Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

G. CLAY NETTLES

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INTERVIEW

Q: Clay, it's good to be here with you doing this today. Welcome.

NETTLES: Thank you, glad to be here.

Q: Clay, you entered the Foreign Service at the end of September 1957, after service in the United States Army and a couple of degrees from the University of Alabama. Tell me how you got interested in the Foreign Service in the first place.

NETTLES: I had a cousin who was a secretary in the Foreign Service, and she served in Madrid, and therefore I knew a little about the Foreign Service. When I went to school at the University of Alabama, there were very few people there who really knew much about it, but because of my cousin, I did. I took the Foreign Service examination, and, somewhat to my surprise, I passed it. I passed it my senior year of law school, and although I was planning on practicing law, I thought, well, why not give the Foreign Service a try. If I didn't like it, I would go back home to Alabama and practice law. But instead, 36 years later to the day, I retired from the Foreign Service.

Q: To the day.

NETTLES: To the day.

Q: When you took the Foreign Service written examination, you were in law school at the University of Alabama. Was that after you had done service in the U.S. Army or before?

NETTLES: It was after I was in the Army. I took ROTC, and therefore I had an ROTC commission, and I had an undergraduate degree. Therefore, with the combination of those two, the military would not defer me. So, in the middle of law school, I had to go in the Army. Then I came back and finished law school after the Army.

Q: The Army experience, working for the U.S. government, didn't discourage you from pursuing the Foreign Service?

NETTLES: No, but I was in the Counterintelligence Corps, which was really more similar to a civilian job than the real military. We didn't wear uniforms, for example. Basically, what we did was to run background investigations on people who held top-secret clearances. Other than the initial training period, I spent 18 of my 24 months in Alabama.

Q: When you entered into the Foreign Service in 1957, were there others in your class, or other people you knew who entered in that period, who also had law degrees, or were you thoroughly unique?

NETTLES: No, I suppose the largest number had a background in political science, but there were half as many lawyers, and certainly a fair number of lawyers. I don't recall precisely what the percentage was.

May I add, though, that I never regretted studying law, even though I didn't practice. In fact, I tell people that I think a law background is almost ideal for the Foreign Service,

because, as I'm sure you would agree, Foreign Service officers, although they do specialize, are expected to be generally a little bit of a jack-of-all-trades. That is basically what a law degree is about. It is designed to teach someone to reason logically. Of course, I'm sure you'd agree, that's the ideal qualification for a Foreign Service officer.

Q: It certainly is very important in life, to analyze and logically approach issues. It helps with your reporting and problem-solving in general. Had you actually passed the bar?

NETTLES: When I graduated from the University of Alabama, I was automatically a member of the bar. That's since been changed, but I was a member of the bar because of the mere fact that I graduated.

Q: So you came to Washington to the Foreign Service Institute for the initial orientation course. Did you have some language training, or did you already have a foreign language when you entered?

NETTLES: I had studied French in college, but I really couldn't speak it at all. So I had language training, after the initial orientation.

Q: Then you stayed in Washington for your initial assignment. What were you doing then?

NETTLES: First, I might say that, of my entering class, only three people and those that were off language probation went overseas initially. All the rest of us stayed in Washington. I was assigned to the Bureau of Security, in a section that really should have been part of INR [Intelligence and Research]. What we did was to read documents from other agencies, primarily the FBI, and decide who, if anyone, might be interested in seeing those documents within the State Department. The FBI deals with the Office of Security, so that's why our office was located in that bureau.

Q: So you were essentially screening and reviewing documents to see if they had pertinence to a desk, geographic bureau, or some other part of the State Department.

NETTLES: Yes, perhaps visa, but for the most part, desks.

Q: Probably a lot of the documents you didn't feel had any interest or value.

NETTLES: That partly, and some were quite voluminous, so certainly a desk officer wouldn't have the time to review them. It was a useful function.

Q: Then your first overseas assignment came after you'd been in the service, what, about two and a half, three years?

NETTLES: Yes, two and a half, roughly. For two years in that job at SY and at Language and Orientation.

Q: You were assigned where?

NETTLES: To Tokyo. I was sent there because of my legal background. Article XV of the Treaty of Peace with Japan provided that any Allied property located in Japan (it had to be located in Japan, not, for example, in the Philippines) at the beginning of the war would be returned, and if it couldn't be returned, compensation would be paid. There were over 300 American claims under this clause in the Treaty of Peace. All except 17 were settled, and those that were not settled were sent to this legal commission, composed of one Japanese member, Ambassador Nishimura, a former ambassador to France, and a former member of the Court of International Justice in the Hague; an American member, Lionel Summers, who had entered the State Department under the Wriston Program from the Legal Division; and a neutral member, Judge Salim, a Swedish judge who had served on an international commission in Egypt. I was the legal assistant for the American member, Lionel Summers.

Q: Did Lionel Summers have other responsibilities, or was he there just for this purpose?

NETTLES: He wore two hats. He was the supervising consul general of all of the posts in Japan, including Okinawa.

Q: The consular posts.

NETTLES: Right, and he even had two offices. He had one in the embassy itself, or rather what was known as the Manchesu Biru, the Manchurian building, an annex of the State Department where the consular section was located. Then, for this commission, we had an office in the old Imperial Hotel, which, as you know, was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. I divided my time between the two offices.

Q: I think, in my oral history interview, I said that my first office, when I went to Japan in 1959 as a member of the United States delegation to the GATT Conference, was in the old Imperial Hotel. But I can see I have no particular distinction, because you have the same location for your first office. You say Allied properties; these were private properties, company properties and so on, primarily?

NETTLES: Both. In a few instances, there were claims for an American citizen whose house was destroyed by bombing. But over half of the claims were made by American companies that owned an interest in a Japanese company. For example, one American company owned a percentage, I believe about 20 percent, of Toshiba, and they brought claims for the damage which Toshiba suffered as a result of the war.

Q: You say there were how many unsettled claims, 17?

NETTLES: There were 17 American claims, but there were other Allied claims, also. But the U.S. had the largest number of unsettled claims. We were the first to have a formal commission and have hearings. The legal issues, particularly as far as the companies, were basically the same for the British or the Dutch or others as they were for Americans.

So we worked closely and they were very cooperative, because the legal precedents that would be decided by our commission would be applicable to theirs.

Q: And they would have their own joint commission to take up their claims.

NETTLES: Exactly. But I think, as a result of our claims and the precedents which were established, it wasn't necessary for all of these countries to have a formal commission. I know the French settled all of theirs... I'm not sure about the British and the Dutch. They had the largest number of claims after us.

Q: Now the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty, I think, was concluded in 1952.

NETTLES: I don't recall when it was signed. [Signed in 1951 in San Francisco.]

Q: But sometime well before you got there in 1960. Had the claims commission been working already for some time, or did it start about the time that you got there?

NETTLES: No, it had been working for some time. As I said, there were initially over 300 American claims, and all but these 17, which were referred to the commission, were settled. Basically, those that were not settled fell into two types: one, that the Japanese simply questioned the validity of the claims, or, two, the financial amount of the claim was so large that none of the Japanese negotiators wanted to take the responsibility of reaching a settlement. They preferred that it go to the commission.

Q: Was the commission able then to complete its work to deal with these, basically, two issues--magnitude and ones where there was a dispute about the validity of the claims?

NETTLES: Right. We concluded the commission within six months. This was almost record time for a legal commission of this type. It usually takes much longer. But the Swedish jurist wanted to conclude and go home, and so he put pressure on us to really expedite the work. It was interesting work, and I think the American companies, for the most part, were very pleased with the outcome. They got pretty much what they wanted, with the exception of one American company, which I won't name. All the companies had brought claims, for example, for their buildings which had been destroyed by the Allied bombing raids, or the percentage which they owned. But the one American company filed claims for the profits which they lost when the war contracts were canceled. For example, the contract to manufacture torpedoes.

Q: For Japan?

NETTLES: For Japan. Of course, at the end of the war, in '45, all these contracts were canceled. But this American company filed claims for the profits which they would have made had the contracts been fulfilled to manufacture these armaments. I know you won't be surprised to hear that it was unanimous that this company's claim for their lost profits was denied.

Q: Now if a company was not satisfied with the judgment reached by the claims commission, did it have recourse elsewhere, or a right of appeal to somebody else?

NETTLES: No, there was no right of appeal.

Q: So this was final.

NETTLES: That was final. But I think, on the whole, the claimants were satisfied.

Q: The claims had to be filed by some specific date?

NETTLES: I think so, Ray, but I don't recall. There must have been a cutoff date, but I'm not sure.

Q: So the commission basically finished six months or so after you started.

NETTLES: Right.

Q: You were there for the windup phase.

NETTLES: That's right. I had been told by Personnel in Washington before going out that this would probably last for about a year, and then I would be reassigned to either the embassy in Tokyo or to one of the consulates and work in the consular section. After the completion of this work, I was sent to Yokohama, where I worked for two years as a consular officer.

Q: You initially had been in Tokyo for six months or so, and then you were reassigned to Yokohama. Did you move, or did you commute?

NETTLES: I moved.

Q: It's not a very great distance between the two cities.

NETTLES: No, but as I'm sure you recall, one could have commuted every day. The train service was quite efficient; it was much more efficient than driving. When I made the move, I just simply drove my car down to Yokohama and moved into furnished quarters. There were, I believe, five consular officers, so every fifth week, you were the duty officer, which meant that you were on call and had to come in whenever there was an emergency or a night-act cable, for example. You couldn't very well have commuted from Tokyo to come in to read a night-act cable, so it was essential that we live in the Yokohama district.

Q: As you remember, I was detailed to Yokohama the last three months I was in Japan. I commuted, because it was very near the end of my assignment. As you were talking about the duty-officer roster, I don't quite remember whether I was on that or not on that. In any event, it would have been hard to respond in the middle of the night or on a weekend

from Tokyo, although I guess it would have been possible, because there are trains just about all the time.

NETTLES: Well, no, I believe the last one stopped at midnight.

Q: But you did consular work. You did the usual range of visas and American-citizen protection, and so on.

NETTLES: Yes, on a rotational program, which meant, for example, that I was visa officer for approximately 10 months; administrative officer for about six months; and protection and welfare, which included shipping, for perhaps 10 months (which may not add up exactly, but gives an indication). It was good training. You were the only visa officer, and yet, as you just mentioned, it was close to Tokyo, so if you really got into a difficult thing, you could always pick up the phone and call an expert who had done this for a long time and ask a question. You were on your own, but yet you could get assistance very easily. It was interesting, though, that very quickly, although I was a junior officer, I became the expert in shipping, because Yokohama was by far the busiest port for American ships (and by `ships' I'm speaking of merchant ships) in all of the Far East. At other ports, Fukuoka, for example, I remember when they had an occasional American ship come there with some problem, they would call me and ask for my advice, because I had by far the most experience of anyone in Japan at that time.

Q: I think that American consular officers had more responsibilities with regard to American shipping in that period than perhaps they do today. Of course, there isn't as much American merchant shipping on the seas. But what were some of the particular responsibilities that you had for American ships that came in to Yokohama? I guess some actually went up to Tokyo to dock, but Yokohama was the post on Tokyo Bay that, I think, did all the shipping work for American ships.

NETTLES: All the shipping work, that's right. Yokohama was normally the first and the last port of call for American merchant ships going to the Far East. Because of the law and insurance, particularly insurance, it is important to stop by the consular section before going home and file what was known as a note of protest. This was not a U.S. government requirement; it was done strictly for insurance. Executing this note of protest, which contained wording about rough and stormy weather (it always had that phrase), protected the company in the event of an insurance claim. Now I don't know the details, but I know that was the reason for this, and why almost all American ships docked there. Also, they could get from the consulate in Yokohama a crew-list visa if the American ship had foreign nationals on it. Individual visas were not required if it had one crew-list visa. Almost every ship docked for those two things.

Then, in addition, there were other reasons. For example, only an American consul could discharge a seaman. The ship's captain could not. The law (and it was written in the law) simply said (I could almost quote it), "Occasionally, a consul may be called upon to discharge a seaman for cause. This should not be done lightly." Fortunately, I was only called upon once to discharge a seaman for cause.

Q: At the request of the captain.
NETTLES: That's right. It was quite an interesting situation. The ship was located at Shimizu, a port about 100 miles south of Yokohama. I had to go down there and then go aboard the ship and conduct a hearing. The facts of the case were that, the night before, the seaman had been in a bar, and, like Burt Lancaster in those kinds of movies, broke off a beer bottle and cut up the face of the first mate pretty badly with the broken bottle. So the captain wanted to have him discharged. The union representative had sort of ambivalent feelings. They felt like they had to protect the seaman. On the other hand, I said, "Would you really want to serve with this guy on the way back to the U.S.? Aren't you afraid that he might do the same thing again?" This union representative agreed that, yes, he just might. So it all wound up they were happy with my decision to discharge him. Then I had to take the seaman back to Yokohama with me. He didn't speak any Japanese, and I did, so he was on his good behavior all the way back to Yokohama.

Q: Then what did you do when you got him back to Yokohama, put him on a flight home?

NETTLES: The agent for the company was responsible to get him back. So he went into the detention center. The detention center was where seamen who'd missed their ship, for one reason or another, would be held until either they were flown back or placed on another ship. But, again, it was the agent's responsibility to take care of the seaman. But many a week I would get a call from some seaman saying, "I want to speak to the American consul."

I would say, "Well, I'm the vice consul. What can I do for you?"

He'd say, "All I did was miss my ship, and they've got me here in jail."

Then I would say, "Well, you're not in jail. You're in detention center."

The seaman would say, "Well, it's got bars on the windows. I can't leave."
They had a point, but I would say, "No, if you had seen a Japanese jail, the conditions wouldn't be quite as good as the detention center, and certainly the food wouldn't be nearly as good."

But, in any event, I worked closely with the agents, and we got them out as quickly as we could.

Q: The American consulate in Yokohama is now closed, I believe, and has been for some years. Can you sort of reflect, Clay, about the role that the consulate played, not only in terms of shipping and visas in the port city of Yokohama, but more generally in its consular district? Did you travel quite a bit? You mentioned going to Shimizu. Or was that what the consul general himself would do?

