Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

BRUCE W. CLARK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is June 4, 2002. This is an interview with Bruce Warren Clark. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well, do you go by your first name, Bruce?

CLARK: Yes. My full name is Bruce Warren Clark, but I shouldn't be confused with another Bruce W. Clark - Bruce Wormley Clark - who rose very high in the Asian Bureau. Or the Bruce Clarke who is or was out at CIA. So, reader beware.

Q: Did that cause a lot of trouble for you?

CLARK: Yes. If I ever had to go out to the Agency, the office that had to clear my entry was headed by their Bruce Clark. That caused some amusing confusion.

Q: Okay, so let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little about your family?

CLARK: I was born in Los Angeles in 1941. My father was an architect. My mother did not work outside the house once she had children.

Q: Let's talk a little about the background of your family. Where did your father's family come from? What was his education?

CLARK: His family came originally from upstate New York, but he was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. When my father was around eleven years old, they all moved out west in the 1920s and settled in Los Angeles.

Q: And what was the family doing out there then?

CLARK: His father retired from a pharmaceutical business in St. Paul and moved out there for his health.

Q: And where in Los Angeles?

CLARK: West of downtown between Olympic and Wilshire near what is now called Koreatown, though it was an area of large, comfortable houses back then.

Q: Where'd your father go to school?

CLARK: First to Stanford, but then he decided he wanted to be an architect. Since Stanford didn't have a pre-architectural program then, he shifted to USC and got his degree there. He then got his graduate degree in architecture from Harvard.

Q: And what type of architecture was he involved in?

CLARK: Mostly residential and small office buildings.

Q: Does that touch a chord with you? Did you go out to see what other architects were doing?

CLARK: Oh, yes. We often used to spend Sundays driving around looking at buildings and houses and I still do. When I go back to California I've tried with some success to trace down the houses and buildings he designed.

Q: That's great. And your mother's family background?

CLARK: Mother's family grew up mainly in west Texas, where her ancestors had lived since about 1854. She was born in El Paso and moved out to California when her sister won a beauty contest that led to a screen test. So they moved out to Hollywood.

Q: What was the family doing in Texas?

CLARK: Her grandparents were ranchers and shopkeepers.. Her father, however, worked for the Southern Pacific and became a conductor.

Q: Did she go to college?

CLARK: No. She never finished high school.

Q: Did your mother and her sister get involved in the movies?

CLARK: Oh yes. Her sister made several films, but these were B and C type films as far as I know.

Q: Well, tell me about them., I'm an old movie buff.

CLARK: Well, her sister - who used her own name of Evelyn Pierce - made perhaps ten movies and had speaking roles, but the only ones I can remember now are the early Rin Tin Tin movies where she played the young leading lady. My mother was what you'd call an extra and never had speaking roles. Her most "famous" role was that of one of the three brides of Dracula in the original Bela Lugosi film which you can still see on TV.

Q: Oh, hey!

CLARK: She's one of the three women who emerge from coffins in the basement or crypt of Dracula's castle.

Q: Did the movies play much of a role in your life? Did you go see a lot of movies?

CLARK: Oh, yes. Both my father and mother liked movies and we went frequently. I still do.

Q: So, you grew up in LA. Where did you go to school?

CLARK: In 1943, my father went to Illinois to work for an airplane manufacturer that was working on a secret weapon: drone planes designed to be used as flying bombs. However, the project was dropped in favor of the atom bomb. In 1944, I believe, we returned to California and settled on the other side of LA in San Marino. I went all the way through high school in San Marino.

Q: Did you go to Henry Huntington elementary school?

CLARK: That's right.

Q: Well, we're fellow alumni.

CLARK: Oh, really?

Q: Oh, yes, I went there, I think it was for the fifth and sixth grade., Before that I went to Stoneman, and later I went to South Pasadena Junior High, for in those days San Marino and South Pasadena had a joint high school system.

CLARK: I went to first to Carve r elementary school and then to Huntington until high school. By that time, San Marino had opened its own high school.

Q: I lived on El Molino. I don't know if you remember that street. Anyway, I'm 74 years old, and was born in '28. The area was mainly orange groves and orchards then.

CLARK: I only know one other person from San Marino in the Foreign Service, Bob Myers.

Q: Anyway, so the first school you went to was Carver. Was that a military school?

CLARK: Well, actually I went to a private school, Clairborne, for the first and second grades and then to Carver for the third and fourth grades..

Q: It just doesn't ring a bell with me but…

CLARK: K. L. Carver were the initials. It was on the east side of San Marino. I don't know if there is still a Carver Elementary School.

Q: I was on the west side near South Pasadena and went to Stoneman for the first few grades. Stoneman students then went into Huntington or something like that.

CLARK: The Carver elementary school that I went to was remodeled and expanded to become San Marino's own separate high school shortly before I finished the 8th grade at Huntington. If you ever saw San Marino High School back then, you would have noticed that some of the features - like the height of corridor ceilings and water fountains - were designed for young kids, not teenagers.

Q: How did you find the San Marino school system? We're talking about the elementary system.

CLARK: Well, it had a very good reputation, especially for English. I certainly thought it was good. At the time, San Marino was almost 100% white, now it's about 50% Asian, I think.

Q: Asian, yes, which has boosted its academic standing. (Laughter)

CLARK: It's still wealthy, so to speak, but with a very different population.

Q: Were there any subjects you were interested in?

CLARK: Always history, English, and later, political science.

Q: How about at home? I mean, at the time you were a kid looking at things, people were talking about the beginning of the Korean War and the Cold War. Did this make much of an impression on you?

CLARK: Oh, yes. I read about those things all the time. My father used to subscribe to news magazines like TIME and LIFE and newspapers like the L.A. Times and the Pasadena Star, and I read stuff like that all the time.

Q: What sort of books did you go through at the library? It was right next to Henry Huntington school.

CLARK: Mainly history, I think, a lot of books on American history - biographies mostly. I also liked historical novels.

Q: Do you recall any books or novels or histories that particularly impacted you at the time?

CLARK: Well, one of my all time favorites was The Egyptian, a novel by Mika Waltari. My father forbade me from reading it but I read it anyway.

Q: Well, of course.

CLARK: It was too racy, he probably thought. But I loved things like that, books about ancient empires and so forth.

Q: At this time you were at Huntington school which took you up to high school, didn't it?

CLARK: Through the 8th grade.

Q: Eighth grade. Did any teachers there stick in your mind or anything like that?

CLARK: Not particularly. I remember my 8th grade math teacher because I did well under her despite my dislike for the subject. Mrs. Mackey ruled her class with an iron hand and was somehow able to get math into my brain.

Q: Good for her! What about at home? What were the politics? Because San Marino, of course, was not a hotbed of liberalism at the time.

CLARK: No. My father was what would now be called a liberal or moderate Republican, a breed that's almost disappeared. He liked Earl Warren and didn't like Richard Nixon, who was our Congressman back then.

Q: My mother just hated him, because he beat out Jerry Voorhis, who was very liberal.

CLARK: My father said that you can't trust Nixon on some things, but I don't know the details. My father's brother and sister were more conservative. They liked Taft for president, and I remember they used to have big arguments about Taft and Eisenhower.

Q: Later on you had Johnny Rousselot. He was in my class at Henry Huntington.
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CLARK: I think that my mother and brother had moved to Palo Alto by then.

Q: Well then, from the eighth grade where did you go?

CLARK: I went to San Marino's new high school which had opened two years earlier.

Q: In high school, what subjects or sports were you interested in?

CLARK: Well, again, English, history, and civics or government.

Q: Were politics a subject that kids were talking about?

CLARK: Oh, to some degree I suppose. Basically everyone was a Republican.. I remember that during the 1956 election there were a few students that favored Stevenson, That struck most of us as just incredible. I think the student body was about 98% Republican.

Q: How about extracurricular activities?

CLARK: Not really. I didn't do any sports.

Q: Any plays or that sort of thing?

CLARK: No.

Q: While you were there were you pointed towards anything, your family pointing you towards anything?

CLARK: Not really. I think I'd already decided that, though I liked architecture, my math and science skills weren't good enough. Then I heard from friends of my parents that their son, who was greatly admired, was thinking of going into the international hotel business or the Foreign Service. I asked what that meant, and liked the idea of travel and living abroad. I started to look into those careers and when people asked me what I was going to do, I got them off my back by saying 'I'm going into the Foreign Service.'

Q: Did you learn anything about the Foreign Service?

CLARK: Well, I never knew anyone who was in it, but I remember reading a book by William Beaulac, I think. He was an ambassador in Latin American.

Q: William Beaulac?

CLARK: Something like that.

CLARK: It was a wonderful book. And that really got me interested in it. And then I read one by our Ambassador in Czechoslovakia, was it Ellis Briggs? Who made large cuts in the staff? And one by Charles Bohlen. I think it was called Bears in the Caviar.

Q: Ellis Briggs, yes. He wrote Farewell to Foggy Bottom.

CLARK: I may have read the Briggs and Bohlen books a little later, but I remember the Beaulac book was the first time I read about the Foreign Service, and I liked what I read.

Q: So what did this mean for college?

CLARK: Well, I went my first year to Claremont Men's College, which had a curriculum aimed at preparing one for government service. Then. when my father died in my freshman year, I transferred to Stanford where he had gone and studied political science and history.

Q: So you went to Stanford from when to when?

CLARK: I was at Claremont Men's College from 1958 to 1959, and then at Stanford

from 1959 to 1962.

Q: You were there during the Kennedy-Nixon campaign? Did that engage people on the campus?

CLARK: Oh, yes, I remember I went to see Kennedy's speech at the auditorium. And also Madam Ngo Dinh Nhu. She came to drum up support for the government of South Vietnam. There was a huge controversy over whether she was good or bad.

Q: Oh, yes. Madam Nhu was the sister of the president of South Vietnam at that time.

CLARK: I think she was the sister-in-law of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Q: Sister-in-law. Known as the Dragon Lady. And not affectionately.

CLARK: That's right.

Q: How did you find Stanford as an environment?

CLARK: Well, by transferring in my sophomore year and living off-campus at home to save money, I sort of missed out on a lot of the Stanford experience that I would have gained if I'd gone as a freshman. It was a good school, but to this day I am not wild about it. I got a good education, but I think I missed a lot of things that make the college experience so special. There were, however, some good professors and some especially good teaching assistants.

Q: Did you find you were concentrating on any particular area?

CLARK: Oh, yes, Latin America. I was sure, thanks to Beaulac's book, that I wanted to serve in Latin America. (laughter) Also, my brother liked Latin American history and my best friend at Stanford was Mexican-American.

Q: Were you taking Spanish or anything?

CLARK: Yes, I took Spanish and took courses in Latin American history and Spanish literature.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam? While you were still in college?

CLARK: No, after college I went to work for my brother who was starting a business in Santa Cruz. Then the draft was breathing down my neck, so I enrolled in the Army reserves for intelligence training, I took a year of Russian in Monterey at the Army Language School.

Q: Now the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, yes. I did too.

CLARK: Really?

