The World Bank/IFC Archives

Oral History Program

Transcript of interview with

MARY WOLFE

Date: December 13, 1984

By: Charles Ziegler
ZIEGLER: Today is December 13, 1984. My name is Charles Ziegler, and I have with me here at the World Bank Mrs. Mary Wolfe, who had a long and distinguished career with the Bank beginning as a temporary staff member in 1951 and retiring in 1984 as the Bank's senior tax officer. To begin this interview, Mrs. Wolfe, would you please briefly outline your career with the World Bank?

WOLFE: I entered on duty in September, 1951, as a temporary employee, as a statistician to work on the statistical portion of the report of the first mission to Chile, which was basically an agricultural mission with a little bit of transportation added to it. At the end of that period—the end of November, 1951—I applied for a permanent position. There were none available in the statistical area of the Bank at that time, and I was asked to take a job entitled voucher examiner in the unit that eventually evolved into the Controller's Department of the Bank. For about a year-and-a-half I operated as what they called at that time a voucher examiner, paying bills and processing all types of payments and contracts, et cetera. I was then given the assignment of tax and retirement. I stayed in that job, and finally became the senior tax and retirement officer. I stayed in that job until I retired.

ZIEGLER: I would be very interested in hearing about your role in the Chile agriculture mission of 1951, which was undertaken as a joint Bank/FAO effort organized at the request of the government of Chile, and which arose out of conversations between the president of Chile and the president of the Bank in March, 1951. How did you fit in to the scheme of things?
Well, when I applied for a job they said that a position was open to do the statistical work that needed to be compiled as part of the report. Although I could not read Spanish, but could read French, I was sent to the libraries of the Department of Agriculture and what was then the Pan American Union to compile whatever information I could find. There was very little published on Chile. It had been very backward in keeping any early agricultural reports, but I did find bits and pieces, and I compiled that information. When the mission people returned, they reported to me whatever information they had found in Chile that was not in this country. We brought together what bits and pieces of statistics there were as an historical background for this mission.

As I was only in the job from September to November, I did not actually see the report itself, or get into the writing of it. I had the privilege of meeting the members of the mission, and of meeting the Bank economists who were working with the report. I learned about the people of Chile and the country as I talked to them. They were very impressed and upset that the working man in Chile took his pay, went and drank it up, and went home and beat his wife. I remember that as being something that appalled them, as being a way of life, a normal way of life, in the areas that they visited.

ZIEGLER: Is there anything that stands out in your mind regarding the people who were involved in producing this report? There is a Mr. de Vries, as I remember. This is not the economist, by the way, but another gentleman.

WOLFE: Yes, Mr. de Vries was a member of it. There was a gentleman, Dr. McLeod, who was from Scotland. I remember him very distinctly because he was very knowledgeable about agriculture. It was my privilege to meet at that time Mr. Paul Craig-Martin, who was a Bank staff member. They had added to this the transportation section, and Mrs. Christian Finne (Grace Werring)—who was not Mrs. Christian Finne at that time, and who later became a staff
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member, although she was then a consultant—went with the mission, and was interested in the transportation and agriculture. Her fiance from Norway, Christian, became a staff member. She finally got him over here, and they were married. They were both staff members of the Bank. I remember that very distinctly.

ZIEGLER: It was unusual at the time to have married couples working at the Bank.

WOLFE: Yes, very unusual at the time, yes.

ZIEGLER: Mrs. Wolfe, your first job with the Bank was that of voucher examiner, and admittedly your career encompassed far more than just that, but it would be interesting, I think, to hear what was the nature of the job as it existed in 1951, because there is still a similar type of job existing today in the Bank.

WOLFE: At that time we had very few women professionals. I remember there was a woman lawyer and a woman economist. They have both since retired from the Bank. Anyone who worked in Controller's was called a voucher examiner. We did not have the designation of tax and retirement officer or payroll officer so, whatever job we had was classified as voucher examiner, and that has stayed on for some of those jobs.