NETTLES: The consul general did, and he was basically just showing the flag. The rest of us did occasionally, but not that much. We traveled a lot, of course, unofficially.

Japan, as I'm sure you would agree, has many attractions, and it was always fun to get out. Despite its reputation, basic Japanese is not difficult at all to learn. Japanese is very difficult to speak fluently. But with basic Japanese, which one could acquire easily, you could enjoy traveling where little English was spoken.

Q: You did not have formal language training, but you were able to take some part time?

NETTLES: Early morning language.

Q: In Tokyo?

NETTLES: Yes, and then I continued in Yokohama.

Q: The Foreign Service Institute's Japanese-language school was in Tokyo, not in Yokohama at that time.

NETTLES: At that time. Later, when the consulate was closed, our consular functions shifted to Tokyo.

Q: The replica of the White House, the original consulate building, I think went back before the Second World War.

NETTLES: Yes, it did. Yokohama was 80 percent destroyed by bombing, but there was a block right on the water that survived. That included the American consulate; a British bank; a British company, Butterfield and Squire; and the Yokohama Grand Hotel, a truly grand hotel. These were all on one long block.

Q: There was a Foreign Service national employee at the consulate in Yokohama named Yamada, if memory serves me correctly, and I believe he was closely associated with U. Alexis Johnson. Do you remember that story?

NETTLES: Yes, I do remember very well. Mr. Yamada was in Mukden, Manchuria, working at the American consulate when war broke out. According to U. Alexis Johnson, he saved his life by preventing a Japanese mob from lynching U. Alexis Johnson. Ambassador Johnson was very, very grateful. Every time he went to the Far East (and when I was there, that was at least twice a year, because he was ambassador to Thailand at the time), he would come to Yokohama to see Mr. Yamada.

Q: There's one other part that I think is kind of interesting. That is, when Johnson came back to Japan with General MacArthur in 1945 to be, I think, his political advisor (and I think he eventually was the consul general in Yokohama, all this well before the peace treaty and before the embassy was reestablished), he broadcast on the Armed Forces radio that he was looking for Yamada-san, and would he please come, that Alexis Johnson was looking for him. He came and was rehired by Johnson after the war, out of gratitude for what he had done in Mukden at the beginning of the war.

NETTLES: That's very interesting. I didn't know that myself. Certainly Mr. Yamada deserves great praise for what he did in saving U. Alexis Johnson's life.

U. Alexis Johnson not only came to Yokohama often, but occasionally Mrs. Johnson would come, too. As you know, Mrs. Johnson had the reputation, as did so many of the top senior wives of that time, of being difficult. As you said, at one time he had served as consul general in Yokohama. So Mrs. Johnson, when she came to Yokohama, would go to the consul general's residence and rearrange the furniture the way it had been when she was there. Of course, when she left, the consul general's wife put it back the way she wanted it.

Q: Okay, is there anything else we should say about your assignment in Japan?

NETTLES: No, except that it was a very good initial post. The legal work was interesting, and because of the unique position, I was included in a lot of high-level functions that I wouldn't have been otherwise as a very junior officer. So that was interesting. Also, one is expected to have experience in every area of the Foreign Service. Yokohama was ideal for that.

Q: It was also ideal that management at the post recognized the importance of location, and scheduled you to do visa work, shipping work, and administrative work.

NETTLES: That's right. I should add, too, that we had the ideal consul general, who was there to support you and to guide you, but he didn't try to micromanage.

Q: I think there was one officer, maybe his deputy, who was very experienced at consular work.

NETTLES: Particularly shipping and seamen, Frances Taylor, that is correct. For years, she had served within the State Department in the Shipping Bureau.

Q: Whatever one would say about shipping work, Yokohama was a very important place where that was done. Probably one of the five most important in the world.

NETTLES: Yes, I believe it was considered the second most important. Only Rotterdam was more important at that time; more important in the sense of American ships that called there.

Q: Partly because of the nature of the Far East at that time, there probably were more problems with seamen related to shipping than perhaps there were in the ships going to Rotterdam.

NETTLES: Well, I would think so, simply because the voyages were longer, and that increased the amount of time in which problems could arise. Then also there were quite a few American ships, and when I say American, of course, we're talking about ships that were under its American flag, merchant ships. But that included tankers, and we had a

number of tankers that made periodic trips between the Persian Gulf and Japan. Those seamen would serve normally for six months at a time, and then they'd be flown back to the States. Of course, six months is a fairly long time, so quite a few problems could arise during that period.

Q: Where you wouldn't come anywhere close to the United States and American ports. You'd keep shuttling back and forth.

NETTLES: Correct, correct. These tankers.

Q: Where did you go after Japan?

NETTLES: I came back to the States, studied Spanish, and then I went to Venezuela.

Q: This was the embassy in Caracas. What was your assignment there?

NETTLES: I was an economic/commercial officer. I had very little training in economics, but I liked the work. I tried to assist American businessmen and wrote commercial reports. I remember specifically doing a detailed study of the chemical industry as it existed in Venezuela, which received a compliment from the Department of Commerce as being very useful for potential American investors. Venezuela at that time was a very rich country and a big market for U.S. goods and services. A lot of American companies had investments there, and others were considering doing so.

Q: Were you primarily doing kind of general reporting, like on the chemical industry? Or were you doing something specific--American investors, or exporters, with world trade directory reports, or trade opportunities, things like that?

NETTLES: ...never... that. The world trade directory reports were basically done by a very efficient local..., a German national who had been with the embassy for many years, and he did that full time. We did, of course, assist American investors if we could, but we did mostly reporting.

Q: Was your entire assignment there pretty much doing this one economic/commercial function? Or did you move around?

NETTLES: No, it was entirely tied into that kind of commercial section.
It was a difficult period for American companies, as you may recall, because after Castro came to power in Cuba, his lieutenants tried very hard to destabilize the Venezuelan government. I remember there were quite a few attacks on American companies. I remember once looking out of my office window, which was up there on a high floor in the embassy, and seeing three different American companies that were going up in flames, having been bombed or sabotaged by leftist guerrillas. But the Venezuelan government put it down. We also had several Americans who were kidnapped by the leftists during this period. We even had an SOP (standard operating procedure) for what to do when an American was kidnapped, even down to how to have a press conference

when the American was released. And, fortunately, all of them were released, when I was in Venezuela, none were harmed.

Q: These were mostly American business people who were taken hostage and eventually released?

NETTLES: Yes. I believe only one American official was kidnapped, but only held for a very brief period. I remember once, though, a number of guerrillas entered the house of the political counselor. But the only people that were there were his wife and the maid, and they were just tied up, they weren't held captive, and they were released in a few hours.

Q: Did you feel under threat?

NETTLES: No, we didn't. But that's because no one had actually been harmed. As I said, I was a junior officer at the time, and it was rather exciting. It was an interesting time to be in Venezuela.

Q: We didn't really talk about this when you were in Japan, but when you were in Tokyo, there was some excitement, too, with demonstrations.

NETTLES: Correct, particularly, the visit which Eisenhower had scheduled. And it was because the demonstrations became so large that his visit was called off. Unfortunately, I think Ambassador MacArthur (the nephew of the general) did not realize that the visit was going to coincide with the renewal of the security treaty. Eisenhower's visit by itself I don't believe would have been as objectionable, but since it coincided with the renewal of the security treaty, it became highly political to the leftists within Japan. And Ambassador MacArthur should have realized that, in my opinion.

Q: The guerrillas that were causing trouble in Caracas at the time you were there were Cuban-supported, but they were Venezuelan?

NETTLES: There may have been a few foreign nationals that were involved. There was supposedly one Russian. A number had been trained in East European countries, but they were basically Venezuelans.

Q: Did the U.S. government get involved in trying to support the government of Venezuela to put down this...?

NETTLES: No, no, not to my knowledge.

Q: It was their problem, and they dealt with it.

NETTLES: Well, I'm sure that had they requested any particular assistance, we would have certainly considered it and probably complied. Although, as I said, a number of American companies were destroyed, there were never whole sections of the country that

were controlled by the leftists. It was mostly an urban problem. And the government, within a relatively short period, managed to get the situation under control.

But during that period, the leftists did succeed in planting a bomb in the U.S. embassy. It was somewhat amusing. The embassy itself was a seven-story building, very modern, with a lot of glass. And we had intelligence that the leftists were going to place a bomb in the men's room of the embassy. So they closed all of the men's rooms except on the seventh floor, the top floor. The Marine guard, of course, was supposed to search everyone when they entered the building. But somehow the terrorist came in and saw the sign that the men's rooms were closed, and go to the seventh floor. So, evidently, the terrorist just took the elevator, or walked seven floors, to the seventh floor, placed his bomb in the men's room, blew a huge, gaping hole in the side of the building and blew out most of the windows. But miraculously, no one was hurt. The terrorist managed to do all of that and escape.

Q: Was your office on the seventh floor?

NETTLES: No, it was on the fifth floor, I believe. That happened shortly after I left. I was not there when that happened.

Q: You feel that the work that you did was, in fact, helpful to American exporters, American investors? You were commended by the Department of Commerce. But people would visit, and you would have dialogue with them. You felt that you were helpful to them, I assume.

NETTLES: I think so. But I must admit, at that time, I did mostly reports. I didn't work that closely with American businessmen. Later, I did, in other posts, but not in Venezuela. The American businessmen there tended to deal more with the consul general rather than me. I did mostly economic reporting and commercial reporting. But I do think the reports were helpful.

Q: They tended to deal with the economic counselor?

NETTLES: They tended to.

Q: You said consul general.

NETTLES: I'm sorry, the economic counselor.

Q: How many people, roughly, were in the section? Several other officers?

NETTLES: Yes, there was one person who specialized in the financial sector, mostly banking. And one officer strictly for petroleum; he was an expert in that.

Q: And that was you?

NETTLES: No, it was a relatively senior officer. I helped him some. I did more of the analytical reporting, whereas he worked on the day-to-day problems of the petroleum countries. And then there were two other junior officers who did basic economic reporting. Perhaps now, in looking back, we could have done the same amount of work with maybe one less officer. But it was a training place, too, for junior officers.

Q: Especially since you, as you said, had not had any kind of economic/commercial experience or training before you went there.

NETTLES: That's correct.

Q: Well, you had the language training.

NETTLES: That's right.

Q: Okay, so you've been in Japan, in Venezuela. Where did you go after Caracas?

NETTLES: Well, as you may know, I was only in Venezuela for 15 months. I arrived at the embassy early one Monday morning, after a long weekend when I'd been at the beach, and our Personnel officer, who was a sweet lady, came down, practically in tears, saying, "Clay, I'm so sorry." She had a cable in her hands. My father was in ill health; it immediately came to mind that something had happened to him. But, no, the cable simply said that I had to report to Washington within 10 days for Vietnamese language and area training. Frankly, I was not all that unhappy about it, but I would never have volunteered to go to Vietnam. I was in the first group of Foreign Service officers to be specifically selected to be trained in language and detailed to AID in Vietnam.

I was told later, by Personnel in Washington, that this came about when the head of AID and the Secretary of State were both in Zaire. The head of AID told the Secretary of State that AID had just been given permission by Diem, the ruler of Vietnam, to send people to the field. For years, Vietnam, under Diem, would not permit AID to send people out in the provinces. So the head of AID told the Secretary of State, you have your people, you know what their background is, you know if they're language proficient, you know exactly what their qualifications are. Can you loan us some officers until we can select and train them in Vietnamese and other duties? The Secretary of State agreed. Word reached Personnel on Wednesday. They immediately established certain criteria, three of which were mandatory, which were: age, you couldn't be over a certain age at that time, and had to be single, and you had to have a fairly high language aptitude. Others criteria desirable, but not mandatory, such as prior military service. In any event, Personnel within State came up with 300 files. They went over these files during the weekend, and on Monday morning, they sent out cables to various posts, and 30 of us were selected.

Q: Okay, you were describing, Clay, how it came to be that 30 State Department Foreign Service officers got rather abrupt orders to report to Washington for Vietnamese language and area training. This conversation between the AID director and the Secretary of State took place in Zaire?

NETTLES: They were both there for some occasion. I don't know what that occasion was. But it did take place in Zaire.

I might add, too, that we, the Foreign Service officers, had no option. In fact, there was one other officer who was selected for this program who was serving in Venezuela who received orders, too. I remember Personnel in Washington called the embassy in Caracas to say that they had heard that this officer was unhappy about the assignment. Personnel said, "Should he submit his direct resignation, it will be accepted." He did, and it was. None of us, I think, that were in my class were that unhappy about going, although none of us had volunteered for it. And morale was good. What did irritate us, though, was that we in State had no option about going to Vietnam, whereas, at that time, AID employees did have an option. And Bell, the head of AID, apparently did not realize this, because when he addressed our entering class, he congratulated us on our choice. Well, we had no choice about it at all, and it irritated us that he didn't know that.

Q: Do you know how many others resigned, as opposed to being willing to go into this program? You mentioned the one in Caracas.

NETTLES: He was the only one of whom I had personal knowledge. Incidentally, that officer was at the consulate at Puerto La Cruz, which has since been closed.

Q: So this was about 1964 or early '65 when this happened.

NETTLES: It was '64, because it was a year of language and area training.

Q: The Vietnamese War was certainly not as controversial domestically within the United States as it became a few years later. Was this a factor, do you think, in the willingness of the 30 to go for this assignment, that they perhaps didn't anticipate that it was going to become so controversial? Or was that a factor at all one way or the other?

NETTLES: It's hard to say. Of course, we did not send combat troops into Vietnam until June of '65, so therefore the number of casualties had been very few. The program really became controversial within the U.S. after American casualties mounted. And that only really started in the second half of '65.

Q: Let's go back to talk a little bit about the training that you had. You say it was roughly a year. Was that mostly in language study, or a combination?