Q: Oh, yes. I did it way back in '50, all of '51.

CLARK: I studied there for a year and then finished out my eighteen months of active service in the reserve. Somewhere in that time I took the written exam in San Jose, and I remember I thought I might be doing pretty well for two reasons. They were dedicating a post office next door, so "The Star Spangled Banner" and other patriotic music was playing during the exam - a good if distracting omen. And then during one of the breaks I remember one of the other guys saying, "What was that map that showed…?" It showed Germany at three different periods, and you were supposed to identify which periods. Since I had no problem with that, I thought 'Hmm. There may be hope." (Laughter.)

Q: How did it come out?

CLARK: I guess I did very well. I passed it and then I took the oral later on.

Q: While you were in the reserves were you doing anything else?

CLARK: It was all Russian language study for about a year. Then I went back to Fort Holabird in the summer to enjoy Baltimore without air conditioning. After that I returned to California.

Q: By that time did you know you were going to be in the Foreign Service when you came in?

CLARK: No. When I was back in Baltimore, I got the word that I had passed the written exam and two of my good friends hadn't. And so I went back to California to work for my brother's company and wait for the oral exam.

Q: Where'd you take the oral?

CLARK: San Francisco.

Q: How did that go? Do you remember any of the questions?

CLARK: Yes, some of them. The examiners asked me (and I'm not an economist) what were the economic indicators for inflation or something like that. I started to name just about everything I could think of and it turned out that they were all valid. It depends how you use the information. And then they asked me some question about issues in Latin America. I don't know why they did that but they fell into my area. I had just read some long article in the Christian Science Monitor about economic problems in Latin America, especially fishing, and I rattled off info that they weren't aware of. So it did me well.

Q: So did you come into the Foreign Service soon after?

CLARK: I think I took the oral exam in August or September, and I was called right before my birthday in February.

Q: Of which year?

CLARK: Of ’66. I was asked if I could come back to Washington in two weeks, and I remember I surprised my mother no end by saying I wanted to think about this. Two weeks was not a lot of notice for such a major step, but I guess they had - what do you call it? - an unexpected opening, so I agreed the next day to go.

Q: So you started in…

CLARK: February ’66.

Q: February ’66. What was your A-100 course like?

CLARK: Well, the class coordinator was Alexander J. Davit, the very model of a diplomat: very urbane with a great sense of humor. There were about forty people in the class. Some bright stars, or at least they became stars, were in it like April Glaspie, Joe Winder and Dan Simpson. Jack Maresca, I guess, is no longer in the Foreign Service, but he did very well. I would say the class was divided between a small group who were sort of very East Coast, Ivy League and urbane, and a larger group who were bright but not quite as sophisticated in their manner. The two groups didn’t mix much.

Q: While you were there did you still want to go to Latin America?

CLARK: Yes. But I had also become interested in Europe.

Q: At that time were they asking where you wanted to go and what type of specialty work you wanted to do?.

CLARK: Yes, they asked us for a wish list. I think you had to put down three areas you thought you might want to specialize in and three areas of the world you were interested in serving in. Everyone expected it was a real gamble, however.

Q: So where did you go?

CLARK: Well, I think because I had studied Russian, they sent me to West Berlin on the theory that with Russian and German language training I could be of some use in the divided city of that time.

Q: So you were in Berlin from ’66 to…

CLARK: ’68.

Q: What was West Berlin like, ’66 to ’68?

CLARK: The Wall had been built, of course. People had adjusted gloomily to its existence.

Q: It was built in ’61, wasn’t it?

CLARK: Yes, in ’61. The original anger had largely passed and there was a resigned feeling among the Berliners that they would never get rid of the Wall. It was still easy to drive around the city and park. Berlin wasn’t exactly a thriving, booming city yet, but the remains of the war were pretty much all gone.

Q: What type of work did you do?

CLARK: Well, I was a first-tour, rotational officer so I served a few months in each of the main sections of the Mission in order to get an idea of which area I might want to specialize in.

Q: Who was the head of the mission?

CLARK: Brewster Morris.

Q: And where’d you start?

CLARK: They put me in the admin section to start with, under Bill Jones, and I guess I was in that section for about three or four months. I went on, I think, to USIA, and then to the economic and the consular sections. Then I was made the aide to the Minister, Brewster Morris, and ended my tour in the Eastern Affairs section.

Q: Was there a lot of tension in Berlin at that time, being in the heart of East Germany and all that?

CLARK: I don’t think so, or at least I didn’t feel it. There was a lot of interest in Berlin, which was still considered a possible flashpoint in East-West relations, but I think the hot point had passed. Things had settled down. The U.S. Military Liaison Mission was still doing it’s thing, snooping around East Germany and East Berlin, driving into Russian formations and going into sensitive areas closed to the public. There was a lot of spying on each other, but the Mission wasn’t in any day-to-day crisis mode or anything like that.

Q: Did you get involved in interesting episodes, you know, like a G.I. doing the wrong thing or other critical situations? Did you get involved in any of the liaison or dealings with the Soviets?

CLARK: No, that was all taken care of by Sol Polansky, who headed the Eastern Affairs section. He was the guy who did all the things with the Soviets.

Q: Did you have friends or acquaintances in the German population?

CLARK: Yes, I met a few young Germans that I would see from time to time, and through another American FSO, I met a young East German and his friends whom I used to visit from time to time in East Berlin. He later became a doctor in East Germany.

Q: Was the Free University a major center of political activity among young people?

CLARK: I roll my eyes. And how! Of course, the U.S. Mission backed up to the Free University, and the Free University was a hotbed of student unrest. The Berkeley of Europe, I think, while I was there. And all the unrest was brought to a head when the Shah of Iran visited in June 1967. At the time, I was the Mission's protocol officer, so I got to greet him at the airport. I remember escorting our consul general, Alice Clements, to a formal, command performance of an opera in the Shah's honor. As I approached the Opera House, I heard all this yelling and I thought they were all applauding the arrival of the Shah. But they weren't. Eggs and rocks were flying through the air. I ran to get into the opera while the police were flailing their batons to keep the mob at bay. I think that's when the police killed a young man, Benno Ohnesorg. And that led to two years of unrest, if not more. All sorts of demonstrations and violence followed. It was a very bad period in West Berlin's history.

Q: Well, did we feel that students had ties to the East Germans or was this unrest more or less tied to student unrest in the United States and elsewhere, and of course in France?

CLARK: Well, yes, 1968, the year of great student unrest in Germany and France was coming. There was a lot of unrest everywhere, I think, over the war in Vietnam, over the corruption and repression in Iran, and over the old-fashioned, unresponsive faculties and teaching methods in the universities. The Shah, however, already had a huge number of detractors in Germany because of his lavish lifestyle, repressive government and brutal police. What were they called? The SAVAK?

Q: SAVAK.

CLARK: SAVAK. There was a lot of criticism of him anyway, especially in magazines like Der Spiegel, for being a repressive ruler who exploited his people while living lavishly.

Q: Were you close to the Shah when these demonstrations went on?

CLARK: No. I met him at the airport, but the worst demonstration occurred later when the Shah was entering the opera.

Q: By that I mean, were you with him in the car?

CLARK: Oh, no, no. Once he was greeted at the airport by the protocol officers of the three Allied missions, he was escorted by West Berlin's protocol chief in a big motorcade. In the Opera House I sat nowhere near him. He and his party sat in the imperial box or whatever you want to call it.

Q: While you were there in the Foreign Service, were you picking up any of the American unrest from Vietnam?

CLARK: We were certainly aware of the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in America and Europe and of the critical coverage in the press. But with the Wall and a very repressive Communist state a few miles away, I wasn't very sympathetic to the criticism of our policy in Vietnam.

Q: It was my understanding that for a long time there was practically a theology about West Berlin and what one could do and not do. Everyone had to be very careful not to do anything that could undermine our rights in Berlin or give the Soviets or East Germans an opening to exploit. Our relations and contacts with the Soviets and East Germans were done by the numbers, so to speak, and watched very closely.

CLARK: Oh, yes. You had to be especially careful whenever you traveled in or out - or to or from - the Soviet Sector. You had to be careful how you did it, what documents you had, what documents to show or not show, which guards you spoke to, and whether the guards were allowed to look inside your car or trunk. There were all sorts of things like that.

Q: Were you married at the time?

CLARK: No.

Q: Did you get any feeling for the political life in Germany? For example, who was the mayor of West Berlin at the time?

CLARK: Heinrich Albertz. Willy Brandt had already gone to Bonn several years earlier.

Q: Did West Berlin or West German politics intrude much in what was going on?

CLARK: Not in my world. I really didn't follow Berlin politics very much. The central concerns were the student demonstrations and whether they were going to somehow open Berlin up to Soviet or East German meddling.

Q: From the people you were talking to, was there concern that the student demonstrations might catch on to other elements of society? Trade unions, the intellectuals or something like that, or did they seem to be kind of isolated?

CLARK: I think there was some concern that they could spread. Other people thought not. They thought that the average German worker or citizen was not impressed by these students and violent demonstrations. Student demonstrations are almost a rite of passage in a lot of European countries. But the ones in Berlin were pretty violent.

Q: Why was that?

CLARK: Berlin was particularly attractive to student radicals because it had two major universities, a lot of students, and a long history of tolerating alternative movements and lifestyles. In addition, the FRG subsidized the cost of living in West Berlin and exempted West Berliners from military service. This made it a magnet for anti-government and protesters. But even today there seems to me to be a peculiar tolerance among many young Germans for those who like an opportunity to trash streets and break windows and cause a big fuss.

Q: Were there any spectacular escapes or attempts to break over the Wall when you were there?

CLARK: Attempts to escape were common. I don't recall any particularly spectacular escapes or attempts, but it seems to me that while I was there one group escaped through an extensive tunnel.

Q: Was everyone in the Mission very careful not to get involved in trying to get people out from East Germany?

CLARK: Absolutely. We weren't even supposed to take letters back and forth for fear that it might somehow be a plot to involve the United States or one of its diplomats and create a problem.

Q: Was there a feeling that, as a single man, the Soviets might set up traps, you know honey traps with girls and things like this, in order to involve you in a compromising situation that they could exploit?

CLARK: Well, I socialized mainly with members of the U.S. Mission and other diplomats, so I don't know. I suppose if you were a serviceman who went out to bars, etc., in the areas frequented by U.S. Army types you might well find yourself targeted by some young woman. But that was not much of a problem in diplomatic circles as far as I knew.

Q: Was the diplomatic life and work there with the French, British and Germans and all, pretty interesting?

CLARK: Just as in the American mission, it seemed that the other missions had an awful lot of bright young people. My counterpart in the British mission became the British ambassador in Bonn and later Washington. Anyway, he rose very fast to the top levels of

the British foreign service. I think a lot of foreign services sent some of their brightest people to Berlin. At the time, Berlin and Yugoslavia were two areas that got a lot of attention in the Department.

Q: Yes, I was in Yugoslavia from '62 to '67 with Larry Eagleburger, David Anderson and Jim Bullenstein, I mean I never ran across such a bright group later in the Foreign Service. Did being in Berlin entice you to change your specialty or geographic area??

