmanship among the three western missions, would talk to the Soviet counterpart about it and see if we could smooth things out, and that worked pretty well.

Q: And to what extent were there four power quadripartite meetings?

WILLIAMS: There were no quadripartite meetings of any consequence until after the wall fell and German unity started approaching very rapidly. The days I'm speaking of, '86, '87, '88, even most of '89, there were no quadripartite meetings, but the four of us, so to speak, would get together at the annual ball of the Berlin air safety center which was a quadripartite-manned air traffic control center for the Berlin air corridors and the column of air around Berlin. They gave a lovely ball every year and we would inevitably with our wives in our formal wear, talk shop, the four of us, about what was going on. But it was not a meeting per se, there were no notes kept for example.

Q: When you refer to the four of you, you're really talking about the other political advisors, or the number twos in the respective missions of the four powers, and the number ones would also interact with each other at these events and others.

WILLIAMS: They would interact too in more or less a similar way. There was an amazing harmony of interaction at all levels. The three ministers would interact and meet occasionally with the DCM of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin who was Igor McSimichev for the whole time I was there I think. Brilliant man. We always spoke in German and he was always very well-informed. Below that, the political advisors would meet, monthly at lunch, more often as needed. We would exchange inter-Allied messages on a whole range of issues every day. Our economic advisors would meet the three of them public safety advisors and so on and so on. There was a whole range of Allied coordination mechanisms, often involving military counterparts as well, and often involving liaison with the Berliners, so by the time we got there this had been fleshed out over almost four decades and was well along.

Q: Your title was political advisor, but you also were the number two in the mission, at least on the State Department side.

WILLIAMS: Number three. Actually, number four. It depends on how you count. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the hierarchy was that the chief of mission was the ambassador in Bonn. The deputy chief of mission was the military commandant, at least on paper. And that led to a problem which we can discuss. The number three was the minister in Berlin who was the actual guy in charge of the mission day by day, and the number four was the political advisor. That was I. In practical terms I was the number two. In theological and protocol terms I was number four.

Q: So, on a day-to-day basis you were the executive officer. You were the deputy for all practical purposes. Did that mean that a fair amount of your time was basically helping the minister manage the mission, or could you do political work much of the time?

WILLIAMS: I started by doing political work much of the time because John Kornblum was so brilliant and so engaged and so knowledgeable about German affairs that basically he could run USPER, as we called the mission, out of his back pocket. So I had a learning curve to go through and I did. And spent a lot of time initially learning about the political realities of working in Berlin. Later in my tour, and this continued through the rest of my foreign service career, I dealt increasingly with the management issues, including budget and personnel, and for the first time realized how much fun I'd been missing all those years when I thought the political work was the end of all things in the foreign service. But initially it was political. John, perhaps deliberately, perhaps not, sort of threw me into the cold bath without a whole lot of preparation. He was gone at one time. At several key points he was gone from Berlin, from Germany, and I was the acting minister. And the first time this happened was in November of '86, We had an issue before the Allied Kommandatura. This was the governing body of Berlin created at the end of World War II from which the Soviets had withdrawn in '48. The AK met on a monthly basis; this was ministers. And the issue before the Kommandatura was how to implement a German court decision that had found the Libyans responsible for a particularly grievous act of bombing. I think it was Labelle disco or something else. I forget the specifics.

Q: Which happened in 1984 or thereabouts.

WILLIAMS: It happened early in '86 in Berlin. The Allied Kommandatura had to deal with the issue of what to do about a German court decision that had put in public record the fact that Libya was responsible for the bombing of the disco in West Berlin in which a couple of people had been killed. This was at the Labelle disco which had been frequented by American military. This bombing occurred a few months before I got to Berlin in '86 and by November of '86 the issue had come up to the Kommandatura. Our legal advisors, every mission also had a legal advisor or two, and others concluded that the only way you could react to that in a meaningful sense since our writ did not extend to East Berlin, would be to issue a formal order expelling the Libyans from Berlin. Realizing that the practical effect of that order would be to affect only their presence in the western sectors of Berlin. They would still be able to circulate freely in eastern Berlin since the Soviets were not about to expel them from their sector. This raised a whole lot of issues including West Germany's desire to maintain good relations with Libya. Genscher the German foreign minister at the time was particularly involved in that effort. And that meant that at the end the ambassador in Bonn, Rick Burt, was also much interested. And without having ever been briefed by anybody on how the Kommandatura worked, without having ever attended a session of the Kommandatura, I found myself as acting minister not only going, but presiding over the meeting since it was the American month. We met over a series of five or seven days. It was a difficult exercise for me because I did not know the protocol of the Kommandatura meetings. There was definitely a protocol. You addressed each other a certain way, you had to follow something like Robert's rules of order. I was corrected a number of times by my colleagues who were real ministers, the British and the French, the British in particular. But since we all wanted the same thing and there really was no dissent on that, the question was how do you get there in the most correct way. And we got there, and we issued the order and expelled the Libyans from Berlin, realizing that we were in effect expelling them only from the western sectors. Now the coordination that I also had to learn on the fly was to keep the military commandant informed because there were implications for the security of West Berlin because he had to make sure his people, Berliners, would carry out this order. If a Libyan tried to come into West Berlin he would not be allowed and so forth. And Rick Burt was on the phone with me about every two hours or hour, asking what in the hell was going on because the Germans were asking him. What are you Allies about to do in Berlin to our Libyan relationship. So it was a delicate dance. We got through it. I was able to keep, I think, the commandant and the ambassador satisfied although two times I had to keep Rick Burt waiting while I finished telling the commandant what was going on and I don't think Rick Burt liked being kept waiting, but you have to make choices in this life. It was quite an education, and after it was all over I realized how much I'd learned, and I felt the Kommandatura had done a very good job and I was grateful that John had given me that chance. I just wish I'd had a little more preparation for it. Ironically enough, this was in November of 1986 when all this happened. I must say it didn't make much of a blip in the papers. The real blips were behind the scenes with the Germans in particular. The same issue rose again in the summer of '87. Once again there was no minister. I was acting, and once again we were in the chair so I was chair in the Kommandatura. And the issue came up with Iranians. The Iranians had done something particularly egregious involving terrorism. A German court had conclusively issued a report, the German authorities had, that the Iranians were guilty of terrorism in Germany, or in Berlin I forget which. So once again, having done it to the Libyans, we decided as the Allied Kommandatura we would do it to the Iranians. And we did. With exactly the same type of to-ing and fro-ing. There was a little more concern that the Iranians might do something crazy because we didn't know much about them compared to the Libyans. Nothing did happen, but there was some concern based on intelligence reports that there would be untold reaction. But we expelled the Iranians who were based in West Berlin from Berlin. That is, from the western sectors of Berlin, acting as the Allied Kommandatura. Once again, I was the one who kept the commandant informed and kept the ambassador in Bonn informed. I felt pretty good expelling people.

Q: In addition to the challenge of coordinating with the ambassador in Bonn and the commandant in Berlin, did you have to coordinate pretty carefully with the State Department in Washington or were you pretty much on your own in working these things out?

WILLIAMS: The State Department by this point had given USBER a pretty long leash on this sort of thing. I did not talk to the State Department colleagues, but Don Koglitz our legal advisor I'm sure was in touch with his colleagues back in L. Deputy Political Advisor Brass Smith and others were talking to people back in EURCE so Washington was certainly witting to what was going on. We also sent cables back telling them what we were doing and what we planned to do, but there was really not a whole lot of input on that, as I recall, from Washington. I don't recall any input. No complaint about what we did, but also nothing particular.

Q: Now, as political advisor, to what extents were you engaged, involved, reporting on West Berlin politicians, political developments, parties?

WILLIAMS: Well quite a bit because we dealt of course with a lot of Berliners. At my level we dealt with the governing mayor. So we dealt with the governing mayor and his immediate staff in the senate as it was called which was the government of Berlin. Dealt with other politicians. When I came there the governing mayor was CDU, Christian Democrat, but we dealt with the Social Democrats as well because we realized that at some point they would succeed the CDU as indeed they did. We did that at a fairly intensive level so that we would report our conversations, our discussions. Sometimes we would have business to do, I would just transact business with the governing mayor, and usually the minister would do that, more often I would deal with his deputies in the senate. The Greens came on our screen at this time also. In Berlin they were called the Alternative List, the AL, but they were an offshoot of the National Green Party in West Germany with which I had some experience from my time in Bonn. They were initially very allergic to people who wore suits and ties and suspicious of the Allies who had been occupying their city for so many decades and what we stood for and this and that. But their concerns were I think more economic and ecological than anti-imperialist so we could have a discussion with them. They would accept our invitations to come to our house. I had one of the so-called representational houses and a staff and a budget to use it. And so we would often have large functions there with a lot of folks from the mission, some of the military and some of the Allied and the Berliners including the Greens, the Alternative List. I won't say they ever became close friends, but they did come and we got to know each other professionally which was useful.

Q: What sort of functions did you have? I know, never having served in Berlin, there were some kind of unique types of representation functions that seemed to work very well.

WILLIAMS: We had large receptions on a number of occasions. Obviously whenever a visitor came through or a CODEL (Congressional delegation) or an FBI team or whatever it was, we would use my residence or the minister's residence, sometimes the commandant's for large functions.

Q: Smoking evenings? Herenaben?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's a German tradition which we had in Berlin too. Basically that's an evening for men. Since Beth Jones and others were members of our staff didn't take kindly to the designation of herenaben which would seem to exclude them. But we got around that. In fact, an increasing number of women staffed USBER in my time there, so I think the term fell into disuse. But essentially when I got there it was still in vogue with an evening where men of influence from the Allied missions from the Berlin government, from the military, from the economic sector of the Chamber of Commerce would get together and discuss things of great moment over very good food with cigars at the end. A noble tradition.

Q: You mentioned that Beth Jones was on the staff, what was her position at the time? She's now assistant secretary for European affairs.

WILLIAMS: Indeed she is. Beth was the economic advisor with counterparts in the Allied missions and I think certainly in the Berlin city government she dealt with the Chamber of Commerce quite a bit, the fairgrounds people since the fairgrounds is a big part of the Berlin economy. She was very much involved.

Q: Now there was of course an American embassy in East Berlin at this time, accredited to the German democratic republic. To what extent were you involved with that embassy and how did you share responsibilities? Because you did have some responsibilities for Berlin as a whole including the eastern sector.

WILLIAMS: Formally we were responsible for Berlin as a whole as were the other Allied missions in West Berlin with the Soviet embassy in East Berlin. The minister, whether it was John Kornblum or Harry Gilmore, his successor, I think as a matter of routine met with the ambassador in East Berlin whether it was Dick Bartley or Frank Meehan, at least once a month, maybe more often. There were a number of issues to talk about, but most of the issues that we dealt with at USBER did not involve the embassy in East Berlin because the embassy did not deal with Berlin per se except to the extent the East German government was there which it was to some extent very limited with the East Berlin government. But our folks in the East Berlin embassy were accredited to the German Democratic Republic and took their responsibility primarily in the field of the bilateral relationship leaving to us Berlinery with all of the niggling issues involving waterways and canals and borders and sewage systems and security that entailed.

Q: Air access?

WILLIAMS: Air access too. We ran the air access. We had a program to exercise the right of military access in East Berlin or the Soviet sector of Berlin as we called it, on a daily basis. And on a daily basis we would send military convoys through Checkpoint Charlie who would travel around in East Berlin and come back. They were always followed, they were always checked through with the correct procedure and checked out in the correct way, but that was deliberately designed to show that we were not going to give up our right of access to Berlin as a whole. In this case, the Soviet sector. And occasionally these vehicles would be involved in a fender bender or a pedestrian would get hit, or they would render aid to somebody who had gotten hurt or fallen unconscious. There were a few cases where essentially a humanitarian incident arose or they would have to go to the hospital because one of them got sick very quickly, it was an emergency, and we had to get them back. And this was handled strictly by the missions in West Berlin. Occasionally the consular officer at the embassy in East Berlin might get involved, but more often than not they would come straight through the Soviet channel to the respective Allied force in West Berlin. It was convoluted to be sure, but it worked pretty well, because as I said at this point in the late 1980s we'd been doing it for over forty years. Nobody wanted trouble in Berlin and when there were problems or incidents or whatever all four sides worked to make sure that we settled it as quickly as possible. Another example, this also extended it to East Germany where we had a different set of access rules, each of the three western Allies had a military liaison mission in Potsdam. The Soviets had one based in Frankfurt, reciprocal. And the purpose was to stage military liaison missions which were actually overt spy missions on what the respective forces were doing in East Germany in the case of the Soviets and in West Germany in the case of the Allies. And so our Soviet hands at the Potsdam military liaison mission had a frequent period of travel through East Germany to the Soviet encampments, not East German places, mainly to see what they were doing, because the Soviets at that time had a huge presence still in East Germany. A year before I came to Berlin, there had been an incident where Major Nicholson, who was one of the members of the military liaison mission, had been shot and killed while doing his duty at a Soviet cantonment somewhere in East Germany. He'd been shot by a sentry who'd been told to shoot anybody who got near the tent. The major was near the tent, he was shot. He was still alive. But as the Soviet soldier had no further instructions he kept everybody else at bay with his rifle and the major bled to death. This led to a huge incident between us and the Soviets, between the Allies and the Soviets, because the British and French were just as concerned that it could have been one of theirs. We were not in the reporting chain on these things, but we did hear about them when they came back through Berlin because we were in close touch with our MLM friends. They kept the USCAB the army intelligence folks in Berlin informed, but they had a separate reporting channel, their own stovepipe. And I forget exactly where it happened, but in the wake of the Nicholson story and the bad blood over that, steps were taken to reduce the likelihood of that again. Allegedly the Soviets instructed their sentries to be more careful and we took some steps to have some extra communications capability in case something like that happened again. I forget how it happened, but at one point in the fall of whatever year it was, just about the time Secretary Shultz was going to sit down with his Soviet counterpart, Gromyko. A member of our mission in Potsdam was driving one of these Mercedes gallendewagen, it's like a hummer, off-road vehicle, on duty, they flag was flying. It was clearly a U.S. military vehicle, and for whatever reason he was shot through the arm. He wasn't killed and he wasn't seriously wounded, but the bullet went through the flesh of his upper arm. And that was reported back through channels. What happened was we short circuited the process. We heard about it through normal liaison with our military colleagues in Berlin and realizing the significance of it, and knowing the secretary was getting ready to sit down with Gromyko, we sent a cable back. We cleared it within the military in Berlin, sent a cable back saying, look, the Secretary is going to meet with Gromyko. He should land very heavily on the Soviet because this just happened. We weren't trying to poach on anybody's territory, but we were on a time constraint because the meeting was a few hours away and we knew if we communicated the other way it would just take too long. Well there was a huge blowup over that within our sector because we had short-circuited the process. The reporting chain for the MLM went to Berlin, to Heidelberg, to NATO I think or to SHAPE and then back to the Pentagon and then to State. That's the way they liked to report things, and that's the way the military chain of command goes. And in effect we did this and Secretary Shultz raised it with his counterpart before the Secretary of Defense ever found out about it. So he was not pleased, the Secretary of Defense, and naturally his unhappiness was visited down the chain of command. So that was a lesson for all of us and me particularly as a civilian in how the military chain of command works. I won't say I learned the lesson perfectly, I certainly didn't, but it made us a little more sensitive to it. On the other hand, I think given the circumstances we did exactly the right thing.

Q: You mentioned previously that there was a problem with the chain of command, the commandant. Was it this incident you were referring to, or was there another one?

WILLIAMS: No, it's part of a piece. For years, I won't say forever, but for a long time the practice had been that the commandant in Berlin was always an army two star, was the supreme American official resident in Berlin who took political advice from the mission. The U.S. minister was the supreme political advisor in Berlin who reported directly to Washington and to Bonn and did not take directions from the commandant on matters within his domain as the commandant did not take direction from us on matters in his domain. To be fair, I think many members of USBER and I'll include myself in that, probably had a somewhat too civilian an attitude about some things and not a respectful enough position towards some of the military sensitivities. And this incident about the chain of command and MLM may indicate that. There was some resentment there. Some of it may have been personal based on how earlier ministers had reacted or not reacted to things that the military considered important. For the military, for example, ceremonial things are very important and you go to ceremonies and if you don't go to ceremonies that tells them something about how you feel about them, their culture, their way of life. I'm generalizing crudely without trying to give too many specifics here. So when John Kornblum left after a very successful tour as minister he was in our generation Mr. Germany. Kind of the Martin Hillenbrand of American foreign service officers. Nobody came close to John in terms of expertise and depth of experience. Real wisdom in how the Germans function, how they think. When he left, Harry Gilmore followed. Also a very competent German European hand with a lot of eastern experience that John had not had. But more significantly what happened was that the commandant changed a little later. John Mitchell had been commandant when we got there, hale fellow, well-met, very good at ceremony, at presiding over meetings, very deferential to our collective political expertise as we were deferential to his military expertise. His successor, the last commandant in Berlin, was Ray Haddock, also a two star army general, who came to Berlin with a very different agenda in mind. He had been one of the commanders of the deployment sites for the P2s, the Persians, in southwestern Germany. Married to a German, spoke pretty good German, and had done some very delicate and successful negotiations with the local officials in Dadenvertenberg, southwest Germany, when the fight over the deployment of these Persians was being waged. And they were deployed and from all that I heard and read and was told he did an excellent job in helping prepare public opinion for that event. And he may have been encouraged to some extent by the other members of the staff of the USCAB who had gone through the Mitchell era and wanted to right the balance a bit. I'll put it that way. So he basically saw an opportunity in this fourth hat that the senior military person wore in Berlin, and tried to exercise authority as the DCM in Berlin over U.S. mission in Berlin, USBER. Now we of course did clear cables with each other. We were very correct about that. Whenever we had a major assessment that went out on the political scene in Berlin or the coming elections in Berlin or a visit by the governing mayor to Washington which always involved some face time in the White House with the President, we would clear that with either the commandant or his staff, as a courtesy. We didn't think we should skip them. Ray Haddock cleared it himself. As I recall his initials in bold print were on there. And I forget what precipitated, but basically he made a pitch to Ambassador Walters, a retired three star general, among other things, that he as the commandant in Berlin and the deputy chief of mission in Berlin should be in the chain of command substantively over USBER when it came to cables, recommendations, decisions and so forth. He really wanted to eat our lunch. And he made a very strong case for it. Harry Gilmore, to his credit, made a very strong rebuttal, but he was always rebutting the very aggressive outreach by the commandant and it went to Ambassador Walters in Bonn. At one point, Harry Gilmore, the minister, and the commandant Ray Haddock went down to Bonn and met with Walters separately, and essentially, Walters, who hated this issue and did not want to decide it, affirmed the traditional way of doing things. He told Harry to go back and not gloat over it and told Ray to go back and do his job, as I understand it. I was not in those meetings, so I'm giving this to you third hand, so that's basically what happened. But throughout my time there and I think it continued throughout Ray's tour, he stayed there a year longer than I did, there was this tension. It was not as collegial. It had not always been collegial. I did look into the history of this when I was in Berlin and there had been times before when very brilliant and aggressive and ambitious military folks had asserted authority over USBER on certain issues. Sometimes successfully, sometimes not. This is inevitable in a bureaucracy. It's nothing unusual. But it was unfortunate in the last phase of the occupation in Berlin that our sector had this problem. In earlier years the British had had a commandant who was a bit off the range, and I think the French at one time did too. But we had extra coordination problems in this last phase. That said, it never really got out of hand. We always worked very carefully with each other on very sensitive intelligence matters, on the whole issue of how to deal with the realities created by the fall of the wall on November 9, 1989. The refugee problems. Cooperation really never broke down anywhere as far as I could tell, and I would have known about it. But it was just not as much fun as it should have been. I think it was basically because he wanted to be in charge of us and we didn't want him to be in charge of us.