NETTLES: A combination of both. Mostly language. But they even sent our group to Fort Bragg for six weeks to take the same course, a refresher course, that they were giving to U.S. military officers who were going out as advisors to Vietnamese units. We were not exactly looking forward to it, but to our surprise, we rather enjoyed it. Initially, when we arrived at Fort Bragg, the 30 of us were known as the civilian company. We did all the training that the military officers did. We were all young and relatively junior, and we identified with the more junior officers in the military, mostly the captains. But to our

surprise, we weren't accepted by them as well as we were by the senior officers. Most of the junior offices seemed to think, well, what are these civilians doing here?

But the ice was broken. After about a week, we had a day of survival training. And one of the members of our class, Desaix Anderson, who later had a very distinguished career, overslept. So he followed the bus in his Jaguar convertible (maybe that was another reason why the military didn't accept us). In any event, at noontime, every fourth person was given a live chicken and some potatoes and onions, with the directions, "Here's lunch. Cook it and eat it." Well, Steve Ledogar, who had a very distinguished career in the State Department, is also an excellent cook. By the time we got back with the wine, the chicken was all ready. Steve knew how to cook the chicken. He had them cut it into small pieces and make shish kabob out of it. All the military people tried to roast their chickens whole, and, of course, that takes hours. Desaix and I drove into town and bought a case of chilled white wine. So we had delicious chicken with white wine, which we served to all of the military. That broke the ice. After that, we were completely accepted by the American military officers.

Q: You shared your rations.

NETTLES: That's right.

Q: Also, the training at Fort Bragg was, of course, Special Forces or Green Beret. That wasn't the training?

NETTLES: No, they were all Army officers who were going to be detailed to Vietnamese army units as advisors. The Special Forces were completely separate from us. I should add that we were the first group to be specifically trained to be detailed to AID. And although we rather enjoyed this program, in our critique, we recommended that they not send any more, because we really didn't think it would be relevant to our work in Vietnam. And so I believe only one other AID Foreign Service class was sent to Fort Bragg for training.

Incidentally, as I'm sure you know, although this program of detailing Foreign Service officers to AID in Vietnam was supposed to be temporary, it was continued up until the very end.

Q: Of the 30 in this first class, all stayed with the program until you actually went to Vietnam, or were there some dropouts along the way in training?

NETTLES: Yes, there were five dropouts. It was because FSI had unrealistic expectations of what you could accomplish in the language training program. After the course was about half over, five people were summarily dropped from the program. I remember the head of the language program burst into the room, pointed at four or five people, and said, "You, you, you, and you, pick up your books and get out. You're through!" He accused the people of malingering. I knew that was not true. And we were very much afraid that it would hurt their careers. Frank Wisner, who later had a very

distinguished career serving as ambassador to Zambia, Egypt, and India, was in our group. Frank's father had been a very senior officer in the CIA, and he knew the establishment a little better than we did. So Frank requested a visit with one of the senior people within State. He and a group of us called upon this senior official to protest the treatment that these officers had received. We were concerned that it might hurt their careers. I must say that the people within State to whom we talked were very responsive, and I do not believe that the careers of these people were adversely affected.

Q: Those four or five people didn't come back into the Vietnamese program?

NETTLES: One later did. He was the type of person who wanted to prove that he could do it. And he did.

Q: Later on.

NETTLES: But he simply did not have a high language aptitude. Almost 95 percent of people can learn a language if you work hard, but some people can learn it much easier than others, depending on their aptitude. But with the exception of a very few people, it still takes a lot of hard work to learn the language.

Q: You said that all of you were assigned to this program rather abruptly on pretty short notice, 10 days or something. Was the training program already in being, or did that have to be built up very quickly as well?

NETTLES: No, it was not. We were the first group. That's why, for example, they took off some of the pressure on the language training, and also why they stopped sending people to Fort Bragg. But the training itself continued, in a modified form, right up until the very end of our involvement in Vietnam.

Q: Was this, at the time you were there, called the Vietnam Training Center already? I know, later on, it had that name.

NETTLES: No, it was just simply part of FSI, which at that time was located in the old Arlington Towers.

Q: So after you finished all this training, language and Fort Bragg and others, did you do much training with AID as such?

NETTLES: No, not at all. Oh, perhaps we had a day or so, but just a minimum amount with AID.

Q: So you went to Vietnam, and you went right out to the provinces, or did you spend some time in Saigon?

NETTLES: I spent three days in Saigon. I was the only one in our group that had been to Saigon before. When I was in Japan, I took a vacation and went to Saigon. A group of us

from my class had arranged a meeting at a very good restaurant I remembered. We had a really magnificent dinner. At that time, it was the most expensive dinner I remember that I'd ever had. But all of us were quite happy to pay it, because we didn't know where we were going exactly or what we would be doing.

Q: So all during this training period, you were the expert on Vietnam; you had been to Saigon. You were the only one.

NETTLES: I'd only been to Saigon for two or three days, but at least I had been there.

The very first night I was in Saigon when I came back, I was invited to a big cocktail party given by the admin. counselor. At this party, I was talking to an officer from the political section of the embassy, and he asked what I was doing. I said, "Well, I'm on detail to AID, and I'm going to be assigned to II Corps." As you know, there were four divisions, known as corps, in Vietnam. II Corps was basically the central part.

And the political officer said, "That's too bad. We expect II Corps to fall within a few weeks, and we'll probably lose a few people."

Well, that was my introduction. The situation, especially in the highlands, was desperate at that time. Someone compared the situation to a poker game in which one side had won, meaning the Viet Cong, but before they could pick up the chips that were lying there on the table, we changed the rules of the game by sending in combat troops. It was so bad that gasoline that was sent to Pleiku, one of the big U.S. bases in the highlands, had to go through Viet Cong roadblocks, and we had to pay a tax on American military fuel to get to go through the roadblocks.

Q: To the Viet Cong.

NETTLES: They had to pay a tax to the Viet Cong at the Viet Cong roadblocks. Now, of course, it was paid by Vietnamese contractors, the U.S. military didn't directly pay the tax, but indirectly they did. I arrived in July of '65, and the first U.S. troops arrived there in June, just a few weeks before I did. They, for the most part, were in I Corps, which was the extreme northern part, and then later they came further south and west. I was assigned to Lam Dung Province, which is right in the center of the highlands. There were never any U.S. combat troops there, only advisors, while I was in Lan Dung.

Q: In the period that you were there, or ever?

NETTLES: There could have been some later. During the period I was there, there were never any U.S. combat troops other than advisors. I was in charge of the AID program, as I said. Later, they consolidated the various American groups in the field. The USIS (USIA officer today) might have responsibility for two or, in my case, even three provinces, and there would be a resident CIA officer. Of course, the military was by far the largest. They had about 30 advisors within the provincial capital where I was. All of us were separate but equal. Later, USIS, AID, CIA, and the military were combined and

were known as MACV. Usually, the senior American military advisor would be the MACV head in the province, but occasionally, it would be an AID officer. But they were all separate when I was there.

Q: So that meant, when you were there as the AID representative in the province, you would report to Saigon?

NETTLES: No, I would report to Na Trang, which was the headquarters for AID within II Corps, and then they would report to Saigon.

Q: And you also had an advisory liaison responsibility with the provincial governor?

NETTLES: Yes, but also with every division of the provincial government, such as education, agriculture, and rural development. We even had a program, Chu Huo, to encourage Viet Cong to defect. Now AID provided support for most of these Vietnamese government agencies. A hundred percent of the budget, for example, for Chu Huo programs came from AID, but a relatively small percentage of the support for the educational bureau was AID. For the most part, the support was in kind rather than in cash. For example, we would provide bags of cement or roofing materials or bulgur, which is a type of wheat.

Q: And your job was to facilitate all of this flow and to deal with problems.

NETTLES: That's right, and constantly planning for what was to be done the next year. We would work very closely with the division chief to see that the programs were effective and to see that the material was used properly.

When I arrived in Lam Dung Province, the very first night, I was invited to a party given for the head of U.S. military, who was leaving. He commented, "Tomorrow, I'm going back to the States. People will ask me about the war in Vietnam. But all I can tell them is that there are 52 provinces. And I can only tell them a little about the war in Lam Dung Province."

And that was very true. My experience the entire 18 months in Vietnam was in Lam Dung Province. And Lam Dung was not typical. For one thing, two thirds of the people there were refugees who had come from North Vietnam in 1954, at the time of the partition of Vietnam, and were staunchly anti-Communist. They were very receptive to what we were trying to do.

About a third of the people in the province, though, were Montagnards. And the Montagnards were in various degrees of civilization. Those in Lam Dung Province were very primitive. I would say they weren't even in the Iron Age.

Q: What would you say about the caliber of the Vietnamese officials that you worked with in the province?

NETTLES: I found them, for the most part, very impressive. And one must remember, too, that despite the American casualties, the Vietnamese consistently had far higher casualties. In fact, their casualties were usually about five times what ours were. That tends to be overlooked by a lot of the people.

Q: Were the officials honest? Was there a lot of corruption evident?

NETTLES: I did not see any. I remember, though, we had one province chief who, when he arrived, told me and the senior military advisor, "Gentlemen, you don't have to worry about me. I've been province chief twice before. I've made my money." But I never saw any corruption. That was my job, to run the AID program, and I think we could account for all of the funds and material that we received. And I did not see any misuse.

Sometimes, though, things might require a little explanation. I remember one of the programs that AID sponsored were self-help programs. Usually, these were wells for the small villages, or a small bridge, something like that. But the first thing the province chief wanted to do was to build a tennis court. I protested, and he said, "This is very important. It's not for me. It's for all of the government employees. The roads have been cut. It's impossible for them to get out to go to Saigon anymore, or to go anywhere. I think this will be essential for morale." And he was correct. It was used by the lower- ranking bureaucrats, and it was used properly.

Q: The province chief was not from the local area, he was sent in by Saigon. He was a civilian or a military person?

NETTLES: Military. All the province chiefs, to my knowledge, were military. There may have been some civilians, but I never learned of any.

Q: If you wanted to go to Saigon, how would you get there?

NETTLES: Normally, I would go in on an Australian Caribou, a Canadian-made plane. But the Australian government was involved in the war effort in Vietnam, and basically what they did was to furnish military transports. They provided cargo flights to six provinces in II Corps. It was three days a week, and the last stop was in Lam Dung Province. So it was very easy for me to get into Saigon. Now if I wanted to go back on a military transport, I had to do it in reverse and make five stops before I got there. So I tried to get a flight some other way. The U.S. military had frequent flights in and out, and they were good about letting me know when one might be going directly. I don't believe I ever made that circuit with six stops before getting back. The roads in my area were controlled by the Viet Cong.

Q: The full route.

NETTLES: Yes. AID had its own planes. For example, they would provide one for me to go into their headquarters about once a month, to go over all the accounting. They were very strict about that type of thing.

Q: Did you have to spend a lot of time taking care of visitors who would come to your province?

NETTLES: Well, we did have a number of visitors. Marietta Tree, for example, came through. I had a good cook, and word got out that I was happy to receive visitors and served a good meal... And we had an interesting program. So we got more visitors than we might have otherwise.

Q: How about the Viet Cong? How present were they in the province?

NETTLES: There were very few local Viet Cong, but the composition of the population of the province was not typical of the country as a whole. However, the Ho Chi Minh Trail went through the province, so there were quite a few at the time. We would get reports when large units were going through. We knew that the Viet Cong could always take the province any time they wanted to, but we didn't think they could hold it. But we were constantly aware they were there. For example, my first month, they blew up my house. That makes an impression on you.

Q: Were you in the house?

NETTLES: Yes. And to be awakened by the roof falling on top of you is a little disconcerting. There were three of us in the house. At that time, I was the assistant AID provincial representative. Three of us were sharing the house, the provincial representative, myself, and a summer intern from Berkeley.

Q: The AID representative.

NETTLES: Right. The house was part of an agricultural college, which had been built some years before by AID. There were three bedrooms in the house, across the back of the house. My bedroom was the middle bedroom. The only hotel in town sold rooms by the hour, so we put up any visitors in our guest bedroom, which had a single bed and double-decker bunk. This happened, as I say, my first month. The only north-south road in Vietnam went through the province. And the week before I arrived, the Viet Cong blew up the two main bridges on this road. We had experts from the U.S. military come and look at it, and they said that it was a really professional job. They said, you don't know how difficult it is to blow up a big bridge and do it properly. Well, they obviously had left behind explosives, because a week later, there was an attempt to blow a very small bridge. The bridge wasn't damaged, but two of the people doing it were killed.

Well, some of these leftover explosives they decided they would be used to take out us, the three American civilians. They planted the charge on a tripod against the corner room where the summer intern was staying, perhaps because it had three beds. The other two rooms each had a single bed. We were very lucky, because, as the U.S. military experts told us, they used probably about 20 pounds of plastique, a type of explosive. They put it on a tripod, but they didn't try to shape it, so about 90 percent of it just dissipated. Had

they shaped it, they said there wouldn't have been anything left of the house or of us. As it was, the blast blew out most of the back wall and part of the roof. My bed was in a corner, right below a large picture window, and the picture window was blown over me and blew out the next wall. The wall between my room and the summer intern's was blown out also. The electricity went off at 10 o'clock every night, so I always slept with a flashlight right by my bed, and, miraculously, it was still there. I reached down and found it. Ted, the summer intern, was screaming, because he thought he was on fire from the blast. He could only see red. And I thought his screams were charging VC (Viet Cong). My initial reaction was, this couldn't be happening to me, I'm a Foreign Service officer. Well, Bob, the AID provincial representative, said he was alright. And even though I was concerned about VC, I didn't think I could let Ted, the intern, bleed to death. He said he was hurt. So I snapped on my flashlight for just a second or two, because I knew it would make us a better target for VC that I thought might still be there. Ted said he would never forget that I exclaimed, "My lord, there are no walls!" Ted looked like raw hamburger, from his knees down and his chest up. He had heard a noise and was sitting on the side of his bed when the blast went off. There wasn't a piece of his bed left as large as the palm of my hand. But other than one very bad cut on his instep and a ruptured eardrum, all of his wounds turned out to be superficial. They were puncture wounds, so they weren't bleeding.