CLARK: Not my preference for political work. But I changed from being interested in Latin America to being interested in Europe because when I went on vacation and saw other parts of Europe, I really liked it.

Q: So where did they send you next?

CLARK: To Vietnam after several training courses. At that time, almost all single officers, and I think officers without children, were sent to Vietnam with a few exceptions. I was assigned to CORDS - Civil Operations and Rural Development. That was the USAID organization that ran the pacification program.

Q: When did you get there with the Foreign Service?

CLARK: In 1969.

Q: Was there any sort of dissension in the ranks? Did you just salute and go or did you feel you had any choice in the matter?

CLARK: I didn't have any choice as I understood it, but I had two friends who resigned rather than go there. One not so much because he disagreed with the policies but because he was an Italian speaker who had been assigned originally to Italy but sent instead to Mogadishu with a promise that he'd be assigned for his second tour. Nonetheless, after a really unpleasant time in Mogadishu, they assigned him to Vietnam, so he said goodbye, joined the UN and just retired a couple years ago. But others didn't go because they thought the policy was wrong. By the time I got to Vietnam I was very suspicious because I'd done a lot of reading on Vietnam at FSI and was beginning to have a lot of doubts, especially after Tet, whether or not this was the way to do it.

Q: Did you take Vietnamese?

CLARK: I took the short course and didn't do very well because of the tones. I could reproduce them but I couldn't hear the difference when someone was speaking.

Q: Like learning the Morse code. I never could tell the difference between a dot and a dash. It went by too fast, which makes it a little difficult. It's almost the same, up against the same frustration. When in 1969 did you go out to Vietnam?

CLARK: I think I got there about April.

Q: And you stayed 'till when?

CLARK: Eighteen months. So something like October…

Q: Of '71?

CLARK: Of '70.

Q: '70.

CLARK: Is that right?

Q: Yes. That would be right. Where did they assign you?

CLARK: Well, I arrived in Saigon and I was told there were several posts around the country that were available. So I called a friend of mine for advice….

Q: Who was this?

CLARK: David Passage.

Q: I've tried to get and interview him.

CLARK: Well he's hard to get in touch with. Anyway, he was working at MAC V Headquarters in Saigon. I guess he had just had an argument or something with one of his bosses and was really down on working at MAC V. He recommended going anyplace outside Saigon. So I said okay, I'll go out in the country somewhere. Since I was raised in California and liked the ocean, I tried to choose a place near the ocean. And preferably a place where I didn't have to take those awful malaria tablets which made me ill every time I took them. So I went to Tuy Hoa in II Corps in Central Vietnam.

Q: Well, when you got there in the spring of '69, what was the situation in South Vietnam?

CLARK: As the country goes, it was still recovering I suppose from the after-effects of the previous year's Tet. I didn't have any special feel for the situation, but FSI had done such a good job in indoctrinating me about the need to be extremely careful about my security that I was amazed how freely people moved about. When I arrived in Saigon, they put me in USAID I - one of those hotels for USAID officers. I was almost afraid to leave the room. When they said to go across the street about a block to eat, I said 'Is that safe?' After awhile I got used to the fact that the situation was by no means as dire as they had said in Washington, then on the way up-country they took me first to II Corps headquarters in Nha Trang. When I arrived there and got off the plane, they took to a little

hotel in the middle of Nha Trang with no visible security. I looked at this and said 'There's no way I'm staying here; anyone could walk in here.' So I guess the reality was that the security situation was a lot better than I thought it was, but nonetheless I stayed instead with a fellow I had just met a couple months before in Washington. Actually I personally never had any security problems, but friends of mine certainly did. I lived downtown in the little town of Tuy Hoa in a house I shared with another USAID officer. We had a couple of guards that slept through the night instead of guarding, I think, but never had any problems even though VC had made it into the center of the town during Tet.

Q: Tuy Hoa. What was the situation there? Was that a district?

CLARK: Tuy Hoa was a district in the province of Phu Yen, on the coast north of Nha Trang. Since Tuy Hoa was the main town in the district and also the provincial "capital," so to speak, the town was pretty secure. It was separated from the much less secure valley by a highway, railroad tracks and a river. The town was pretty secure, but how secure the valley was at night was anybody's guess. And if you went far from the town into the woods or the jungle during the day you could be asking for trouble.

Q: What were you doing?

CLARK: I was the deputy district advisor. The district advisor was always an Army major.

Q: A district was the smallest unit?

CLARK: Yes. Corps were divided into provinces and provinces into districts.

Q: You'd had military experience, albeit in the reserves. Was that helpful where you were?

CLARK: Well, a little bit, but where I was the U.S. military didn't play a combat role. The district team lived right outside the center of town and spent most of their time advising and training the Vietnamese. There was not a lot of military action in Tuy Hoa district, probably because the province headquarters were there and a lot of Vietnamese military. However, in Tuy An, the district to the north, the district team's compound was overrun by the VC one night. My counterpart there, whose name I've forgotten, had to fight for his life with his machine gun and grenades. I went up the next morning and saw a stack of about forty VC bodies. I mean they really had a tough time.

Q: Well, what were you doing?

CLARK: Basically seeing where our aid was going and how it was being used. Going out to the villages, and seeing that the villages or hamlets got what they needed.

Q: What was your impression of how was it being used?

CLARK: About 10% effective if judged by our intentions. The aid would arrive on a truck in a square inside the district government compound downtown. When it was unloaded, the merchants would come and buy it, which they weren't supposed to do, of course, since this was all being donated by the United States. Basically all of the stuff moved smartly into the market. The powdered milk went to feed pigs (not children), and the oil went into the marketplace to be sold.

Q: Had we learned to accept this?

CLARK: I guess. I mean, I reported it and I think everyone just sort of assumed that 10% effective was okay. It was extremely wasteful. And, of course, corruption was rife. The province chief was in on it.

Q: Did this turn you off to the South Vietnamese cause? How did you feel?

CLARK: I liked and respected the Vietnamese I worked with. The district chief was a Army captain and concerned with military matters. He had two deputies - one civilian and one a lieutenant - who spoke English, and I went around all day with them, visiting villages and hamlets outside the town of Tuy Hoa. I think they were trying to do the best they could under the system. I felt very sorry for the Vietnamese. But I didn't think the war was really of winnable, because I thought that for the people who had influence and contacts the war was, in a way, a golden opportunity to make a lot of money. These people didn't suffer so much. They could buy their sons out of the military, and there were many ways to make money off the war and the Americans. Stuff that we threw away could be converted by Vietnamese into dollars. For example, the garbage from the U.S. airbase across the river south of Tuy Hoa was a gold mine. People fought to get the contract to haul the garbage away. The same went for the contract for doing the laundry for the airbase. A lot of American money and aid flowed into the economy but I think most of it benefitted people who were basically already rich.

Q: Was this stirring up any dissent within the AID ranks, officers like yourself? Were you sat on from an upper level so to say, and told to cool it?

CLARK: No. I don't know what happened when reports got to Saigon or to headquarters in Nha Trang. Our province senior advisor, who was a very honest, hardworking Foreign Service Officer, was very sympathetic.

Q: Who was that?

CLARK: James Engel. I'm not sure about this, but I think he was transferred because he had a falling out with the Province Chief over corruption. They had several real hot arguments, and I think his bosses figured out that that situation wasn't helping anything. He was, I think, transferred to II Corps headquarters in Nha Trang and replaced with

someone who they hoped could work with the province chief. But he, too, got really angry at all the corruption.

Q: How about with your colleagues, fellow Foreign Service Officers? Did you sort of sit around in the evenings and talk about the problems that you saw?

CLARK: Yes. But there wasn't much we could do about it but report. I don't think any of us were big supporters any longer of our involvement in Vietnam. I think we all sort of favored the idea of declaring victory and leaving.

Q: Well, you were there when they were just beginning to draw down, weren't you?

CLARK: Right.

Q: Did that have much effect when you were there?

CLARK: Tuy Hoa had really been in the middle of the fighting in Tet '68. But afterwards, for some reason, the Vietcong did make a big effort there, so the absence of American and Vietnamese troops was not much of a problem. Also, Tuy Hoa and the whole province was basically defended by Koreans. What I call Korean-occupied. The Koreans were tough. No one messed with the Koreans. I think the Vietcong decided to let the Koreans own the highways and so forth and avoided tangling with them. I think the VC concentrated on other areas, although it was clear that small units of VC were around and entered the villages and hamlets at night.

Q: Well, this is one of the interesting things. When the Koreans came in they didn't get involved in a great many fights, but they scared the bejesus out of both the Vietcong and the South Vietnamese.

CLARK: Well, they were really pretty ruthless. They'd drive up and down the highways shooting not only at water buffalo but at almost anyone that moved in an area that wasn't considered secure on the general premise they must be Vietcong. They were really fierce.

Q: Did you have any dealings with them?

CLARK: No. Not really. I met them once in awhile but that was all.

Q: Did you get any insight from speaking to Vietnamese? I mean were you able to get any feel for how they felt about things, how things were going and all?

CLARK: Well, the Vietnamese I worked with obviously did not want the Communists to succeed for political or family reasons. Naturally they feared imprisonment or worse if the VC won and that their families and all would suffer. But I don't think they had a lot of hope that things were going to get better for the government.

Q: You didn't get much of a feel, then, that the South Vietnamese government was making a big effort to win the hearts and minds in your area? President Thieu wasn't coming around inspiring the troops and that sort of thing?

CLARK: No one like that ever came to Tuy Hoa or Phu Yen province while I was there except for William Colby, who was head of our pacification program.

Q: Did you get any feel for the operations of the CIA there?

CLARK: No, not really in Phu Yen. I know that one officer who served in the district south of mine was reportedly a young CIA officer, but I thought he was a Foreign Service officer. So I know they were around. I had no idea what they were doing or that they had different contacts or anything.

Q: There were these young men working out of the political section in the American Embassy in Saigon, called provincial reporting officers. Did they come around?

CLARK: Yes, they came. There were several. I thought that they went to Saigon but actually lived and worked at corps headquarters like Nha Trang. and traveled around all the time. I remember one in particular, a very nice fellow who spoke Vietnamese.

Q: Who was this?

CLARK: I think it was Fred Shoup. I always wondered how he related to the military. He had a soft, cultured manner that was quite a contrast to the military officers who had come in from the field in camouflage uniforms with grenade belts and weapons in hand.

Q: Well, after eighteen months you were sort of counting your days in your job, weren't you.?

CLARK: Oh, yes. I was eager to leave. I enjoyed seeing parts of Asia on leave which I never would have seen otherwise, and the policy of sending all single officers and unmarried officers without children there produced, I think, the biggest gathering of bright, interesting people I've ever met in one place. Saigon was just filled with people of my own age, many of whom had served elsewhere. It was a fabulous sort of group.

Q: I was there at the same time, and it really was exciting. I was an older officer but it was very exciting.

CLARK: My best friends even today are almost all from that era. They lived in Saigon or elsewhere and I met them while I was over there.