ZIEGLER: This is long before the Hay Grading Exercise or any other such thing...
WOLFE: Oh, very much so. We did not at that time have a Controller's Department, and I cannot recall exactly how we switched back and forth, but we were part of Administration, I believe, in the beginning. Then Treasurer's, or the reverse, and then went back to Treasurer's. Finally it was decided—and I don't remember the exact year—that we would be a separate department, but it isn't that old. At the time, I went in to that area under Mr. Francis R. Poore. We had a supervisor, and we had one person for each type of job that is now a section of the Controller's Department. We had one person in charge of consultants; one person in charge of making all the payments of any contracts, any purchases; we had one person in charge of tax and retirement; we had one person in charge of payroll. Included in that group was the person in charge of budget and another one in charge of planning. That comprised the Controller's Department under Mr. Poore and his assistant.

The job that I took, which was certainly not in my line, as I was a mathematician—they begged me to take it, and I accepted the job because I wanted to stay in the Bank—was paying all of the bills, worrying about all the purchases, the rent, the maintenance of the buildings. All that type of thing was what I did originally. The young lady who had been here had not been doing her job properly, and there was a great backlog. I finally got that settled. Then the young lady who did the tax and retirement side of it was taken ill and terminated from the Bank. I took over her job, and it grew over the years, as all of these different areas did. We women received our professional ratings, finally.

ZIEGLER: What did you actually have to do as a voucher examiner?

WOLFE: Well, it originally was handling all of the purchases and the contracts, making all payments that were not actually payroll, taxes, or retirement, or any others made for which I was responsible in that job as a voucher examiner. Then, when I went to the retirement and taxes, I was still called a voucher examiner for a while.
ZIEGLER: One thing you mentioned earlier leads me into the next question. You said you wanted to stay in the Bank. Could you perhaps characterise the work relationships among staff during your early days in the Bank, and could you discuss any special problems which might have arisen, or anything of special interest in that context?

WOLFE: Well, I had to say why I wanted to stay here, and it was a compulsion. I had five offers from the government, in different areas of the government, to be a mathematician or statistician in some role. I had been so well treated, and had felt it was such a privilege to work in the Bank during the month of my temporary position that, since I wanted to go ahead and be a working mother, I wanted to stay with the Bank. The people I had worked with had been so very, very nice to me. I did not know what the World Bank was when I came here, because I had been living in Europe and had not really been around to concern myself very much about when it was formed. We were more concerned with our problems in Europe. But I decided that this was the place I would like to be associated with.

I had had the privilege of meeting Mr. Eugene Meyer years before. I had known Mr. John McCloy in Germany. In his role there he had been my husband's boss. I felt that the people I was meeting here, the job, and the organization itself were something that I would like to be associated with.

The Bank was small. At the time I took my permanent job in December, 1951, we were in the main building of 1818 H Street. The International Monetary Fund was also there. There were still a few people from the Treasury who had not moved out yet. I was on the second floor of the A building for a while, and then we moved to the twelfth floor. We were there on the twelfth floor until we were moved over into what is now the N building while they built what is now called the B building. We stayed in the N building until we could move back into the B building.
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We had a wonderful camaraderie and relationship among all of the staff, including the president, Mr. Black. Mr. Black would walk in and out of our office. He always would seem to call us by name. If he didn't call you by name, you still felt as if he knew you personally. We had picnics in those days, and we all got to know each others' children and spouses. Our Christmas parties were small. One year we had it at the Mayflower, and had a magician--to show how small it was--not all of us saw him, but it was that small. You felt as if everybody was working for the same organization. We did not have any type of caste system in those days. We didn't worry about professional and non-professional, we didn't worry about grey areas. All those things came along later and produced unrest, as it always does any place where you become a bureaucracy. But in the early days, in 1951, there still was that feeling that we were all working for the good of mankind, more or less, and that we were doing something to help the world.

ZIEGLER: In his interview with the Oral History Program, Ed Donovan said very similar things. The Bank sponsored a lot of social activities for staff, and I can remember looking through old copies of what was then called the "International Bank Notes" --which is now "The Bank's World"--and they have pictures of the picnics and various other activities sponsored by Bank, such as bowling teams. In your view, then, this would really have played an important role in producing or enhancing staff morale and staff cohesiveness?

WOLFE: Yes, the morale was very high. We were very cohesive, and I repeat that there was no question of whether I was any better for any reason, such as education or otherwise, than the messengers, the people in the Print Shop, or the Mailrooms. We all worked together, because it was the only way we could get our job done. We were all very good friends, and in the job that I had I needed all of the people whom we would call service people. We were all service people. Personnel, Controller's, and Administration were all the
services, and the Bank could not have functioned without us, so that we were all very good friends. I can recall, thinking about Ed Donovan and the Print Shop, that if I wanted something that needed to be done on a special typewriter, I would just go to the Print Shop and ask to borrow it. That is the way we operated, which made us all just one great big happy family, really.