So, again, being concerned about VC, I wanted to do something to let them know that we weren't helpless, so I told Ted, just stay there. He had been thrown into a corner when his bed blew into pieces. I was going to throw a grenade, but our grenades had been in the top of the closet, which was all blown out, so those were gone. My carbine at the bottom of the closet was still there, so Bob and I fired a few rounds from our carbines, just to let the VC know we were alive and well.

Then we moved Ted to the living room, the least damaged part of the house, without any light, of course, and put him on the sofa, not realizing that it had been covered with broken glass, and he got a few more cuts from that. Fortunately, not serious, either.

The U.S. military compound, with about 30 military advisors, was about 300 yards away. We thought they'd be over to help us, but they weren't about to leave their compound at night. They came over at daybreak. The blast occurred about 10:45 pm.

Q: Even though they had heard the explosion.

NETTLES: Yes. But they weren't getting out of their compound until the dawn. It was a long night. But it all worked out fine.

I should add that Ted, the summer intern, recovered fully, and went back to Berkeley.

Q: So you had to find a new place to live.

NETTLES: That's right. And taking advantage of the fact that we had been blown up, I told Bob, the provincial representative, that I would arrange for a new house. Bob was a

Mennonite and had previously been in Vietnam under a Mennonite assistance program to the Montagnards. He had had no experience in dealing with U.S. bureaucracy. I hadn't had much, but I had had enough to realize this was an opportunity to find a good house. So I leased the largest house available in town. Only the province chief had a larger house. At the time, AID complained that the rent was rather expensive. But with inflation, it quickly became a bargain. It was quite useful because we had many official visitors and had quite a few visitors, and we had a place where we could put them up. So it all worked out very well.

Q: Did the Viet Cong keep coming back and doing this kind of thing again? Or was that just one episode early that didn't continue?

NETTLES: That was the only instance of that type that happened while I was there. It was unique at that time in Vietnam. Some AID people were killed or captured, but during the period that I was there, they were not singled out. They happened to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, but there were no deliberate, specific attacks on Americans. I believe it stayed that way right up until the Tet Offensive.

Q: In '68.

NETTLES: I'm not certain of that, but I do know, the time that I was there, '65 and '66, I don't think there was any single, specific attack upon American civilians...

Q: You, Clay, said that you were the assistant provincial representative for a while, and then became the representative. How much time did you serve in both those capacities? And how did you happen to become the senior representative? Did you have an assistant at that point, or were you the only one?

NETTLES: I was the assistant for about six months, and then I was provincial representative for a year. I did not have a formal assistant, but instead I had a young lieutenant as my assistant for the second year, a great guy. He was a former football player at the University of Florida, who had majored in agriculture. The U.S. military advisor was rather annoyed that a lieutenant was assigned to report to me rather than to him, so he said, "All right, he's your responsibility completely. You can take care of him logistically." So he lived in this large house that I had. He did a very effective job.

He was a perfect example that although language training is very helpful; it's not essential. He did not have any language training, but had the ability to identify with people and was extremely effective. Of course, he had a Vietnamese assistant.

Later, an 18-man U.S. military unit was sent to the province and reported to me rather than the military advisor. This was part of the MILSAP program of military physicians and assistants. Normally, there were 18 in each unit -- two doctors and about 16 corpsmen.

Q: They were physicians, medical people.

NETTLES: All were medical -- two or three doctors, and the rest corpsmen. In our province (at that time, I think it was unique), we split the MILSAP unit up. We had 12 in the provincial capital, and six in a district capital.

Once a week, I would go to the district capital. AID would provide a helicopter once a week. It was actually two helicopters, because the helicopter for transportation came with another one, which was a gun ship. A gun ship was an armor-plated helicopter that simply was so heavy it couldn't take any passengers or cargo. But they flew together just in case one was forced down, the other could provide cover, or help, possibly even rescue people.

So, once a week, I would go to the district capital.

I would arrive, and the very first thing I would do would be go to a local restaurant, which was run by a Frenchman, who had a Vietnamese wife, and tell him that I would be there for lunch with the people who were traveling with me. He would send his wife to the market to buy whatever was available. You didn't order, because you didn't know what was available, but you knew you would have a good meal.

Then I would go to see the military unit, the MILSAP team, because they were my responsibility.

Then I would begin a tour program with the Vietnamese district chief, who was very good. Unfortunately, the month after I left, he and 43 other people were killed in an ambush.

Then I would have a late lunch. Usually a few French people would be there, and I'd talk to them. When the day was over, I would have talked first to the Americans, then to the Vietnamese, and then to the French. If they were all saying the same thing, I thought, well, perhaps I know what's going on.

Q: Let me ask two questions. First, tell me a little bit more about the MILSAP team that reported to you. What was their function and purpose, to provide medical assistance to you?

NETTLES: No, to the Vietnamese, strictly the Vietnamese.

Q: For public health and vaccinations and that sort of thing?

NETTLES: In this province, the medical facilities were primitive in the extreme and transportation to large cities was difficult.

Q: Basic health care.

NETTLES: Right, for the entire province.

Q: My second question is, you talked about going to this district capital and talking to all these different people, and maybe you had a good feel for what was happening locally. How much of your function, your responsibility was reporting to Saigon or whoever about conditions in the province?

NETTLES: Once a month, each agency in the field would get a joint report. These agencies were the U.S. military, AID (I being the AID representative), CIA, and USIA. Well, USIA's representative had two other provinces and only spent about one week a month in the province, so he obviously couldn't write the report. The CIA representative was good, but he was one of those people who just had a great deal of difficulty writing or drafting. And, as you know, we Foreign Service officers are supposed to be good drafters. If we aren't, we're in trouble. But the military, who had some very capable drafters, would insist that I write the reports, because the provincial U.S. military said, you can send it directly to Saigon. In fact, you must send it directly to Saigon, because we cannot do that. We would have to send it to our headquarters, and they would send it back, because we reported the situation as we saw it, and the situation was pretty grim. The U.S. military told me, "If we say that we've got a problem, then that's an admission that we're not doing our job properly. We cannot write anything negative. However, we can sign off on what you write."

I remember specifically, once, and this was when a unit was ambushed in our province. There were approximately 50 people killed, including a U.S. officer who had been at Fort Bragg with me. They were killed within six kilometers of where I lived. It was an ambush... they were just wiped out, and no Viet Cong were killed. Well, the local U.S. military reported on it, and the U.S. military report came back. Headquarters said, "Look for enemy bodies."

The local U.S. military sent it back again and said, "We looked, and we didn't find any."

And the report came back again from military headquarters, saying, "Look again."

Then the local U.S. military reported that artillery fire and an air strike had probably resulted in at least 150 enemy killed and 200 enemy wounded. This was, of course, strictly fiction.

Q: But it satisfied the higher headquarters?

NETTLES: That's right and, I'm afraid, was indicative of much of the military reporting.

Q: You were there in Lang Dong province about a year and a half? You left in the summer of '65?

NETTLES: No, I arrived in the summer of '65 and I was there for 18 months.

Q: When did you leave there, the end of '66?

NETTLES: Yes.

Q: What was the situation at the time you left as compared to when you arrived? Had it gone downhill steadily?

NETTLES: No, I arrived shortly after the first U.S. combat troops arrived. Had they not arrived, all II Corps would have fallen within a matter of weeks. As I mentioned earlier, that was what I was told upon my initial arrival by someone in the Political Section that they expected II Corps to fall. It was very clear when I left 18 months later that as long as the U.S. troops were there, the country was not about to be taken over by the Communists. The question was what would happen when and if U.S. troops left. The U.S. involvement was apparently a limited relation and the goal being to train the Southern Vietnamese so that they could sustain themselves after we left. Unfortunately, it turned out that they could not.

Q: This happened well after your period there. You went on, as we will hear, to a number of other assignments. Did you ever think about volunteering or asking for another assignment in Vietnam with your language? It sounds like a pretty positive experience that you had there overall.

NETTLES: It was a positive experience. I found the Vietnamese to be a very sympathetic people and I liked them. However, and I give the State Department sent out officers to the field to rate all of us on detail to AID and we got a formal efficiency report. That was toward the end of my 18-month tour. The senior officer who did the report counseled me and said, "I recommend that you do not extend." I was thinking about extending for a year because I enjoyed the work and I thought I was doing a good job, but he said "you are still a junior officer and it would be good experience, but counting the year of training you had, you will have been out two and a half years and you really need more experience in the normal career type work. Later if you want to come back to Vietnam, fine, but you need more experience before that." I took his advice and applied for the Economic Training Program at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. I had enjoyed my economic-commercial assignment in Venezuela, but I knew if I were to work within that field in the State Department, I had to have more training so I took the FSI course which was at that time a six months course. Then I had an assignment in the bureau doing economic reporting in Latin America area. After that I had a year at Harvard studying.

The FSI course plus the year at Harvard gave me the background to specialize in the economic field, which I did for the rest of my career.

Q: Let me ask you one last question about the Vietnam experience before we leave that. The rating officer who came out to evaluate you after you'd been there for a year or so, did that person come from Saigon or from Washington?

NETTLES: I believe from Washington, I'm not certain.

Q: Especially sent out to kind of go around and visit all the provincial areas in Vietnam?

NETTLES: To the best of my recollection, I'm almost certain he came directly from Washington. I was very impressed. He spent a day with me. It was also an opportunity to give Washington an idea of what we were doing in the field.

Q: You were the first group that was sent under this program? Was this called the CORDS Program or was that a name that come later.

NETTLES: It came later.

Q: Perhaps when there was a more coordinated activity in the provinces.

NETTLES: CORDS was the name after all the U.S. government agencies were consolidated which I think was a good idea. I enjoyed being the head of the program, but it didn't make sense to have all agencies acting independently.

Q: I think through this Oral History Program, the economics course at FSI, the university economic training and even an analyst job in the Latin American Bureau has pretty well been covered. Is there anything during that period that you would want to speak about for this purpose or should we go on to your next overseas assignment?

NETTLES: No, I think we've pretty much covered it.

Q: Where did you go after Harvard?

NETTLES: To Beirut in 1970 which I should say was my favorite assignment. I liked the job ok, but as far as a place to live it was my favorite.

Q: Well, part of that was timing, you would agree?

NETTLES: Of course, timing is everything.

Q: You went in 1970 and what sort of work did you do? You were an economic officer?

NETTLES: Yes, and my specific responsibility was petroleum reporting for the entire Middle East. That may sound a little odd, but it was easier to get information in Beirut about what was going on in Saudi Arabia then it was in Saudi Arabia itself. There were a number of consultants - Middle East Economic Review, for example, was based in Beirut. It was a very open society and economy.

Q: You went there about the same time as so-called "Black September" in Amman which led to many Palestinians coming.

NETTLES: I believe that's not quite accurate. There were a lot of Palestinians in

Lebanon, but they were there dating back to the initial fighting in what is Israel today. The "Black September" took place only in Jordan. I had a good friend in the Jordanian embassy in Washington. He went back on home leave while I was in Beirut. He and a friend, a major from the Jordanian army, called at my office in the U.S. embassy. My friend had gone to school at AUB (American University of Beirut). As we were sitting in my office, he said, "Who would have thought only a few years ago that I was outside throwing stones at this very window." I asked my friend, who was on his way back to the States after home leave, "How did you find things in Jordan?" He said there was a much sharper division between the Palestinians in Jordan and the native Jordanians. Then he turned to his friend and said, "I've been away in the States. What do you think?" His friend, the major, said, "Yes, there is going to be a showdown soon and it is going to be bitter, but we will win." My friend was back six weeks later right after Black September for his mother's funeral. Because her son was a diplomat and her husband had been a senior Jordanian official, she was executed by the PLO.

Q: It was certainly a great tragedy, but didn't some Palestinians move into Beirut?

NETTLES: Not at that time. Those that were already there became much more radical. The larger camps were right on the edge of Beirut and, in fact, the largest camp of all was between the airport and Beirut itself. They would frequently block the roads. The Palestinians living there became more radicalized and the PLO became more influential with them, but there was no mass migration from Jordan or other areas into Lebanon.

Q: As I recall the civil war in Beirut began about 1975 which was a few years after you were there. You talk about Beirut as being an ideal place, great living, very cosmopolitan crossroads of the Middle East. Did you see anything like a civil war conflict situation?

NETTLES: When I arrived in Beirut there were tensions and people were apprehensive about the future. First of all, there were all these Palestinians in the country and there were bitter rivalries between essentially religious groups. As I'm sure you know, the French had favored the Christians, particularly the Maronite community. The French were basically responsible for a form of government whereby the President of Lebanon was always a Maronite Christian, the number two in the government was always a Sunni Muslim and the number three was always a Shiite Muslim. This was based upon a census taken, I believe, in 1938. Since then the population mix had changed. The Muslims were a majority. Yet the Maronites were still basically controlling the country. The Palestinians who were living there were almost entirely Muslim. A major reason they were not integrated into the country and why they were forced to remain in the camps is that their integration would tilt the balance of power to the Muslims. It was an artificial and unstable situation. Nevertheless, the government of Lebanon said it was safe to travel throughout Lebanon, except for the southern border area, which was controlled by the Israelis or their allies.

Q: But otherwise you could circulate pretty freely around Beirut and throughout the country?

NETTLES: Yes, throughout the whole country with the exception of that southern border. And I did. The Lebanese were social, but they considered it improper to have social events on the weekends. The weekend was for the family. If you were close to them, they might invite you, but certainly official functions were considered improper for the weekend. I frequently went to Tyre, my favorite place in Lebanon, on the weekends.

Q: You were, as you said before, responsible in many ways for a kind of regional economic reporting, particularly petroleum?

NETTLES: Entirely petroleum-- petroleum regional responsibility.

Q: Did you travel at all in the wider Middle East?