Q: Did the Director General John Burns come around? I know he visited Vietnam when I was there to ask FSOs where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do afterwards. Did you meet him?

CLARK: I never met Burns, but he may have sent over a team that visited Phu Yen to talk to the FSOs. I'm not sure about their names. Phillips and Henderson, maybe? They came and visited almost every Foreign Service officer in place. I guess they took notes on how officers were doing and what they wanted next. They seemed to me to be very impressed by what they heard in Saigon which, I thought, was not too representative of the experience out in the provinces. I personally thought people in the provinces should get some extra points, because life in the provinces, even if you weren't in a bunker, was a lot harder than it was in Saigon.

Q: Oh, yes, I spent eighteen months in Saigon and it was very comfortable life. I didn't mind being separated from my family. And then I would go out and look at some of the young officers, you know, in a sandbagged dugout.

CLARK: Exactly. It seemed to me when it came to assignment time that the guy that spent eighteen months living in a dugout should get preferential treatment.

Q: So what did they do with you?

CLARK: I was sent back to Washington and assigned to the long-since-abolished office of the Inspector General for Foreign Assistance. And my main job was to lead more experienced inspection teams back to Vietnam, which I did. I went back to Vietnam a couple of times, and once to Central America.

Q: How did you find looking at Vietnam from the headquarters perspective of AID when you went back there?

CLARK: I had the impression that the Inspector General of Foreign Assistance very carefully targeted the areas to inspect in line with Congressional interests. They didn't want their inspection reports to be ammunition for critics. So the inspectors were very careful about what they looked into. For example, if you said, "Yes, we're here to look at what happens to powdered milk and oil, but look at what's happening over here," the inspectors might reply, "Yes, yes, but we're not here to look into that." So I don't think they were very effective.

Q: Of course, there was the great problem that if you tried to do this, any critical report would be immediately fed to the enemies of AID in general and get played up. Then, rather than helping to correct the problem, it just becomes ammunition to destroy the program.

CLARK: That's right. So there's a reason for it.

Q: And this is one of the problems of reporting on corruption, I think. If you're in a country and you keep reporting on corruption, critics of AID or what have you will zero in on the corruption and not on other developments.

CLARK: During one of my trips, I think that I had a tiny part in uncovering some serious problems in the USAID effort there. By that I mean there were a lot of officers that were supposed to be assigned out in the countryside who weren't actually living - at least full time - where they were assigned and were maintaining an apartment in Saigon that USAID was paying for. I mean it was a total breakdown. Some would have a car out in the country and a car assigned to them in Saigon. You know that type of waste. And I think the Inspector General did finally get USAID to make sure that people were actually living where they said they were living, and if they had one car that they didn't have another. Very sloppy administration and misuse of funds.

Q: Particularly by this time, I think you found people who were turning this whole effort into a career program of leading the high life, you know, with a Vietnamese girlfriend, black market activities, and so forth. I think the real true believers by this time had probably mostly left, leaving the field to the sort of careerists who were trying to stretch it out as long as they could and make as comfortable a life as they could.

CLARK: I think there were a lot of fellows who found Vietnam a very profitable way to make some money, have some girlfriends on the side, and spend every weekend in Thailand or whatever.

Q: You also had a significant number of people, I think, who were estranged from their wives back in the States. The atmosphere, I think, was much better in the beginning when people were really making an effort.

CLARK: Well I think it couldn't help but get worse the way they recruited people for Vietnam. They were going out to, say, Fresno and signing up policemen who had no experience abroad.. And then suddenly these guys were abroad without their families and double or triple their old pay in a rather loosely administered situation. That sort of thing leads to abuse.

Q: Were you concerned that you were getting too in with AID as such and away from sort of the regular Foreign Service?

CLARK: Yes, I wanted out of that job, since I didn't find it what I wanted to do. So I was switched from there to the Vietnam Working Group, which is probably the job I liked least in the entire Foreign Service.

Q: Well, you were doing the Vietnam Working Group from when to when?

CLARK: Well I think I was with the Inspector General for maybe eight months or…

Q: This would put you in the middle of '71.

CLARK: I think I was maybe a little less than a year with Inspector General. Then I

moved over to the Vietnam Working Group which was headed by James Engel who had been my boss in Vietnam. Except by the time I arrived he had left to be an ambassador to some country in Africa. Dahomey, I think.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: Got in a lot of trouble there, too. Anyway, my new boss while I was there was Josiah Bennett. He was from New England and fit all the ideas you'd have about a close-mouthed New Englander. (Laughter) Never said anything. Information is power and he wasn't going to share it with anyone.

Q: Well, you were there from sometime in '71 until when?

CLARK: I was in the Vietnam Working Group until about March '72.

Q: What were you doing? What piece of the action did you have?

CLARK: Basically our job was to defend our war effort to critics, Congressmen and military people who would ask why we were allowing this or that to go on. We had to write responses that fudged the truth or were simple unresponsive. This was very painful for me because a lot of the criticisms were right on. But we always had to come up with some answer that either avoided answering the question or gave a response that we didn't believe in.

Q: Were you picking up on the anti-Vietnam movement and all?

CLARK: Well, I think most of the people in there were well aware of the criticism and sort of sympathetic to it. We weren't participating in it, certainly, but I think our belief and support for the war withered.

Q: What about the other officers? Were they having the same problem you were having?

CLARK: Well, one officer was Steve Johnson, who was the son of U. Alexis Johnson, then the Undersecretary of State. I don't think he had as much problem, but he probably knew what his father was dealing with and had a much better understanding of all the pros and cons that someone at that level had to deal with. And another officer was Theresa Tull. I think she was supported the effort and thought that it all could come out well if everyone would do the best they could.

Q: She was later Ambassador to Laos, I think.

CLARK: That's right. But the atmosphere in that office was pretty grim for me.

Q: Well, you must have been ready to get the hell away from the whole Vietnam thing, weren't you?

CLARK: Yes, I really was. In fact for years afterwards it seemed to me those who had served in Vietnam would talk about nothing but Vietnam. It just got so tiring. I was glad when the topic finally faded away.

Q: Where'd you go? Were you able to make arrangements to get the hell out?

CLARK: My unhappiness was noted by Josiah Bennett, and somehow I got offered to Larry Eagleburger, who at that time was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, down at the Pentagon, in ISA, for policy planning and NSC affairs.

Q: ISP or whatever it is.

CLARK: Yes, it was ISA then. And I was his special assistant for awhile.

Q: How did you find working for Larry?

CLARK: He was very easy to work for. He was very bright and nice and was trying to relax a bit and not work such long hours. I mean, he's a very bright, driving person by nature, but he had had a heart attack when he was in the NSC working for Kissinger. I think that one reason he was in ISA was so that he would not work twenty-four hours a day. I found him perfectly agreeable to work with, very nice fellow.

Q: What sort of things were you dealing with?

CLARK: Well, I was his special assistant and was sort of the paper coordination and clearing center. He had about 30 people working for him under the direct supervision of his No. 2, a Rear Admiral Anderson. I was not involved in the substance. When someone needed a paper, for example, it was my job to make sure the paper was produced and cleared in time. His job, of course, involved working on a lot of really top secret stuff dealing with military policy and defense policy and strategic issues around the world. I never saw that stuff because it was taken in directly to him.

Q: Well, did you get any feel for the military approach to international affairs there? As opposed to State Department?

CLARK: Well, yes. I found the civilians I worked with there very bright - as good as anyone I had known in the Foreign Service. The military officers were bright, too, but perhaps less willing than an FSO might be to question general policy. At least that was my impression. I might be wrong, but I got the impression that once policy is set, military officers don't continue to question it, whereas it's been my experience that Foreign Service officers never cease. This is why, I think, a lot of people are infuriated when they come to State Department and deal with the Foreign Service attitude of "yes, we know what the policy is and that's the line we'll take, but in-house we need to examine this again." I don't think the military do this as much.

Q: How long were you doing that?

CLARK: About a year, from 1972 to 1973. Then I was assigned to the U.S. Mission to NATO, and arrived in Brussels in August 1973, following French language training.

Eagleburger talked to someone in USNATO, and they needed a guy to be special assistant to our ambassador - or permanent representative as he is actually called.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

CLARK: I had a new ambassador every year. George Vest had just left as the chargé, I think, and when I arrived Donald Rumsfeld was ambassador. Then he went back to Washington. Then came David Bruce, Robert Strausz-Hupé and Tapley Bennett just as I was leaving.

Q: Well now, where is USNATO located? In Brussels?

CLARK: It's outside Brussels at the NATO headquarters in a suburb in a sort of industrial park toward the airport.

Q: How did you find this type of work?

CLARK: Really tiring. Very long hours. As a staff assistant, you're not creating things or going to meetings or meeting people. You're sitting in an office. NATO is like a foreign policy factory. It is not like a normal diplomatic post. Everything is right there in this one huge headquarters, so you don't have to go out to meet and talk to people since they're all right there. And the staff assistant's job is completely non-substantive: pure paper pushing. But the officers, both FSOs and military, were really bright. The top floor of our wing was the office of the defense advisor, Larry Legere, and most of his staff later became admirals and generals. They were really good. It was a very bright group of people.

Q: Was there much concern about the "Soviet Menace" at that time?

CLARK: Well, yes. I think there was always a worry that if war ever came the Soviet Union would be a real problem, I don't think I ever heard anyone mention that the Soviet divisions were 40% undermanned or badly equipped. Everyone took the number of divisions and all that at face value. And there was real concern that if war came the European allies wouldn't have all the materiel and equipment and technology and so forth to hold the line.

Q: Did you get any feel for how NATO was looking at the role of France at that time?

CLARK: France was always a big problem. There was a real loathing for the French

position. Jobert was really disliked.

Q: He was the former French Foreign Minister.

CLARK: They really stuck it to the United States all the time. You began to wonder if France was an ally. Though France didn't participate in NATO military or defense planning, they had a permanent representative in the North Atlantic Council and played an often obstructionist role.

Q: Did you have any French counterparts that you worked with?

CLARK: No. I think the Americans had very little to do with the French.

Q: How about the Germans and British?

CLARK: Oh, yes, we had very close relations with the British and the Germans. And Luns, the Secretary General of NATO, was very pro-American.

Q: You were there from 1973 to 1977?

CLARK: '73 to '77. I was there when the war in the Middle East broke out in 1973, and we decided to resupply Israel with tanks and equipment committed to NATO.

Q: Yes, that was the Yom Kippur war in October.

CLARK: As I recall, we were ready to ship them out without even telling the Germans or NATO what we were doing. That, coupled with the Europeans' reluctance to get involved in any way in that war in light of their own interests in the Middle East, caused at lot of problems for us with our NATO allies.

Q: That really must have been a very acrimonious period.

CLARK: Yes, there were some hot issues while I was there. And then there was the Year of Europe, which was designed to strengthen relations between the U.S. and Europe. The MBFR talks in Vienna. The founding of CSCE. The revolution in Portugal and how to deal with Portugal now that the government was socialist. And the overthrow of the Greek government and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

Q: How about the British and German counterparts, did you deal with them very much?