ZIEGLER: From this early time period are there any particular individuals who stand out in your mind, or any particular incidents involving them that would be of interest?

WOLFE: Well, I think one of the things I remember very distinctly was one of the picnics. I'm sure most anybody around in those days remembers it. Mr. Black played softball with the men; all the young unmarried gals arranged games for all the children of those of us who were married. We all took our own picnic meals, and we all sat together. Those children have now grown up, and many of their mothers or fathers had stayed on at the Bank. We would say how is so-and-so, and what are they doing? Their marriages, and their children and their problems were very important to those of us who knew them at that time.

Another thing that I remember was when Mr. William Howell, the director of Administration, died about five o'clock in the morning (July 9, 1964). We were Administration at that time, and he was our director. It pulled everyone in the Bank together. It was the first time that we'd had a death where there was a wife and children involved in the Retirement Plan, and the first time that we had had a problem with taxes. It will always be remembered by me as a very sad time. Mrs. Howell is still living. I still talk to her and ask about the children and grandchildren. But it was also a time when we had to put our thinking caps on. The Bank lawyers and our outside legal counsel had
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to decide how we interpreted the law, and how to handle the estate of Mr. Howell, both for taxes and for the Retirement Plan. That is something that I will never forget. It was the first incident of the death of someone whom we all loved so dearly.

ZIEGLER: Yes, other people in the Oral History Program have mentioned that he was very well liked, and very much respected and admired by the staff.

If I could, I would like to turn next to your years at the Tax Office. How would you describe the evolution of the role of the Tax Office? From what you've already said, I gather that you had one individual doing a job which is now done by a whole section, so obviously you grew in terms of staff in your office. But, I'm sure your job, and the role of Tax Office, evolved also. If you could describe your job a little bit, that would be very helpful.

WOLFE: Well, when I first took it over, I don't remember exactly how many Americans we had, but it was very few. We were doing everything by hand, and continued to do everything by hand until 1968, when we put the payroll on a type of computer. That lasted until we eventually started a computer area. I did both tax and retirement for many years all by myself, with only my supervisor doing any checking. As the number of staff grew, we felt I had to add on another employee, so we had two employees for quite a while. Then we added a third employee. It finally evolved until there were five of us for quite a few years. I felt that we didn't need anyone else, since I did an awful lot of work myself, which would be all changed today.

Starting with the death of Mr. Howell, we had to, over those years, interpret the law, which of course was done by the Legal Department. Everything we did was authorized by Personnel, interpreted by Legal, and processed through Controller's. Mr. Ellsworth Clark, a lawyer in the early days, who was so well respected by everyone--it was a great loss to the Bank
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when he had to retire and finally died—and our outside legal counsel had to make these interpretations. They included me in their thinking, which was a rare experience, I'm sure, for anyone in my position, and certainly a rare experience for a woman. They handled it by thinking out loud, calling me on the phone, or coming to my office, which they did quite often, or by inviting me to Mr. Clark's office, and then interpreting and thinking out loud. They asked whether I felt that I could operate with that interpretation, whether I felt that it made common sense, whether I could explain it to the staff. This was certainly quite a compliment to me, and was a job that I slowly evolved in.

The job grew and grew; the interpretation, the tax laws, everything grew. After Mr. Clark's retirement from the Bank, and then his death very shortly after that, my role, with the help of the Legal Department, became more and more the interpretive role. It finally evolved to the point that, if I had any problems, I would go to the Legal Department. I would have them put in writing any interpretation. I began to go to them, instead of the reverse, their coming to me.

When Mr. Clark retired, the whole Legal Department changed. The young lawyers came in and were given so many other assignments that it was impossible for them to step into Ellsworth Clark's shoes. Ellsworth Clark had written the Retirement Plan, he had gone to the IRS, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service that is, which must approve every amendment in the Retirement Plan. He had interpreted the tax law. Anything that we had, any interpretation that was given to me at the time I took over, all of our rules, had been written by him and interpreted by him. He was greatly respected for this in Washington and by the IRS.