NETTLES: Only once, but that is a particularly interesting trip. The British were preparing to withdraw from the Trucial states in the Persian Gulf and we were going to open a post there. So the Department invited posts within the area to send an officer on an orientation visit, and I was selected to go from Lebanon. We met, the four of us, in Bahrain, where an officer, John Countryman, from the consulate in Dhahran, which had the responsibility of reporting for the Trucial states, joined us and was our escort through all the Trucial states except Fujairah.

Q: At that point we did not yet have embassies or posts?

NETTLES: No, we were preparing to open them. In connection with that, I went down a few days earlier to visit Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where the major oil facilities were. In addition, once when there was a personnel problem in Saudi Arabia, I was sent there for four months as the acting economic/commercial counselor at our embassy, which was at that time in Jeddah.

Q: So you were actually on the staff there for four months on a temporary basis?

NETTLES: Yes, but frankly, four months was just about the right amount of time to spend in Saudi Arabia in my opinion. I was glad to go and I was glad to leave. It's not an easy place, but many people do like it.

Q: Again, this was before the oil shock-- the OPEC increase in oil prices which, I think, happened after the 1973 war. So you were there from '70-'72? Did you see anything like that on the horizon in terms of what could happen in the oil market that was vulnerable?

NETTLES: Yes, nothing quite like that, but, periodically, a major pipeline which ran from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon would be blocked. It was called Tapline and it was owned by ARAMCO.

Q: ARAMCO?

NETTLES: For years it had been a major conduit for the export of Saudi oil and

periodically it would be cut. Well, of course, there were tankers to take the oil around South Africa, but that increased the time by about at least 400% because of the longer distance. Whenever it was cut there would immediately be repercussions on the international market and prices would shoot up. It was very indicative of how finely the balance of the supply of oil was. We realized that, should there be any major disturbance, then the repercussions would be horrendous.

Q: At times when the pipeline was cut, was it because of terrorist activity or accidents?

NETTLES: Both, but they were prepared for that and usually it would be repaired within 48 hours. However, there was one period when Tapline was closed for about six weeks as I recall, but I believe that was in connection with Black September. I'm not 100% certain why that occurred.

Q: As you say, many of the companies and many of the analysts of the Middle East petroleum scene were in Beirut. You saw lots of them all the time and did a lot of reporting, I'm sure.

NETTLES: Yes, communications were good. There was no place so open in the Middle East.

Q: Besides it was a very beautiful, very pleasant place?

NETTLES: Yes. The people were friendly, you were able to get away for the weekend - the climate was pleasant, good restaurants, good hotels - very pleasant.

Q: Okay, anything else we should say about your two years in Beirut from 1970 to 1972.

NETTLES: Not really, other than to say that it was my favorite post.

Q: From there you went to Islamabad, Pakistan. Is that your least favorite?

NETTLES: No, Zaire was my least favorite. I was in Pakistan at a particularly good time - six months after the war with India, in which, you will recall, we "tilted the right way." The old timers told newcomers like me that, "It was not always like this." Life had not always been so pleasant.

Q: That was after the war in '71 that led to the independence of Bangladesh?

NETTLES: '71 or '72.

Q: I think it was late '71.

NETTLES: I drove from Beirut to Islamabad.

Q: How did you manage to do that?

NETTLES: I had a direct transfer. Islamabad wanted me to report directly and take home leave six months later so I thought this was my opportunity to drive. I had a car - an Opel Cadette. I sent a cable that I was going to drive and they replied, "No." Islamabad wanted me there immediately and I was to fly. They said I didn't need a car. I sent back a cable saying that I was going to drive and that I would average 300 miles a day, but I was going to drive. Our DCM (in Beirut), the late Bob Houghton, who was one of the most outstanding Foreign Service officers and individuals I have ever known, called me in and said, "Clay, I'll send this cable if you want me to." He had to sign off on it. "But, you realize you are probably going to antagonize your new boss in Pakistan. Do you really want to?" I said, "Yes," I would take that responsibility and that it was that important to me. "I'll average 300 miles a day" and I did. I drove across Syria and because we had no relations with Iraq, I bypassed Iraq by going through Turkey. It was a little longer, but that was recommended and I drove across Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran for 3,500 miles. It took 11 days.

Q: It was quite a trip?

NETTLES: It was, but by far the most interesting trip I have ever taken. The roads were surprisingly good other than one short stretch of about 60 miles in Iran near the Afghan border. Other than that stretch, all the roads were paved and in good condition, but I understand part of the roads in eastern Iran had only been paved the year before. Then there was an excellent east-west road across Afghanistan, half of which had been built by the Russians and half by the U.S. The road through the Kabul Gorge, which was U.S. built, was an engineering marvel.

Q: You went through Kabul?

NETTLES: I overnighted in Kabul. Later during the three years I spent in Pakistan, I went to Kabul about every quarter. Kabul was a fascinating city and quite a change from Islamabad. I liked Islamabad, but it was good to have a change. It was about a six-hour drive from Islamabad.

Q: Tell me, how did the economic counselor feel when you did arrive 11 days later? Was he still upset that you had come that way despite his wishes?

NETTLES: Well, we got along fine. I think he admired me for doing what I really wanted to. I don't like to do things arbitrarily, but when something is important, I'll do what I think is important. It is a matter of principle. I have always been pleased that I did that.

Q: And, you also recognize certainly that, in this case, if you didn't do it now, you probably would never have the chance to do it. You did it by yourself or did you have someone go along with you part of way at least?

NETTLES: A Foreign Service officer George Basel who was finishing language school was going to go with me, but the night before I was to leave, a cable came in saying he

could not take leave and he had to proceed immediately to Cairo for his next assignment. My boss Norm Pratt who was the economic counselor - I was living in a hotel and the duty officer did not know where to call me - called me that evening about 11 o'clock and said, "George Basel can't go on the trip with you, but my son John (a graduate student at AUB) would love to." I said "I would love to have company" so I delayed the trip about four hours while John got two visas in record time and he drove with me. He stayed for awhile and flew back from Pakistan. It was good to have company, although the trip itself was much easier than I had anticipated. You had to be prepared because in Afghanistan some of the gas stations were as far as 300 miles apart.

Later, when I was serving in Zaire - I was in the embassy at Kinshasa, I received a Christmas card from the Pratts. At that time Norm was the economic counselor at Pretoria and I was the economic counselor at Kinshasa. John's parents said to come for a visit, but come before May, because he (Norm) was going to retire. There was a post script signed "John." He was a graduate student still waiting for AUB to reopen and he said he was ready for another trip. Obviously, I took advantage of the invitation without hesitation. I visited for a few days in Pretoria and John and I drove to Lesotho, Swaziland through the Krueger Park. So we had two good trips. John is now one of the few Americans working for Aramco in Saudi Arabia.

Q: Let's go back to Islamabad for a minute. This was 1972, Islamabad as an embassy had been sort of really getting going only seven or eight years before that when the capital was moved to Karachi and temporarily to Rawalpindi and then to Islamabad. How were things in Islamabad when you got there in 1972?

NETTLES: One was very conscience of the fact that Islamabad was a new, planned city. There were advantages and disadvantages. The housing was extremely good, but there was no historical section. What people fail to point out is that Islamabad was adjacent to Rawalpindi, a large and old city and particularly important as a garrison town during the British days. I would spend many a Saturday or Sunday just wandering through the souk (the market) in Rawalpindi which was 30 minutes away from where I lived.

Q: What was your job there? You were an economic officer?

NETTLES: I was the number two in the Economic Section. It was a particularly interesting time to be an economic officer because, I believe you just mentioned, the country had just divided and Bangladesh had become an independent country. The economic effects were quite interesting in that it was a country that had literally been split in two. It was interesting though how easily Pakistan coped with the division.

Q: The reporting that you did was primarily based on conversations with government officials or reading government documents and analysis? Much of the business and economic entrepreneurs were still in either Karachi or Lahore, weren't they?

NETTLES: Correct. Most of the people I dealt with were government officials. There were some in Islamabad, but I did go to Lahore and Karachi often, usually about once a

month. We did have a consulate in both and they, of course, did reporting, but it was useful for me to get there fairly often.

Q: Was there an active AID program in the country at the time?

NETTLES: Yes, there was.

Q: And the World Bank was also active there?

NETTLES: They did not have a resident representative there, but they sent people there often.

Q: Pakistan was and still very much is a developing country trying to deal with population increase, trying to get agriculture more efficient and productive. You felt that the three years you were there some progress was being made in all these areas?

NETTLES: Yes. I think the trend was improving. Pakistan at the time was mostly agricultural. There was very little industry in Pakistan at the time of independence, but they were developing more and more and today Pakistan has a large amount of industry. When I was there, the textile industry was the most important industry. Agriculture is still important, but it is becoming more and more of an industrial country and the per capita income is increasing. However, they have some rather serious sectarian problems. Not so much along religious, but ethnic backgrounds.

Q: Of course, they have very much been impacted by the situation in Afghanistan, but that came in the late '70s or early '80s continuing to today. How about Kashmir? Was that an interest to you as an economic officer?

NETTLES: Not for me. You will recall that at the time when India got its independence, Kashmir was basically divided between Pakistan and India. Most Americans are not aware that part of Pakistan today was Kashmir. Modern day Pakistanis call it Asad, Kashmir - Free Kashmir. Periodically, there would be a flare up, but there was never any fighting when I was there.

Q: As you know, I was also assigned to Pakistan a little bit before you were there, to Lahore. One of my memories was going to the hill station at Murree. At the time they had a small USIS summer information center there. I don't think that was still there in the early '70s?

NETTLES: No, it wasn't, but the ambassador had a residence there and when he wasn't using it, other people from the embassy could use it, but there was a very good hotel there. It was only an hour's drive from downtown Islamabad to Murree.

Q: Straight up the mountain.

NETTLES: The climate there was wonderful all year round in Murree. It was very nice in

Islamabad in winter, but extremely hot in the summer. I remember once being at a New Year's reception in Islamabad - wonderful weather. It was a garden reception at noon and when it was over, I got in my car and drove to Murree and there was six inches of snow. One could move back and forth very easily.

Q: Did you actually live in Islamabad?

NETTLES: Yes, I did. The housing was quite good. I'm sure that everyone assigned to the embassy lived in Islamabad.

Q: Was there much American business interest in Pakistan?

NETTLES: There was a fair amount of American business interests, mainly with the banks and the petroleum companies. There were quite a few American petroleum companies active and we assisted them to a certain extent.

Q: Were they finding much oil?

NETTLES: No, they found some, but not a lot, but there quite a number of U.S. companies drilling there. They found more natural gas.

Q: What part of the country, the South, or Punjab?

NETTLES: No, in Baluchistan.

Q: Near Afghanistan.

NETTLES: Right, while I was there. I think since then they've found some in the Punjab.

Q: I remember there were American firms involved with the embassies in the '60s in building Bangla Dam. There were other dams built. The other problem I remember from the '60s was the saline problem. They were trying to use tube wells to reduce the salinity of the soil. Were you involved with either the big dam projects or the smaller water projects?

NETTLES: No, not directly. There was a big dam that was under construction while I was there between Peshawar and Islamabad - not very far. I believe it was the largest dam ever built on the Indus, but it was built by an Italian company. I went there several times to see it and I was there when it was finished, but there was no U.S. direct involvement in dam construction when I was in Pakistan.

Now AID was helping in various ways to combat salinity encroachment - a problem when you irrigate and there is very little rain to wash away natural salts. One of my major responsibility within the embassy was liaison between AID and the embassy proper. You might say, "Why was that necessary?" Well for one reason, AID was located in an entirely separate building. I attended all their staff meetings and worked very closely with

them.

Q: They had program economists or maybe more than one, but they were not very much reporting to Washington

NETTLES: Not the type we were doing, but they were doing specialized reporting. As you know AID operates on projects and they would have loans of some sort and the documentation for a loan would be extremely extensive and it would have had background information about the justification, but, no, they wouldn't do economic reporting per se. But, they had some good economists and, of course, I worked very closely with them.

Q: Their economic reporting wouldn't be in a form that would go, for example, to the Department of Agriculture or wouldn't be available to the public or Department of Commerce?

NETTLES: No, their extensive reporting would just be in the loan documentation.

Q: You finished in Islamabad in 1975 and where did you go from there?

NETTLES: I was getting ready for a new assignment and wondering where I might go when I received a telephone call from personnel and was asked would I like to be economic counselor in Kinshasa? I said, "That's in Zaire isn't it?" They said, "Obviously, you're an African expert." I said, "Do I have any choice about this?" They said, "Oh, yes, the ambassador-designate, Dean Hinton, has given us three names and you are one of the three. One of the officers will be offered a DCM job which he will probably take and you have French and the other officer doesn't so if you want it, it's yours. Just left us know within 48 hours." The job was ranked two grades above my rank at that time. It was the only assignment I ever took that I thought would be good for my career, but I realized that that was an opportunity which I really couldn't say no and besides I was really intrigued about going to Africa so I said, "Yes" and spent three years there. I enjoyed it, but it was my least favorite posts in my 36 years in the State Department.

Q: We probably should put on record that Dean Hinton was at that time probably one of the preeminent senior Foreign Service officers in the economic area with great experience and for you to be sought after to be the economic counselor I think alone besides the stretch aspects of the assignment was a real kudo for you.

NETTLES: It was and I realized, as I said, I couldn't afford to say no for that among other reasons, but life is interesting. The week before I was to arrive, Dean Hinton was declared persona non grata. It wasn't anything that he did. He was a victim of circumstances between the U.S. and Mobutu. Mobutu was a very, very clever politician. We wanted to reduce, cut off, or eliminate our assistance to him and at the same time the U.S. government wanted to be active in Angola. Mobutu was clever enough to realize that we needed his assistance to be active in Angola. So he discovered a "plot" in which the U.S. was involved - of course, this was all fiction - but he said Dean Hinton was

involved in this plot and had him declared persona non grata. Instead Walter Cutler was sent in as ambassador.

Q: So you never actually worked for Dean Hinton in Kinshasa?

NETTLES: No, and I worked for Lannon Walker, the DCM, and Walter Cutler. Both are outstanding officers and had distinguished careers, but neither one had a background in economics. Therefore, it was an entirely different job working for them than it would have been had I worked for Dean Hinton. I would have learned more economics working for Dean Hinton, but it probably wouldn't have been as much fun.