Q: You've mentioned several times that this was the last phase of the occupation period and the Berlin wall came down on November 9, 1989 which is five days short of being 15 years ago today. Do you want to talk some about that, and how early did you anticipate that something momentous like that was going to happen? I think it would be very interesting if you could talk through that.

WILLIAMS: I don't think anybody on the scene in Berlin and perhaps even in Bonn who was following this issue as it developed in the summer and fall of '89 anticipated what happened. In retrospect, it looked so clear, and you wonder how we missed it. But if anybody anticipated such a thing he didn't report it, or at least I never saw the report. We were all too close to it I think. There had been concern for several months that the East German regime was getting wobbly. A lot of its young people were leaving or trying to leave and this accelerated in the late summer and early fall of '89 when Hungary opened its border with Austria. There was as I recall regime change in Hungary. They decided to open their border with Austria and take the barbed wire down and this was broadcast as straight news in the West German and East German medium. East Berliners got both. And they quickly realized that as Hungary was still a communist country, formally speaking, they could go there as tourists and then very easily cross over into the West through Austria. And so a number of them started doing that. Numbers of East Germans were leaving East Germany through Hungary to Austria to West Germany in effect. We were monitoring this through various channels; this was not an overt stream. Refugee groups were processing these folks at various points. But the desire to get out was particularly acute among the young people, married people, single people, students, who just saw no hope in their society and saw tremendous opportunity and wealth in West Germany. Numbers started going out through Czechoslovakia as well. There was a time when the West German embassy in Prague was inhabited by several thousand East German refugees who had gotten into Czechoslovakia, another communist country, legally as tourists from East Germany but had not been given visas by West Germany, yet nevertheless they climbed over the fence and camped there. In September or October this led to another highly publicized situation in which the living conditions on the grounds of the German embassy in Prague became so acute that people were afraid folks were going to start dying of plague or dysentery or various things because it was just an impossible situation and more and more folks were coming. It was acting as a magnet for more and more East Germans. So finally the West Germans negotiated a so-called one time agreement with the Czechs and the East Germans to let these East Germans go on trains, sealed trains that would pass through East Germany into West Germany from Prague. That was how they came as I recall. The Czechs wanted them out of there; the East Germans wanted the issue to go away. They wanted the East Germans back, but for whatever reason they agreed. So the East Germans left. That was the second thing. And then the third thing that happened, in October, was the East German national day, and for this one Gorbachev came. It was a state visit as well as the national day with all the pomp and circumstance of which German military bands are so capable. We watched it all on T.V. of course and we had a lot of people in East Berlin at the site where the parades occurred, the torchlight parades as well as the military parades. But essentially, Gorbachev said in public to the East German regime, those that cannot change to meet the demands of the present are doomed. In other words, we're not going to help you. His message was somewhat veiled, but it was interpreted both East and West to mean if you get in a real situation here the Soviet troops are not going to bail you out. There was also a lot of pacifist church led groups in Leipzig in particular in East Germany and other cities, in Dresden, which grew and grew from candlelight vigils to mass demonstrations where at one point there were 100,000 or more East Germans chanting in the streets of Leipzig, "We are the people, we want some change". It was peaceful. These were not mutinous citizens, they were far more peaceful than West Berlin demonstrators were when they would demonstrate for something. These were anarchists we had to deal with in West Berlin, but in East Germany, not in East Berlin but in the big cities of East Germany largely pacifist, well-behaved, but huge groups of people. We had reported all this, we had internalized it, but we had not connected the dots to that meant the regime was tottering.

So was the East German politburo had a meeting I guess sometime on the ninth of November. On the evening news the government spokesman for East Germany read a decision by the politburo. It basically said as of tomorrow morning any East German citizen who wants to leave East Germany may do so with proper documentation. It looked as if he couldn't quite believe what he was reading as he read it. Nevertheless he read it, and this was one of several news items. This was not the big story, there was no follow-up, but that was just one of the announcements. I was with Ann in a movie theater that night. Around nine or nine thirty they stopped the film, turned on all the lights and asked Mr. Williams to come to the desk if he would. This was an American military theater on one of the bases we had in Berlin. This had never happened to me before. It was Harry Gilmore on the phone saying he had just gotten a very puzzling message to the effect that crowds of East Germans were spilling into West Berlin at one of the checkpoints. He said he wasn't quite sure what this meant, but maybe I should come down to the office and see. For the next four days I lived at the office and we kept watch and informed Washington of what was happening. Essentially what happened was when the East Berlin population heard that news report they went down, even though they didn't have documentation, that meant an exit visa, that's what the East Germans required, you're supposed to get an exit visa stamped into your passport and with that you would be allowed to leave to go to the West. They didn't have that documentation because the offices weren't open, but they nevertheless went down to the checkpoints where you would normally cross. More and more of them gathered and there were thousands and then tens of thousands and the pressure got quite high because people were getting afraid folks would get crushed. The guards at the checkpoints, the East Germans, had absolutely no instructions on this point. Fortunately they decided to take the easy way out and not to use deadly force to keep the crowds back. When it got too bad they simply lifted the turnstile and the folks were allowed to come through. And that's basically what happened. The wall was breached at several points when the guards lifted the barrier and the crowds swarmed through. The people couldn't believe they had gotten through without being shot and what they saw when they got over there. And then the West Berliners soon heard what was happening and amazing numbers of them rushed down to the wall. Berlin itself is a huge city in terms of area. We lived within the wall the whole time we were there and rarely saw it all and we traveled a lot. It was lakes and canals and vast expanses. It's a very large area in terms of square miles. So the West Berliners from all areas of the city would rush down to the wall. This would sometimes take them a half hour, an hour to do, to see for themselves what was happening. And many of them spontaneously invited the East Berliners home for dinner, for the night. We heard this again and again from friends who did it. Apocryphal stories of West Berliners giving cars to East Berliners. There was a huge surge of good feeling here, brotherhood, German to German. No violence, even against the guards. The East German guards were still there standing at their posts letting the masses go by. No violence against them. Tremendous happiness, euphoria in fact, lots of honking of cars. Tremendous consumption of alcohol. The bars and the pubs didn't shut that night, or for the whole weekend. In fact the city ran out of booze I think, probably Sunday. And even still no brawls, no rowdiness. It was a very unusual, intoxicating moment. Literally intoxicating, where people acted sensibly and yet with this enormous joy. I have to say, we were swept up in that, even those of us like me, stuck in the office. Ann went down; a lot of my staff went down. I finally got down there on Saturday or Sunday to see it, but by that point the party had peaked. People were starting to come down off the high even though it continued through Sunday. So that's essentially what happened. Then the question was, well, since most of those East Berliners went back, they said we just want to come visit. They went back to their homes, crossed over again. And then they wanted to come back. It quickly became apparent that this whole idea of exit permits and entry permits and visas was absurd and the whole edifice was going to come down. It was only a few days later that the first sections of the wall started coming down. We as allies from the first moment were very closely involved because of our responsibility for security in Berlin. With the West Berlin authorities, but also with the Soviets. I think the most nervous people in this whole event were the Soviets who didn't know really what was going to happen with this huge number of Germans surging around, drinking. Given the history of Soviet-German relations, particularly with the way Berlin had been taken and the way East Germany had been occupied, the Soviets had reason to be concerned that there might be brawls or violence attempted against some of their units somewhere in East Germany or around Berlin. Didn't happen. One reason it didn't happen I think, or one reason why the Soviets didn't overreact, which was perhaps a greater danger, concern they would preempt to do something stupid that would trigger German violence, was the Allies at the minister level, also at the ambassadorial level were able to tell them in Berlin that the Berliners had the situation under control. The Allies had it under control; we were not going to let things get out of hand. We spent a lot of time, we had public safety advisors who were essentially our diplomatic security people, but working with the German police authorities to keep the crowds under control. They never had to deploy force as I recall, but there were a lot of meetings on where the problems might occur. Public safety folk were very, very busy. The military had their own contacts and we did this together. It was USBER and the military in this operation and the Allies also, civilian/military worked hand in glove with this with each other, with the West Berliners. This jurisdictional fuss I mentioned earlier with the commandant and so on really was meaningless in what I'm describing, fortunately because we all worked very closely together. One of the issues that came up, for example, was since this never happened before and since we never war gamed or game planned for something like this, we didn't really know how far it would go or where it would go, but there were lots of points of concern. One was for example the part of the wall that was in front of the Brandenburg gate. It was old concrete and apparently the older concrete gets the harder it becomes. Much harder if it's 20 years old than if it's 10 years old. When it's 30 years old it's even harder and so on and so on. It's a progressive thing. And it was very thick, and nobody quite remembered how the wall had been built there, but the concern was that within this enormously thick concrete wall were reinforced bars, steel girders and taking it down, which the crowd wanted to do, might require heavy equipment. If some West Berliners got the heavy equipment to take down the wall there they might turn around and direct that equipment to the Soviet military monument which is right next door and that would really get the Soviets engaged. And so the fear was disorder which Germans dislike anyway, civil disorder, but particularly civil disorder directed against official Soviet presence like the military monument which had Soviet guards 24 hours a day and so forth. Or other Soviet buildings in Berlin. So a lot of effort was spent to work those issues, to make sure that if heavy equipment had to be used that it was put to civilian use and not to inappropriate use, and that the Soviet missions and presence always had due protection and were respectfully treated. And we were very up front with the Soviets about that. I think those reassurances played a useful role because they had never dealt with this either and they as I said had some reason to be concerned. I don't know of any untoward acts against the Soviets either in East Germany or East Berlin during this period. Or in West Berlin. There may have been somebody who threw a rock, but it would be that low level. That was not the agenda, fortunately, and I think this general euphoria sort of swept people along in another direction, they didn't want to wreak vengeance on folks.

Q: You were coordinating pretty closely with the American embassy in East Berlin during this particular period, or were your issues...

WILLIAMS: I don't think they had much of a role in this. I mean no disrespect, but I honestly cannot recall dealing with them. I was dealing with my Allied counterparts, our Soviet counterpart; we had one of these impromptu quadripartite chats at USBER one day. The Soviet, Vladimir Grinin was his name. Very fine fellow. He drove over with a colleague from the Soviet embassy and met with I guess the three Allies in our office, just for a chat. They had to take a huge detour because the large crowds were blocking the normal routes of access and they had a car that had Soviet diplomatic plates on it. It was a Soviet car, and they were a little nervous to be honest about it, because they had no protection. They were just there, the two of them, but pleasantly surprised it was going as well as it was. They had not been hassled on the way over. We talked about things, what we were hearing from the Berlin police, and what the projection was. So there were a number of meetings like that, and I think it was handled well, although as I say we had no master plan, we were sort of operating by the seat of our pants, but it came out alright.

Q: You mentioned earlier the statement by President Kennedy during his administration on his visit to West Berlin, Ich bin ein Berliner. There's another famous quote by President Reagan. I'm not sure what year; I think it was also in Berlin.

WILLIAMS: 1987, yes. "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Q: How significant was that do you think, or that posture on our part?

WILLIAMS: I think it was very significant, although at the time..

Q: You were there when that...

WILLIAMS: Yes. He came for the 750th anniversary of Berlin. This was a huge birthday party that the city wanted to throw for itself. The Reagan administration was heading to elections in a few months and they wanted to throw it to showcase Berlin, to showcase their leadership of the city. And the Allies were very happy to participate, because as I said most of our expenses, certainly our birthday party expenses were paid for by the Bundestag. So we had lots of resources for a tremendous birthday bash. Reagan came; he was in Berlin I think for less than 12 hours. He flew into Tempelhof, he came to the B hall which was the original civilian passenger terminal of Tempelhof for the American birthday for Berlin. Just a little humorous aside. This was 1987. He had been shot six years before. He was in Germany, in Berlin, surrounded by Soviets, the Secret Service went a little goosey, but we got him in there. The B hall was full of people. There was a balloon drop because Mike Deaver liked balloon drops and the President loved them. There was a huge number of balloons in nets waiting to be dropped at the right moment of Reagan's speech. They were apparently close to some source of heat, I guess lights, so Reagan is giving his speech and it's a very charismatic speech, very uplifting, and midway through a sentence is this loud boom that goes off. We didn't know what to make of it, it sounded like a gunshot. We thought, oh my god, somebody is shooting the President, and the Secret Service and everybody else is very nervous. Without missing a beat, Reagan said, "Missed me," and then went on with his speech. Huge roar and cheer from the crowd. It was great showmanship. But his best showmanship was in front of the Brandenburg gate, outdoors, with a very carefully screened audience of Allied civilians mainly. This was the British sector, but all three sectors were represented. The backdrop was the chancellor of Germany and the ministers of the three Allied powers, the ambassadors and so forth, and that's the speech at which Reagan said "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." And there were several sentences addressed rhetorically to Gorbachev in the first person, but "tear down this wall" was the most dramatic one. That made quite an impact apparently among the population to whom it was really addressed, that is the East Germans and others of the east. I think, at the time, I felt and I think a lot of my colleagues felt it was melodramatic, it was too much showmanship, it just wasn't statesmanlike, but I think we were wrong. Looking back on it, if you look at how that sentence is played in retrospective histories of it post-wall it's quite an important event that the head of the free world, the head of the United States government thought it important enough to say to Gorbachev in Berlin, "Tear down this wall," very principled position. So I would say it was quite famous and more influential than Kennedy's proclamation that he was a jelly-filled doughnut.

Q: Should we stop at this point and then we'll pick up next time?

Today is the sixteenth of November, 2004 and we're resuming our conversation about your service as political advisor at the U.S. mission Berlin from 1986 to 1990, and I think in our previous conversation Jim, we pretty much talked about what happened before and during the coming down of the wall in November 1989 and maybe we can proceed and talk about the rest of your assignment to Berlin and how much you were involved in the reunification of Germany and the diplomatic negotiations that went on to that goal, of course things specific to Berlin.

WILLIAMS: When the wall fell that November 9th, it quickly became more and more porous as more and more pedestrian and vehicular traffic crossed over in both directions. So it was rapidly clear to everybody, including the Soviets, that the reunification of the city and of Germany was a matter of time. Some of the Allies wanted the time to be longer, some shorter, but nobody disagreed about reunification, to which we were all formally pledged, including the Soviet Union by the way, that it was coming much more quickly than any of us had imagined a few weeks before. After the new crossing points were opened, basically by removing large hunks of the wall so that people could go through it unimpeded and drive through it also, more so than they had been able to do for almost 28 years, there was a lot of traffic back and forth. Seeing East Berliners in West Berlin became normal and having West Berliners look around East Berlin was normal too. Now formally the quadripartite status of the city remained and the responsibilities of the three western Allies and the Soviet Union were unchanged. We continued our regular meetings, the three westerners and then at various levels the ministers and the political advisors would meet with their Soviet counterparts to conduct business, to exchange notes, basically to reassure the Soviets in many ways that this process of rapid change which makes any status quo power nervous was working peacefully and not likely to lead to their detriment, physical or otherwise. I think we mentioned in our last conversation that there was initial concern by some of the Soviet leaders in Germany, particularly the military leadership that these surging crowds of happy Germans might for various reasons turn suddenly on the Soviet garrisons that were all over East Germany. As far as I know that never happened. There was no retribution visited on either the Soviets as an occupying power or on the East German authorities who had been perceived in the West as their puppets for many, many years. There may have been some score settlement at a very low level, but it never came to my attention in Berlin. So we were very pleased that and I think we can take a slight amount of credit for that, making sure there was no overreaction by either the Berlin authorities or by the Soviets camped around the city and throughout East Germany. The calendar of events then became dominated. The Christmas season of course was approaching, but there were other things that had to be done. One was to open the wall at the Brandenburg gate. The Brandenburg gate, next to the Berlin bear, is the symbol, historically, of Berlin. It had been closed since the wall had been constructed. In fact, there was a massively thick and tall wall right in front of the gate. The gate was on the East Berlin side of the city, in the Soviet sector as we called it, and had been the backdrop for many events, including President Reagan's 1987 address to the German people. And Mr. Gorbachev whom he implored to tear down this wall. So the Brandenburg gate had tremendous significance. It was really a question of engineering and working out how best to safely remove some of those huge partitions, and then letting the crowds come through in an orderly way. As I recall, the word went out that the gate would be open. That is, that the wall would be lifted near the gate on December 22, 1989, a very rainy, overcast day as is typical in that part of Europe in the winter, throughout the year for that matter. Crowds amassed, including the commandants and the POLADs and the ministers and a whole lot of other people on the western side. And then I forget how the signal was given, but at some point around three that afternoon the crowds surged forward and for the first time ever most of us foreigners at least, found ourselves walking under and through the Brandenburg gate and looking at its decorations. We'd only seen them from afar because it had not been accessible from the eastern side either because of its special significance in proximity to the wall. That was quite an exciting event. It was also the day, as I recall, when Leonard Bernstein dramatically showed up in Berlin. He had been, as millions around the world had, moved by the sudden surge toward German unity, and decided to come and conduct a concert in the Berlin philharmonic hall which is also near the wall, of Beethoven's ninth, and he did. And it was quite a concert.

Q: You were there?