After he left, different young lawyers came and were assigned, as part of their job, tax and retirement. They either had to look to me for some explanation, or to the records. He was not the best filer in the world. He had boxes and boxes and boxes piled in his office always. Most of it, an awful lot of it, had been in his head; but what we used, we had insisted that
he write down, so we had very good background, and a very good authorization from the Legal Department. Mr. (Davidson) Sommers and Mr. (Lester) Nurick were very helpful also, but Ellsworth Clark was the main one who had had that responsibility for interpreting tax law. The young lawyers who came afterwards were all very helpful, but they soon went on to what I'm sure they considered to be better, more important areas in their professions than the tax and retirement. It slowly evolved that, since I had had so many years of experience in working with Mr. Clark--had read law at his feet, so to speak--as he would interpret it out loud, and ask my opinion, and ask my thinking, and if it made sense, whether it could be used. I had much more responsibility in decision making.

Our first outside legal counsel was Leonard Ackerman, whose wife is still employed in the Fund. He died as a young man in his sleep one night and was a great loss to us. He was the outside counsel at the time of Mr. Howell's death. Mr. Ackerman would call me up and say, "I think it should be this way, what do you think?" and discuss it over the phone. That was very ego building on my part, and very complimentary. Thus, I had this wonderful background and education from these two gentlemen, so that when they were no longer with us, I'd had enough education that the Legal Department allowed us to come to them. We reversed positions, and when we needed legal opinions it slowly evolved that I would go to them and get opinions and interpretations, instead of their initiating consultations with every problem. That made the job much more interesting for me, and gave me much more responsibility. Certainly, we never left them out of anything. We always had something in writing, and had to have it because we were only a processing unit. We had to have the law interpreted, and we had to have anything that we were going to do approved by Personnel, especially when it came to handling the staff and the interpretation of whether it was a death on duty, or what have you.

The Tax Office's responsibility became, in my thinking, more and more important during those years. We started paying French income tax and U.K. income tax, and those laws had to be interpreted. They were more or less
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interpreted in the Tax Office, as I'd had this background. I was also able to read French, so that I could read the French tax law. We had direct contact through the Legal Department with the Paris Office, but more contact was directly through me to the Paris Office, unless we had problems.

I also had an opportunity to go to the IRS to meet with the people in the statistical section. In the early days they furnished a formula to us to convert from net salaries into gross salaries to calculate the taxes. That was already in place when I took over the job. They used to furnish tables that we could use in our hand calculations, but when the laws changed on different deductions and values of exemptions, those tables could no longer be used, and were not very applicable to what we were doing. In the early days, the statistical department of the IRS would do these by hand and send them to me for checking and agreement that they were correct. Then they would send me all the copies, and I would then furnish them to all the international organizations in the United States. Those were interesting years, and wonderful contacts were made at that time. Then, when the IRS went on computer, they said it would cost seven thousand dollars. I advised our management that I didn't think it was worth it, that we would make up our tables ourselves. The factors that had to be used from the different tax rates I could do mathematically, and we didn't need that procedure from the IRS anymore.

WOLFE: As the amount of reimbursed taxes was becoming very large, we decided to study other systems or changes to the present system. We finally decided to change the system, which had been operating all of those years in the Tax Office, from using standard deduction to average deductions. I believe that was in 1980. This caused a great deal of problems. We had studies done by Price Waterhouse that recommended that we go to the U.N. system, which is a very difficult and much more expensive system for the organization. It was finally decided to implement this change after another study of the actual itemized deductions of the senior officers of the Bank, who willingly gave us a copy of their returns. It was all very strictly confidential, and compiled by an outside tax firm. The Board decided we would go to what we call the average deduction system.
Interpreting what the average deduction was to be, I and my assistant went to the statistical department of the Internal Revenue Service, where some of those people with whom I'd been working all of those years were still employed. We discussed the best method of an average deduction which could be furnished to us by the IRS, and not any deductions or figures that we would compile in the Tax Office, or in the Bank in any department. They would come from the outside and be furnished to the staff. It was agreed that we would use average itemized deductions as printed in a publication of the IRS which was always three calendar years behind the year in which we were going to use them. It took them so long to compile their figures because of final filing not being until April 15 of the next year, and people being allowed to extend their filing up until September 15, and other such reasons.