Q: Why do you say that it was your least desirable or least favorite assignment— was it the living conditions or the people?

NETTLES: The living conditions were superb. Maybe that's why they had some of the economic problems they did, because they built such lavish places. I would compare life in Kinshasa to life in an Eastern European formerly communist country. The government controlled all Zaireans. You knew it would be very difficult to become in anyway friendly with anyone. They knew that it could be dangerous for them. I had a number of African friends, but friends from other embassies, not Zaireans.

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Q: It's the 28th of August, 1997. This is an oral history interview being continued with G. Clay Nettles. My name is Raymond Ewing. We are at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center. I think when we stopped before which was some six weeks or so ago. You said or were about to say that one should not judge all of Africa by Zaire.

NETTLES: That's correct, Ray, but that was not my observation, but what other African diplomats told me. The reason why they said that was Zaire, at that time, was essentially a police state and very similar to the Eastern European countries in the old communist system and it was, therefore, impossible to get to know the local people.

Q: You were there from 1975 until '78. Mobutu was well ensconced. You were the economic counselor? The economy was in good shape, bad shape, terrible shape?

NETTLES: The economy was beginning to deteriorate. When I arrived, we saw the first symptoms. Zaire had been hailed as the most promising country in southern Africa other than South Africa itself. The word you heard most often was potential. Zaire had enormous potential in minerals and agricultural land and energy, you name it. However, they didn't take advantage of their potential. They abused it and corruption was rampant. By the time I left, it was obvious the country was in serious difficulty and it continued to go down hill ever since.

Q: Had at that time they rescheduled their foreign debt or was the United States continuing to provide aid at the time you were there?

NETTLES: That's a very interesting story. I was selected for Zaire by Ambassador Dean Hinton and two weeks before I arrived, he was declared persona non grata by Mobutu and I'm sure it was due to the fact that the United States had decided to suspend or cut off economic assistance to Zaire. Mobutu was corrupt, but he was extremely clever. He realized that the United States could not become involved in Angola, which it obviously wished to do, without his assistance. So he discovered a "plot" in which he accused the United States government and specifically Dean Hinton of being involved and declared him persona non grata. The United States government immediately sent back a former ambassador for a visit and resumed economic assistance to Mobutu and it continued the entire time I was there.

Q: We sent a new ambassador?

NETTLES: No, we sent a former ambassador, Sheldon Vance, who had served there before. He was just there to "investigate" and he recommended resuming aid.

Q: He was not sent as an accredited as ambassador?

NETTLES: No, Lannon Walker was the chargé for about six months and then Walter Cutler came out as ambassador.

Q: The reason that this could happen, as you say, was related to Angola and to the key strategic position that Zaire occupies in central Africa.

NETTLES: That's right. We couldn't have assisted factions in Angola without using Zaire as a base.

Q: Zaire is, of course, a tremendously large country. You were able to travel extensively around the country while you were there?

NETTLES: Yes, I was - fortunately, the military attache had a plane and I could go along with him. The internal transportation system within Zaire, air, road, and river, was terrible and was deteriorating rapidly.

Q: American business community was extensive or large in Kinshasa or more in other parts of the country?

NETTLES: The American business community was concentrated almost entirely within Kinshasa. General Motors, for example, had an assembly plant. Firestone manufactured tires. Citibank had an office. Compared to Europe, it was small, but for Africa it was extensive.

Q: I doubt it any of those things still exist 20 years later.

NETTLES: I doubt it also, Ray, but then again, of course, I haven't been there since I left

in 1978.

Q: The mining industry - copper and other mineral extractions - was in the eastern and southern part of the country. Were there American interests in that as well at that time?

NETTLES: Not directly. An American Company, Morrison and Knudson, had been awarded a contract to build a power line from Inga which is between Kinshasa and the sea. They built an enormous dam. Morrison and Knudson did not build the dam, Italians did that, but Morrison and Knudson had the contract to build an eight hundred mile power line to take that power from Inga to Shaba, the former Katanga province. That was a five hundred million dollar contract. When it was awarded to the U. S. company, which was before I arrived, this was considered a real coup, because again the word was that Zaire had this enormous potential. Later when economic conditions turned sour, there was a lot of hindsight quarterbacking and it was said that the line shouldn't been built in the first place.

Q: Was it built by Morrison and Knudson?

NETTLES: The power line, yes, but it never really went into operation, because the economy had disintegrated to such an extent.

Q: Was it World Bank financed? Do you remember?

NETTLES: I believe so, Ray, maybe partially ExIm Bank supplied a major portion of the funding, but I don't recall the exact combination of the financing.

Q: Other than general economic reporting, were you involved with any complicated problems or issues at the time you were there or was, in the terms of the work of the economic section pretty standard?

NETTLES: Basically standard. Of course we did a lot of economic analysis to justify the economic assistance we were giving to Zaire. As I said before, the real justification was for political reasons. We did work very closely with Morrison and Knudson trying to help with their problems and they had many of them installing the line. All of the American companies that were there had problems. They relied (in a country like Zaire) upon the embassy to assist them much more so than had they been in Europe. They really did need our assistance and we tried to supply it.

Q: They probably had problems that if they were in Europe, they wouldn't have had either.

NETTLES: Exactly.

Q: I think it is a great credit to you, Clay, to have been selected to be head of the economics section by Dean Hinton. Dean Hinton, certainly, was one of the most brightest and most active economic officers in the Foreign Service. He went on to be an

ambassador many times, but I think he always thought of himself as an economist and an economic officer, but he had been forced to leave by the time you got there?

NETTLES: That's correct. He left two weeks before I arrived. The State Department held up my assignment and also that of the political counselor because we had both been selected by Ambassador Hinton, but after a week's review, they sent us out anyway. I'm sure I would have learned a lot if I had served under Ambassador Hinton, but I thoroughly enjoyed working under Lannon Walker and later under Walt Cutler although they didn't have the economic expertise that Dean Hinton did.

Q: But, as you say, much of the rationale for our presence, our activities and our interest in Zaire at that time and subsequently was largely for political reasons, and a lot of it was related to Angola.

NETTLES: That's true, Ray, but it shouldn't be overlooked that in the early '70s, Zaire was seen to have enormous economic potential. They simply didn't take advantage of it, but as a result of my three years there, I hate that word "potential" after what I saw in Zaire.

Q: What was the major problem— was it corruption and inefficiency or was it something else? Or, can you put your finger on just one problem?

NETTLES: There was a severe shortage of trained personnel. Corruption was a major problem, but Mobutu made one decision which, I think, had more to do with the situation than anything else. He nationalized everything in the country, even barber shops, that was owned by foreigners. It included all the stores and businesses of every type. These were then given to his cronies. It gave him immediate political support. In the majority of the cases, the people who were given these businesses didn't know how to operate them. A few of them brought in foreign partners and continued to operate. Most, once the stock of goods were sold, simply closed. Thus, the government so the government was not getting the revenue to maintain basic services such as transportation. The roads quickly became impassable and, I understand, the river system now is no longer open to regular motor boats. Air Zaire ceased to operate as an effective carrier. The infrastructure simply collapsed.

Q: How much of that was happening the three years you were there - '75-'78? The nationalizations had taken place earlier?

NETTLES: About 18 months prior.

Q: So you were really seeing the impact of decisions taken not too long before?

NETTLES: But, Zaire was a wealthy country so it didn't collapse and still hasn't completely collapsed. I understand it still functions in a certain fashion. For example, copper production while I was there was approximately 500,000 tons a year. I believe last year they produced 12,000 tons so you can see what has happened. And, copper was the

main source of foreign exchange.

Q: At the time you were there? It was mostly exported out through where?

NETTLES: Originally the main route for export was the Bengala Railroad, which went through Angola, but, of course, that was closed due to their fighting in Angola. Some copper was exported via the river system within Zaire and some went through Zambia and then South Africa. That was also the main route to bring in supplies to that area.

Q: So mainly through South Africa? How about Mozambique? Probably not.

NETTLES: I don't think so. Mozambique was having its own problems.

Q: At that time, yes.

NETTLES: There was a good rail system which ran from Lubumbashi through Zambia and through South Africa and that was the principal way after the Bengala Railroad was closed.

Q: Is there anything else we ought to talk about in terms of your assignment in Kinshasa?

NETTLES: I think we have pretty well covered it. To sum it up, I think I learned something there, but it was my most difficult assignment in the Foreign Service, and I can't say I was unhappy when my assignment came to a close.

Q: Knowing you for a long time, Clay, and knowing something about your assignment pattern, you've gone back to at least one post and you would have been happy to go back to some others, but I guess Kinshasa isn't in that category?

NETTLES: Only maybe for a brief visit to see how things are going.

Q: And, you never did get back after you left in '78? Where did you go next after Kinshasa?

NETTLES: I went to Rome and attended the NATO Defense College for six months.

Q: I think that has been pretty well covered in various interviews. I know that there is one State Department officer, normally, that goes to that and the U.S. military and, of course, people from all the other NATO allies.

NETTLES: Correct. I would simply say that I found the course interesting, useful, and enjoyable and those three adjectives rarely go together.

Q: I'm impressed that you found it both interesting and useful. I don't have any question that you thought six months in Rome was enjoyable.

NETTLES: Not only in Rome, but we devoted about a month and a half to travel within Europe and a month in North America.

Q: It was a six months' course, is that correct?

NETTLES: Which made it slightly difficult to fill because those students who had school-age children found six months an awkward time. So that was when they invited single people and those without children to the course. As you surely know, most of the courses of that type are nine months.

Q: Yes, and as I recall, assignments to the NATO Defense College are usually linked or connected to onward assignments to one of the NATO capitals.

NETTLES: That's correct. Now that's a requirement. When I was there it was not a requirement, but I was fortunate that my next assignment was to a NATO country, Turkey and I found the course good preparation for it.

Q: So you went to Ankara immediately from Rome or did you have some Turkish language study at some point?

NETTLES: I took home leave after the course and also had about six weeks of Turkish language training. As you are familiar with our language policy, I'll just review it briefly, normally Turkish requires ten months of training to receive a useful or working level. As you know, when a course takes 10 months or more, they make an assessment as to whether the job is language designated or not. My position as economic counselor was not language designated. I think that was correct in terms of almost all people with whom I dealt in Turkey on a professional basis almost invariably were proficient in English or French. I found the six weeks of basic Turkish quite useful as it helped me to get around because the average person on the street doesn't speak any English or any other foreign language.

Q: So you had a six-weeks' short course to familiarize you with the Turkish language.

NETTLES: I traveled extensively in Turkey and that was really quite [adequate] for that purpose.

Q: So you actually took up your assignment in Ankara in the summer of 1979? And you were there three years? Tell me a little bit about what conditions were like when you arrived. And, you were the economic counselor so particularly on the economic side.

NETTLES: Correct. Turkey was in a desperate situation. They had had weak coalition governments and weak coalition governments were unable to take fundamental reforms which they badly needed. They had turned to us and other OECD countries - Turkey was a member of the OECD - and asked for assistance. We and other OECD countries said, "No. We will help you with a program, but we are not going to give you assistance until you have a program." Finally, when the situation became truly desperate, they did sign an

agreement with the IMF for fundamental reforms.

I had left my car in Rome and I took the ferry from Ancona to Dubrovnik and then drove through southern Yugoslavia and Greece and on to Istanbul. There was little gasoline in Turkey as ships anchored offshore waiting to be paid before they unloaded petroleum. I had filled up at the Greek border which got me to our consulate in Istanbul. I filled up there and that got me into Ankara. The whole economy was hardly functioning because of lack of basic supplies. You saw trucks lined up for miles waiting for fuel that might come in. That winter was one of the coldest on record. My colleague from the Austrian embassy said it was like Vienna in '45 except there was plenty of food. Many of my European colleagues sent their families home. It was pretty grim, however, from an economist's point of view, it was fantastic because you could see results from the reform which had been made. Turkey went from being an extremely centralized economy to being a very open economy. Almost immediately you could see results. Of course, we and other OECD members were supplying significant amounts of assistance. The combination of our assistance produced results better and quicker than we had dared to hope.

Q: What would you say was the key ingredient that got the Turks to adopt a meaningful reform program that was accepted by the IMF? Was it the pressure from the United States and their Western European allies or was it a decision that they came to themselves? If so, with these weak coalition governments, how did they manage to make that decision?

NETTLES: Sure, there was pressure from the U.S. and the OECD allies if you define it in the sense of pressure that we refused to help them until they did come up with a program. That was pressure, but I think appropriate pressure. The Turks were in desperate straits and they realized that the existing situation was not working so they felt that they really had no alternative.

Q: Let me ask you to comment on Turgut Ozal. He is often given a lot of credit for implementing the economic reform program, to getting it accepted, to seeing it through. You knew him, I think, well? I don't remember some aspects of the timing, but I'd be interested in your comments on him and his role.

NETTLES: That's right. I did know him well, because he was the head of the State Planning Organization and the State Planning Organization was the group within the Turkish government which was given the responsibility for implementing these basic reforms. I worked with him and I got to know him well. Now as I am sure you know, a military coup occurred in Turkey approximately six months after I arrived. The coup did not occur because of economic conditions as reforms were working. It occurred because of the political situation. The military has a role in Turkey which is perhaps unique. They consider themselves the guardian of the Ataturk legacy. Of course, as you know, Ataturk was the founder of modern Turkey. His fundamental objectives were that Turkey would be part of the West and would be a secular society. The military is considered the guardian of his legacy and has intervened and taken over the government on three

different occasions. But each time, once they stabilized the situation, they returned the government to civilian control. That was the way the military was perceived in Turkey and they waited until the situation was again quite extreme before they intervened. One of the very first things that the military government did after they staged the coup was to say that the economic reform program would continue and be under Turgut Ozal, who was promoted.

Q: I believe that the military intervention was in September of 1980, as you say, not long after you arrived and was primarily because of the political situation but also because of terrorism and the violence that was occurring within the country.