WILLIAMS: I was not there, but I saw it. It was a great success. Well-attended, and we have parts of it on videotape, so vicariously we live that experience from time to time. Particularly the fourth movement, the choral movement, where they speak of joy that makes all men brothers. And indeed that seemed to be the feeling that the Germans had themselves, as well as everybody else. It was a time of great joy, jubilation, embracing one's fellow man. That all has passed now and the euphoria dissipated fairly quickly, but at that time, those first weeks and months after November 9 it was undiminished and the crowds that surged toward the Brandenburg gate that December afternoon were certainly strong witness to that assertion. There was a huge celebration on New Year's Eve at the Brandenburg gate with lots of fireworks and drinking and shouting and yelling. People actually climbed on top of the Brandenburg gate which was dangerous because it's fairly high. It was a stable structure but it had not been built for drunken revelers to climb around. I don't think anybody died that night, but there were some injuries from minor falls. Anyway, more jubilation, more goodwill, more celebration of what was coming. And the next months of 1990 were basically an unfolding of further steps as the wall continued to be dismantled. Dismantling the wall was a huge undertaking because the total length of the wall, because of the size of the city of Berlin, in particular the size of the three western sectors which had significant lakes and canals as part of their territory, or the border, to put a wall around that required a structure of I think about 120 kilometers. Not the whole city, the Soviet sector, East Berlin, was not part of it, but ringing the western sectors of Berlin including the lakes in the southwest and the north took a lot of doing, and dismantling that thing. A lot of volunteers helped, including tourists, my wife, my daughter. Everybody got a hammer and chisels and went to work, and they earned themselves the nickname of wall woodpeckers because you could hear this chink, chink, chink noise up and down the wall, day and night. It was like the locusts here every 17 years, or the cicadas. It just was on and on and on. But still it took a long time. This was old cement, it was well-built, and it was massive and very, very long. Parts of it stand today, but mainly under historical protection for reminding future generations.

Q: There are small chunks in living rooms all over the United States, all over the world.

WILLIAMS: We shipped back several hundred pounds through the pouch of genuinely harvested parts of the Berlin wall. The demand seemed insatiable because everybody wanted some, and the pieces that had parts of the murals or the frescoes or paint on them were particularly prized because they were the outside part of the wall. Interestingly enough, the murals were only on the side pointing toward the west because that was the only side that was accessible to the graffiti artists and the others. On the eastern side the East German authorities kept people away. They didn't want them approaching that wall so there was virtually no graffiti on that side at all. Huge chunks of the wall, as you know, were lifted away and ceremoniously given to the Bush library, to the Reagan library, to other prominent libraries and institutions around the world, and today very little remains. The formal structure of the quadripartite status of Berlin and the occupation regime had not yet changed. We decommissioned Checkpoint Charlie shortly before our tour ended in the summer of 1990. Checkpoint Charlie was the main crossing point in the American sector at the wall that was created after the wall was built. The decommissioning involved the lifting by crane of the house where the guards had sat for decades to another site, and then giving away pieces of the large gravel that underlay it. The foreign ministers came, Secretary Baker was there, Douglas Heard was there, the French foreign minister and quite a few others. It was a major ceremony in which we were at the mission involved heavily in preparing the way logistically. There were other events of that kind. There was a quadripartite meeting of ambassadors for the first time in many years. Vernon Walters was our ambassador in Bonn and he and the two Allies met with their Soviet counterpart from East Berlin for a general review of how things were going. This happened about February, March as I recall, of 1990. I was not at the meeting; Harry Gilmore was involved as an advisor. The meeting was in Berlin at the old Allied control council building, which essentially had been vacant since the Allied control council stopped meeting after the Soviets walked out of it in the late 1940s. But with unity coming, with so much changing so rapidly and given the stakes the decision was to hold a meeting. As far as I recall it only met once, in a somewhat formal sense as to reassert visibly the authority of the control council for Berlin with the four power controlled council, and I don't believe it ever met again at that level.

It seemed to me that our meetings with members of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin remained at a much more frequent rate for the balance of my tour there. We always met with them regularly, as I said in earlier sessions, at my level, at the minister's level, and when the ambassador would come up from Bonn he would almost always meet with the Soviet ambassador from East Berlin in a bilateral where I would take notes.

Q: And the meetings at your level were also generally at a bilateral level with the Soviet embassy?

WILLIAMS: Usually. We had a rotating system among the three western Allies where one of us was the Ally in charge for the month, so to speak, and one of our months was November. So we were in charge when the wall fell, and Harry Gilmore had the duty and the honor to inform the other ministers and the ambassador in Bonn and the commandant and coordinate our response to that first frenzied activity. So usually the chairman of the month would meet with the Soviet counterpart. All of us had the same Soviet counterpart in these years; his name was Vladimir Grinin, a real German expert, about our age, very attractive man with a very attractive wife, spoke excellent German. We conversed in German because that was the language that we all had best. Some of my colleagues knew Russian, I didn't know a word. But we socialized a bit with them at the quadripartite Allied festivities such as the ball of the Berlin air safety center which would be held each winter. There were other events that were celebrated by Soviet entities in West Berlin where we would see Grinin informally from time to time. We got to know each other fairly well. He proposed early on that we converse using the informal German "you". Which was quite a step. He was, to my surprise, very comfortable with that, we certainly were, and he was Vladia, I was Jim, and Roland and Jeane-Paul. There were four of us. I would say we had a good time. It was always professional. We could joke around with each other. We got business done pretty quickly. We continued the rotation of Ally of the month and that person had the main responsibility for being in contact that month with Grinin, either in West Berlin or in East Berlin at the Soviet embassy. We met in both places.

Q: To what extent were you involved during this transition period with the U.S. embassy in East Berlin? I think we had talked about that a little bit before, but obviously their days were coming to an end and I don't know at what point the embassy and the mission began to in effect come together.

WILLIAMS: That really happened after I left in August of 1990. We always had regular meetings with the ambassador and the DCM at the embassy in East Berlin. But even though we were all in the same city, our missions were almost entirely different. They never had any responsibility for the quadripartite issues, for dealing with the Soviets about Berlin that was our bread and butter. They dealt with the East German government which for us was an illegal presence in East Berlin and we never dealt with the East German authorities unless it was an emergency when somebody had to receive first aid in an auto accident on the Autobahn in East Germany or in Eastern Berlin. So there was almost total division of labor, but after November 9 I think there was more regular contact between particularly Harry Gilmore the minister in West Berlin and the ambassador Dick Barkley in East Berlin. Personalities aside, there was I think institutionally a bit of chafing between an embassy which was accredited to a government but not responsible for the capital city of that government and a mission which was responsible for the whole city which included the capital city of the government whose authority it did not recognize in the city and there was from time to time inevitably some friction. And some duplicate reporting which I think on the whole was a plus because there were different sides of the elephant to report back to Washington. But in terms of coming together, that was a matter of great sensitivity which our chief of mission in Bonn handled because as German unity was coming it was quite clear there would no longer be a need for an embassy in East Berlin because the GDR was going to be melded out of existence into the larger Germany. The decision was made essentially in Washington to have embassy Bonn coordinate the coming together of mission Berlin, USBER and embassy Berlin. And that inevitably meant some people would go and some people would stay, and that decision was made ultimately in Bonn by George Ward the DCM and Vernon Walters the chief of mission. And inevitably there was some resentment and great disappointment by some of the members of the embassy in Berlin. More so than my members of mission Berlin. There were more of us, not that we were better, and not all of us say it either, but this all happened after I left and I only know this from hearing it from a lot of people.

Q: One of the procedural innovations I suppose in the diplomacy of German reunification was the four plus two, the quadripartite powers, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, and the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. Did that all start after you had left, or did that really not affect Berlin as such.

WILLIAMS: It didn't affect me. It started before I left, but I was not involved. Harry Gilmore was tangentially involved, but most of that diplomacy was run out of Bonn by all three of the western powers, and then working with the Soviet embassy, in East Berlin, not the Soviet embassy in Bonn. But I don't recall aside again from the logistical responsibilities we had for setting up the venue for some of these meetings, I don't recall any major role by USBER in that time. And of course, after we left there was a lot more of it because we left in August and German unity came about a year later, so there was an intensive negotiation from '90 to '91, but it really didn't involve me.

Q: I don't mean to plug a book particularly, but I might just note for the record a book that I've read that I think was really quite excellent by Condoleezza Rice who perhaps today will be named Secretary of State and her coauthor is Philip Zelikow who is well-known lately for being the executive director of the 9/11 Commission and it really discusses the four plus two talks, what Secretary Baker's involvement, all sorts of aspects. It's fairly detailed. I don't remember the title, but it came out about 10 years ago, eight years ago, something like that.

WILLIAMS: Harry Gilmore wrote an op-ed piece in the Baltimore Sun that came out on November 9 this year. This is the fifteenth anniversary of the fall of the wall. It was a short piece, but it recounted his, he was the Allied chairman for that month, November. His experiences dealing with the governing mayor of Berlin, Walter Momper, social democrat, and the commandant Ray Haddock, and the Allies and Ambassador Walters that night. And it's quite an interesting vignette. The main issue that night was the Berlin police, the West Berlin police, wanted authority to approach the wall and maintain order and restore it when necessary. And the issue was, and the reason they came to us was, the wall was off-limits to them. It stood on the territory of the Soviet sector or of East Germany, depending on where it was located, but they had no legal right to touch it. In fact we had been very firm in telling them to stay the hell away from it, that it was our responsibility as the occupying powers for many, many years. But given the extraordinary circumstances these tens and tens of thousands of Germans surging forth, there was a correctly perceived need to maintain order lest things get out of hand. So in a period of an hour or two, Harry gave Momper the authorization as soon as he called and then back-briefed the French and British ministers and the commandant and the embassy in Bonn. Things were just going too fast to hold a formal meeting in the Kommandatura and decide this issue. Momper was very happy to get that authority. And the Berlin police, working very closely with the Allies, made good use of that authority. They didn't climb all over the wall and they kept people off the wall as long as they could. It wasn't entirely possible as we know from the pictures, but it was just an indication of how closely and well we worked together in those turbulent days.

Q: Ok, anything else you would want to say about your assignment to Berlin before we go on to your next posting?

WILLIAMS: There are three things I just want to highlight very briefly from my four years in Berlin. As I said before I was initially very surprised as to the comity that existed between the Soviet Union whom we were still calling the evil empire in those days and the Allied powers in Berlin. The surprise was my own lack of background in Berlin when I got there, but it reflected a general desire by all four powers not to have any trouble in Berlin. With the signing of the quadripartite agreement in the early 1970s they had taken that step that they no longer wanted Berlin to be a flashpoint of the Cold War. And so sometimes there was trouble given the circumstances of the division of the city, the division of Germany, the garrisoning of West Germany and East Germany by large numbers of Allied forces and Russian forces, and the spying by one side on the other that was also sanctioned as part of the post-war agreements. Inevitably there was friction. I mentioned last time Major Nicholson was shot and allowed to bleed to death because a Soviet sentry kept first aid from being rendered. Another MLM, military liaison mission, person was shot when I was there. But every time something like that happened it was quickly handled through channels and never escalated to a crisis over Berlin. Nobody wanted any trouble. Whenever refugees, East Berliners or East Germans, tried to cross the wall and got killed or shot or whatever there was a lot of public outrage, political concern, but it never escalated to the point of crisis simply because we had learned a lesson in the '40s and '50s we didn't want one. So from the management of the Berlin air regime, to handling incidents at the wall, or even more trivial things such as when an Allied military vehicle would break down in the eastern sector of Berlin, the Soviets could be counted on to be helpful within reason. They wouldn't do everything, but they generally would be helpful because it was in their interest to do so. Even when Reagan came in 1987, this was my baptism into this, the decision was made to have him speak in front of the Brandenburg gate and to walk up close to the wall and even stand on the area next to the wall where the footing was placed. This is what the Germans called the untabaugabe. Once again, this is technically, legally, juridically part of the Soviet sector of Berlin and this would be a violation. But I told Grinin our Soviet counterpart what was going to happen. I said he was going to walk up there; this was a visit, that's all it is. I wasn't asking permission, I was simply telling him, and his reaction indicated there was not going to be any problem from the Soviet side.

Q: Did you tell your counterpart what President Reagan was going to say?

WILLIAMS: I didn't know, I did not preview the speech. But this could have been a delicate thing. The Secret Service had sharpshooters posted on top of the Reichstag which is very close to the Brandenburg gate and on other points of high ground nearby to protect the president. As I recall also brief greeting on that simply as to let him know there would be armed personnel with sniper scopes up there just in case something untoward happened. As I recall, the day of the visit itself when Reagan was there, there was no Soviet to be seen, the East Germans were out of sight. It was as if it was a dead man zone on the other side of the wall. And fortunately everything went off very smoothly. I think that's sort of informal or formal discussion to put them on notice so we could reassure them and also make sure they did the right thing, or didn't do the wrong thing in anticipating something that didn't happen. So Soviet-Allied cooperation in Berlin was extraordinary, even to the personal level, the whole time I was there. And that was a very big plus in managing the issues.

Q: And that continued through the very turbulent period of 1989.

WILLIAMS: It did. Walters would meet with the Soviet ambassador regularly. As I said, Kotchamasov was the first one. Smirin I think was the second ambassador. They always spoke Russian, sometimes we used German, Walters spoke all these languages, and fortunately for me he did a lot of his business in German so I could take the notes, otherwise Harry would have had to take the notes because he spoke Russian.

The second issue I wanted to mention very briefly is the question of budget. I think it's important to note that the bundestag, the German legislature in Bonn, approved a huge budget for the three western Allies each year. Aside from salaries and all other expenses, all of our operational costs in Berlin, military and civilian, were born by the occupation cost budget approved by the bundestag. Now it went through the normal internal control channels in Bonn. There was a liaison system set up in Berlin and in Bonn, between the embassies and the bundestag, but it didn't go through the congress and it didn't go through our OMB or OPM or any of the other American alphabet agencies. So it was a sui generous arrangement. We had very stringent budgetary years in this period in Washington, so it was a generous budget for us. The missions in Berlin, military and civilian, were very well-equipped. Deliberately so. Not only did we want to showcase Berlin as a city of freedom and success, we wanted to make active use of those assets. So we had created over the years extraordinary training facilities for the military to use, and extraordinary conference facilities for the mission to use, so whenever there was a chiefs of mission conference in Germany or in Europe, they almost always came to Berlin because we had the facilities, we had the personnel, we had the assets and the infrastructure to support it, and we did. Many of the military units, army units in Europe, mainly USEUR, U.S. Army Europe, came to Berlin for specialized training in inner city warfare which is now so topical with the battles raging in Iraq and other things, and the standard of excellence they achieved there was really quite extraordinary, because once again the equipment was first rate and we had the space to do it. We also didn't have, quite honestly, as many environmental concerns in Berlin as the army was facing in West Germany. There were some, very articulately and loudly sometimes, but ultimately we had the upper hand in Berlin, we didn't in Germany when it came to that.

Q: I think that's an important point you're making. Let me ask you though, to what extent did you exercise some restraint, and were there controls in place. Was it sort of sky's the limit unlimited, tennis court in every backyard?

WILLIAMS: First of all, we had requisitioned when the army first came into Berlin in July of '45 some very large and well-preserved properties. The Soviets had beaten the hell out of the city when they took it. So what became the Soviet sector of Berlin, and these lines of division had been drawn in the years before the war ended, the heart of the city and the eastern sector were pretty well obliterated. By the luck of the draw we had a sector that went down to the southwestern sector of the city, which was not the direction from which the Soviets advanced on the city, although they had enveloped the whole thing. There were a lot of properties still intact in our sector, the British sector, and the French sector. And these were expensive to maintain. They were requisitioned so they formally still belonged to the German state or to the German families who had once lived there, but their maintenance was expensive and that was considered a legitimate expense by the cost of the occupation budget. Restraint was used, but it was a different kind of restraint. We wanted to maintain a certain level of excellence and the Germans wanted us to have that excellence. It wasn't that this was rammed down the throat of the bundestag, although inevitably questions were asked about it in the bundestag. These questions became more and more pointed as decade after decade after decade went on and the war became a rather distant memory. So every year we had more questions to answer as to how this money was being spent and why so much money was needed for the three Allies. The embassy in Bonn handled that liaison with the bundestag, but in order to better handle it, and frankly to give a better image of our commitment to serious internal controls, the embassy created something called the Berlin budget management office, BBMO. This was run by Dan Tholl I think, a recently retired FSO with admin and bookkeeping credentials that were quite significant. And they reviewed the budget for the American sector before it was submitted as part of the Allied budget to the federal authorities who submitted it to the bundestag. And that was a much more serious review when the BBMO came in.

Q: Was that in Bonn or Berlin or Washington?

WILLIAMS: It worked out of the embassy in Bonn but they came up often to Berlin and they had an office in the mission too as I recall. And that was necessary because quite honestly there had been inevitably some excesses. There had been a scandal some years before that the British were running a stable of polo ponies in the British sector near the Olympic stadium and paying for it out of the occupation cost budget. So when the polo pony scandal hit the ponies were quickly retired, sent back to Britain, taken off the occupation cost budget. We never had ponies, but we had morale and recreation welfare type things. Large boats that were floating around the Wannsee, motorized for the morale of the troops, and the troops used them, and the commandant had a private yacht which he shared with the minister and POLAD (political advisor) occasionally. For essentially representational activity, but also recreational activity. So there was a lot of that and one could quibble about how much of that was excess and how much not. The difficulty for us in the American sector was we had so much more than our colleagues at the embassy in Bonn. Again the constraints of the United States federal budget meant that the embassy in Bonn was living on a very short leash. At one point, the first year I was there '86, '87 they had to give up a lot of subscriptions to professional magazines, newspapers, because they just couldn't afford them it got that bad. Although it was strictly speaking a violation of the budget we I think wound up buying some subscriptions for them, we had the money, we thought that was the right thing to do. Needless to say, it did not endear us to our colleagues in Bonn because they knew we had the capability and resented the fact that they didn't. And they were right to.

Q: To what extent was their budgetary coordination with the other two Allies? You mention the Berlin budget management office dealing with the bundestag, or with the German finance ministry. Did you all try to make sure you were kind of in sync a little bit with the French and the British?