This caused some deep criticism on part of some of the staff. The Administrative Tribunal had been set up very recently in the Bank. We had cases presented to the Tribunal by staff members arguing this point and asking that we not go to the average deduction system. The Tribunal decided from those cases that the Bank had a perfect right to change their tax system any way that they wished. The system had not been changed from 1947, when we started reimbursing taxes—I believe that was the first year they did taxes—up until 1980, but the Bank had a perfect right to do so. Having read the briefs that were presented, I realized that they did not or would not be accepted as a criticism.

It was very difficult from 1980 on to explain to many of the staff members, unfortunately the highest paid staff members, what the system was, how it operated, and that no one was trying to take advantage, or to take anything away from the staff member. This was the most difficult time in all of my years there.

For historical benefit, I think I should add that, as they do not have itemized deductions in the U.K. tax law or in the French tax law, it was...
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decided by the Legal Department, and by outside tax counsel, that we would not use the average deduction system for those two countries for the reimbursement of taxes to the U.K. employees in the London Office and the French employees in the Paris Office. We had several cases of Canadian taxes which we did reimburse, and as the Canadian tax law is very much like the U.S. tax law, and they do have itemized deductions, their government furnished us with information from which we could devise average itemized deductions.

ZIEGLER: Is there anything you would like to add in this context?

WOLFE: No.

ZIEGLER: This change in the method of reimbursement which you alluded to in 1980 was, of course, a very significant stage in the evolution of the Bank's tax reimbursement policy. From the time, say around 1951, when you began working with taxes, were there any other significant changes in the Bank's policy of tax reimbursement, and how would that have affected the staff, most particularly the Americans, who form the bulk of the staff affected?

WOLFE: Well, the U.S. tax law changed from every taxpayer paying at the same rate and considered as a nonentity or one entity, and went to married as opposed to single. That was the first big change. That was in the beginning, or had just come in before I took over the tax system. The staff was small enough and trusted the Tax Office and the people working there enough, not to have presented any problems.

The next tax law that was passed that affected us drastically, or all Americans very much, and started a lot of thinking among non-Americans, was
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when in October, 1960, the Congress passed a law that all U.S. citizens employed by international organizations must pay social security. As no international organization is taxable by the U.S. government or any other government, there wasn't the method of employee/employer contributions that could be used. So we, as Americans, had to pay Social Security as self-employed persons, which is a different rate from employee/employer. It is higher than the employee rate, less than the total of the employee/employer rate.

The first year that went into effect the Bank did not reimburse for any portion of it. The second year some of the staff complained to me that they felt that it wasn't fair that they paid more than they would have if they were employed in private industry. They had no control over the law. I requested that the management look into this matter and see if there was any way they felt that the difference between the employee rate and the self-employed rate could be reimbursed by the Bank. It was decided that it would be done.

The next step was that some of the lower salaried staff came and said that their own contribution, which they had to take out of their salary, was very difficult for them to do each quarter. Was it possible to put in a system where it would be saved for them, in a sense, so that they would not get it in their pay check, but would get their contribution included in their tax check reimbursement four times a year. I again advised management of these complaints, and it was decided that we would set up the withholding system of the staff member's share from the payroll which worked very well during the years. After that, it was just changes in value of exemption, changes in tax rates, but nothing that was a drastic change until we came to the average deduction system.

ZIEGLER: On a somewhat broader level, but still related to the Tax Office, would you care to characterize the relation between the Tax Office and the Bank staff; most particularly the Americans, who form the bulk of those paying the taxes?
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WOLFE: Well, I always felt that we had exceptionally good relationships up to the time of the average deductions system. As we grew, the staff had a great deal of faith in the Tax Office. The auditors had a great deal of faith in the Tax Office. My supervisor for many years, Joe Reamy, had started the office. He had so many other chores to do that, as we became larger, it was turned over to me, and the office more or less operated on its own with a minimum of supervision. We took a great deal of pride in what we were doing, worked very hard, and hoped that we would not make mistakes, that we would have things done properly. I always took great pride in the fact that things were in fact done properly.

At the time of going to average deductions there was much resentment. As the Tribunal would not, and the Board would not relent in this interpretation, the Tax Office then had to take a great deal of the criticism, of the blame. The rapport between the staff and the Tax Office slowly deteriorated in lots of ways, and by the time I retired from the Bank, I felt that it had deteriorated more and more.