CLARK: I didn't, no. I suppose fellows in the political section did, but as a staff assistant I didn't.

Q: Well, as staff assistant to Rumsfeld for a year and then to Bruce for a year, it doesn't sound like we were treating NATO as very important.. High grade people, but they only

had time to make the rounds before they're out again.

CLARK: It wasn't a very good to have a new ambassador every year. But they were top-notch people, and both had influence and easy access at the highest levels in Washington. Rumsfeld left to become Secretary of Defense. He was very bright and very secretive. He had very little to do with the other people in the mission and didn't appear to be much impressed by his staff, though more so by the military officers than the FSOs. The staff had very little contact with him, though he bombarded them all the time with questions on little slips of paper called "yellow perils." As far as I know, he discussed ideas mainly with his own special advisor, Robert Goldman, whom he brought over from St. John's College in Annapolis. He and Goldman talked all the time, and the staff was excluded. He seemed sort of contemptuous of the people in the mission. I don't know if that's true or not, but that's the way it came across. The mission did not like him. David Bruce was very likeable, but he also had little direct contact with the staff. On the other hand, he had remarkable access and contacts in Washington and Europe and could communicate directly to the most important people at the highest levels.

Q: What impression did you and your colleagues in the Foreign Service and all during this period in time have of Henry Kissinger?

CLARK: Very smart, very wily. I think most of us were happy that he was Secretary of State since for once we could be sure that the Department was on the inside instead of the outside of decision-making. I don't think we thought much of him as a person. Several friends of mine had been his staff aides and they said it was absolute hell to work for him, that he was most arrogant person they'd ever worked for. He had a famous temper and so forth, but he was bright. I think that only now are some of his clever moves and ploys catching up with him.

Q: Thanks to Vietnam and NATO, you were sort of thought of as a political-military guy, weren't you?

CLARK: Yes, everyone thought of me as a political-military officer. That had never been my original intention, but the jobs just sort of started shaping my career that way.

Q: So what happened then? After NATO.

CLARK: In 1977, I returned to Washington to RPM which, of course, did NATO affairs from the Washington end. So in a way I was doing the mirror image of what I'd done at NATO, which was very good for RPM. I knew all the players in the Mission, and I knew how things would flow and work over there.

Q: So, you worked in RPM for two years? 1977 to 1979?

CLARK: Right.

Q: What were some of the issues to had to deal with?

CLARK: Well, as I recall, a lot of the time was spent getting CSCE underway - that was the Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe - and trying to put some meat on the bones of this organization. And getting around the French, who were still being obstructionist.

Q: Did you get any feel for how we looked upon CSCE initially?

CLARK: Well, I got the impression it was sort of window dressing. I mean, it wasn't really what NATO was designed to do. It was my impression that it was invented to give NATO new fields of endeavor where the Europeans could participate happily. Now, of course it's evolved; it's almost the main purpose of NATO.

Q: Let's see, you were there when Carter came in. Did that make a difference?

CLARK: I don't recall particularly that it made a difference.

Q: I mean, were you there at the time the so-called neutron bomb became an issue?

CLARK: I don't remember. When I left maybe?

Q: You left when?

CLARK: I left there in '77.

Q: Well, no, you wouldn't have.

CLARK: I don't remember working with that issue while I was in RPM, though I recall it was an issue. But of course that would have been handled almost entirely by arms control experts.

Q: Well, this caused quite a rift between us and the allies, particularly Germany. We were pressing the Germans to accept weapons including, I think, the neutron bomb (or enhanced-radiation weapon) on German soil. Helmut Schmidt was the Chancellor, and after the Germans had been sort of dragooned into doing it, Carter changed his mind and decided it was not such a good idea. Helmut Schmidt, who had made a huge effort to overcome enormous opposition and taken a great political risk in supporting us, wrote the Carter administration off after that.

CLARK: I remember that. I don't know what I was doing at the time, but I wasn't involved in that.

Q: Well now, you were in RPM until 1979?

CLARK: I was in RPM probably 'till the middle of '79. Then I went over to German or Central European Affairs. But there I worked mainly on East German matters.

Q: Okay, let's see. That would be from about 1979 to...

CLARK: Well, no, maybe it was in 1980 that I moved over to EUR/CE. It handled Austria, Switzerland and Germany. I was the East German desk officer.

Q: How did we view East Germany at this point?

CLARK: I don't think we ever thought it was going to fade away as it did. We thought they were a bunch of hard-nosed communists, but people you could work with a little bit on small issues. But you had to be very careful. We thought they were the smartest of the East European countries, and the hardest to deal with and the most inflexible.

Q: Did we foresee any real change in that area?

CLARK: No. We didn't foresee it. I mean everyone always said that if the Soviets would relax their presence and influence in East Germany things might change, but we never thought the Soviets would do that.

Q: Were you back in Washington in '79?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: The Soviet move into Afghanistan must have changed things.

CLARK: Oh, yes.

Q: It showed that the Soviets were basically an aggressive power, not a defensive power, at least in our estimate.

CLARK: Right. Personally, I thought we went we went a little bit crazy on the Soviet adventure in Afghanistan as if all of South Asia and the Middle East was going to fall or something.

Q: Big arrows pointing down towards the Persian Gulf and all that.

CLARK: Exactly. But, yes, that really made the Soviet Union the Number One live threat. It got a little overdone, but look what it's achieved years later. (Laughter) They're out and now we are in Afghanistan.

Q: Who was the head of EUR/CE?

CLARK: John Kornblum, and then Tom Niles.

Q: How did you find them?

CLARK: I liked Kornblum a lot. A brilliant officer. Of course he's done almost nothing except German affairs and NATO affairs his entire career. He's retired now, but I think he's brilliant. I've heard, though, that as ambassador to Germany people didn't like him as much. I really liked working for him though.

Q: Were we concerned at the time when you were doing this that somehow or another the Soviets might offer some sort of deal to unite Germany and that Germany would haul out of NATO?

CLARK: Yes, I think we were. I think there was always a concern that if the Soviets could somehow offer the right combination of things the Germans would decrease their support or commitment or something to NATO or somehow become less cooperative.

Q: Did you get any feel for the German cadre within the State Department - the people who dealt with Germany? Were they a special breed of FSO, do you think?

CLARK: When I was there, there was a joke that John Kornblum had people lined up for the next two generations. Yes, I think there was a special sort of German group, a special group that Kornblum had picked for assignments way down the line. He was very good at identifying people, bringing them into German affairs, and arranging their assignments long in advance. Yes, I think there was a German Mafia, so to speak - one I think that the State Department went to some trouble to dismantle afterwards.

Q: Did you find yourself part of that?

CLARK: Maybe, but I was not, and never considered myself to be, a German experts. I'm talking about the officers who were almost fluent in German and had already served there a couple of times. I wasn't quite that level. When I spoke with other people, they'd say, "Oh, you're one of Kornblum's," but I'd say that I wasn't that interested in spending the rest of my career in Germany.

Q: Yes. You mentioned your wife, had you gotten married at this point?

CLARK: No, I met her when I was assigned to East Germany. After serving on the German desk, my next assignment was to East Berlin.

Q: Who was the Minister?

CLARK: Now we're talking about our Embassy in East Berlin. So it's an ambassador. When I got there it was Rozanne Ridgeway. Herbert Okun may have been there for a short while after I arrived, but for most of my tour Ridgeway was Ambassador. Then Frank Meehan replaced her at the end.

Q: You went to East Germany following your tour on the German desk?

CLARK: Yes, I went to East Germany about ’83.

Q: What job did you have there?

CLARK: I was Political Advisor. And my wife-to- be was my deputy, on-the-books so to speak.. She was actually the head of station. We met there and married several years after.

Q: Well now, what was the situation then? You were there from ’83 to when?

CLARK: ’87.

Q: Boy, that’s a long time. What was the situation in East Germany at that time, when you arrived?

CLARK: A lot attention was focused on the church, because the Evangelical church was the main alternative, shall we say, to the government. There was a lot of pressure from young East Germans for the GDR to loosen up. The East Germans were, of course, following very carefully what was going on in Hungary and Poland and this made the regime very nervous. Honecker and his group were struggling to prevent that from spreading to East Germany. But as far as I know, we were unaware of how much Honecker was on the outs with the Russians, and how unsettling the East Germans leaders found what was going on in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

Q: You were there when Gorbachev came in?

CLARK: Yes. And I think we tended to downplay reports that Honecker didn’t get along with Gorbachev and vice versa. But we were proven wrong. (Laughter) The reports were accurate. I think we just couldn’t believe that the Soviet Union would do anything to destabilize the hard line communist government of East Germany given its strategic importance and location.

Q: One thing, how did you find dealing with the East Germany government?

CLARK: Well from my standpoint, very correct and proper. Very formal. The fellows I had contact with at the Foreign Ministry were all polite and very correct. We entertained each other and so forth, but you never made a lot of progress. They never deviated from the policy line or indicated any change was possible. They’d listen to what you said and make notes, but there was no indication that it was going to change anything. I remember that, while I was there, the LaBelle disco in West Berlin was bombed by Libyan agents. Our ambassador, Frank Meehan, went over to the Foreign Ministry to ask the GDR to take action against the Libyan embassy in East Berlin. The officials told him that they had no idea what he was talking about, and if his accusations were true it was just shocking.

We just said, "Oh, come on." But that's the way it went. They must have known what was going on with the Libyans, since they bugged everybody, but they wouldn't admit anything to us or show that they took any action in response to our complaint.

Q: And I take it that there was no way of sort of breaking down the barriers.

CLARK: Not really, not with the government people. The East Germans were finding it a little easier to travel to the United States for conferences and so forth, but everything hinged on the Soviet Union and how much support it gave to Honecker. When it started to withdraw its support, things started to move fast, especially when Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia started to wobble.

Q: But this is after you left, was it after?

CLARK: Yes. Most of that happened after I left, but the SED had already begun to meet with West German government and party figures, especially SPD leaders, and Gorbachev had called for reform and democratization in the Soviet Union.

Q: But what was happening, had things started to develop and loosen or change?

CLARK: Well, I think even when I was there that the GDR had started to allow East Germans for the first time to go to Hungary without a huge hassle, which later was to lead to going to Hungary and not coming back. And the Hungarians began to allow their citizens to travel a lot more freely. East Germans watched this and wanted to know why they couldn't do it too. This caused a lot of stress for the GDR regime.

Q: You found that sort of up and down the line the East Germans were disciplined. I mean they were following strictly the party line. Was anybody saying 'My god, I hope things will change.'?

CLARK: No official would ever show any weakening. Members of the Evangelical Church thought that things were moving slowly toward liberalization and that in time - ten years or so - there might be some change for the better. But no official ever indicated or hinted any variation from the party line.

Q: Was somebody watching the East German influence abroad? Because so many countries had such as in Libya and other places where the East Germans sort of trained the police force.