WILLIAMS: I think we did, but I don't recall any intensive coordination in Berlin. Certainly it never was done at my level. None of my discussions ever involved budgetary coordination and I don't think the ministers did either, either John Kornblum's or Harry Gilmore's. I think this was handled through the embassies in Bonn, working with the finance ministry and through the ministry the bundestag. But a subset of this, and it's the final point I want to mention because it's historically relevant, is we had in the American sector some enormous, historically significant buildings that were in very bad shape. One was the Prussian Supreme Court which was the locus of the Berlin air safety center which had a very small part of a cavernous building. One was the building where the Kommandatura met; it was originally an insurance building, later a bank, but a historically significant building. One was Tempelhof Airport, huge airport built by the Nazis, surrounded by the city, but with large areas. There were various residences and there were other buildings too. Most of the buildings had been public buildings under the Prussians, then under the Nazis, and were used by our people. We, late in the occupation era, that is we'd been maintaining the buildings all along, or trying to. But they reached such a point of general dilapidation in the 1980s that a very imaginative admin officer at the mission, Mike McLaughlin, came up with the idea of seriously reconstructing these buildings to preserve them for posterity against the day when unity came. At this point we didn't know that unity was right around the corner, but to fix the leaky roofs, to repair the hazardous wiring, to make the plumbing stacks operate again, to really upgrade these buildings and make them useable if not by the Allies then by somebody else, perhaps by German authorities when unity came. So this was done, as I recall, primarily in the American sector, and it involved a massive increase in our budget allocation which went roughly from '85 to '90 from five million dollars to 20, 25 million marks maybe per year. It went up five fold because of this building maintenance and upgrade program. The historical facades were maintained, when necessary they were renewed, the internal workings were gutted and replaced, and we basically tried to make those buildings fully functional and useable when the time came. We didn't have immediate need for it, and Mike was in retrospect clairvoyant that the need would be coming very soon, but we had a huge part of commercial real estate and public real estate available for German authorities to use when unity came. It was a huge operation. Mike basically ran it, keeping the embassy informed using German contractors, German material, so it was done to a very high standard, and that was impressive to see because nobody had either thought of this before or had the bureaucratic fortitude to put it through. Mike seized the opportunity and made the most of it, and it's quite a credit I think to the American and indeed the Allied occupation there at the end at least, that so much of that real estate was ready when unity came.

Q: That was real foresight, I hadn't realized that, that's interesting. Anything else?

WILLIAMS: No, I think that's it.

Q: Let me ask you one question, I think you probably addressed this right at the beginning of our discussion of your assignment in Berlin. You were political advisor, you were POLAD for short. POLADs in major commands advise the commander, you did that, but in a different way. Were there aspects of your responsibilities that would be traditional POLAD or it was all pretty unique?

WILLIAMS: Well, I think it's both. We were all part of an occupation regime and formally became part of the army command post at Clay headquarters. We were in protocol terms in the chain of command. I never had command authority over troops, but in the absence of the commandant the minister would be acting commandant for political purposes and protocol purposes. In the absence of both of them, I was the acting commandant. Again, never with line authority over troops, but for representing the American sector, vis-a-vis the other Allies, vis-a-vis the Berliners, vis-a-vis anybody else, the baton passed to us. I was also supposed to, and did, give political advice and other advice to the commandant and my colleagues in the command; the chief of staff was an important one. The head of the air force presence, air force colonel was another. There was a lot of coordination through regularly scheduled meetings each day, each week, between the USBER and the military. The commandant chaired these as the senior American official in Berlin. In his absence it would be sometimes the minister. It sort of passed around. But usually the commandant was there. And these meetings were fairly free flowing. We attended the meetings and then we had our own staff meetings to which the commandant and the chief of staff or one of his advisors would always come. So there was healthy coordination, we cleared cables for each other and this sort of thing. I think with John Mitchell who was the commandant when we got there it worked very smoothly. John and his wife Joan took their representational responsibilities seriously. John certainly was an able military commander, but he did not try to run the political analysis and reporting that USBER did. He accepted this natural division of labor, which had existed for a long time. Not always harmoniously, but generally speaking. And under John Mitchell it was very harmonious. We were very respectful of his authority and responsibilities and he was very respectful of ours. The last commandant, John's successor, was Ray Haddock, and he had a much more MacArthur-esque approach to running things. He had successfully presided over the deployment of the 104 Persian missiles in southwest Germany in the '80s, major success for U.S. diplomacy. He had spent a lot of time dealing with Germans, trying to overcome public resistance to that deployment. Spoke pretty good German. Married to a German. And he came to Berlin with a mission to really assert the authority of the USCAB in all respects, and so it was not as harmonious with him. But when the crunch came, when we really had to work together and pull together November 9 and so on, we absolutely did. So these frictions were at a much more superficial level than I perhaps had indicated. But I always would give advice and John Mitchell and then Ray Haddock were free to accept or reject it, and vice versa. They were always welcome to opine on things as well, but we were free to accept that or reject it within our area of competence. Just to give you one example and I have a great affection for both these commandants although Ray might not fully agree with that. I saw them both, and their wives, at the fall of the wall party at the German embassy Saturday night. We'd get together each year around the 9th of November, German embassy hosted and for very little money, I think about $40, everybody who was a Berliner or a friend of one could go and have a great time with authentic German food and drink and see old friends and reminisce. And both John Mitchell and Ray Haddock were there with their wives. But just to give you one example of how things had changed, there was some issue that happened involving the governance of West Berlin and Ray decided he would send a private note to the governing mayor who was Walter Momper at this time, telling him that whatever it was was a bad idea and he didn't think he should do it. It was a private note, it wasn't a dictate, and it was not a press release of any kind. He sent him a private note trying to counsel him. I'm sure John Mitchell had never done that and it had been a long time since any commandant had, and Ray had never done it, and we had never heard about it which tells you how things were. USBER was not informed, but I was called in by Momper's chief of staff, a lawyer who had been plucked out of the university to run things, a very able fellow. He told me that the governing mayor had received this letter, did not plan to respond to it, did not want it in the senate, and he gave it back to me. He said we don't like to be counseled that way. So I had the unenviable task of returning the letter to its sender with the message that accompanied it. I faithfully did that. And that was the end of it as far as I knew. But these things added up. This was just one case, but there were other little things. But again at the end of the day when we really had to pull together in the sector among the three sectors with the Berliners and the Germans and the Soviets, all that went away.

Q: Jim, we're probably in about August 1990 and ready to go on to your next assignment. What came next?

WILLIAMS: I had decided after staying in Berlin for so long and enjoying it so much that I really wanted to continue that type of work if possible, and that inevitably meant that I was going to seek a DCMship in some large embassy. I had had conversations before I went to Berlin about possibly going to Greece or Turkey. I had served in Turkey, I spoke Greek still, served in Cyprus, never in Greece, but I was looking at the DCMships in Ankara and Athens, trying to take advantage of my earlier experience and language training. It seems to me I arranged to be back in Washington when the new politically appointed ambassador, Michael Sotirhos from New York was going out to Greece. He was in Washington on consultations prior to going out, and that's when he interviewed me. I went in expecting to have about a half hour of the man's time. I knew there were other candidates waiting to be interviewed some time while he was there. I didn't know who they were exactly or when they were going to see him. I'd never met him before although I'd heard he was a businessman from New York City, which barely scratched the surface.

Michael is still alive; he is a Greek-American, first generation. His parents came from the Greek islands and he grew up in very modest circumstances in New York City. Went to CCNY, became a successful interior designer, got into commercial real estate and other investments, and in short became a multi, multi-millionaire by the time he was 50 years old. Had two children, had a wife who was also Greek-American. Very hardworking people. I think they drove themselves as hard as they drove their staff, but had this tremendous workaholism, and that quickly became apparent in the interview. After about five minutes of pleasantries, and he was quite cordial, he asked if we could switch to Greek. At this time, I had not spoken Greek seriously for years, I hadn't had any refresher. I'd been speaking German for the past four years, and found myself having to answer questions essentially with very short replies, using the vocabulary I was able to dredge up through my brain. We talked about his concept of leadership and loyalty. Loyalty was very important to him, loyalty upward as well as downward. We talked about that. I think he chose me among other reasons because I had never served in Greece. He was strongly suspicious of Foreign Service officers, or perhaps generally, but particularly Foreign Service officers who'd had a tour in Greece and wanted another. He thought their reasons were suspect, that they had been perhaps corrupted by the delights of being in Greece, the Levantine charms of the climate, the women, the weather, whatever. And some of the other candidates had had that experience. They were very strong candidates. Had better Greek than I did. Certainly had had the executive credentials I had had, but I had never served in Greece and it became apparent to me in that interview that was important to him. And serving in Cyprus was one thing, didn't count against me, but not serving in Greece certainly counted for me. And so the interview went on for about four hours. Fortunately I had not had much coffee and I had gone to the men's room before it started, but by the time it was over I was ready to leave, let's put it that way. And then he interviewed some other people, I left and went back to Berlin and never heard anything from anybody. Finally I called him in Athens just to ask how it was going and to say I'm still interested in the job if you're still interested in having me. He was very noncommittal, very courteous, but he said he still was considering people. He either told me then or told me later that he was under pressure to consider what we euphemistically call in personnel diversity candidates, women and minorities, to be candid about it. I'm sure the system had some candidates. And it wasn't until that spring as I recall, March maybe April, when I finally got the assignment. Athens came through, so we were very happy about that. I called and thanked him, and said look forward to working with you in Athens, and he said look forward to having you here. He had made some comments about his predecessor Bob Keeley whom he didn't like for some reason. Perhaps that's a common affliction that political ambassadors have when they succeed a career ambassador. Sometimes works vice versa too. In any case, we had a very cordial introduction to each other and I think in retrospect he handled the selection process very well. I know that he grilled everybody as thoroughly as he grilled me. It was a long, long session. Four hours at least. Dave Ransom was surprised at how thorough it was. I think I was the first one in the queue just because of the way the scheduling worked out.

Q: When did that take place again?

WILLIAMS: I think that was in the fall of 1989, or the summer. He went out that fall so it was probably when I was back on leave July or August. Before the wall fell. At that point I couldn't brag about having brought an end to the Berlin wall, but I could tell him about the occupation cost budget because I thought he would be impressed by how large a budget the American sector had, and other things I was doing. It was a friendly meeting; it was certainly a substantive discussion, and one of the most thorough meetings I've ever had with anybody on any subject. He took due diligence seriously as he had taken everything, business deals and everything else. I saw this again and again when I was in Athens with him. He really went into things in a very thorough way.

Q: I think I first met him in Cyprus about 1981, '82, early in the Reagan administration, and I know he had been very much involved in fundraising, particularly with ethnic communities I think, for that election. I don't know if he took a position in the administration, but he was certainly close to the counselor during the Reagan period, Edward Derwinski, then he was ambassador to Jamaica. That was just before Athens, correct? Very early part of the Bush administration.

WILLIAMS: He had four years in the Reagan administration as ambassador to Jamaica, and then when Bush came in he was one of the few political ambassadors kept by Bush which was a big surprise to a lot of people who thought as Republican ambassadors they might be carried over.

Q: So he was the latter part of the Reagan administration and very early part of the Bush administration, but he was in Kingston and was selected to go to Athens.

WILLIAMS: He told me that his expertise had been, aside from the fact he was a committed Republican and believed deeply in the principles of the party, his expertise had been organizing ethnic groups of all kinds for Republicans. Greek-Americans for Reagan, Turkish-Americans for Reagan. He showed me the pins once. He had Arab-Americans, any conceivable hyphenate group you could imagine had a pin for Republicans. For Reagan, for Bush. And he had done that very well, bringing his tremendous drive and organizational skills to bear and had been rewarded first of all with Jamaica for that. Then when Bush came in, he knew Bush very well also, got Athens.

Q: I think in the early part of the Reagan administration before going to Jamaica I believe he had a position in the White House for a period. Is that possible?

WILLIAMS: He was with somebody in the White House doing something but I cannot remember what it was. He was certainly close to Ed Derwinski.

Q: And Faith Whittlesey maybe who twice was ambassador to Switzerland in the Reagan administration, but also had a White House position.

WILLIAMS: It's possible, but I never heard him mention her and she never came to Athens when he was there.

Q: So anyway, you got to Athens.

WILLIAMS: In August of 1990 as I recall. I called the ambassador as soon as I got to a phone the next day. He invited us over to the residence to the swimming pool for a get acquainted session. Estelle was there, their children were not there. Ann and Laura and I went over for what became a four or five hour discussion/swim/lunch at the swimming pool. This time it was all in English fortunately so it was much easier for Ann and Laura.

Q: A question that has popped into my head over the years is he was the first Greek-American U.S. ambassador to Greece I believe. How was he received? I was in Italy with John Volpe one of the first Italian-Americans to come there.

WILLIAMS: I think the Greeks were initially in awe of Sotirhos, cowed by him. He has a very strong personality, fluent Greek, fluent English, and able to chew people up or argue a case one way or the other with tremendous force. It's an overpowering personality when he comes on strong as I saw him do many times. The reason he had been suspicious of FSOs who wanted to go back to Greece a second time was he was certainly a Greek and took that seriously, but he was contemptuous of much of what modern Greece had become. The sloppiness, the filth, the lack of discipline, the inefficiency. The list went on and on. WASPs (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) like me would consider some of those things charming and part of the atmospheric delight of Greece, but Michael Sotirhos and Estelle as well, she was Greek-American also, had a very hard line about some of these things. They correctly pointed out, and some of their thoughts the Greeks would also point out on their own, that the system in Greece was essentially so corrupt and so bad that even very good people couldn't succeed there. Those same people when they immigrated, whether it was to America or Australia or Britain, did succeed. They got ahead. They prospered. And their conclusion was almost universally, well there's something wrong with the system in Greece. That was I think the starting point. My concern, knowing he was Greek-American, was that he would suffer from localitis and he would be too apologetic for what I already knew were some of the foibles of the Greeks. Not at all. He was tough as nails on the Greeks when the time came, but he also knew how to schmooze with them and get things done. He was very tough on his staff and drove himself and Estelle as hard as he drove anybody else. He was not easy to work for, but I think he knew how to get things done. For example, the DECA (Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement) agreement was up for approval in the GreekParliament.

Q: The Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement related to the U.S. facilities in Greece.

WILLIAMS: Exactly, that was it. And in this period, this was the late 1980s, the Papandreou government was running out of steam with scandals and so forth. But the national elections they'd held had not produced a clear, decisive majority in the parliament so the only way the parliament was going to approve the DECA was going to require some arm twisting or some absences on the part of certain deputies. I forget how it was done because it happened before I got there, but Ambassador Sotirhos managed to persuade Papandreou to have some of his party's deputies, the PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) party deputies, absent themselves from that vote so that the New Democracy deputies would have enough votes to approve the DECA, and I think that's what finally happened. But he didn't achieve that easily or right away. It took a lot of sessions with Papandreou who in the end went along with it, and the DECA was approved. When I got there, Constantine Mitsotakis had become prime minister, again with a very narrow majority that the Greek election log never did produce a clear winner, although manipulated many times.

Q: New Democracy.

WILLIAMS: Constantine Mitsotakis of New Democracy ran the government and that was the party in power for most of the time that I was in Greece. Papandreou came back in the elections of November 1993 and I left in the summer of 1994.

Q: Okay, against that background, how did Ambassador Sotirhos use you as DCM? What was your role as you saw it, as he saw it, and how did things work within the mission?

WILLIAMS: The first thing he did was literally the first month I was there he took me around to meet the president, Karamanlis, the prime minister, Mitsotakis, the foreign minister, Samaras. Virtually the whole cabinet. He was at those meetings. He took me in. It was a business meeting first of all, so we transacted some business and then he would introduce me in the course of the meeting and say, "This is my deputy who will be in charge of the embassy when I am away on leave." And basically the message was he's alright, work with him. So I had recognition and I knew the people. I met them when he finally did go on leave and I was the chargï¿½ and had to do some business with them. It was a very useful thing to do, and I was a little surprised he did it so early because there was a lot I needed to do in terms of learning how the embassy worked and so on, and he wasn't planning on going on leave soon. In the end he didn't leave until January when Desert Storm broke out and I had to call... no, he was there. But for some reason I had to call up the Prime Minister, Mitsotakis, at 10 o'clock one night to ask for urgent clearance to let our transport aircraft fly through Greek airspace on the way to reinforce our effort in Kuwait. I had met the prime minister, by this time several times in his office and elsewhere, and I got right through, the embassy operator got me to the prime minister's operator and zoom it went right through, and I found myself discussing in Greek with the prime minister. Military operations for which I didn't have the right vocabulary, but I did remember the word for logistical support and got that out. And the prime minister agreed very quickly. It was a short conversation, but it was facilitated by the fact that Sotirhos had laid the groundwork and made me acceptable, let's say, in his august circles. He was very good at that, and I met the military leadership as well through our MAAG (military assistance advisory group) chief who was a two star air force general, as well as through Ambassador Sotirhos early on. The Greek military. The chiefs of staff, the four stars.

Q: How did he see your role within the embassy?

WILLIAMS: Well, he wanted me to be the manager of things. He said he did. And in many respects I was the manager. But because of his knowledge of things, the fact that he'd already been there about a year when I got there, he was obviously in direct contact with a lot of people. If he was very interested in an issue it would be directly taken care of. One example, he was a businessman as I said, and a New Yorker, and perhaps for both reasons he had a good nose for corruption. And basically he was able to look at certain of our senior locals who had positions in procurement, warehousing, other areas, and surmise that they needed more careful review because they were dressed too well, their watches were too expensive. The apartment they lived in was in too upper bracket a section of Athens, something was going on. And I have to say, my initial reaction was he was being paranoid because I don't think of people that way. But when we looked at some of these folks, sure enough the procurement lady it turned out had been fleecing us for several hundred thousand dollars a year by various transactions with vendors. The books always balanced. You couldn't look at the books and find it. The enrichment came off the books. But we had a special investigation done. He was right. We fired her. We wanted to not pay her severance benefit as we were technically required to under Greek law because she was a senior FSN, but Washington did not want to back us up on that if it came to a court case. In the end we had to pay her severance.

He was very much involved with the personnel, especially the Greek personnel of the embassy. Very suspicious of some of them, and as I said, in some cases, not just this one, his suspicions were well-founded. I think though, because it was essentially a suspicious approach and not what the Greeks had expected certainly, FSNs, it led to more tension than was necessary. Athens was not a happy post in his time, I don't think. Largely because of his approach to work and drive and when he gets under pressure like many of us, he gets rather terse with people, he can be brutal with people sometimes. Both Americans and FSNs as well as Greek officials. He could chew out a Greek minister as well as a political counselor with equal effect. So it was not a happy place. One of the issues that was our first delicate issue to deal with. Ann had to deal with this really, because Estelle, Mrs. Sotirhos, and the ambassador took it very seriously. Apparently a lot of our staff did not know which fork to use, I know that sounds absurd, but the Sotirhos's believe that you should use the correct fork and apparently they were used to meals where they had lots of utensils on either side of the plate. This happened before we got there, but we were told that a number of our senior Americans had inelegantly used the wrong utensil at a meal at the residence in the presence of the ambassador. Mrs. Sotirhos had noticed it and wasn't this a horrible thing and this had to be fixed, by God. Not today but yesterday. So Ann was given the mission of fixing it. We'd never seen this behavior. The American staff looked fine to us, in fact they'd eaten at our table and they seemed to know how to be. They didn't use their hands or anything.