NETTLES: Between both the left and right, assassinations had become common, but the violence and the terrorism largely didn't affect foreigners. When I had a cocktail party or a dinner when Turkish guests arrived, they would often call home to say that they had gotten to my place safely and then when they returned, they would call back to say they'd gotten home. The situation was desperate for many Turks, particularly if they were journalists or professors.

Q: You as part of the embassy did not take particular security precautions? I'm sure you took precautions, but nothing unusual? You were not a target or vulnerable yourself?

NETTLES: Not really. We did have guards at our houses and there were a few exceptions of terrorism, but nothing comparable at all to the terrorism which was affecting the Turks.

Q: By the time the military took over and, you said, they continued the economic reform program, elevated Turgut Ozal and gave him more stature and continuing position within the government, we were supporting the economic program. We encouraged them to move in that direction giving some support. Did they appreciate the fact that we were not only giving that support, but were prepared to continue it even after the military took over?

NETTLES: Yes, the military intervention was supported by 95 per cent of the people and they returned control to civilian authority before they became discredited.

Q: At various times when a military intervenes and overthrows a democratically-elected government, even if it is a weak or vulnerable government, we have taken a very critical position feeling that this is hurting human rights or democratization or whatever. That wasn't the case in Turkey at all. We understood the situation and the fact that they were prepared, at some point, to turn it back to the civilians and also continue their policies.

NETTLES: That's correct, Ray. That was our perception and it turned out to be correct. More importantly or at least as importantly, that was the perception of the vast bulk of the Turkish population. I'm sure there were a few individuals who were against it, but not the average person.

Q: How quickly, for the average person, did they see the results of the economic recovery

program? Did it happen rather quickly? You said that you could see the affect rather dramatically. Was it also quick?

NETTLES: Very quickly. For example, I told you of the shortage of petroleum. Well, that shortage was overcome in a few months. The winter that I arrived was terrible, but by the next summer, there was no shortage of fuel or basic commodities. Even a few luxury products such as coffee again appeared on the market. Coffee was not available when I first arrived, and, of course, Turkish coffee is famous and very popular with the Turks.

Q: During that first winter that was so difficult for Turks, was it also difficult for you in the embassy or were you able to have heating and meet your requirements?

NETTLES: It depended upon where you lived. I happened to live in an apartment building where there were only Americans and it was small and the embassy could get fuel oil and supplies. However, one of my colleagues lived in a much larger building and was one of the few Americans living there. He had two small children. The only heat they had for about six weeks was from the electric stove and the electricity was only on 12 hours a day. As the result of that, the U.S. government decided to find small apartment buildings for its people in order to be able to supply fuel and, occasionally, water, as there were water shortages from time to time. Within the next two years, all embassy staff were living in buildings in which they were the only ones. Some people were not happy about this, because they said they did not want to live in an American ghetto. Then again, they had to weigh the advantages against the disadvantages. When you didn't have any fuel and when it was 10 above zero, that was something to consider.

Q: I know one of the other winter problems in Ankara, particularly during this period, was smog. The air quality because of the burning of soft coal, it has another name, too.

NETTLES: Lignite, which is a form of soft coal.

Q: Was that a major problem for you in Ankara the whole time you were there or especially the first winter?

NETTLES: It was always a problem in the winter during my first tour. However, while I was there, the Turkish government contracted with the Soviet Union to import natural gas. The United States was not happy about that, but Turkey insisted that they would not become overly dependent upon the Soviet Union as the source of its fuel. In fact, they pointed out that their energy imports from the Soviet Union would be a smaller percentage of its total energy imports than that of Italy. They did sign this contract with the Soviet Union, built the pipeline and a distribution system so that today Ankara does not have a serious smog problem.

Q: When you first arrived in Ankara in 1979, Ambassador Jim Spain was the ambassador?

NETTLES: No, Ron Spiers was the ambassador. I served under him for about a year and then Jim Spain arrived and he was there for about 18 months. He was replaced by Ambassador Strausz-Hupé.

Q: You were the economic counselor under these three ambassadors. Was there a significance difference between them in terms of their interest and support for the work of your section?

NETTLES: No, not at all. They all had different personalities, but they were all very supportive. I enjoyed working with all three of them.

Q: Turkey, of course, has a big economy and lots of problems. We touched on those and the program that was introduced to deal with those problems. Let me talk a little bit more about the external aspect. I assume that as the reform program got going, not only were there more imported goods on the market, but Turkish exports began to pick up?

NETTLES: Let me go into that in a little more detail. The Turkish economy which developed after World War I was based upon self-sufficiency and the only significant exports were agricultural. On the other hand, almost everything that could be made in Turkey was made in Turkey and a lot of things were made that really shouldn't have been made. Any virtue carried to the extreme can become a vice and that happened in Turkey. Protection was given for anything that could be made in Turkey regardless of the cost. Once they decided to open the economy, many of these businesses, which were basically import substitutions, were no longer viable. They had to rationalize that if they were going to survive and if they couldn't survive, they went out of business. The way to survive was not only to supply the local market, but to be exporters. This is what Economics 101 teaches. Many Turkish businesses had been grossly inefficient. They didn't have to be efficient as long as they only supplied the captive local market. But they had to become efficient when imports were permitted. Turkish traditional agricultural exports continued, but they did not increase significantly, but very, very quickly manufactured exports became important.

Q: Was the United States' market important in that early period as they began to look for markets abroad for their industrial products - particularly, say, textiles and so on?

NETTLES: Yes, textiles were important for that, but many of the manufactured products other than textiles were, frankly, not up to U.S. standards. This changed very quickly. Packaging is very important when you go into a sophisticated market like the U.S. You have to manufacture to a certain standard, you have to package it. The textile industry was the first to take advantage of the U.S. market, but others followed. You name it, there was a broad category of exports. Turkey also became and still is a significant market for U.S. exports.

Q: And that happened as the reform movement took hold, and they reduced some of the protection they had been supplying to the import substituting industries? What kind of products was the U.S. interested in that earlier period selling to Turkey?

NETTLES: We sold quite a bit of fertilizer, for example, and, of course, we had a military assistance program and supplied a lot of military equipment to Turkey. Basically, we supplied bulk raw material. We didn't supply many manufactured products, but the industrial raw materials we supplied to Turkey were significant.

Q: How about tourism? Did you begin to see that developing as a result of the eased political situation, as the improved economy or did that happen later?

NETTLES: It began to happen during my first tour. I wouldn't say that the economic reforms had much to do with that. It was more the result of the improved political situation. I think the tourism industry really developed on its own without significant government assistance.

Q: What about Turkey and the European Common Market or European Community at that time? Turkey is still not a member as a customs member with the European Community. It's a significant political issue in Turkey and Europe. How was it especially in the early period when you were there?

NETTLES: Throughout my entire association with Turkey, the European connection has been extremely important. Remember, I said that the two fundamental principles of Ataturk's philosophy were that Turkey was a part of Europe and was a secular state. Thus, association with Europe in the form of the European Community or whatever had as much psychological importance as economic importance. The Europeans had given the Turks almost all the economic benefits of membership, but they said, "Well, that's enough, you're not really ready to enter into the European Community." The Turks wouldn't buy that because of the psychological implications. And, I would say that that continues to be the situation. The Turks believe that it is not only an economic problem, but a political problem.

Q: And with a strong psychological aspect as well?

NETTLES: I would say psychological not political.

Q: Well, it's probably political, too. How about thinking partly in terms of the economic dimension? How about relations with Greece while you were there? It wasn't very long after a lot of trouble?

NETTLES: That's correct. The Turkish national holiday is when they defeated the Greeks on the outskirts of Ankara. Many Americans are not aware of that, but in 1922, Greece invaded Turkey and almost conquered the heart of Turkey. They were defeated and were driven into the sea. There was a division of the population. The Greeks, of course, have never forgotten that. In 1922, the Turkish population was roughly eight million and there were about five million Greeks. That wasn't that much difference between the two countries. Today, Turkey has roughly 65 million and Greece about eight million. I could be off a million or two. But changed ratio is important. The Turks are not

obsessed with Greece the way the Greeks are with Turkey. If you see a country as your enemy and all of the sudden it has eight times as many people, then you are concerned. The Turks certainly are aware of Greece, but they are always shocked that the Greeks consider them a threat. They don't think of Greece as being a threat and they don't really think they are a threat to the Greeks.

Q: I think you're right, the perceptions in Athens and Ankara have always been different and that is certainly still the case. And, the great national holiday in March is when they got independence from Ottoman Turkey in the 19th century. How about Cyprus? Did you pay much attention to that on the economic view?

NETTLES: Not a great deal, because there were very few economic considerations involved in the Cypriot situation when I arrived. The embargo had been lifted.

Q: Turkey also has a very important situation vis a vis the Middle East - Syria, Iraq, Iran are all neighbors. Was that something you took much interest in and also related to that, were you able to travel in eastern Turkey or southeastern Turkey?

NETTLES: First question first, when the Turks started seeking export markets, they quickly found that some of their neighbors and particularly the ones in the Middle East were natural markets. The exports to Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia increased dramatically. And, Libya was important. The Turkish construction firms became quite efficient and often obtained big contracts in these countries. The Turks also tried to present themselves as an intermediary. For example, they would urge American firms who wanted to build a dam in Iraq to take them on as partners. There were several instances, I know of, where it worked very well. Yes, the Turks were very conscience of their opportunities in the Middle East and took advantage of them.

Q: Let me ask you about Iran particularly because you were there from '79-'82 and the Islamic revolution and the overthrow of the Shah had just taken place when you got there. Were you involved in that al all?

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This is August 23, 1997 and this is a an oral history interview with G. Clay Nettles and I'm Ray Ewing. Clay, we were just talking about Iran, I think. Why don't you finish your thought about how that was seen in Ankara, particularly in the Economics Section?

NETTLES: Well, it didn't affect us immediately at all, but at that time Turkey was the only country in the area that didn't require visas for Iranians citizens, so there were literally hundreds of thousands of Iranians passing through or in Turkey at any one time. The Iranians were desperate and the lines were a mile long at the American consulates in Istanbul and in Ankara. However, we really didn't become, certainly not in the Economic Section, directly involved.

Q: We want to talk about your travels within Turkey, but let's skip ahead. You were in

Turkey on your first tour from '79-'82 and then you went back to the Department to the Bureau of Economic Affairs. What did you do there?

NETTLES: Before that, Ray, I was to Suriname for six months as the DCM on a TDY basis. When I left Turkey, I had hoped to be the U.S. Director for the African Development Bank. I was the State Department candidate. Unfortunately, after several months, it went to a political appointee. Unfortunately, from my point of view because I would have enjoyed that.
Q: That would have been in Abidjan?

NETTLES: Correct where the Bank is based. However, that didn't work out. I had turned down several significant assignments hoping to get that. Then a friend of mine told me that the next morning I would be called in by Personnel and told I was going to be sent as DCM to Suriname. Forewarned is forearmed. I was in no position to say "No" to the assignment, but said, "Alright, we're willing to waive the requirements to speak Dutch." I said, "It really wouldn't be fair to me or to the position, but I will be happy to go up to a year while you find someone or even train someone in Dutch." Much to my surprise, they agreed to my condition and asked if I could leave the next morning. Three days later, I was off in Suriname. It was an interesting time to be there. The reason they wanted someone down there right away was that the military dictator, Bouterse, had rounded up all the leading opponents one night and had them shot. Only 17, but these were some of the most prominent people in the country - the head of the supreme court, the dean of the university. We criticized him, of course, so he discovered a "plot" in which the DCM was involved. He couldn't very well say the ambassador was, as he had just arrived a few weeks before. He had the DCM PNGed and the U.S. government wanted to send a replacement immediately to show that we took this very seriously. That's why I was sent there. I was there for seven months and it was a fascinating time to be there, but again, like Saudi Arabia and Zaire, I was glad to go and glad to leave.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

NETTLES: Bob Duemling.

Q: The head of government, I recall coming to Ghana when I was there a little later. I was there from '89-'92. I'm not sure exactly when he came, but I think Jerry Rawlings, who was head of state in Ghana, saw certain similarities with the story in Surinam. Does that sound right to you?

NETTLES: Only to the extent that they both had a military background before coming to power. From what I've heard of Rawlings, but you know better since you were ambassador there, I always thought of him as a rather benign figure who did a lot of good work in Ghana, whereas, Bouterse was a psychopathic murderer. I think there is a big difference.

Q: Rawlings tended to be friends with not too many people on the international scene and the ones he chose had certain characteristics like that. And, I don't think he was entirely

benign. He did some good things no question about it.

NETTLES: I will defer to your judgement of Ghana.

Q: Anyway, you were there for seven months and they found someone else who could speak Dutch to replace you presumably?

NETTLES: Patrick Killough. He trained in Dutch and, as I say, had I spoken the language, I think I would have enjoyed a regular assignment there.

Q: Was Dutch pretty important?

NETTLES: Yes, it was because Dutch was the language of the news every night on TV and the papers were published in Dutch. They spoke what was called Papiamentu, which was a mixture of Dutch and Spanish and perhaps a little African and English thrown in. As DCM, I couldn't supervise properly the reporting if I couldn't read the papers or listen to the radio and know what was going on. Yes, to have done the job properly, I really needed to speak Dutch or at least be able to read it.

Q: So after this temporary assignment, you came back to Washington to the Bureau of Economic Affairs? What was your job there?

NETTLES: I was the head of the Office of Marine and Polar Minerals within the Economic Bureau. The United States government and other interested countries were trying to develop a minerals regime for Antarctica. The idea being that we should do this before any significant minerals or petroleum should be discovered. IO had the lead in this within the State Department, but EB was very much involved in it, too. That was the major thing that we were doing.

Q: I suppose the Bureau of Mines and the Interior Department, but also some of the American mining companies.

NETTLES: Correct. There were other things, but that was the major thing.

Q: The Law of the Sea Treaty negotiations had already occurred.

NETTLES: That's right

Q: So in 1985 you were up for assignment and you were ready to go overseas and where did you go?