CLARK: I'm sure we were watching GDR activities abroad very carefully, but that was probably done most by our intelligence agencies. But then, yes, there was concern because the East Germans were training the Libyan police force and so forth. East Germans had a hand in a lot of things we disapproved of in the Third World.

Q: Did you travel around much?

CLARK: Yes. We traveled around all the time.

Q: Any problems?

CLARK: No. You were usually tailed. You had your usual sort of amusing things happen when you did travel. Cars would suddenly appear out of nowhere and follow you, or you would stop by the side of the road to eat lunch and suddenly out of nowhere a whole bunch of people would appear and sit down close by. But I was never harassed or anything and my wife-to-be didn't really have any specific incidents. They apparently thought I was the chief of station. For some reason, when the STASI documents were later made public, it looked like the East Germans had not figured out who was who in the Embassy. I thought this was amazing because we had East Germans working in the Embassy on the first floor, which was the unclassified area.

Q: Maybe they were too clever by half.

CLARK: Maybe.

Q: Were we able to get a handle on the East German economy? Because half the time, as I recall, we were saying that East Germany was the most advanced of the bloc countries, had a pretty good economy, and produced things of acceptable quality. Yet when it finally merged with West Germany, most of the stuff turned out by the GDR turned out to be pretty poor and the economy was terribly inefficient.

CLARK: I don't think we had a good handle on the real state of the GDR economy. Part of the problem was, at least while I was there, that our economic counselor tended to believe what he saw or read or was told. The general impression was that the East German economy was probably the most advanced and best organized, etc., in Eastern Europe. And the reality, we learned, was that it wasn't. I mean people basically weren't going to their jobs or were working two to three hours a day and taking the rest of the day off to shop. We were never aware of that as far as I know. When we visited factories, I guess, they organized a Potemkin Village-type operation. I think our economic reporting from East Germany was way off.

Q: Were you able to have any contact with East Germans? Significant contacts?

CLARK: No. I wasn't, at least not outside church officials. Most of our non-official contacts were with church people. The USIA person, Cynthia Miller, had very good contacts in the cultural world. But if you went out and around, we were easily identified as American, and once you identified yourself as an American, East Germans were pleasant but understandably guarded and cautious because the STASI had informers everywhere.

Q: What about sort the intellectual side, the artists and writers and such? Often this is an

area where one can develop safer contacts?

CLARK: Well, in fact, Cynthia Miller, the head of USIA and her staff had a lot of such contacts, and I think she got a lot of information that she didn't share with us. As apolitical counselor, I always thought that was too bad. I think such information should have all been pooled in order to get a better idea of what people thought.

Q: Well, this raises a question which is very pertinent today because we're talking about terrorist attacks on the United States and the role of the CIA and the National Security Agency and the FBI. It seems that they really weren't sharing information. I've often thought that in some of our embassies, not everybody has to do their own thing in isolation like the CIA, yet USIA and the consular section, which often have their own highly useful don't seem to get together and share information.

CLARK: That's right. I think that was one of the biggest flaws when I was in East Germany. The territorial imperative was too strong, especially when other agencies were involved. There was too much of this "I got this information and I'm not going to send it to State. It's going to go through my channel, etc." And stuff that goes through USIA channels may it never get to State. So a lot of stuff gets lost that way. It would have been much better for everyone to pool their information.

Q: Did you have any contact with our mission in West Berlin?

CLARK: Yes. We'd go over there twice a month or so for lunches or meetings. I didn't talk to the top level officials at the Mission; Ridgeway and her DCM did that and had much more frequent contact with the top officials at the Mission. Nelson Ledsky was over in West Berlin and I think they met frequently. But they were almost two different worlds at this point. Once we had our own embassy in East Berlin, there were turf questions about who should report what if it concerned the GDR or East Berlin but came from West Berlin sources. Neither post wanted the other post reporting or commenting on what it considered its business.

Q: Did this preclude the almost obligatory trips to East Berlin from West Berlin?

CLARK: No. But there was less need for those trips. People serving in West Berlin would come over to East Berlin, but mainly for pleasure or tourism, not information gathering. However, travel to East Berlin was encouraged in order to maintain the Allied right of access.

Q: It used to be that Allied staffs in West Berlin traveled to East Berlin to make a statement about the Allies' right to travel into East Berlin as one of the "occupying powers."

CLARK: That's right. The Allied missions in West Berlin didn't want to give up that right, so they did come the traditional way through Checkpoint Charlie, taking care to

observe the complicated rules about where they could enter, with whom they could talk, what documents they could show, and so forth. But they didn't come over to East Berlin to get a feel for the political or economic situation or such; that was left to the embassy.

Q: When you traveled to Leipzig, for example, did you have to get permission or could you just take off?

CLARK: No, you didn't have to get permission, but in reality you had to make hotel reservations in advance through a government office. Consequently, the East Germans knew where you were going. If you didn't make reservations you might arrive to find you had no place to stay. So the East Germans had no trouble following where we went, but they never objected to us going anywhere with the exception of certain areas of East Germany that were off limits for military or security reasons.

Q: Were you there when there was an unfortunate incident where at least an American officer was killed?

CLARK: Yes, I remember that. He was with the U.S. Military Liaison Mission.

Q: How did that happen?

CLARK: As I recall, he was out doing what U.S. Military Liaison Mission does, that is, to go into sensitive areas to observe East German and Soviet troops, equipment and facilities. I think he got very close to some Soviet unit, got out of his vehicle, and started inspecting a tank while its crew was nearby. He took a great risk and was shot. It was a tragedy but he was doing something very risky and he paid for it.

Q: Was the Soviet military presence obvious while you were there?

CLARK: Oh, yes. Not in the center of Berlin, so to speak, but Berlin was ringed by Soviet military camps and barracks and domestic residential areas.

Q: While you were there, what was happening in Poland?

CLARK: Well, the Solidarity movement was active and East Germans were following it with great interest. I think there was a lot of comment in East Germany. Though the East German press didn't cover it at all, the East Germans could see and hear about it on West German TV and radio.

Q: Oh, so they could they could pick up TV?

CLARK: Oh, yes. There was no problem with that. They could watch western TV and listen to western radio.

Q: I take it that everybody in East Berlin watched?

CLARK: I think so.

Q: Because I guess it was much more interesting.

CLARK: Yes, but not as pro-American as you might think. (Laughter) But as you know, the West German TV and press don't exactly toe the American line. They are frequently very critical of U.S. policy.

Q: Were you getting much feel for what was going on within the East German government with Honecker as President and all? For example, who's on top in the leadership, who's standing on the Kremlin wall next to whom and that sort of thing?

CLARK: Well, nothing dramatic. I mean we realized Honecker was aging and that his likely successor, the Crown Prince so to speak, was Egon Krenz. But we didn't see anything that would indicate any massive change would come about. The fellow who was the party head in Dresden, Hans Modrow, was considered the bright star of liberalism in the SED. I wonder what happened to him. But the general feeling was he was too liberal, too willing to take too many steps toward better relations with the West and ease restrictions, and if they eased restrictions the whole thing would come apart.

Q: Could you apply your political training when you were there? I mean, the Party was very disciplined and secretive. I think it would be difficult just trying to figure out who was doing what to whom.

CLARK: It was. You couldn't just go out and pick up a lot of gossip and so forth. There was no place to do that.

Q: In many ways it sounds more difficult than in Moscow, where over the years the Embassy developed a real science for wrinkling out information and clues by studying the papers and all to figuring out what was going on.

CLARK: That could be. I think Moscow has been so important for a lot longer, and a lot more effort has been focused on Moscow for decades. We were sort of new to the East Germany thing.

Q: Was there a feeling that having relations with East Germany made sense?

CLARK: Oh yes, certainly. Though we didn't think East Germany was going to collapse, we thought things would have to change in due course, and that the more the GDR was exposed to Western influence, the more it would have to change. I just didn't think it would ever come so fast. I never thought the Soviet Union would somehow let it go within a year.

Q: And really, this whole change was the result of developments in the Soviet Union.

CLARK: It was Gorbachev.

Q: It was Gorbachev. And maybe looking at it now, one could see that his policies were a logical development. I mean it got to the point where the Soviet system wasn't working, and they weren't going to go out and shoot a lot of people to make it work.

CLARK: I agree. When I hear people criticize Gorbachev, I think 'Thank Heavens for Gorbachev.' This is the guy that basically took the step that led to the dismantling of the Soviet Union.

Q: Absolutely. He didn't know it.

CLARK: No. He deluded himself in thinking that it wouldn't all come apart the way it did, but he did take the crucial steps.

Q: All right. Certain things became more and more impossible. For example, with the East Germans towards the end, they had the ability to go out and shoot mobs, but that wouldn't have really worked, for it probably would have destroyed the regime.

CLARK: Yes, I think that was it. In the end they decided they couldn't do that because that really would have ripped the situation apart.

Q: Yes. I think this is a good place to stop, Bruce, but we'll pick this up the next time. You left there in 1988, just before the deluge.

CLARK: '87, yes.

Q: '87, you left in '87.

CLARK: Well, I don't know if the rest is very interesting,. but I'm willing to come back.

Q: Well, why don't we do one more session. That should do it, but I'll just put at the end here one thing: In '87, where'd you go?

CLARK: I transferred to a sunnier climate, Riyadh.

Q: To Riyadh?

CLARK: I had no knowledge of the Middle East whatsoever, but I thought it was time for a change from German affairs.

Q: Okay. Well sometimes it's interesting to capture the view of the new boy on the block., I mean sometimes people have been around so long that they begin to lose sight of how things are, and somebody walks in, you know, looks around and says 'Gee.' Sometimes a

new person can see things in a little clearer light. So we'll pick this up in '87 in Riyadh.

CLARK: Okay.

Q: Great.

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Today is June 12, 2002. Bruce, 1987 - how did you get to Saudi Arabia? What was the process?

CLARK: Well, the Political Military Counselor's job had been vacant for so long they wanted me there immediately, therefore I never even got area training. So I had some leave and got on a plane and flew to Riyadh.

Q: Arriving in?

CLARK: August. At about two o'clock in the morning.

Q: What was your initial impression of what you saw there?

CLARK: I was flabbergasted, because as we flew in I had no idea how big Riyadh was. I had read books which still described it as a small sort of city up in the highlands or something. From the air, as you flew in, it seemed to be about as big as Los Angeles. Very spread out, and at two o'clock in the morning there were lots of people with portable TVs camped out on the desert watching portable TVs and having a little outdoor meal. And the city is very modern. I was just very surprised. The old historical center of ancient adobe buildings is still there, but basically it's a very modern city.

Q: Did you have any feeling why the job had gone unfilled?

CLARK: Riyadh has always been an unpopular post because of the restrictions on women. A lot of women don't like it, but a lot of women do like it, especially if they have interests they can pursue on their own. For instance, women who were studying for a graduate degree or writing a book or a thesis or something liked it because they had drivers and could live in the luxurious compounds which had cable TV, pools, tennis courts and all that. The whole question was how much they were bothered by the fact they couldn't drive and go out by themselves really to shop and eat.

Q: You were there from ' 87 to when?