Q: You probably didn't offer them quite as many utensils as at the residence.

WILLIAMS: Not as many perhaps, but they seemed like normal people, so it was a very delicate thing. I forget how Ann did it, because it was done in the presence of Mrs. Sotirhos and the ladies essentially. The ladies were given this message to take back to their husbands and I was not involved, but Ann worked it out with her diplomatic skills so that it became sort of a game. Ann made it enjoyable, they reviewed things, they had even a film as I recall on etiquette, and they went through it utensil by utensil by utensil, what it's for. And without telling the American ladies you dolts, you don't know which one this is that's why we're making you go through this, which is I think the way the Sotirhos' preferred to do it, Ann did it in a lighter, more educational way, and she only had to do it once, fortunately. But I mention this because as I say I never saw it and I was flabbergasted that the ambassador and his wife would put so much stock on that. So I said it must be the case that whenever anybody is at their table he or she eats impeccably. I'm not exaggerating. About a week later General Galvin or somebody like that, ranked four stars, came to the residence for a working breakfast and the ambassador was on my left, General Galvin was across the table for me. I was there and I think Laurel Shea the political military counselor was there. There were four of us at breakfast being served a representational breakfast at the residence. General Galvin, who also did not eat with his hands, was given a piece of toast or croissant, took it, buttered it with the butter knife, not his own knife, and then put it instead of on the bread plate, on the main plate. I was waiting for the ambassador to explode, but nothing happened. My lesson from that was, perhaps etiquette isn't the be all and end all.

Q: It sounds like the ambassador was very hands on, I think we can say.

WILLIAMS: Very much so. But if he thought you were doing the right thing, or if he had confidence in you or didn't think the issue warranted his involvement, he gave you pretty broad rein. The economic counselor, political counselor, he rarely corrected their stuff.

Q: Did he want to see every outgoing telegram?

WILLIAMS: No, he didn't. As I recall at the beginning he did and then gradually I started signing off on things and even when he saw it he would rarely change anything. So as his confidence grew in me, I think I took over more of that. He thought that I was too soft on people, that is not hard enough on people, and I certainly was nowhere near as hard as he was, and I think in a way his criticism was a badge of honor, but it was a fair point. I was perhaps too understanding of people and too gentle. He wanted me to be a lot rougher with some of them, and my perception was that personalities aside, a lot of these folks had gone through a rough period with him and there was no point in my grinding them down further. He never liked that, but he didn't seem to hold it against me. Just would remind me from time to time I had to be tougher.

Q: Ok, well we've talked briefly about etiquette and about Desert Storm in January of 1991 and the planes coming through. What were some of the other issues and problems that you had to deal with in your time there.

WILLIAMS: Well the constant one was November 17, the Greek terrorist group that had been so successful in assassinating American and Greek officials since 1975. Its first victim as you remember was Richard Welch, the CIA station chief in Athens. And they killed a couple of Naval captains, defense attachï¿½ was one, a Naval captain at the MAAG was another. They'd killed Greek officials including the son-in-law of Prime Minister Mitsotakis, Pavlos Bakoyannis, and they'd tried to kill quite a few others. We had our guard up all the time. I had to go in an armored car. I had a follow car; the ambassador had an armored car and a lead car, as did the MAAG chief and the defense attachï¿½ and so forth. It was not just the ambassador and DCM, but the more senior officials really had to be protected because we perceived that we were targets of November 17. Unfortunately, it has to be said that November 17 was more professional and more successful than the Greek police who were, at least on paper, supposed to catch them. They made few mistakes. The Greek police made many. The bad guys were very dedicated to their work; the Greek police seemed to care less sometimes. And to a large extent this is not the fault of any particular Greek policeman but a fault of the system which changed cops routinely whenever the minister changed. Not just when the government changed, the prime minister changed. Whenever the minister of public order changed all the senior cops would be rotated out. We learned the hard way that many people whom we had trained in say counter-terrorism or forensics or whatever, with a view toward catching November 17 and putting them out of business. They were lined up doing traffic on roads or something when the minister changed because they had not been permanently part of the structure. We tried to fix that, this goes back before my time and continued after I left. I don't think we ever really did fix that problem. The British and we put in a lot of effort to help them. As the Olympics approached they got a lot of other effort and support from NATO, from others. But they only caught November 17 and rolled it up because November 17 got unlucky. It was a highly compartmentalized group, fairly small. One of its people carrying a parcel bomb down near Piraeus one day had the thing go off and injure him so badly he was taken to a hospital. Once they had found him in that condition, figured out who he was, they were able to unravel the whole gang and catch most of them fairly quickly.

Q: But that was long after you had left.

WILLIAMS: Long after I had left. And it only happened because of that accident. Who knows how long it would have gone on if it hadn't. So it was always a mystery why in such a chatty society as Greece where gossip is the currency of the day and highly valued and used as the lead of an exchange, how a secret like that could be kept so successfully. The membership of November 17 and nobody would come forward. There were lots of suspicions voiced, and the CIA bought lots of information and leads, but as far as I know none of them panned out. People were in many respects afraid. November 17 had acquired Robin Hood type mythos, legend. All powerful, all successful, impossible to penetrate. It was never penetrated, and we never captured a member or put one away until this incident happened by accident many years later. But part of it was in addition to the way the police were politicized and rendered ineffective by this constant transfer and shifting of personnel and cadres. The system was defective in other ways. For example, judges were afraid to preside over trials. Prosecutors were afraid to prosecute certain people believed to be members of November 17 or close to it, because of fear of retribution. There were threats voiced, the names and the addresses of the family members including the wives and children would be published in left wing rags of various kinds whenever some trial was coming up. And that had a very definite intimidating effect on the judiciary, prosecutors, and others. Generally it was believed that November 17 had grown out of a left wing violent offshoot of the group that had opposed the 1967 junta from exile. I think that's correct, though I'm not sure that all the people who were finally caught and put away were of that vintage, but it was believed correctly to be a very small organization, often used the same pistol to kill people. The same ballistics would turn up again and again, and sometimes it would bring in hit men from overseas to assassinate folks. The Turkish embassy press attachï¿½ was killed the last month I was there that way. So it was really a bad thing, and particularly frustrating that for all the manpower and resources we invested and the Greeks invested to catch these people and put them out of operation, we had no success. None. It's particularly puzzling in that the Greek counter narcotics effort was much more successful. Again, same police force, different unit, but it's the same ministry, the same hierarchy. For some reason their antinarcotics unit maintained cohesion and had a much higher level of effectiveness. With some glitches, but a much higher level than the counterterrorism group ever approached when I was there. So that's a real mystery. But that was a problem and it was an issue that I had to deal with because of the visibility of the ambassador and me and others. One of the things I quickly discovered when I started presiding over watch committee meetings and country team meetings was that in looking around the parking lot, every other agency drove around in an armored, foreign cars. Now in Athens, European cars were quite common in those days. Big Cadillacs and Plymouths were not, which is what the ambassador and I had. So in other words, being driven around in a Cadillac with or without a flag on it was almost like putting a bull's-eye on the car, and my Plymouth had no other counterpart either. We had two Plymouths, both lightly armored, and those were the only such cars in Athens. So the MAAG chief had a BMW, the station chief had a Mercedes, lots of those, and on and on and on. But they blended in, whereas the ambassador and I stuck out. So we held a series of watch committee meetings and reported back to Washington what we had found. Again, this is a high terrorist threat post. Despite the Buy American Act, it really makes no sense to have the top American state officials in this post drive around in the uniquely American cars, when all the other American personnel are driving around in cars that blend in and fit much better in the landscape, and are easier to maintain, because there were parts, the mechanics knew this stuff. And essentially we embarrassed DS, Diplomatic Security, in the department into waiving the rules and authorizing the purchase of some European cars. The ambassador got an armored Mercedes finally, and I forget what I got, what the DCM got. I wasn't looking for Mercedes, I just wanted something that was a little less visible. Because of November 17 and the high terrorist threat we got it, and it was a long haul. Our RSO did a lot of good work in that and I think we got some bureaucratic support from other agencies back in Washington since this was a no cost thing for them, it wouldn't come out of their hide to have state use some of its limited money to buy a foreign car.

Q: To what extent at that time that you were in Athens in the early 1990s did we think that November 17 was part of a broader international network or had ties abroad, and to what extent were you also concerned in addition to November 17 by Arab or other non-Greek terrorist groups that might operate in Greece?

WILLIAMS: Well there was at least one other Greek terrorist group, Revolutionary Cells I think it was called, which had been known to set off bombs at various places. There was one in Patras that went off the first year or two I was there. But they were kind of feckless, they didn't kill people with the ruthless efficiency and zeal of November 17, at least they didn't at that time. There were lots of Palestinians crawling around Athens at that time, and the Greek services were on top of them as we were through liaison and through direct means, and just down the street from my residence, two doors down the street, was the headquarters of the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) where a lot of these characters came from time to time. It was never a problem for our residence. We just thought it was kind of amusing that the PLO was our neighbor. So we were to a much lesser degree concerned by the Revolutionary Cells and by the Palestinian groups. We were aware that they were there, but N17 was really the focus. Every year, as you know, on November 17 there is a march to the American embassy protesting the role of the U.S. government in the era of the 1967-74 junta and holding us responsible largely for what the junta had done to the people of Greece and the students of Greece on November 17, 1973. And this march, which starts at the university and comes up Queen Sophia to the embassy, usually attracts a large number of hangers on, including Palestinian groups, Kurdish groups, other groups. University students for sure, but some of these people got violent, stone throwing, that sort of stuff, even scuffling. The embassy was always protected by a lot of police, there were always arrests made, and they had tried to hold them back far enough so the rocks couldn't do any damage. You always had to be a little careful with that because you didn't know what was going to attach itself to the march, and that would be another cause for concern. November 17 never hid itself in large groups like that. As far as liaison with other terrorist groups who were part of an international movement, we never thought N17 was part of a broader international movement. We thought a large part of its success was due to the fact that it was not, that it was so sealed off, almost hermetically, from any source including foreign ones. There was some kind of cooperation we thought, some of the non-N17 hit men were employed to come in and do a job, just shoot the Turk or shoot the American and then get out of the country. How they were paid, how they were hired, we never figured out, but the surmise was that the active cadre was probably not in the inner circle. That's all that I recall about N17.

Q: Okay, what other issues were you particularly concerned about in this period. U.S. military issues, Turkey?

WILLIAMS: Turkey was always on the plate. The bases were working pretty well although they were phasing out as they were throughout Europe. We had an army base up in the northern part of Greece that phased out. The large air force base near Athens, Hellenikon, phased out the first year we were there, and then the last year we were there the intelligence base on Crete at Heraklion phased out. So coordinating that, discussing that with our own authorities in the European commands in Washington and negotiating the circumstances with the Greek authorities was a big part of what we did in those years. We had two large communication relay sites outside of Athens which handled a lot of the message traffic for State and other agencies. We wanted to close them out or upgrade them. I forget what it was. Consolidate them. There were issues there that had gone on for years that we kept talking with the Greeks about. I think we finally shut one, scrapped the material, got agreement to do that, and then relocated to the other site.

A big issue that we had that is still I think a hardy perennial on the agenda of whoever is running embassy Athens was our effort to purchase the land behind the embassy. The parking lot. Originally that had been just a parking lot and there was a street between it and the chancery and that street was closed years ago for security reasons and gradually the embassy operation spilled over to put structures on the parking lot. Even though we didn't own the land we put up warehouses, other structures, and surrounded the whole thing with a security fence. But we really wanted to own the property outright to avoid the political arrows and other arrows we took from time to time from the owners of that land who thought that the rent we were paying was not enough. We almost got it. One year Sotirhos wanted to get this done because he'd gotten the DECA done, he'd gotten a tourism agreement done for the first time with Greece. He'd gotten a civil aviation agreement done by putting his laser-like focus on the issue and driving the American embassy folk to the point of distraction sometimes. But he got it done. And this was one he wanted to get done too. And he was right. He almost got it done. The problem was by the time he hammered the Greek officers' pension fund leadership into line, they were the ones who owned it, and got the foreign ministry to push them in line and to back this, the money that had been fenced off by FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) for purchasing the land, 12 million dollars, was no longer available. By the time he tried to get that money put back together again then the pension fund was at odds. We just never could line up all the stars together; it was that sort of thing. But our use of the property continued unabated. It was never challenged in any real way. There were threats of legal action by one party or the other, but it was always a potential vulnerability. We spent a lot of effort on that, discussing that with the foreign ministry and with others, ultimately with no resolution.

Q: You were there for the U.S. elections in 1992. I assume Ambassador Sotirhos was still there and probably was not very happy with the results. Or did he go back to help with the campaign?

WILLIAMS: No. He was always a Republican, there was never any doubt about that, and he had a number of his friends, colleagues from the party I think, come to stay with him at the residence when he was there, but he was scrupulously non-partisan as an ambassador. For example, he would host a reception for the Republicans abroad in Greece and he would host a reception for the Democrats abroad. He really took his job as ambassador in that sense in a truly non-partisan sense which I thought was admirable. One of the things he did that was striking was former President Carter came to Greece in '92 perhaps to receive an award from the Onassis Foundation of $100,000 for the work of Habitat for Humanity which he had founded. And so President and Mrs. Carter came and the Sotirhos' gave a very lavish reception in their honor with the whole Greek establishment. The ambassador basically escorted them around, introduced them to everybody, made sure they had a good time, and spent a lot of time with them. I knew he did not like Jimmy Carter's politics. We didn't talk politics often, but I knew that given the way that Reagan had come in and I knew he'd been involved in that campaign, I knew he had a very strong view. But he treated Carter with tremendous respect and deference. This was a President of the United States and by God he's going to be treated that way and honored by the Greeks as well as the Americans here. So it was really a commendable effort and I think a good time was had by all.

He did not go back for the campaign of '92. I honestly don't know if he had any involvement at all. He may have given advice, he may have not been asked. He and Estelle did know the Bushes fairly well from the campaign of '88 and earlier in the Reagan administration they were on a first name basis with them. He knew everybody in the Bush White House. Whether he wanted to go back and do more I really don't know, but the fact is he didn't. He stayed in Greece until late January of '93. Just around Inauguration Day, I think a few days later, he and Estelle left Greece for good and I started what became a 10 month period as chargï¿½.

Q: Ok. Why don't we stop there. Let me just ask you before we finish this tape if there were any other prominent significant visitors that really stuck out.

WILLIAMS: President Bush came there just after the Gulf War, so probably late spring/summer. He made a swing through the area. Went to Turkey, went to Greece. Went to other places. But it was the first time in many, many years that a sitting American president had come to Greece. I think the last time had been Eisenhower in 1959. A sitting American president. And it was a great success. Cyprus was a big part of that. We made a real effort to make some progress on Cyprus with the Turks, with the Cypriots, with the Greeks.

Q: Did he go to Cyprus, Bush?

WILLIAMS: He did not go to Cyprus, no. But there was a tremendous lead after that. Security was a major concern obviously because N17 was still around and Labor of Love. I think they had issued a proclamation. They issued proclamations from time to time which always made it into the press but could never be traced to anybody, about the imperialists and this and that, inveigh against Bush. We took tremendous security precautions and there was no incident at all during his visit. He went to the Greek parliament and spoke. There was a reception in his honor at the residence which was a security nightmare because there were high-rise apartment buildings all around the gardens of the residence. The Greek police literally had to shut down every apartment that faced the residence and make sure the balconies were clear before the President would go out onto the lawn. It was a good visit I think in every respect, but the progress we were going to make, or thought we had in the bag, had lined up for Cyprus, did not materialize, because at the end of the day Mitsotakis and the then Turkish prime minister were supposed to sit down and agree on something. I forget who the Turkish prime minister was. And this had all been laid out we thought, and choreographed, and the Turkish prime minister basically said I have no idea what you're talking about when Mitsotakis raised the subject and so it came to naught. They met one on one and I asked Lucas Silas who was later ambassador to Washington who was then Mitsotakis' chief of staff what language they had spoken in. It was German. And I said was it possible that they didn't understand the term that was used. And Lucas did not speak German. He checked with Mitsotakis who said no, Mitsotakis was absolutely fluent in German and he said that the Turk was too. So, whatever it was, it appeared the Turk had backed out of something that had just become too politically delicate for him to manage at home. And that chapter, what happened between Mitsotakis and the Turk, happened before I became chargï¿½.

Q: We're just beginning to resume on the 3rd of February 2005 talking about James Williams' period as DCM in Athens from 1990 to 1994. And, why don't we begin, if your memory is coming back, to whatever your involvement with - Mitsotakis was Prime Minister of Greece? And the prime minister of Turkey and something about Cyprus, and I don't know exactly when that would have been.

WILLIAMS: This was the aftermath of the visit by President Bush to the region after the Gulf War. Bush came out to Ankara and Athens in I think July, or summer of 1991 in the wake of the coalition's great victory of the Gulf War. And for months before that trip there was a tremendous emphasis in the department and in the field to try to rack up some achievements in connection with that visit, and one of those achievements was going to be Cyprus. There was a lot of effort expended on what could be done to promote Greek/Turkish support for progress on Cyprus, and indeed progress on the other issues that divided Greece and Turkey. We went through the whole inventory of those issues that affected those two countries bilaterally. Cyprus was one of the biggest but certainly not the only one that irritated the relationship. And the Bush visits to both capitals went very well. Good conversations, professed understanding and agreement by Mitsotakis in Athens and by his Turkish counterpart whose name I'm forgetting now in Ankara to make some meaningful steps on Cyprus. In the wake of Bush's visit and the positive signals that all sides recorded on the subject of Cyprus, the next step was supposed to be to hammer out an agreement in the direct meeting between Mitsotakis and the Turk. I forget where that meeting occurred. It was not in Greece. It was somewhere in Europe. In any case, it was a complete fiasco. The Turk, according to accounts we got from both delegations, the Turk professed no knowledge of any agreement or understanding with Bush or anybody else to make a deal with Mitsotakis ï¿½ propos Cyprus. We went through this any number of ways. They spoke in German by the way which was interesting, because Mitsotakis is multilingual as most Greeks of his generation are. The Turk also had studied in Germany so their best common language was German. We even explored, since I speak German, whether there was a possibility of a misunderstanding of the German term that was used, but there was no chance of that because they were quite literally fluent in the language. They knew what they were saying or what they were not saying. So for whatever reasons the Turkish government through its prime minister walked away from that tentative understanding that President Bush had catalyzed. There was tremendous disappointment in Athens by Mitsotakis and his team that they'd been let down or bamboozled or whatever. I don't think they blamed us directly for it, although we had certainly been involved in the birth of this understanding, but they were very, very disappointed that it did not occur.