ZIEGLER: Let us turn to another aspect of the Bank's Controller's Department and the financial complex of the Bank. From your perspective, could you just briefly discuss the development of the Controller's Department and the Bank's financial complex? How did it appear to evolve from where you sat?

WOLFE: Well, as I have said, the Controller's was very small, and we had just one man, one job, for some years. When we were the Treasurer's Department it was small also. As the age of computers came in, as the Bank started IFC and IDA, so many more problems evolved in the financial complex. As our bond issues began to go all over the world, as the Third World countries joined, and money other than dollars and gold was used, I feel that the financial complex all of a sudden grew like Topsy. In very large areas, people were
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doing feasibility studies, reports, and things that were really new. The Programming and Budgeting Department became very important under Mr. McNamara. I would say, that when Mr. McNamara joined the Bank in 1968, it was the beginning of great growth, and certainly great growth in the financial complex.

ZIEGLER: In one of our preliminary discussions for this interview, you mentioned to me that you were involved in the process which lead to the founding of ICSID, the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes. Could you describe the nature of your involvement, and could you add any insights into the negotiating process which resulted in the establishment of ICSID? We've spoken to Mr. Broches, who obviously was very deeply involved in that, and it was quite a long negotiating process from all I've been given to understand.

WOLFE: Well, I couldn't add anything to Mr. Broches' phase of that. I was asked to be the finance officer to handle the expenses of the representatives as they came from the countries, which I did as they met. It was a very, very pleasant experience. I found, surprisingly so, that from these Third World countries there were some very famous, very well educated lawyers and judges. My feeling was—and I have since at several times discussed that briefly with Mr. Broches—what a wonderful, unusual group of people came to that first meeting. What wonderful minds, what seriousness they brought to the job, and a desire to really have a system to solve international disputes.

ZIEGLER: You've also told me, Mrs. Wolfe, that you attended all the Bank's annual meetings from 1953 through 1970. From your own perspective, could you describe what your particular role was in the annual meetings, the evolution of these meetings in terms of their size and complexity, and if possible, the subject matter of the questions under discussion?
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WOLFE: Well, my role was in the Finance Office all through those years, and it was an unusual one. I don't know that anyone ever attended that many, or worked at that many, annual meetings. Mr. Poore asked me if I would take over that job under him and work with the finance officers. It was a wonderful experience, because I traveled to all the annual meetings that were outside the country and went to the Sheraton Park to all those that were in the USA.

Being in the Finance Office, we had the privilege of meeting all of the delegates, the governors, and alternate governors who attended the meetings. They had to come in person to the Finance Office to sign their applications for the cost of their transportation and the per diem advances that we gave them for living in Washington or whatever city we were in in other countries. I had the privilege of meeting all of these people over those years. I think the most interesting thing was, as the Third World countries evolved, the ministers of finance and presidents of their national banks became what I felt were friends of mine. Unless their governments changed, and they were killed, which some of them were, they came year after year for quite a few years. You had the feeling you were going to see friends. They would sit and talk and tell about their country, about their families and show you pictures of their children. It was a wonderful experience. As far as what went on in the meeting rooms, I did not have much contact with that. It was the personal meeting and the personal contact with the people who worked at the annual meetings, most particularly with the delegates that came to the annual meetings, that made it very important to me.

ZIEGLER: Could you describe some of the more exotic locations where the annual meetings were held? I'm sure you went to quite a few.

WOLFE: Well, the first one that I attended outside the country was in 1955, in Turkey. There was a riot, and our lives were threatened. We had bread lines, we had check points. The Hilton Hotel could not hold all of the official
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delegates, and we who were workers were all transferred from the Hilton Hotel when the delegates started to arrive to what was called the "Ship of Turkey" - the Adana. We lived on that ship with the largest roaches and the largest fleas and some of the strangest food that anyone will ever meet. As a result of the riot, when we left the ship for social affairs or work we went in taxis through check points until we reached the University of Istanbul, where the conference was being held.

After the week of the conference when the senior delegates left, we were finally moved back to the Hilton Hotel. The food in the Hilton Hotel was sabotaged because the employees thought they were going to be working for the Hilton Corporation instead of the Turkish government, so I think that is one that no one will ever forget.