CLARK: Two years, 'till August '89.

Q: What was your job?

CLARK: Political Military Counselor.

Q: What did this encompass?

CLARK: When I was there it was mainly about liaison with the U.S. Military Mission there which advised the Saudis on all things military, especially sales of arms and airplanes, especially the Saudi desire to buy more F-15s.

Q: Well, what was the situation regarding sales? As you know, political careers had been destroyed in the course of selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia. I'm talking about Congress and the Israeli part of the equation. What was the situation when you were there?

CLARK: It was pretty much the same thing that AWACS sales faced. The Saudis had bought some F-15s in 1978 and wanted more, but Congress objected largely because of the Israeli lobby's fears that the planes could be used someday against Israel. The Saudis were cooperating with us pretty well, but Congress had a lot of problems with selling things to Saudi Arabia until they looked at the balance sheet, and realized that if we didn't sell them aircraft, the British or the French would. So the argument was always that we might as well make the money build up important connections with Saudis who were important or going to be important. But in the end, Congress still refused to sell them F-15s so the Saudis bought British Tornadoes.

Q: Well, how did political military fit affairs fit into the Embassy's operations?

CLARK: It was pretty much limited to following all the information and insights that we got from the U.S. Military Mission, the Saudi National Guard advisors and private U.S. contractors. They would feed into us what they learned of Saudi attitudes and leanings towards this equipment and that equipment. Sales negotiations were so important, however, that they were handled at a much higher level than political-military counselor. In fact, sales were discussed and negotiated at the ambassadorial level in Riyadh and Washington, because you were talking about multimillions of dollars involving very sensitive relationships between various princes and Prince Sultan, the Defense Minister, and Prince Bandar back here in Washington and so forth.

Q: What were you getting from your military colleagues about the Saudi use of aircraft and the efficiency of the air force?

CLARK: Well, actually, our impression was that the Saudi pilots, a lot of whom had been trained in the United States, were very good. And as I recall, the big issue at the time was whether we could keep Americans on the AWACS planes after we trained the Saudi crews. I think we wanted to know what the Saudis knew. The Saudis were reluctant to do that.

Q: Well, what was the situation '88 to 90? Was the Iran-Iraq War still going on?

CLARK: Yes, the big threat to the Saudis came from Iran. And, of course, there was the our downing of an Iranian passenger plane. It caused a lot of concern. But at that time Iraq was still an "ally." In fact my deputy got in a lot of trouble with the Ambassador once in a CODEL briefing by mentioning that probably in a few short years the real enemy would be Iraq. He was told to shut up and not say that in front of Congressmen again. It embarrassed the Saudis, for the Saudis never liked to speak critically of any neighbor, regardless of what they thought privately. They didn't want to ever be quoted that they said Iraq was a potential enemy even though they realized that was so.

Q: Were we, at your level, looking at Iraq as a potential enemy?

CLARK: Not at my level. I think that agency officers were aware of the potential of Iraq. But at that time Iraq had not caused any problems; it was busy fighting Iran, and Kuwait was quiet. We knew there was a border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, but I don't think anyone had an inkling that Iraq was going to try and invade Kuwait.

Q: Were you there when the Iran-Iraq war stopped?

CLARK: I don't think so. I don't remember clearly when it stopped but I think it ended shortly after I left.

Q: I was wondering whether that caused any change. I mean did life kind of just go on the whole time you were there?

CLARK: Well, when I left the big issue that really stirred up our relations with Saudi Arabia was the Saudi purchase of missiles from China. We were completely surprised to learn that Prince Bandar had made very secret trips to Peking and bought these missiles while ambassador in Washington. A coup which he managed to pull off, I think, without any American really knowing it.

Q: These were Silkworm missiles, weren't they?

CLARK: Actually they were CSS-2 surface-to-surface missiles which the Saudis installed down in the southern, almost uninhabited part of Saudi Arabia. And he actually got them over there and installed, I think, without the Americans knowing about it until one of our military teams or something happened to be down in that area and spotted some odd crates or something like that. And then one discovery led to another. When I left that was one of the big issues. Why did Saudi Arabia do this on the sly, and why did they need such missiles? We were afraid, of course, that if they didn't use them against Iran they'd use them against Israel someday.

Q: Did you have many contacts with the Saudi military or pretty much just with our military?

CLARK: Pretty much with our military. And with a few Saudi officers in the Ministry of

Defense who spoke English, because I spoke no Arabic.

Q: Well, did you find yourself waging battles with the Department of Defense or with Congress or with State in your position there?

CLARK: No. I think State and Defense were working together trying to deal with criticism of Saudi Arabia and keep arms sales going, because a stable, friendly Saudi Arabia with all its oil is of great importance to us economically and politically.

Q: Who was your ambassador while you were there?

CLARK: Oh, first Hugh Horan. He is - or was - one of the Department's greatest linguists, especially in Arabic. He's a brilliant man and was delightful to work for. But then he ran afoul of the Saudi royals. I suppose you know that story.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: The account that was in the Post was actually very accurate.

Q: Did his departure sort of upset the Embassy, would you say?

CLARK: Yes, I don't recall exactly but there was a lot of anger at the Saudis and real unhappiness at the way he had to leave so quickly. He was sort of a beloved Ambassador. He was a very, very nice fellow and very well-liked.

Q: How about when you…

CLARK: I was about to say that he was replaced very quickly by Walter Cutler, who had been the ambassador right before Horan. Cutler returned to Riyadh transformed. I mean that when I arrived, Cutler had just left and it was clear that people were more or less happy to have a new Ambassador. Apparently he was not very popular for one reason or another, so we were all wondering how he would be on his second go-around. I found him very good, friendly, very sharp and businesslike. I don't know what happened in his stint in Washington, but people said he returned a reformed person.

Q: How wonderful. How did you find life there? Were you there with your wife?

CLARK: No, we weren't married yet. I always wanted her to visit, but we never did it because it was so difficult to bring in a single woman. I would have had to falsify a reason for the visit, like saying that she was coming to visit some other family, so she never came. But life was very comfortable if boring as a single person. Even as a single man, I got frustrated at the restrictions on women. The restrictions were just ridiculous. You couldn't go out to a restaurant with someone you weren't married to. You had to go out in groups, and basically that meant you had to go to international hotels where men and women could sit together at a table. Otherwise you had all sorts of problems. So the

life there got sort of wearisome. And I think that's why a lot of women didn't like to go there with their husbands. Life in Riyadh was a bore even though it was comfortable. I never had any problem with the Saudis, and all the stuff you read about now was relatively rare then. I guess it was sort of a golden interim period. If there was anti-American feeling, it wasn't obvious. We knew of course they had the Mutawa, the religious police, and the Wahabi sect was very strict. But that was sort of always over there outside the diplomatic world.

Q: Did you get involved in the building of bases and all that?

CLARK: Personally? No. But we were busy building or helping build various military installations and bases. For example, the Corps of Engineers was building a huge base in the northeast. I think it was called King Khalid Military City. It was enormous, a veritable city. It cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and had everything in the typical Saudi fashion. I was never allowed to visit it though, and it was very difficult even for American military and attaches to get to go there.

Q: How did the American military find it there?

CLARK: Well, the ones I dealt with got along with the Saudis very well. The Saudis were very agreeable personally if sometimes frustrating to work with. U.S. military got along well with Saudis, especially with those educated in the United States. I don't think there was any problem that I knew of.

Q: After this sort of desert interlude, where did you go in '89?

CLARK: In August '89, I was transferred back to the U.S. I went first to the NEA/AFN in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. I was in the office for North African affairs.

Q: Wait a minute, were you there when Saddam went into Kuwait?

CLARK: Oh, yes, I was there, in that new job.

Q: Oh, the new job.

CLARK: I was the Deputy Director and the Moroccan Desk Officer, which meant that I was more Moroccan Desk Officer than Deputy Director.

Q. Essentially you were in NEA dealing with Moroccan affairs?

CLARK: Right. But when the war with Iraq began, our boss - the director - volunteered our office in the effort to enforce the embargo on Iraq by tracking ships carrying illegal shipments. So a lot of our time was spent firing off messages to various governments saying a ship is coming your way with illegal stuff on it, you ought not to let it come in your port or you ought to search it and so forth.

Q: Where were you getting information?

CLARK: From aerial reconnaissance and intercepts and so forth. It was pretty impressive to see how much information was gathered every day on what ships were going where and when they were supposed to be various ports.

Q: Did you get after-action reports and find out what happened?

CLARK: Yes, to some extent.

Q: Did they seem to be stopping all this stuff?

CLARK: Yes. I think a lot of ships were intercepted. And a lot of ports were closed to them. Sometimes, when a government was reluctant to seize or board a ship, they'd just tell the ship to keep going.

Q: How long did you do Moroccan affairs? You were there from '89 to when?

CLARK: '91.

Q: Were there any sort of issues with Morocco?

CLARK: Well, the big issues in Morocco at that time were human rights and the Western Sahara. Of course, we have had fairly good relations with Morocco for a long time. Morocco has been a rather pro-Western member of the Arab world, and has played a positive role in trying to promote an Arab-Israeli settlement. During the Iraq war, it was sort of an intermediary for demarches and so forth to other Arab countries asking them to stick with the embargo and not cooperate with Iraq or countries there were cooperating with Iraq. Publicly, the Moroccans might take a strong, pan-Arab stance, but privately they were cooperative.

Q: I take it they really didn't feel as much a part of the front-line states vis-à-vis Israel?

CLARK: I don't know. Morocco's in a slightly different world. It has a long history of contacts with Western Europe and the Arab-Berber-French colonial culture of northwest Africa is different from that of states further east.

Q: What was your impression of the King? It was Hassan at that time, right?.

CLARK: He was extremely bright and wily. Hard as iron on issues that concerned the security and perpetuation of his regime. I mean, the family of General Oufkir was still imprisoned. He was the general who was accused of leading the plots against Hassan in the early '70s.

Q: You mean the attempted coup during the palace garden party?

CLARK: Yes. The general was found guilty of secretly planning the two attempts to kill the king in the early '70s. He was executed shortly after, but his family has been imprisoned in rather harsh conditions ever since in something close to solitary confinement along with about twenty other officers who participated in the attempted coup or at least did not oppose it sufficiently.

Q: Was the UN attempt to organize elections in the former Spanish Sahara a major item?

CLARK: Oh, yes. That and problems with Algeria, which allowed the Polisario to live in southern Algeria and stage attacks into the Western Sahara. Morocco even then was very concerned by our attempts to push it to allow a plebiscite in the Western Sahara on independence and was busy figuring out ways to avoid doing that. Hassan, who was very bright, came up with the idea of inviting all Moroccans who had fled Spanish Sahara twenty years earlier to return to the Western Sahara, reestablish their citizenship, and vote. Needless to say, this clever move put a big wrench in the works.

Q: Did that hurt our relationship or did we just put that issue to the side?