Q: Okay, then I believe you wanted to talk some and we certainly ought to cover the period that you served as chargï¿½ d'affaires. This must have been at the beginning of the Clinton administration in early '93 for something like 10 months?

WILLIAMS: That's correct. Michael Sotirhos, my ambassador, who was a Republican par excellence made very clear that if President Bush lost the election in November that he would be leaving Athens fairly soon thereafter. And indeed the Sotirhos' packed up and left Athens at the end of January 1993, just a few days after the inauguration of President Clinton. So I entered a period of chargï¿½ship which I had done before. I'd been chargï¿½ at various times when Ambassador Sotirhos was away on leave, medical, personal or otherwise, and it was nothing new. This time, however, I knew it would probably be a bit longer since the in nature of things it takes Washington a while to gear up a new administration and to make appointments. It turned out to be almost 10 months. I think Tom Niles came the end of October of 1993. There had been rumors in the early months of the Clinton administration of other names that were being traded back and forth and that was probably the case. In any case, around May or June I think the nomination of Tom Niles went forward and then it was a matter of going through confirmation and so on so he could come out by October.

Q: He had most recently been assistant secretary for European affairs?

WILLIAMS: Indeed he had, and had impressed newly installed President Clinton very much with his savvy and his command of the brief on the occasion of visits by European dignitaries to the White House. So I'm sure Tom had hoped to get something bigger coming out of the EUR job, but he got Athens and it took him a while to get out. I was happy to be chargï¿½ as long as I could. Looking back on it the chargï¿½ship for me was probably one of the highlights of my whole career in the Foreign Service because it was so long and so much fun. The only thing I would have done differently is I wish I had been told from the beginning exactly how much time I had, because if you know how much time you have, even if it's two months or two weeks you can allot your energy a little differently than if you really don't know. For a long time until the nomination of Niles was firm, and even after that for a while, we really didn't know when he would arrive and therefore I didn't know how long I would be chargï¿½. It was a matter of more than just housekeeping in the interim. There were things to be done with regard to the management of the mission. There was a major project to rehab the residence before the ambassador got there. This was a project which you may recall from your time in EUR/SE had been pending for many, many years and no ambassador wanted to go through having his residence torn up while he was there. So every ambassador, including Ambassador Sotirhos, postponed that project under one pretext or another. But when Sotirhos left we decided to bite the bullet and use the gap, we knew there would be a gap, to launch the project. And naturally, as with every project of this kind, particularly in Greece, there are delays, there are overruns; the architectural plans had to be revised again because the FBO had second thoughts about something that it had approved about eight years before. Same plan, but it had to be revisited, so that cost us time. Some of the vendors let us down with their delivery schedules and there was Murphy's Law at work as always with construction. So the bottom line was when Ambassador Niles arrived in late October his residence was not fully completed. We came close, but it wasn't done, and of course because the work had been done in haste a number of defects emerged that had to be corrected. This took a lot of time, it wasn't the main thing we did, but it was a big part of our activity.

Q: I think if you had realized that you were going to be in charge of the embassy for 10 months then you probably would have approached the entire period differently than not knowing really how long it was going to be.

WILLIAMS: Probably would have. One thing I did do and I felt very strongly about this because I had been braced on the subject when I came to Athens as DCM. I opened up the residence swimming pool to the entire American community, government including military. This had been a very sore subject because the Sotirhos' when they came jealously guarded their privacy and rescinded the community hours that had been around for many, many years under many of their predecessors for a long, long while. And that rescinding of the use of the pool was bitterly resented by an awful lot of folks in the embassy at the time. Most of them had left by the time the Sotirhos' were gone, so I figured it would be the right thing to open up the residence pool to everybody, including myself. I went over for lunch swims quite regularly the summer of '93 in the fall. In my experience it was never very crowded. There were usually some families there, young children, teenagers, whatever, but it was a real plus particularly given the overall security situation in Athens. The fact there were no local pools that were easily available for our people, the fact that the nearby beaches were highly polluted and the clean beaches were a fair drive away, so this seemed to be a good thing to do for embassy morale generally. And since nobody was using the pool it didn't make any sense to leave it there.

Q: Tennis court also?

WILLIAMS: Tennis court too, although that was never... I guess under Sotirhos too that was off limits but the swimming pool sticks in my mind as something people really wanted more and they were happy to get. The tennis courts, I forget how we worked it out; it was sort of first come first serve. To my knowledge there was never any problem with either of them. The interesting thing was that when the Niles' arrived the privilege was taken back again because they did not want the community coming in to use the pool which was built of course with public money on the understanding it would be available for members of the embassy community, but that's another story.

Q: From their point of view it's a question of privacy and intrusion on their space and so on, although I think a compromise could be found where there would be access by both.

WILLIAMS: Limited hours, certain days when the community could use it. So I made the right decision but it did not reap any gratitude when it was rescinded.

Q: Anything else about that period as chargï¿½?

WILLIAMS: Well we had a lot of concerns for my whole time including my chargï¿½ship about November 17. We really never in my whole time in Athens got to the bottom of that organization, what it was, who they were. We thought we had leads; the CIA spent a godless amount of money and devoted endless man hours to profiling these folks, to reading literature from people who might be sympathizers or even directly involved. They had a very sophisticated analysis which I read at one point trying to pin the rap on a particularly prominent leftist journalist and novelist who was prolific. The one reason they were able to pin it on him in their analysis at least was that he used certain terminology and certain plots in his novels that very closely resembled some of the assassination scenarios or attempted assassination scenarios by N17. Some of the language in their proclamations. It read persuasively, but at the end of the day it was absolutely wrong because none of the names in their analysis as I recall from when the case was finally broken a few years ago turned out to be the true culprits. But we spent a lot of time worrying about them because they were so good at what they did and the police were so bad at trying to stop them.

Q: Were there any November 17 attacks while you were there?

WILLIAMS: Yes, during my whole time at Athens and before the base at Hellenikon closed an air force master sergeant was blown away by a remotely detonated bomb which November 17 had set and for which it claimed credit. They basically planted this bomb in a shrub next to his house and monitored his comings and goings. When he was coming back one day, regularly as he did with his laundry under his arm, they detonated the bomb that they had planted there. It was very sophisticated, very successful, and they never caught the folks. Then November 17 shot and killed a very prominent banker, Greek, while I was there. Similar MO (modus operandi), not with a bomb with the same gun that had been used to kill the station chief and quite a few others in past years, in '75 when Mr. Welch was killed. A few weeks before I left they assassinated a junior press attachï¿½ at the Turkish embassy. A year before that my Turkish counterpart, Deniz Bulukbasi, was in a car with some other Turks going to work and they were bombed by a remotely detonated device very similar to what had been used against he sergeant. His legs were badly torn up. The Turks survived but they were very, very badly off because of that. So it was a live, virile and ongoing threat of which we were always aware and required me and quite a few others to go around in armored cars with follow cars, Greek police, all the time.

Q: Did that requirement for protection for you change when you were chargï¿½ or was it pretty much the same before and after?

WILLIAMS: All that changed was the car. I think I mentioned in my last session that we had been able to get a Mercedes after bludgeoning the department into letting us bend the Buy America Act. The Cadillac the ambassador had been using was unique in Greece and was like having a bull's-eye on his back. So when the ambassador was not there and I was chargï¿½ I used the Mercedes. I think I had his Greek team and the acting DCM had my car in my Greek team. That was all that changed.

Q: Now when Ambassador Niles came at the end of October '93, I wonder how that affected you and your responsibilities and what you did? Sometimes when there's a long interim period and somebody is in charge for as long as 10 months or whatever, it's a little awkward. Everybody thinks that you're still there, you know everything, and it's a little difficult for you and a little difficult for the new ambassador.

WILLIAMS: I think we went through our periods of awkwardness fairly well. It was an adjustment I'll have to admit, to become the DCM again and to get used to having an ambassador again. Once early after his arrival when we were going out to call on the foreign minister or the president or whomever, we were going in his Mercedes and I almost got in the door that he was supposed to get in, that type of thing. I quickly corrected myself. Ambassador Niles was very different than Ambassador Sotirhos. Much more informal in many ways and he made a point of that in the first day. He specifically asked that people not stand in the room or in the meeting when he came in the door. He did not want to have that sort of protocol. In other ways too he was different. He didn't smoke a cigar so the top floors of the chancery were not permeated with the Sotirhos whatever it was. And other ways as well. Tom Niles is a consummate professional; he'd been ambassador many times before and had had lots of responsibilities. There was really very little in Athens that was new to him except that the language was not known to him although he did make a good whack at learning it. He also really did not need and perhaps even want a DCM in the sense that most ambassadors do, certainly that Sotirhos did. He was so super confident and because he had with him his longtime sidekick and ï¿½ber secretary Monty Montoya who was a superb office manager. And she and Tom really were a formidable team. They introduced some technological innovations which I thought were very good. They stopped for example sending out invitations by car and driver that took forever. They faxed them, which was totally new to me, and it worked in Athens. It got speedier results and better results. I think Tom and I had a good relationship. It was not as close as it was with Ambassador Sotirhos because Sotirhos had picked me, and Tom knew I'd be leaving that summer and he'd already picked Tom Miller to come out, so the transition was assured.

Q: Okay, anything else you want to say about your four years in Greece as DCM which ended summer of '94?

WILLIAMS: Summer of '94 actually Tom Miller, my successor, and I had an overlap of a few weeks. The Millers came for a vacation in Greece while we were still there and lived in a temporary apartment. I used my farewell reception at our residence to introduce Tom and Bonnie to my contacts and friends. So it was a good transition from my point of view. I quickly sensed though as soon as Tom started working that it was good for me to get out of Dodge because there's not room in any embassy for two DCMs. Basically he became DCM when I was still there. I was trying to do a few final efficiency reports and other things. But I think it was a smooth transition. It was a great experience and I was eternally grateful to Ambassador Sotirhos for bringing Ann and me to Athens.

Q: Okay, when you left Athens you returned to Washington, what assignment did you have there?

WILLIAMS: Actually I had not done very well in lobbying for my next job. After the great good fortune of having two phenomenal jobs in a row, the political advisorship in Berlin and the DCMship in Athens, I foolishly assumed at least subconsciously that another good job would fall into my lap as those had done. And it didn't happen. The administration had changed, and that meant the whole cadre of EUR was changing. I had opportunities. I turned down a chance to be a candidate for DCM in Bern, perhaps foolishly. And I said at the time to the ambassador who asked me, that I truthfully was planning to go back to Washington unless something really, really special like DCM Bonn came up. That was the one I tried to get with my perversely narrow focus on German affairs. I even managed to find Dick Holbrooke by phone once. I think I called him in some place in remote central Asia and we spoke for about 30 seconds and he rang off and said he'd call back but we never did get in contact again.

Q: He was ambassador to Germany at the time?

WILLIAMS: I believe he was ambassador designate to Germany. That's when I started badgering him to put my candidacy forward. It didn't work for various reasons. So I came back basically on assignment to the board of examiners, prepared to spend some time there and see what would happen. I had literally just spent about five days at the board of examiners and got a call from the head of the office of southern European affairs asking if I'd like to be a candidate for a special coordinator for Cyprus, a job that Nelson Ledsky and others had held. I knew a lot about that and I had never considered doing it, and therefore had not lobbied for it. They had several candidates at the time, including my predecessor in Athens Ed Cohen. Holbrooke by this time was just coming on board as the assistant secretary for EUR and I said sure, that sounded like fun. So within a very short time I was ushered over to meet with Holbrooke who spent very little time talking to me, lectured me on what had happened with the law that had created the job of special coordinator for Cyprus years before. He'd been involved with that. I didn't realize that. And I got the job, and quickly extricated myself from the board of examiners. So I got a job with a secretary, a little office, fairly good sized travel budget and a lot of independence on a subject that I knew very and well in which I thought I could make a difference.

Q: And with the rank of ambassador.

WILLIAMS: The rank of ambassador came later. I had to go through the senate confirmation process for that. It took a long time to fill out all those forms that had to be vetted by our people, then by the White House appointment staff, you know that well. And I went up with five other nominees for ambassadorships. I was the only one with just the title, and as I recall Senator Lugar was the chairman of the hearing in his capacity as chair of the European subcommittee. Very gracious man, very gracious man. The hearing was not well-attended. I think Senator Sarbanes was there briefly, Senator Pell, Senator Lugar and maybe one or two others, plus some staffers in the background. I'd never done that before. My wife was there, a friend of the family was there, and Senator Lugar graciously gave us each a chance to introduce our families and we did, stood up. Everybody was very nice. The only difficult questions, or interesting questions, came from Senator Pell who wanted to know in his semi-querulous way, why we needed all these envoys for a problem involving a small island. It was actually a good question. I danced around it, because by this point we had not only the ambassador to Cyprus job that you had, we had the special coordinator for Cyprus with ambassadorial title. We also had a new presidential envoy for Cyprus, Richard Beattie, who had just been announced. So Pell wanted to know how these folks were going to keep out of each other's way and I gave the answer as best I could and nobody pursued it. I never read the transcripts; I don't recall exactly what I said. There was no follow up question on it, but it was a very pertinent question because that's a lot of manpower for one problem that was not on the top of the administration's priority list at that time. Senator Pell gave each of the five of us nominees a softball question or two and that was it. So the senate gave its advice and consent some weeks later and then I got a form letter from President Clinton with this wheeled signature saying "I herbie appoint you" the rank of ambassador yadda yadda. I kept a copy of that but I had to give the original back when I got a true copy with the correct spelling of hereby. Sharon Bixby was a little embarrassed that that one had slipped through her staff. I think when Dick Holbrooke approved me for the job he knew full well he intended to have his friend Dick Beattie become presidential envoy and he hoped himself, I think he did, to spend some considerable time on the Cyprus problem. As it turned out, Holbrooke got sucked into the Yugoslav quagmire for a long part of his time as assistant secretary and basically ran out of time before he could do much with the Cyprus problem.

Q: Well let's see, I have three kinds of questions. I guess the first is; did you feel like you made any difference? Were you able to do much? And second, let me tell you what my three questions are and then you can pick and choose if any you want to answer, second is how did you get along with Richard Beattie at the White House, and the third is how about working within EUR with Holbrooke and others? Could you do that as well? Because you did not have a line position. You had that position, office of southern European affairs reported up through a DAS and Assistant Secretary Holbrooke. So those are my kinds of questions.

WILLIAMS: The bottom line is I did not distinguish myself as special coordinator for Cyprus. In retrospect I could have done some things differently and probably better, but I don't think it was a very productive two years of my career and I was very disappointed with that. Let me answer some of your questions. Dick Beattie was not really of the White House ever. He is the managing director of Simpson, Thatcher and Bartlett up in New York, a Lexington Avenue law firm. His specialty, curiously enough, is mergers and acquisitions, a not inappropriate field when you're dealing with the Cyprus problem in all of its glory. Dick is a first rate human being. I thought he was a White House denizen at first, not knowing a thing about him except his CV that I'd gotten. He's a Pennsylvania law school graduate, I think he went to Harvard, he's Ivy League. Football player, he'd been a Marine pilot after college, before law school. Married well, stayed in New York. Very sharp guy. He'd been Joe Califano's go-to man when Joe was the secretary for HEW (United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare) I guess in the Carter administration. He'd gotten a lot of Washington experience at that time. He had subsequently taught at the Kennedy School for a couple of years and then come back to Simpson, Thatcher, Bartlett. A globetrotting traveler, a man who was not given to wasting his time and he was not particularly impressed with the title of ambassador that he was given as the envoy, or with the Cyprus problem. He, to my surprise, since I was expecting him to jump right in and sort of crowd me out, he came in rather slowly. He remained the managing director of the law firm, very busy. Not inclined to wasting his time on something that was not going to be productive. He read the briefing books, he absorbed the essence of it very quickly. I went out for an initial trip to the region to meet everybody in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus in November. Then in December he and I accompanied again by Joe Moranty who was the Cyprus desk officer went out for his initial calls. I think he sensed from the beginning, certainly after that December trip, that the stars were not lined up right for any big deal or any type of closure and that was certainly correct in my view. We had another session. We stayed in periodic contact. I would go up for regular consultations with the UN folk and always stopped by and see Dick in his office. Sometimes he'd come down to Washington, but not too often. We stayed in touch by phone. I would fax and mail him stuff occasionally, have classified material delivered to him by somebody at USUN and that would happen on a regular basis as the material arrived. At some point in the first year, that would have been '95, he set up a meeting. His firm has an office in London, I forget where it is. But our efforts focused on getting the two sides, hopefully Denktash and Clerides together for a meeting. So we spent a lot of time trying to set that up. At the end of the day we got a meeting offshore in London between two of the advisors, Ned Ertegun and I think it was the attorney general of Cyprus, I forget his name. A very young, balding, dynamic man. But they knew each other, much younger than Ned Ertegun the Greek Cypriot. And they came with a couple of guys, all sworn to secrecy, and we got the meeting going in Dick's office. The same day that it started, it went on for two or three days I think, the Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot press started showing up so the cat was out of the bag so to speak. The meeting really produced nothing except a rehash of well-known positions. A lot of history, especially about the Turkish Cypriots. I have to say, the biggest difference was Ned Ertegun wanted to go through the history of the Cyprus conflict going back to earlier than the 1950s, and the Greek Cypriot side wanted to look ahead, bridge the chasm, try to put Cyprus back together again. It was just a very clear mismatch of efforts, because I think this meeting was preceded by separate meetings between Dick and each of the principals, Ertegun and the Greek Cypriot principle in the Lansdowne Hotel, private lunch to which nobody but Dick and the foreigner went.

Q: You were in London?

WILLIAMS: I was in London. Joe and I were on the periphery. We were in the large meetings because everybody had supporting staff there, but Dick wanted to meet individually one on one with the principals beforehand. I think that was a good idea. We never got much readout on it, but I suspect that's because not much really happened. In any case, I hope this isn't coming across as critical of Dick Beattie at all, because I think given his ongoing responsibilities to his firm, and the realities on the ground, there was not a whole lot of progress to be made by investing more of his time in the Cyprus problem. But the very fact that there was a presidential emissary for Cyprus, or envoy, I forget which term we used, did debase somewhat of course the coinage of the special coordinator for Cyprus. Naturally the protagonists in the field, if they had to talk to an American official about Cyprus, would rather talk to the presidential emissary if he was available, or the ambassador. I don't think it was ever a real problem for me. I worried it might be at first, but Dick did not approach it in a territorial way at all. On the contrary, we tried to get him more involved periodically, but he just did not sense the time was right, and again he was not a man to waste his valuable time on things that weren't promising. He did manage to continue while he was in Cyprus and Greece and Turkey with me, and while he was in London talking to the Cypriots, to do business of his law firm. He had telephone and fax email access for all I know, and was really working that primary job all along and was able to do it. It was never a problem, but I marvel that he could do both.