In 1958 I went out of the country to India, and we were so busy we saw little of India. Mr. Poore closed the Finance Office one day, and all of us went to see the Taj Mahal in Agra. There was an airline strike, so we had to get on whatever plane we could to get out of Delhi. After being there for five weeks and not being able to see any more of India, we left Delhi. I went to Bangkok, Thailand. In Delhi, some of Third World countries started to join the Bank, and that was interesting to have a chance to meet delegates from some of them.

The next one was held in Vienna, and I can remember an interesting experience with the finance minister of Nigeria. His bodyguards said that he could not come to sign the travelers checks he wanted. I advised them that there was no other way that he could get them, he had to come in person. He finally arrived in his native costume, a very, very large man, and he apologized for them in beautiful Oxford English, and said of course, if he had only known sooner, he would have come and signed them before. It was quite interesting to meet him, and realize what a very intelligent, wise man he seemed to be; then the next year or so, to hear that he had been murdered, and that another government had taken over. It made that meeting a sad occasion.
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I also went to Japan and to Denmark, and each one of the conferences was wonderful. We worked eight, ten, twelve hours a day. We did not have much chance during the meeting to do much sight-seeing. We enjoyed the parties which we attended because of meeting people and the fellowship with people. After the meeting those of us in the Finance Office came back to Washington and processed all of the expense accounts. We were never quite finished with our work when we left the meeting.

ZIEGLER: How was travel generally arranged for the annual meetings overseas?

WOLFE: Everything was arranged through the Travel Office. All of us tried to take advantage of going and coming to visit other countries on our own. The Travel Office and American Express took very good care of us. We traveled on, of course, American passports, but particularly U.N. laissez-passer. The year we went to Rio and had the meeting there, I was able to travel all over South America and Mexico. The year of India we went around the world; the year of Japan we saw some more of the Far East; Turkey, we went all over Europe; when we went to Denmark, we went all over Europe again. It was all arranged through the Travel Office, and we had no problems. Our Travel Office always worked very, very well.

ZIEGLER: Did you generally fly to these meetings?

WOLFE: Yes. I had to make a decision of whether I would fly, and as I had never flown until 1955. They said, you fly or you don't go. I flew and I've been flying ever since. I had traveled the Atlantic four times, violently sea sick, on a ship.
ZIEGLER: I remember Eddie Donovan telling of going to the London and Paris Annual Meetings. They had to go by ship. This is in the forties.

WOLFE: That was before my day.

ZIEGLER: Mrs. Wolfe, you served under four Bank presidents, Eugene Black, George Woods, Robert McNamara and Tom Clausen. Would you care to comment on the effects of their respective terms of office, as you saw them?

WOLFE: Well, Mr. Black was a southern gentleman whom we all greatly respected. It was a conservative time in the Bank. Everyone knew everyone, the growth had been small. The Bank was known, I'm sure, around the world as a very conservative organization and was doing what it was planned to do, what it had been formed to do.

When Mr. Black left, and Mr. Woods came, things began to change a bit. I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Black, and he knew who I was. I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Woods and, particularly, Mrs. Woods, who was a very outgoing lady. The president's taxes have been subject to a special interpretation. I had to get involved in entertainment expenses and that kind of thing that were allowed by the IRS. The interpretation which Mr. Clark was performing and Mr. Poore was working on finally became part of what I had to interpret in doing the president's tax reimbursement.

When Mr. McNamara came, things changed drastically because of his personality. My feeling about Mr. McNamara was one of utmost respect. I wished I could have been a student of his at Harvard in economics. I feel he would probably have been one of the best teachers. He was a very private person. I always regretted that he did not make himself more known to the
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staff, because I think we missed something at that time. I think with the intense growth that we had, and the feeling that we really did not know our president, something was lost that had been there before. I had the privilege of going to his office and talking to him individually about his taxes. He filled in his own forms for the Tax Office, he discussed his own taxes with me, and we had very little intermediary.

When Mr. Clausen came, I did not have that privilege and I'd never had the privilege of meeting Mr. Clausen before I retired.

ZIEGLER: The institutional climate, I'm sure, underwent many changes during the years you were here. By institutional climate I mean the working atmosphere, so to speak. Would you care to characterize the evolution of the Bank's institutional climate from the time you came in 1951 until your retirement? We've touched on similar things before, but I would like you to draw it all together.