CLARK: I don't think we ever allowed it to go so far so as to hurt the relationship, but it was always an irritant because in our view he should have allowed elections. Morocco had occupied the Western Sahara and violated all sorts of agreements, but I don't think we ever wanted to push it to the point where it would cause a split between us or damage Hassan, because he was a moderate voice among Arab leaders and helpful vis-à-vis Arab-Israeli talks. We were hoping he would finally figure out, or the world would finally figure out, a way to make the problem go away - possibly by improving the situation in Western Sahara to the point where the people there didn't object so much to becoming part of Morocco. The Moroccans poured a fortune into the Western Sahara to modernize it and so forth. Without all the money that the Moroccans had put in there, I don't know quite where an independent Western Sahara would get enough to live on. Of course, it does have enormously rich fisheries and undersea mineral beds off the coast that are perhaps worth developing.

Q: Was Morocco being used at that time as sort of an entrée into the Arab world when it came to dealing with Israel and the Oslo accords? I'm not sure of the time.

CLARK: Let's see, the Oslo Accords are when, '92?

Q: Yes, it was later on.

CLARK: '92. Well, Morocco has always played a much more understanding role than other Arab countries when it came to Israel. I mean I don't think there's any doubt it thinks Israel should reach an accommodation with the Palestinians, but it's more flexible. And it is not as concerned about the Palestinians as, say, the states closer to Israel.

Q: What was your impression of the reporting coming out of Morocco? Who was our Ambassador at the time?

CLARK: Ussery. Michael Ussery for most of the time. There was another ambassador, I think, for a short while when I was on the desk, but I can't recall his name.

Q: Freeman?

CLARK: No… well, maybe it is.

Q: I've interviewed him. I was wondering, I mean one of the things that's happened from time to time has been that, we sent a political appointed Ambassador to Morocco who gets sort of co-opted by the king. Was this the case in your view? Was this pronounced or not?

CLARK: I don't think so with Ussery. I think it's very difficult in Morocco for any Ambassador there to not to get sort of co-opted by the Royal Family because the royal family's so important, so nice and obliging and so forth. I think his predecessor, Joseph Verner Reed, was, I think you could rightly say, much more sympathetic to the royal family.

Q: I think he's the one that Foreign Service officers used to cite as an example of identifying to closely with the host government. They say he used to write about "our king."

CLARK: And a good friend of mine whom I think you already interviewed, Lange Schermerhorn, used to mention what it was like to work for him.

Q: I'm interviewing Lange, we're just coming to Morocco.

CLARK: Well, she was the Moroccan desk officer when he was the ambassador. I think she has lots of stories to tell about how pro-Moroccan he was. And then after Ussery, wasn't our ambassador Freck Vreeland? I think so. When I was the Moroccan desk officer, he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for North African Affairs, and I think he went from that job to Rabat. One reason he was in that job was to prepare himself to go to Morocco where he already owned a villa in Marrakech. In fact, I think he lives there now and that he retired in Morocco. He's quite a character.

Q: Did you have any economic problems that came across your desk? I mean problems sales or anything like that?

CLARK: Not that I recall.

Q: Did the French have pretty good entrée in Morocco?

CLARK: Yes. Still do. I mean the Moroccan royal family is still very Francophile.

Q: I mean, did we find ourselves, would you say, almost in competition with the French?

CLARK: At that time I think European relations with Morocco were dominated by France. I just think there's a much closer connection between Morocco and any other Western country, but I don't recall any particular conflict where American interests ran afoul of French interests or something.

Q: Well, you were in North African affairs until what, '91?

CLARK: Yes, until '91.

Q: Then what?

CLARK: Then I was informed that I was not going to get promoted.

Q: Ah-ha.

CLARK: And so I left AFN and went to the Board of Examiners for my final year or so.

Q: How did you find the BEX? It had various ways of operating. How was it operating when you were there?

CLARK: Well, when I was there, if you'd passed the written exam, which was fifty percent English expression and so forth, you then took a day-long oral exam which still had a demarche exercise and then three hypothetical questions. Then in the afternoon you had a group session in which everyone was given a project to present. During the session the group had to negotiate among themselves the amount of funding each project deserved. That's been considerably altered now, I guess, because of BEX's peculiar way of looking at the results and deciding that something's wrong with the test if it doesn't produce the desired mix of candidates. We were frequently being assembled to go over questions that showed a marked difference in the scores by minority and non-minority candidates or by gender. BEX was always trying to figure out what it was about certain questions that made a difference, and I don't recall in any instance that anyone could ever figure out why a certain question did well, so to speak, among white males and not among minorities.

Q: Well, the problem at the time was, I take it, that too many white males were passing and not enough women or minorities were passing.

CLARK: I'm not sure there were too many white males passing. And a lot of women passed. I personally found that women as a rule were better at inter-personal interchange when presenting a demarche. I thought often that women did it better, in a way less likely

to cause hostility or whatever on the part of the person receiving the demarche. I don't think the problem was the number of women passing the test. I think the big problem was getting more Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Latinos to take the test and pass. This problem was very peculiar. I remember going, for instance, to San Francisco Los Angeles and expecting that we would test a lot of minorities. But it didn't work out that way. Relatively few made it to the oral exam and very few passed.

Q: Was this one of those things everybody was trying to analyze and figure out why this happened?

CLARK: Yes. What was the problem? You kept wondering why they didn't do better, because they were obviously sharp.

Q: Yes, or they wouldn't have passed the written.

CLARK: Right.. But, again generalizing, I found that African-Americans often did better in some of these oral exams than Asian-Americans did. And out of all the candidates, I think we only had one American-Indian. It was amazing how few there were to examine from these groups. And why they did seemed often to do worse than whites or African-Americans, I don't know.

Q: Well, did you ever feel any pressure to say 'You've got to pass so many…'

CLARK: No. No. We were always exhorted to do our best to find minority candidates, but never was anyone, as far as I know, pushed to pass someone because they were a minority. Though I must say, I think there was a sort of latent hope among examiners that minority candidates would do well, and that if one showed promise you were sort of thinking, "Come on. You can do it."

Q: I was one of the Board of Examiners back in '75, '76. And we were doing the same thing, you know. Nobody was saying you have to pass minorities but we all knew we should if we possibly could. I mean, in a way one couldn't help but root a bit for the minority candidates.

CLARK: Sort of like you're rooting for them deep inside. But I don't think it changed your grading, unless possibly it was sort fifty/fifty. Then you might give them the benefit of the doubt.

Q: How did you find your colleagues? Was it interesting?

CLARK: I loved it. I mean, I wish in a way I'd done it earlier in my career, because it taught me an awful lot about presenting demarches and so forth. In my career, I sort of just did it, but I think after watching all these people do it you notice what sorts of things work better. And in the group exercise you see the importance of speaking up even if you don't have particularly a lot to say. Some candidates were able to do that very well, and it

was interesting to watch how people make a favorable or negative impression on others by what they say or don't say.

Q: Did you have problems with, say, candidates speaking up? (End of tape)

-with, we brought a group in to negotiate, these people being tested. Was somebody just trying to dominate the whole thing, I mean did the group seem to, you know, drag the person down or something?

CLARK: No, not usually. Once in awhile someone would sort of take over the discussion, but I don't think it was anything exceptional. I have to tell you one amusing incident. As you know, in the morning one of the examiners has to brief the candidates taking the exam on what they should expect. One morning I mentioned that in the afternoon they would have to negotiate the funding for various projects in a group session. And I said something like, "This is not the time to be silent, even though it's after lunch. You should participate actively." Well, in that afternoon session, my words were taken to heart. The session that afternoon was so lively that I remember the other examiners saying afterwards, "What was the matter? Everyone was so wired or something." I remember sitting there in the room sort of chuckling to myself because everyone was talking up. Usually you in a group like that some are pretty quiet and others participate actively, but in this case all eight people were pushing their projects as hard as they could.

Q: What was your impression of the people who were passing? Did you feel we were getting a pretty good group of people? How did you feel?

CLARK: I don't know. It's very hard to judge people and tell what they're going to be like as officers, you know. You look at their records and their grades and so forth, and they all look like bright people, though I have to say there's some grade inflation that makes some of these transcripts very misleading. When I graduated from college in '62, you didn't have classes with 60% getting A's. You look at these transcripts today and they look just brilliant; then you see their essays and the essays just aren't that well written. Or some of them just don't seem to shine as much in the oral sessions as you think they would from their biographic information.. But I think they were all certainly good.. I was never worried about any that we passed. Some very quickly showed another side though. After the exam was over they would start to ask questions that made you wonder if they were even going to enter the Foreign Service, or if they did, whether you'd want them on your staff. Especially the mid-level career types coming in from other agencies who usually did better than, say, students because they'd already had government experience. They often did really well in the exams but they were sort of inflexible about under what conditions they would enter the Foreign Service. I don't know what the system is now, but back then you couldn't guarantee what cone a candidate would get, and so they would say, "I don't want to be a consular officer. I want to know that I'm going to be an economic officer specializing in banking and finance, etc." That sort of worried me a little.

Q: Well, you retired when?

CLARK: '93. I retired a little early because my wife had been made Chief of Station in Brussels. I retired in order to go abroad with her.

Q: So how did that work out? Being a retired spouse.

CLARK: That's the greatest Foreign Service job you could have. I had served in Brussels before, so when I went back I was at home. I knew Brussels well and could get around very easily since I already spoke French. It was wonderful, because I didn't have to go into the office. I would go down to meet her for lunches or go with her to receptions and dinners but I didn't have to write any reports.

Q: No efficiency reports.

CLARK: No efficiency reports. I highly recommend that life.

Q: Where else did you serve?

CLARK: After that? Well, she retired. Unfortunately she envied my not having to go into the office so much that she retired early. But part of that was because she and a lot of people in the Agency of her rank didn't like the head of the agency and his policies.

Q: Who was that?

CLARK: Deutch. John Deutch, who had been the Deputy Secretary of Defense before becoming the Director of Central Intelligence, wanted to become a Secretary of Defense with a greatly expanded responsibility for intelligence. So he did two things. While at CIA he worked to move CIA's reconnaissance and intelligence activities over to Defense, where they still are, I think, consolidated under some sort of Defense umbrella. And then he stripped the Directorate of Operations of its top officers and downplayed its traditional role, arguing that human intelligence was no longer so important in this high tech age. He thought that everything you need to know you could get from intercepts and by technical means. As a result, senior officers like my wife left in droves and morale plummeted. They just saw no future in being an intelligence officer of the type they'd been for their entire career.

Q: Well, what have you done since you both retired?

CLARK: Well, when we retired we moved to Leesburg and found it was too far from Washington. My wife has become an enormous Civil War buff, so she spends a lot of her time reading books on the Civil War. We have a whole wall in our house on the Civil War, and she tours around visiting battlefields. I like to read and travel, and we go to movies and see friends passing through Washington. When I retired, I took that retirement course where they practically scared everyone to death with the idea that you

would go insane after you left the Foreign Service with nothing to do. I haven't found that a problem.

Q: No. Well, this is, of course, what I've been doing for the last 17 years now. I've sort of cut out my little corner of things and done interviews. Well, Bruce, that was great. I want to thank you.

End of interview