Q: When prominent Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots for that matter, or other national interested in the Cyprus problem came to the United States would they go and see him in New York?

WILLIAMS: Very few. Some did. I think a number tried to, but I don't think he was generally available. Sometimes he was out of the country on business. He was in China quite a bit in those days. Sometimes he just was too busy to be involved. He would refer them to either USUN if they were in New York or back to us in Washington. I have to say, I think if there was some substance that happened in the few meetings he did have, he generally told us what it was. He didn't put things down in writing normally. We sent him everything. Sometimes, for example, when there was a meeting in New York where he did meet somebody, I would go along to help as note taker, do the cable and clear it through with him of course because it was his conversation, and then he would clear it with minimal change and out it would go. But normally he did not do that. The one big meeting he had in New York, I think it must have been the occasion of one of the general assemblies; Clerides and Denktash were both in town. This may have been fall of '95. Perhaps the fall of '96 although I don't think so. In any case, Clerides and Denktash were in town and Beattie had them both to a restaurant for lunch. I think it was the Four Seasons. And he marveled at their appetites for drink and food. They ran up a hell of a tab. I think it was reimbursed by representation eventually, and a good time was had by all. I told this story to David Hannig at one point, and I think Sir David at that point was the British equivalent of Dick Beattie. I told David Hannig that story and he had had a similar experience it turned out with those two when he was the perm rep at the UN and invited them to a fine lunch and they had the finest of hors d'oeuvres and entrees and desserts and wines and coffees and cigars, and at the end of it all when they were smoking their cigars and looking very happily at each other, David asked them, "You guys get along so well, why can't we just solve this damn problem right now once and for all?" According to the story, Clerides and Denktash looked at each other and laughed and said, "David you know damn well that if we did that nobody would pay any attention to us. Now feed us these good meals."

Q: An opportunity for another good meal, yeah.

WILLIAMS: And I think that may have been slightly embellished in the telling and retelling, but there is a certain element of truth in it, to be sure. I enjoyed Dick Beattie. I enjoyed working with him. I spent a lot of time traveling to New York, to Europe, to Cyprus, less to Greece and Turkey. Least to Turkey. I spent a lot of time traveling to the EU presidency because the Cyprus problem and Turkey too as you know were very much on the agenda of the EU and I wanted to stay in touch. And gradually I think the respective EU presidential power for six months acquired its own version of the special coordinator for Cyprus and the presidential emissary for Cyprus. There was a counterpart senior diplomat in Rome. In Luxembourg it was the foreign minister, and in other places. I think the travel got to me. I did not travel well. Jet lag bothers me, I have insomnia anyhow, and it just took a certain toll on my normally good disposition. I didn't spend a lot of time coordinating with EUR or with SE. In retrospect that was a mistake. I did work closely with the Cyprus desk officer, I obviously cleared everything, but I never really felt I was part of SE or for that matter part of EUR, so that may well be the way I approached the job. May just be the nature of the institution. I don't say that critically of anybody but myself. I did not make myself indispensable or even particularly useful to the seventh floor. I sent reports and when I met with members of congress, met with the Greek-American lobby and so forth. That was all transparent and above board, but I never established relationship with P or with anybody on the staff of S that would have been useful in terms of getting me more closely tied in there. So I think that's one big reason why I was not included on the trip that Secretary Albright made to Cyprus in 1996. I have to say that rankled, but in retrospect I can understand it. They took Kerry Cavanaugh who at that point was the head of the EUR/SE and that was probably all the expertise that they needed. But by not taking me or whoever was SCC, that does further devalue the currency of it. I don't think there were any real clearance problems between me and EUR/SE. I do think it would be more useful to integrate the special coordinator position fully with SE or with one of the DASes in EUR. That has been done in subsequent years. I think they dual-headed various folks.

Q: It had happened previously. Richard Hoss had double responsibility.

WILLIAMS: That makes a lot more sense than having some free radical out there with a budget and minimal staff, but not much authority over anybody. The one thing I did do that I think is in retrospect useful to some extent, by virtue of my four years in Athens I had met virtually everybody in the Greek-American lobby from Archbishop Iakovos on down. I knew them well. I think they had generally speaking a favorable view of me, but some of them, including one of the advisors to Iakovos considered me a trokophilos a Turkophile, for reasons they could explain better than I can. I had served in Turkey and I did speak Turkish and I did think well of Turkey, but not necessarily for that reason less well of Greece or Greeks. But I did have that reputation to overcome. I remember when I was nominated for the SCC job, soon after I got the job, I was visited by Andy Manatos, one of the leaders of the Greek-American community and indeed one of the prominent lobbying firm Manatos and Associates in DC. And it quickly became apparent that Andy's basic mission was to ascertain if my experience in Cyprus in July of '74 had damaged me in their eyes and the eyes of the Greek-American lobby to serve as an impartial and fair SCC. And he trotted out some transparently phony story that he had known Rodger Davies very well and was distressed when Rodger was killed in the attack on the embassy in August of '74, and basically got me to recite my experiences there which I did with some emotion because it had been an extremely emotional, traumatic time for all of us. And I guess I satisfied him with my account because I kept the job, nobody tried to get me out of it. But I did try to stay in very close touch with the folks in AHEPA, the Pan-Cyprian groups, the archbishop sometimes. Michael Sotirhos, we were still close at that point. He was up in New York, very close with the archbishop. And I met with the archbishop once or twice with Paulette his longtime office manager. Stayed in touch with her just to keep him informed of what I was doing as SCC. I addressed various meetings of Greek-Americans, and one of my innovations was, I don't think any of my predecessors had done it, I'm not sure it was particularly useful, but I enjoyed the effort. I met with the British equivalent of AHEPA, whatever the united Hellenes of Great Britain and Northern Ireland call themselves. Large group, very, very impressive folks, and the Turkish Cypriot counterparts as well when I was in London. I have to say those overtures which were handled through the American embassy and informed to the foreign office made Whitehall a little bit nervous, because here was an American diplomat coming in to possibly churn their domestic waters the way they saw it. That was certainly not my intent, nor was it the result. Basically it was several social functions. A dinner as I recall at which a number of the leaders of that community recited their personal experiences and views, a sort of cathartic session, and I did more listening than talking. What was I looking for? Well I was looking for some ideas, some thoughts, some input that might give me some new perspective, some new thoughts that might be useful in approaching the Cyprus problem. I have to say I didn't find them but I did enjoy the experience of meeting these folks and staying in touch with them for my whole time as SCC.

Q: Who was U.S. ambassador to Cyprus during this period?

WILLIAMS: Richard Boucher. We stayed in very close touch; particularly on that effort to get the meeting set up which we did, but it was an unproductive meeting. The meeting in London.

Q: And did Ambassador Boucher come to that meeting as well? Was he in London for it?

WILLIAMS: It seems to me he did. I'm almost certain Richard was there. But I don't recall anything particularly about it.

Q: To what extent did you or Beattie try to get the United Nations secretary general more engaged on the Cyprus issue?

WILLIAMS: I don't think I tried particularly to do that. And I don't think Dick did either. We had a number of periodic meetings with folks in the secretariat. I don't recall any meeting with the secretary general himself in which I took part. Dick may have met with him once.

Q: Who was secretary general at the time?

WILLIAMS: Boutros Ghali. I don't recall ever seeing him on Cyprus. Or any particular overture or initiative by him or his people on Cyprus beyond the normal management of the Cyprus problem, the six monthly renewal of the UNFICYP mandate. Periodic consultations. Had a few interactions with Ambassador Albright up in New York.

Q: Ok, you're remembering that the Turkish prime minister at the time when you were in Athens is...

WILLIAMS: Mesut Yilmaz. Young, rather phlegmatic sourpuss, taciturn, multilingual technocrat. Definitely a German speaker. And English. Dick Beattie and I met with him once in Washington when he was visiting, and he spent about an hour with us talking about the Cyprus problem. Gave very little. It was a very short report that I had drafted through that conversation. But he was definitely the one that met with Mitsotakis and who reneged on the deal that we all thought had been worked out on the occasion of President Bush's visit to the region in the summer of 1991. The other Turk that we met with and I don't think I mentioned this in my earlier remarks; Dick Beattie and I were in Ankara at one point. I think we only went there twice. And this was probably the first visit. Tansu Ciller was the prime minister. And I had never met Mrs. Ciller before. I had seen pictures of her and knew that she was vivacious looking, but in the meeting she came across as a bit of a flirt. There was a meeting with several of her advisors. Dick Beattie was there, I was there, Dick Barkley the American ambassador was there. Mrs. Ciller had eyes only for Dick Beattie and she smiled and batted her long eyelashes at him, and in the course of making several substantive points which were unyielding and consistent with what we'd heard from the Turks for many, many moons on the subject of Cyprus, I took notes for that meeting. It was a long discussion; it was late at night at the prime minister's residence near the ambassador's residence. And as I recall I finished that cable which I had to write on yellow paper at the hotel at around three A.M. and I had to leave at six A.M. to catch my plane back home. I think Dick Beattie had another plane to catch to go somewhere else. So I think I took that draft and put it in an envelope and shoved it under the door to Dick's hotel room, and went on. And the draft was taken care of and the cable emerged from Ankara in due course.

Q: I think before I turned over the tape you were starting to say something about some contact you had with Ambassador Madeleine Albright when she was U.S. representative at the United Nations?

WILLIAMS: Yes, Ambassador Albright took part in several large discussions on Cyprus when I was the SCC. Some of those discussions involved members of the UN secretariat, some were in-house. And she was on top of the brief. Richard Boucher was there for some of those meetings. Essentially it was a review of where we were and where we were going, but she had a good grounding in the Cyprus problem which I think she drew on when she was Secretary of State and later went to the island in that capacity.

Q: To what extent did you have contact with the United Nations representative in Cyprus?

WILLIAMS: Always met him, I think it was Gus Feissel throughout my time there, and he was one of my main contacts beyond Richard Boucher when I went to the island. Gus was intimately involved in everything we did. Very well informed and I think a very savvy diplomat. It was good working with him.

Q: An American, now living in California. I'm in touch with him through the Cyprus Archeology Institute.

WILLIAMS: He's on the board I think.

Q: He is, yes. I guess I would say that no matter what you or Dick Beattie or anybody else could have or would have done in this particular period probably not much would have happened. It was just not a particularly propitious time.

WILLIAMS: No, it wasn't. I fault myself though for not working more closely with EUR, particularly SE. I have to say working with Dick Holbrooke was not easy and certainly not fun. He has a very difficult style. It does get results, and I am grateful to him for giving me the chance to be SCC and get the ambassadorial title, but it was one of the least pleasant professional relationships I've ever had in the Foreign Service.

Q: He kept an interest in Cyprus. I ran into him just about a year ago as I recall in Washington, and we had a brief conversation about Cyprus. I think he rightly recognized that the two leaders who were in New York at the time to meet with the secretary general, there was a real opportunity for a breakthrough and that in fact did lead to the agreement on the procedure and the referendum, and I think it was an important moment, and I remember him recognizing that. And I think the next day Cyprus was on the front page of the New York Times or two days later when that breakthrough was achieved.

WILLIAMS: Dick's instincts were superb I have to say. Early on when he became assistant secretary he chaired a meeting, I think it was a Saturday morning meeting. You may have been there. Of the Greek-American leadership and prior SCCs and others involved, specifically to discuss ways forward in the Cyprus problem. But he integrated the domestic political component of that with the professional analytical component of it, making sure that the AHEPA crowd, the representative of the archbishop, Andy Manatos and others, and I think even members of congress or their staffs who were interested were invited to that meeting held at the State Department. We even provided lunch, sandwiches. I'd never seen anything like that. It was really quite a good idea just to keep everybody in touch, but also to make sure you had a domestic constituency for whatever you might try to do.

The last time I saw Dick he had left government. I was still SCC. I guess it was my last trip to London. We were both coming through the clearance line at Heathrow. He got through quicker because he was more of an upgraded status than I was. And we chatted briefly as we were walking to get our bags and he asked me about the Cyprus problem. He was still very much on top of it, and I'm happy to hear he still is because his support can be valuable.

Q: It must have been early fall of '96, and a dinner was organized at Fort McNair in the officers' club. It was an interesting evening of discussion about Cyprus. Dick Holbrooke was supposed to be there because he was in effect the Dick Beattie of the time for a period. But he didn't come, and it turned out later that the reason he didn't come was that he was invited by President Clinton to spend an evening, I think at the opening of the MCI arena, at a Wizards basketball game. And I think he rightly realized that spending an evening with the president was probably going to be more productive than hearing a lot of talk about details and some negative comments about the prospects for Cyprus progress.

I wanted to ask you one very specific question. I know when and why the special Cyprus coordinator position was first established. I think it was in 1981 by Secretary Haig, but at what point did it get incorporated into legislation. Do you remember that? It must have been not too long after.

WILLIAMS: I don't know.

Q: But I guess that's one of the reasons why it was retained for so long. Maybe even up to the present. Why there always had to be somebody filling that position.

WILLIAMS: I just don't know the answer to that. I was in SE as Turkey's desk officer when Haig was secretary, when this position was created. Reggie Bartholomew was the first incumbent. I remember talking to him a lot as he was reading in on the job. Reggie for all his gifts had never spent much time, or wasted much time as he might have put it, on the Cyprus problem. He came out somewhat cross-eyed from reading some of those briefing papers about the minutia.

Q: One of the things he decided, which I don't think was a good decision, but I understood why he did it, and it partly reflected his reading of the file, he decided not to visit Cyprus. And he never did come in that capacity. I think he felt that if he did come, this was early in the Reagan administration, a visit by the special Cyprus coordinator, newly established, would be seen as a United States initiative, greater degree of American interest than the administration felt was justified at the time. So he never actually came. A couple years later I was still in Cyprus as ambassador. He did come, but by then he was ambassador to Lebanon and he came on a Sunday to meet with Don Rumsfeld and Tom Miller who were involved in the Middle East as a special envoy, Rumsfeld was, and he invited Bartholomew, Sam Lewis, ambassador to Israel, and Bob Paganelli, ambassador to Syria to meet him and they had an all day session at our residence in Cyprus. And at the end of the afternoon I said to Reg, this is your first time in Cyprus, you at least have to see the green line and get some sense of what you've been hearing about all these years. And he in effect said I don't have time, I have a plane to catch. Anyway, anything else about your time as special Cyprus coordinator?

WILLIAMS: No, I got a lot of reading done when I was in that job, including the four volume memoirs of Glafkos Clerides, an English translation. My Deposition it's called. And it's not the full history of Clerides life, but it does cover the early periods including when I was working on Cyprus and knew him, so it was interesting in that respect and covers the period through the coup too. Interesting in that respect more for history than anything.

Q: He is quite a character, quite a personality. I'd be interested in reading parts of that. Probably not all four volumes, but small parts.

WILLIAMS: People who lived through that period with him, Stella Subiodhi comes to mind, or were intimately involved with that period, have told me that it's not the full account. It's inaccurate by virtue of things it doesn't cover. What memoir could be comprehensive I guess. So I'm sure there is another part of the story that he didn't get into. I enjoy Clerides very much. I have to say, as a persona though, I found Rauf Denktash the most fascinating character on the Cyprus stage. Partly because of his historical sweep, he goes back to the beginning when he wants to brief you on the Cyprus problem, but also because of his personality. Clerides was starting to fade when I was SCC. Denktash was not. He was physically infirm, I think he had a heart attack around that time, but his mind was agile and quick and he was a good dinner companion, lots of fun. Clerides was slowing down.

Q: I would agree, certainly, about Denktash. At the time I was there, '81 to '84, Clerides was leader of the opposition party, and I think widely seen as having kind of served his country, done his job, and performed his duty. The question was who was going to take his place as leader of the party. The idea that he would be elected president and serve for I don't know how many years as the president of the republic and leader of the Greek Cypriot community seemed very unlikely. I would go visit him at his law office or at his home, or on his boat in Larnaca, and we had a very good relationship and very friendly, but it wasn't so much... and he always had very sensible, thoughtful, pragmatic ideas, and certainly criticism of Kyprianou and all that he stood for, but the idea that he had a lot of future ahead of him didn't seem very likely at that time.

WILLIAMS: I think an even less likely idea certainly when I was in Cyprus and perhaps when you were there too, was that Tassos Papadopoulos would be president of the republic.

Q: I agree with that, and I didn't really have all that much to do with him. The first time I went to Cyprus as the deputy director of southern European affairs in 1976 I met with him. He was at the time the negotiator for the Greek Cypriot community. It was certainly appropriate to meet with him. My picture was on the Cyprus mail with him. But when I was ambassador the three years I didn't have that much to do with him. He had a one person political party, maybe two people in the parliament. He was mainly making money. He was a very successful private lawyer and just wasn't around that much socially or otherwise. I agree. I wouldn't have given Clerides very high marks for future and certainly not Papadopoulos. Ok, well where did you go after being specially coordinating Cyprus?

WILLIAMS: It became fairly clear to me in summer of 1996 that I didn't want to continue being the special coordinator. Holbrooke had voiced no objection to my staying on for a third year. I guess Kornblum was coming aboard as assistant secretary at that time. In any case, I had a third year lined up, but I just decided that I'd had enough and it was time for me to do something else. So I started looking around. Not wanting to go overseas. My mother was quite ill at the time, and I think we just wanted to be at home in America for the duration of our stay with the Foreign Service. So I looked around for domestic jobs and went calling on the head of assignments who happened to be Kent Brown. I asked Kent what he knew of that might be interesting for somebody of my background and talents, and the first thing he said was well what about his own job? Unbeknownst to me, Kent was in the process of retiring from the Foreign Service. He took a job with R.J. Reynolds flogging cigarettes and cookies in Russia and the Caucuses or something like that. In areas where he had served in the former Soviet Union, and was in the process of leaving the CDA early.

Q: Why don't you say what CDA stands for.