WOLFE: Well, I think when we went from one building to two, things weren't so bad. We still knew each other. When we built the C building, after we moved from the N building—all of us who had been transferred over there—back into the new big B building, or what is now the B building, and the C building was built we began to lose a little contact. Incidentally, all the new buildings were built right outside of my office except the B building. But every time they built a new building, it was outside my office. Then when the D building was built, I think the feeling of size and less personal contact began.

Also at that time in the whole world, things were changing in facets of management; what people were being paid, what jobs were worth instead of thinking about people. We began to become very bureaucratic, and that has evolved more and more. People were in what they called a "grey area", they
were neither professional nor non-professional. We began to stress professional as against non-professional. There was much bitterness beginning to arise because of that. There was a feeling of those people in the gray areas that they were in limbo and really were nothing. I'm sure, because they have said it to me, and I had employees under me like that. Our Personnel Department seemed to change from one interpretation to another.

We did not have the feeling, as the buildings grew, as we became larger, as we spread all over this area, that people really knew to what they belonged, and who was leading us. By the time I retired, I felt that was getting much worse, and I hope that in the future somebody can solve that. It makes a great deal of difference when you don't know the name of the person three offices from you, when you used to know the name of everybody in four buildings.

ZIEGLER: In a previous discussion, Mrs. Wolfe, you mentioned something that I'd like to get on tape. The way staff alluded to the Bank by name has evolved over the years, at least to some extent. Could you go into that a little bit, because I think it's rather interesting?

WOLFE: Well, in the early days it was nothing but the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. I never heard the expression World Bank for quite a few years. I can distinctly remember when the memorandum came out and said that from then on we would call it the World Bank, officially. Those of us who had been here for a long time couldn't believe that this slang expression, as we had thought, and one that could never be used—you could not use it in correspondence, you just didn't refer to it in anything official—was being adopted. If you ever had explained the Bank—and most people for years didn't know what we were anyway, or where we were, what we did, and why couldn't they come in and cash a check, wouldn't have known what
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the World Bank was at all—that would have meant a bank down on the corner, but International Bank for Reconstruction and Development might have made them stop and think. When it became official that we would be the World Bank, I think we may have lost something. I'm not sure what, but for those of us who had been here for a long time, it took a certain dignity away from the institution and its work. It seems such a funny thing to change, but that came along with the growth, computers, changes in the type of management, and the evolutions the world is going through today.

ZIEGLER: Are there any of your colleagues from the years that you spent in the Bank whom you found to be particularly memorable and whom you would like perhaps to memorialise, so to speak?

WOLFE: Well, I think as I come to the end of my working days, if anybody would say to me, who do you remember in those thirty-three years, who were the most important people in your life? I think I would have to start with Francis Poore. He was the first controller, and because of the way he managed, and the way he handled his people, the dignity that he had, the respect he had of the people is to be remembered by all who knew him. Ellsworth Clark, who had one of the most brilliant minds I've ever seen is another. Eugene Black, because of the type of person he was, and Robert McNamara, because of his intelligence and dream that we were going to feed every poor person and help every farmer in the world, will not be forgotten. Those of us that had been with the Bank for a long time really felt that by golly, we can fulfill his dream, knowing full well we couldn't. But it was a dream to work toward. As I look down through the years, there were a lot of other people, American and non-American that were very fine people to meet, people that you might forget, people that added an awful lot. But, in the history of the Bank, I think, that those people were the most important people I remember.
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ZIEGLER: In closing, is there anything else which we've not discussed which you would like to raise, or is there anything you would like to add at this point?

WOLFE: Well, I'd like to put into the Archives, if anybody is ever going to read this, that it was a wonderful organization to work for. I have never regretted a minute that I have been here. In the beginning, and I suppose still so, but in the beginning, it seemed to draw the best from all countries. It was started by a group of people that had a dream that I don't think they ever thought would exist up until 1984. I have talked to some of those people who were at the original Bretton Woods Conference, and they never thought it would come to this. Having been in Europe, living there from 1947 to 1951, when I moved back to the U.S. and came to the Bank, I saw that it was so needed as reconstruction. Having been in Third World countries I saw that it was desperately needed for development. I hope that it can continue in the manner in which it was started, to continue to develop and never have to reconstruct, and exist for a long, long time.

ZIEGLER: Thank you very much Mrs. Wolfe.