WILLIAMS: Career Development and Assignments. It's the office in the bureau of personnel as it was called at the time that handles all the assignments for Foreign Service personnel. And Kent was the head of that office. Not my counselor and not even the head of the senior officer division, but I went to see him just because he was head of CDA and I was special coordinator for Cyprus. And he very graciously received me and clearly had just begun to start to think about who might do the job since he was leaving off cycle and early. This would have been in September of '96 I think. I had never thought about it, but I talked to Kent, I talked to a few people about the job and very quickly decided this would be something fun and very different than anything I had ever done before. I had stayed away from admin type things assiduously in my politically centered career. Rather late in life I've come to appreciate the strengths and the capabilities of the admin function, but never had I done personnel before or even thought about it. And I frankly knew very little about the way the personnel system works. So with all that said, I threw my hat in the ring and was very quickly interviewed by the PDAS, principal deputy assistant secretary for personnel, Jennifer Ward who recognized me from some encounter or two we'd had in the past. It must have been pleasant because she I gather blessed my candidacy.

Q: She had had that position before.

WILLIAMS: That's right. And then I met with Tony Quainton, the Director General for Personnel. I guess I called on him in his office. I had known Tony for over 30 years since he had been involved on the India desk and I was a very junior officer in the bureau of near eastern affairs. We were not close, but we did know each other. It was a pleasant discussion. Tony's main concern was that the head of CDA traditionally had the ambassadorial title, had been an ambassador, and I was happy to be able to assure him that I had the title even though I never served abroad as ambassador, but I had run an embassy overseas for a long period of time so I was the functional equivalent almost of being a real ambassador overseas. That seemed to satisfy him. As I said this was off cycle, there really was a dearth of candidates. I popped up on the screen just as suddenly as Kent Brown's departure had come on the screen, and there being no major reason not to bless that move, I think they were happy that I was available. So I had one more trip to make as SCC. I was in Luxembourg I think, doing something, and maybe Cyprus as well, but Luxembourg because it was holding the presidency of the EU I believe at the time. Clay Constantinou who was our ambassador to Luxembourg and very close to the Clinton administration was my host there. So when I got the job I think Tony called me at Clay's residence where I was staying to give me the good news, and I came back to Washington sometime in October of '96. Late October I guess, I moved over.

Q: One question is, that's not an easy time to start that job. I started it a few years before in January and I thought it was very difficult then in the middle of the assignment cycle. I think October would have been just about as bad, maybe even worse.

WILLIAMS: I knew so little about personnel, I'm not being falsely modest here, I really was ignorant about most of the ways personnel worked. I didn't really appreciate how difficult a situation I was in. It was all compounded by the fact which I also didn't appreciate until I'd been there for a while that the reorganization of CDA had just been accomplished. It was downsized and regrouped in ways that apparently had left a lot of bruised feelings. I can't say that it was done badly by the people in charge at the time; I can only say that there were some bruised feelings when I got there a few months later. There were civil service bruised feelings in particular, some foreign service bruised feelings. There was a civil service/foreign service divide within the staff of CDA. There were some problems, and so I spent a lot of time initially figuring out what these 80 people did, what the mission was of the various components, the junior officer division, middle officer division, senior officer division, that was fairly clear-cut. The new group that was truly an exotic blend was the assignment support division which was the technicians who had heretofore was grouped with their respected counselors in the junior level and midlevel divisions. They worked together as regional pods I think. Then under the reorganization they were taken out to work as a new unit under somebody who'd never been a supervisor before. So there were a lot of management and supervisory issues there that had to be addressed. And also we were going through a technological revolution. We still had Wang computers at that time, PER, the bureau was in the process of acquiring off the shelf technology from PeopleSoft which was going to do everything including butter our bread and change our shoes for us. It had all kinds of promises financially of being the first generation of this technology. There were lots of glitches and lots of things didn't work. In other words the promise was more than the actual performance as is often the case. I also have to say that since I am almost a technophobe if not a Luddite, I didn't fully understand this stuff. A lot of my colleagues did. It was the younger officers and secretaries who picked up on the potential capabilities a lot more than I did. I did understand it wasn't working, and when the screams of outrage would happen when the machine crashed or the database was suddenly unavailable and it all had to be done by hand in the height of the assignment cycle, the panel cycle, it didn't take more than a Luddite to know that something was really wrong and had to be worked out. So there was a lot of discussion that I was involved in with the leadership of PER, Jennifer, and with Pat Popovitch the head of the admin part of the bureau who was supervising the bringing online of all this technology in PER. CDA was the frontrunner for that because we were so large, so big, and we were the test case. I think we passed the test but it was painful, particularly for those counselors in the trenches who had to do databases by hand after being told they could be done electronically and things like that happened. There was no bad faith involved, this was assurances that were conveyed in good faith, but it just wasn't done as well as it should have been. One of my first decisions which almost blew Jennifer's head off was to ask for a voicemail for every member of CDA. Voicemail privileges had been jealously rationed I should say, and the result was a lot of secretaries and technicians wound up taking new longhand messages on the phone from our clients overseas and elsewhere. There was a lot of resentment about that. It was not efficient. Voicemail did cost something, but my sense was after talking with every section one of the leitmotifs of desire was can we get voicemail or whatever it was called at the time. So I said that makes sense, so I asked for it. And she was amazed that I would be so bold as to ask for it for everybody. I gather Kent had not. But she agreed and Pat agreed and we got it. And I think it clearly was the right way to go because we used voicemail heavily from then on. The concern of course was that our customer service would suffer, that people would not clear their queues of messages, that they would not answer the mail and so on and so on. And I have to say in some cases that happened and whenever it did we would get on people to clear the queues, technicians especially, and give good customer service. We always tried to give good customer service. We were very well aware of the fact we were a service provider to clients all over the world. The dedication that almost all of our people brought, the secretaries, counselors, and the techs, particularly the techs who had more of a proprietary interest since they were civil service and long-term inhabitants of those positions, was extraordinarily high and impressive to see. And that's one reason when the electronic databases failed one weekend and another weekend. It happened at least twice, we had people who were able and willing to go in and by hand go through these hundreds of bids and names and collate it and give us the agendas that made it possible to make assignments.

Q: Did you have a good deputy? Or was that another problem?

WILLIAMS: That was one of the things that happened; they abolished the deputy. Essentially CDA had been downsized as well as reorganized in a very rapid way without being given; the promise was this IT gadgetry would offset the loss of manpower. Ultimately it had that capability, but in the short term it did not. So there was no deputy. My deputy was essentially Margaret Dean who was head of the senior officer division and had served in CDA before. She knew the office very well and really she whispered in my ear all kinds of useful things for the first year I was there, simply because I was so green. I chaired the large panel meeting on Thursday. I had chaired many meetings, that was not difficult, but knowing what the issues were, and when I was about to be bamboozled by somebody was difficult, and so Margaret was there as my whisperer of truth to keep me from making too many foolish decisions. She was invaluable. She was my real deputy de facto if not in name. I had an office assistant the first year who was left over from the reorganization. That position disappeared when she left, and I had very close relationships also with the heads of midlevel and junior level. I spent a lot of time with Mary Oliver the head of the assignment support division because she's the one who really needed it. She had the problem children who were unhappy with the reorganization, resentful of her, rebellious in many cases, and she really didn't know how to handle them because she'd had no training before this job and no experience as a manager. I hadn't had much experience with those cases either but I spent a lot of time with Mary and I think with good result. She became a much better manager.

Q: How did you feel overall about the open assignment system and how it worked, looking back?

WILLIAMS: Never having done it before and being somewhat cynical by nature, I had really not appreciated how much integrity there is to the process. I was very impressed and I told everybody that. I presided over the panel meetings and the head of the midlevel office Georgia DeBell and then John Ford presided over the other panel. We only had two panel meetings a week during the assignment season roughly from late November till the heavy season, till March or April as I recall. We met every week, but the heavy season was late November to April as I recall. Tremendous integrity. The panel discussion, sometimes adversarial, was very controlled and balanced. There would be a proponent for an assignment of an officer and if another bureau wanted that officer and had a chance to put a hold and make its case, if there was opposition to the assignment for whatever reason, whoever was opposing had the chance to make that case. Sometimes on the absence of a security check if a special clearance was required. Sometimes the other checks medical, others had not been gotten. We had a lot of people in the room with a lot of expertise and even though the agendas in the busy season were very long as you recall with maybe 200 items, I always felt that we gave each one a really fair shake, and the discussions when you had to have shootout which would be a formal debate and presentation and then a vote, were always very fair, almost always very fair. In the one or two cases when other information came to mind that belied that judgment, or when I thought that for whatever reason the counselor had not done a good job we would do it again. I would just void the decision as chairman and we would come back at it again de novo. But I thought the effort to get the information out to the officers, particularly those in the field, and that's why customer service was so important, to get the bid list out in a timely way, to get the ancillary documents out that helped make an informed decision in writing the bid list, that was so important. And also timely responses by the counselor and the techs. These myriad questions that come in from people. What about my cat? What about my old aunt? This sort of stuff all of which become relevant to the making of an assignment. I was very impressed. On the other hand, I was also impressed, and here my cynicism was perhaps confirmed, that all of our rules and so on can be broken if there's a will to do it. If it's a matter of a directed assignment by the DG, if the secretary or the seventh floor or even the sixth floor has a compelling need to get his or her boy or girl, ways can be found to do that, and I think that's also good because in the system our size you need a certain amount of flexibility as long as you don't overuse it. And the DG overrides, which is usually the vehicle we use for things if we couldn't make it happen some other way, were rationed out fairly well I thought. So on balance, my view based on three years there, very good system with very good people working on it and with better and better technology.

Q: Did the director general allow you or someone else to present the panel's consideration before a decision was made to overrule in some cases?

WILLIAMS: Oh yes. We had a very open channel through Jennifer to Tony Quainton and then when they changed through Janice Bay to Skip Gnehm. Skip as the director general had a great advantage that I think almost none of his predecessors have had. He actually had served in CDA as head of the junior officer division I believe.

Q: That's the best possible preparation for director general. I told him once; I still feel that's probably right.

WILLIAMS: I couldn't agree more, and he even though it had been many years, he knew much more about personnel when he came in as DG than I did at that point. I was still learning. In fact I was learning for my whole three years there. But there were difficult issues inevitably, or unusual issues, and whenever that happened there was a seventh floor interest or the DG wanted to get involved or we thought he should get involved we had almost instant access to him. And both Tony and Skip were very open to that. They both made good decisions I thought. Quick decisions. But they did it based on the presentation that we made. If I couldn't do it I would send the head of the senior office division or whichever division was most involved. But usually I would like to try to get involved myself just to make sure I was in the loop but also to keep fully on top of the subject.

Q: Okay, anything else you want to say about that period which was almost three years in length?

WILLIAMS: I liked it far more than I had imagined. The deeper I got involved the more I liked it because there was just so much beyond the careers of individuals, the way the system works, systemic issues, consultations with AFSA which I got peripherally involved in. The bureau of personnel started job fairs for techies when I was there. I think that's now an annual event. They really made an effort to upgrade the IT function in the whole bureau and it got better. We yelled and screamed a lot and in retrospect probably a little more than we needed to, but it got steadily better and I think the drumbeat of criticism and the feedback from the experience, the failures as well as the successes helped make it better. I spent a lot of time in the last year on the issue of whether CDA should move into one of the annexes over at Columbia Plaza. A lot of the bureau by that point had already moved or was designated to move over there. This was a building that was gutted and then rehabbed totally as state of the art office space for State Department offices. The personnel bureau was given a number of those, and a good hunk of personnel eventually went over there including I think the files which were so important for the function of the panels and other things that we did in CDA. I decided after a lot of study that we should stay where we were just to be close to the DG and his office, but also to be closer to our clients who were at main State with us before Columbia Plaza. There were a lot of other reasons too. It was a close call; it could have gone either way. I've often wondered if, certainly we would have had much better office space if we'd gone to Columbia Plaza. There was true space there and we were competing against ever increasing numbers of agencies and offices for space in main State before the integration of ACTA and USIA had occurred and there was even more pressure on the existing space in main State. But that was one of my big last decisions and I'm happy I made it the way I did.

Q: Okay, and after that job in personnel you went to the National War College in 1999.

WILLIAMS: I managed to get myself assigned in 1999 to the National War College as the international affairs advisor which is essentially the deputy commandant at the National War College. Senior civilian member of the faculty and there were three or four other State Department senior officers on the faculty at the time. I was involved with them and certainly involved very closely with the core of the State students there. Fifteen or twenty each year.

Q: So you were the senior State Department officer in the National War College and then there was a deputy commandant of the National Defense University.

WILLIAMS: Yes. They called it something else. It's now the vice president, but it's the equivalent of deputy commandant. The NDU or National Defense University sits over both the National War College and the Industrial College down in Norfolk, and each of those entities has a commandant and deputy commandant, so I was the deputy commandant of the War College where I'd been a student some years before.

Q: And did you in effect then evaluate the other faculty members or students?

WILLIAMS: The practice on that was mixed, it seemed to me, and the short answer to your question is no. I contributed to the evaluation of the students and I had a direct relationship with each of them which I cultivated from their first day there. Counseled them on their onward assignments since that was one of their main interests when they came to the National War College and coming out of three years as head of CDA I figured I had some expertise to counsel them and did indeed. I gave input to their faculty advisors for their overall evaluation but I did not write it. Now my immediate predecessor wrote them all. I could have done that but it seemed to me somewhat artificial that the faculty advisor was more closely involved with them than I was and besides I didn't want to write that many evaluations.

Q: The faculty advisor would have been a military officer or civilian?

WILLIAMS: Either way. What I did do was give input and review the overall evaluation, and if I thought that something needed to be added or taken out or changed in any way I made those suggestions and they were always accepted. Since the evaluation form at NDU is not like a traditional State Department efficiency report, it's a narrative about a page and a half in lieu of an efficiency report. It's not the type of document that's going to get anybody promoted no matter what's in that page and a half normally speaking. On the other hand that's not its purpose. It's designed to show what the student did in that year, 10 months at the National War College, both in academic terms and in extracurricular terms, both travel and other things. And I must say the faculty advisors were very thorough in doing that. They tapped all the colleagues who had contact with these students including me and produced pretty good summaries. I was generally satisfied with it. With regard to the other State faculty members, the other senior officers, I really did not rate them. I think all of us were rated by the commandant and reviewed by the vice president of NDU who was Robin Raphel in my last year or two there. In terms of the rating by the commandant we wrote our own as so often happens in the Department of State. The commandants sign without murmur, and in terms of what the review statement was, I think we gave input, maybe even drafts, to Robin and her predecessor. The National War College was to my surprise, because I had been there as a student and thought I knew it fairly well, it was far more collegial and supportive than anything I expected and probably more collegial and supportive than anything I'd ever experienced in my professional career. I say this as somebody who was IT challenged when he came to that job. I discovered that all of my colleagues on the faculty, including the commandant, were much more savvy with the various modules of capability that IT had. They could use it, they could make it work for them, they could tap electronic databases at the stroke of a key, and I knew none of that, and I really was a slow learner. I really have to say all of my colleagues military and civilian who were near me on that corridor spent a lot of time helping me get better. And it wasn't just because I was the national affairs advisor. I saw them spend equal amounts of time helping other people, both faculty members and students, overcome things. There was a commitment there to make sure you succeeded, whether you were a student or a faculty member. Just like Lake Wobegon, no student in the National War College fails. If there is difficulty, and there is with every class, including with State Department students sometimes, they launch a remediation machine that is impressive, including tutoring, retaking the test, whatever it takes to get you up to the standard. I didn't have to pass a test, but I had to get up to standard somewhat on IT and other things, and learned a lot. From the bottom floor to the top I had the most wonderful, supportive colleagues I've ever had. And I've had wonderful colleagues in the Foreign Service, but there's just something, maybe it's the military ethos, maybe it's the resources, I'm not sure what. But the National War College was special. I really think that probably other war colleges are the same.

Q: Did you travel once a year?

WILLIAMS: Once a year we traveled. The highlight of the year and one of the big reasons I wanted to be a student there, and one reason I wanted to go back as a faculty member, was the annual trip. Unfortunately for me, because I was identified with Turkey and taught an elective on Turkey that Peter Galbraith and I created, Turkey and its Neighbors we called it, which is just what it sounds like, a review course of one semester of Turkey with emphasis on Turkey but also Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, whatever. Iraq in particular because...

Q: Cyprus?

WILLIAMS: It would depend, according to the interest of those who taught it. Peter was interested in Iraq, I was interested in Greece and Cyprus and we were both interested in Turkey, so we on very short notice wrote up the syllabus for a spring elective, and the elective is key to the trip to Turkey and Syria. We knew we'd get a fair number of students and therefore a fair number or participants in the elective. So the first year I took students to Turkey and Syria, third year Turkey and Greece and I enjoyed it all. Except for Syria, I'd been there before, it was not new. I would have liked to have gone somewhere else but it was 11 days of pretty enjoyable travel. Fairly good meetings although we discovered that in Turkey the embassy essentially had subcontracted this visit to the Turkish general staff which had its own way of dealing with things. Gave us tremendous logistical support, translators, drivers, vans, direct entry into museums and so on. We had fantastic cultural opportunities. The meetings tended to be a bit cut and dry and not as high level as we would have liked. In Syria, very mixed bag. Our trip to Syria was on the cusp of being cut both years because the relationship with Syria was so problematic and sometimes there was a terrorist concern as well. But I would say that the overall experience for the students, certainly for me, was more useful in cultural terms rather than in the substance of any of our meetings. That was my general impression. The Greeks did a very good job by us in the third year. Travel is broadening, and many of these students had never been to any of these countries and therefore gained a lot from it, I think. One of our most unusual things happened in my last year when we were in Istanbul. We went to Robert College and met with the students of the UN association there. These are high school kids from very good families, and some from very poor families in Turkey. Fluent in English, and we spent an afternoon with them just talking about the world. It was for them a chance to pick our brains, meet the students and get their perspective. And then we all went to a dinner at the officers' club right on the Bosporus which the Turkish military hosted. These were an impressive bunch of kids, and I don't think any of the students ever met a group quite like that. Very knowledgeable. Much more so than an average American high school would be, but this was not an average Turkish high school either, a very elite one with kids who are extremely cosmopolitan and well-versed in some of the things we had been studying including Greece and Cyprus and Iraq, so we had interesting discussions.

Q: Okay, we're just about finished. Do you want to say any closing words and anything else about the war college?

WILLIAMS: No, I think the war college was a phenomenal experience, I really enjoyed it, and it was a great way to end a fascinating career. No regrets. I was almost never bored, that was one of my criteria for enjoying professional life, and I would commend the Foreign Service as a career to anybody.

Q: And you retired in 2002?

WILLIAMS: Retired at the end of September 2002 several weeks after leaving the war college and taking the retirement course.

End of interview