NETTLES: Well back to Turkey, to Ankara. I had been assigned to go to Stockholm and one morning at a staff meeting, I heard that Marshall Casse who was the economic counselor in Ankara was being brought back early for a special position within the State Department. I knew that the post was open and wanted to return. I let word get back to Ankara to say that I could not risk jeopardizing my assignment to Stockholm, but if you

want me I'd much rather go back to Ankara than to Stockholm. And, they did and fortunately it was all within the European Bureau so they were able to break my assignment to Stockholm and I went back to Ankara again.

Q: Now the reason you felt that way is because you had been there before, you knew it was an important, interesting job?

NETTLES: And because we had a significant economic assistance program to Turkey. In Stockholm, I would be reporting events. In Ankara, you had an opportunity to influence events because of our economic assistance program. I remember the first night I arrived there was a party. I remember saying that night that I was back to Turkey because I found the job to be extremely interesting, because I'm an amateur historian and Turkey had a great deal to offer in that field. I liked the Turkish people.

Q: You had been gone about three years and when you got back, was the military still pretty much in charge?

NETTLES: Yes, they were, but elections were scheduled.

Q: Turgut Ozal, what was he doing at that point?

NETTLES: Turgut Ozal had organized his own political party and this came as a surprise to people who had known him originally, because we thought of him as only a very capable technocrat. We didn't think of him as a politician. He proved to an extremely able and capable politician and his party, the Motherland Party won the first elections. One of the reasons many people thought they did win was because the Turkish President, the military leader who had been the head of the coup, had the temerity to criticize Turgut Ozal right before these elections. As a result, the Turkish electorate chose Turgut Ozal. He probably would have won anyway, but he won by a landslide and it was generally considered because of the criticism of the military.

Q: As you say, it was at this point that he was elected, it meant that his party had a majority in the Parliament and he became the Prime Minister because later own he was also elected President.

NETTLES: I'm sorry, I should have gone into more detail. His party won such a large majority that he became Prime Minister. You don't run for Prime Minister in a parliamentary system like the British.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you returned?

NETTLES: Strausz-Hupé was still the ambassador and he continued to be the ambassador for the next three and one half years while I was there. He served for a total of eight years as ambassador to Turkey.

Q: The economy was flourishing - booming?

NETTLES: Yes, it really was and you saw a continuation of what had begun during my first tour in Turkey. Twice a year there would be a meeting in Paris of the OECD donor countries. I remember, the head of the OECD said, and we agreed, that the economic program succeeded quicker and better than any of us had dared to hope at the time when it began. It was due to the efforts of the Turks with the outside assistance. The Turkish efforts might have eventually achieved these results, but they couldn't have produced them so quickly without the outside assistance. On the other hand, had they not had a program, I think the assistance would have been wasted.

Q: A program that the Turks had devised and were very much behind?

NETTLES: Yes, and the Turks had devised it, but in cooperation with the World Bank and the IMF particularly the IMF.

Q: We are really talking about a total of about eight years that you had as counselor of Economic Affairs in Turkey. We're in a sense blending together these two assignments in one official position. Maybe at this point, can we go back and talk a little more about the internal situation within Turkey, the economy and your travels? I started to ask you before what extent you were able to travel in eastern Turkey where I know there have always been restrictions and difficulties?

NETTLES: Right. My second tour in Turkey, I was able to travel throughout the country with the exception of one area, the Hakkari province which is the province in the southeastern corner between Iran and Iraq. That was the only place that was basically off limits.

Q: Was that off limits because of Iran and Iraq or the Kurdish situation?

NETTLES: Because of the Kurdish situation. If I might interject briefly, when we were talking about my first tour in Turkey, we were talking about terrorism. Basically the terrorism that I was speaking of then was between the left and the right. The Kurdish situation was not a significant part of that. When I returned, the left/right confrontation and the terrorism connected with that had basically disappeared— not entirely, but basically. I hesitate to use the word terrorism in association with the Kurdish situation, but the problems, the incidents that occurred were in Kurdish territory or areas where there were large numbers of Kurdish inhabitants and between them and the Turks. It is much more complicated than that because much of eastern Turkey has a large Kurdish population. The Kurds for economic reasons had settled throughout Turkey. Istanbul, a city of eight million people, probably has at least two to three million people of Kurdish origin. Ankara and Izmir also have large Kurdish populations.

Q: How about the Armenia element? There were certainly attacks on Turkish diplomats abroad by ASLA or some like that - the Armenian Liberation Army. Is that something affecting you in the embassy? Probably not.

NETTLES: Not really, I remember when a Turkish diplomat was assassinated in California by an Armenian, the entire embassy staff went to the state funeral and, as is the custom in Turkey, we walked after the casket from the mosque to the cemetery more than a mile away.

Yes, we were aware. The Turks were frustrated by what they felt was international sympathy for the murder of their diplomats. A number were killed and assassinated, but it wasn't something that affected you on a day-to-day basis and the Turks didn't seem hold you responsible.

Q: It wasn't happening in Turkey, it was more abroad?

NETTLES: Exactly.

Q: Let's talk a little more about the rest of Turkey outside of Ankara from the point of few of the economic counselor over this eight-year period. You said in your second tour '85-'90, you traveled a little more. I assume you had to go to Istanbul all the time, because that is the center of business community and the banking community.

NETTLES: That is correct. We have a large and very effective consulate there and we have a good economic officer who could handle much of the business. We were in contact by cable, radio or phone two or three times a day. I didn't have to be there on a day-to-day basis but I tried to get there once a month - certainly every six weeks. And then, of course, if there was a major event or something where I was needed, I might go down for that too. Istanbul was the financial center and that was important, but I tried to and did travel throughout the country.

Q: In the Economic Section, besides your reporting services, did you have an officer from the foreign commercial service or did you do that yourself.

NETTLES: When I first arrived, I was economic commercial counselor, but, as you know, commercial responsibilities were given to the Department of Commerce, which had a commercial officer in Ankara and one in Istanbul also. We worked closely together, as it should be, but I was no longer in charge of commercial functions.

Q: So in your second tour, you were primarily involved in economic negotiations, reporting, dealing with the international organizations, Turkey's external policy?

NETTLES: Correct, Turkey was the third largest U.S. recipient of economic assistance and we did the economic analysis to justify that. There was no AID mission in Turkey so we had that responsibility. Also, we did such things in Turkey as the negotiations for a tax treaty. And as Turkey developed, we began to have the normal trade problems which one would expect and which are inevitable.

Q: I think one of the exciting things for you, I think, Clay, in this period we are talking about which is basically over 10 years - you were gone about three in the middle - is that

Turkey went from being a basket case economically or at least perceived as being one to being a success story. A success for Turkey, but for the international community as well that supported it.

NETTLES: That's right. The classical example that if you do what the textbooks say, the result can work out. I think it is also important to point out that Turkey has a large educated population at every level - not just from technocrats, but good mechanics.

Q: Would you want to comment on the economic significance of the Turkish workers abroad over the decade or so that you were involved with Turkey?

NETTLES: Well, in the early stages, their economic importance to Turkey was very important because of the foreign exchange earnings which they sent home.

Q: They were mainly in Germany, correct?

NETTLES: When I first arrived. Then for political and economic reasons the Germans basically stopped issuing visas for anyone to work within Germany. On the other hand, those that were there could stay so the level remained more or less constant. But, Turkey, as I mentioned earlier, became very active in the Middle East and Libya. There were tens of thousands of Turks working in Libya and Saudi Arabia and these people were there without their families, unlike in Germany, where many had their families with them. Even those in Germany would send money, but those without their families would send 90 per cent of their earnings home, so the foreign exchange continued to be a significant item for the Turkish balance of payments, but the composition changed.

Q: Had other sources of foreign exchange earnings increased in importance - tourism certainly did?

NETTLES: And, certainly manufactured exports did. Carpets were about the only manufactured exports when I first arrived in Turkey, but later there was a broad variety of exports.

Q: The tourism, the facilities had significantly increased? The number of arrivals of tourists from Europe had gone way up, I think.

NETTLES: Correct, it had become very important. One must remember, too, that unlike the Caribbean where most of the food is imported, (most of the food that the tourists eat in Turkey, the construction materials that are used to build the hotels) the food is grown in Turkey and the majority of the hotels used mostly local materials. Tourism was much more important than it would be in the Caribbean where the tourists that go there buy souvenirs that are usually made in Hong Kong or someplace. Relatively little of local content other than labor is provided in the Caribbean, whereas in Turkey, the expenditures made by tourists largely remain in Turkey.

Q: You talked about in your second tour traveling extensively throughout the country. I

know you always have been and still are a great traveler, Clay. Did you travel in the region outside of Turkey or did you pretty much confine your travels within Turkey itself?

NETTLES: Well, I traveled extensively and I think that I mentioned that twice a year there would be a meeting in Paris with OECD and also there would be a meeting on debt rescheduling and I was fortunate to be a member of the U.S. delegation for that.

Q: Did you ever go to Cyprus from Ankara?

NETTLES: No, I didn't. I would have liked to, but at that time it was very difficult. The Greek/Cypriot government did not appreciate the people from Ankara going there and it was discouraged. I have been there, but only from Beirut.

Q: What else should we be talking about in terms of these ten years in Turkey? I feel like we haven't done justice yet. To have a foreign service assignment of that length is very unusual and essentially in the same capacity. Although I'm sure the problems changed, the economy changed as you said. Do you think it was too long or was it ok?

NETTLES: It always, of course, depends upon the individual. As you know, I was there for five years my second time and, as you know, five years is the maximum consecutive time that you can stay in one place. I have been told by Personnel that it becomes more and more difficult to be objective so five years is the arbitrary cutoff point.

Q: Did you feel that was a problem for you?

NETTLES: Not for me, for I was certainly still enjoying it up to the time I left. I remember my first assignment though in Japan if we can go back to that. The wife of the British consul general in Yokohama said, "How do you feel about leaving Japan?" I said, "I hate to go, but I'm looking forward to my next assignment." That was the way I felt about Turkey. I was still enjoying it, but I was looking forward to something different. I have seen, and I'm sure you have too, people who stay too long in one place and become a little bitter. Certainly, I didn't feel that way. I will say this. It probably was not good for me or rather "not good for my career" to stay that long, but I've never worried about my career. What was more important to me was to do something which I enjoyed and I was enjoying my time in Turkey. I felt I was doing something useful and constructive which again is the reason I enjoyed it. That's more important.

Q: Well Turkey is a very large complicated country and I'm sure you were always learning new things and asking questions right up until the last day.

NETTLES: That's right, but, as you know, to get ahead in the Foreign Service, one has to do a good job and one has to be lucky to a certain extent and do certain things in preparation. To that extent I meant it wasn't good for my career to stay in one job too long. Had I wanted to be promoted, probably my chances would have been better had I stayed in Surinam as DCM for example, but I didn't choose to do that. That was a choice which I do not regret.

Q: You certainly had many Turkish friends and you value and appreciate their culture and history, as you say.

NETTLES: I do. There would be something wrong with one if you spent eight years of your life in one place and didn't make friends there. I have tried to continue friendships, have been back to Turkey, and I have also been active in the Turkish/American Association here in the States which is one of the largest of the bi-national organizations.

Q: We talked a little about the Turkish military organization in terms of their heritage of Ataturk and the fact that they have intervened on several occasions when the legacy of Ataturk was in jeopardy in their opinion. U.S. military assistance has been important as you said. The U.S. military is in Turkey in a large way. Would you want to say anything about your relationship with the military in Turkey or your perception of the importance of the geopolitical or military point of view of Turkey?

NETTLES: Yes, when I was there those eight years, we worked very closely with the U.S. military. I was very impressed with what they did. They didn't try to do anything without full concurrence of the ambassador and Washington, of course. It was the right kind of a relationship which it is always hoped will occur. Certainly, I was never aware of an instance where full cooperation did not exist. Conditions have changed dramatically since I was there with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Turkey was considered the southern bastion of NATO. Today they don't even have a border with the Soviet Union. Plus, Turkey was extremely important as a listening station and the U-2s, as you know, operated out of there. Today, with a different type of satellite technology, Turkey does not have that position either so its value to the U.S. has changed.

Q: It's still significant because of its geographic position vis-a-vis the Middle East, Africa and Russia.

NETTLES: And after us, they still have the second largest army in NATO. With the breakup of the Soviet Union though and the emergence of other countries in the area, the Turkish role is different - perhaps equally or more important, certainly different.

Q: We've talked about military assistance being high during this period you were there after the end of the embargo of military assistance relating to the events of Cyprus and so on. U.S. Defense contractors or suppliers must have been very evident, because we were supplying quite a bit of equipment to the Turkish military. Did you work closely with them or did they work more with the MAG or the military people?

NETTLES: We worked very closely with the people who were building planes, specifically the F-16 and they had a lot of problems. We helped them to a certain extent. They, of course, worked very closely with the military. They were the only military people with whom we were involved on a day-to-day basis. One of the main reasons why we worked so closely with them was because of the offset agreement. In return for Turkish U.S. military purchases, the U.S. company agreed to make certain purchases of

Turkish goods, services and we were able to assist them with that - not directly, but by giving advice and information.

Q: Clay, before you went on your first assignment to Turkey, you had six weeks of Turkish language instruction at the Foreign Service Institute. You, at that point, probably didn't think you'd be in country for eight years. How was your Turkish at the end of the time and did you get to the point that you could use it fairly extensively?

NETTLES: Oh, yes. When I was there, I was very pleased to find that it hadn't deteriorated significantly. When I returned after three years in the U.S. I could converse on a basic level with anyone in Turkey. Turkish is very similar to Japanese. Many people claim that they are actually related. Both languages are easy to speak the basic language but extremely difficult to become fluent.

Q: Anything else about Turkey we should talk about?

NETTLES: Not really, since I have left, there are many problems in Turkey today. For example, the Prime Minister has been forced from office by the military because he was from the religious right. One of the problems of Turkey is that they have often had coalition governments and coalition governments can lead to unfortunate situations at certain times. It's regrettable that you see these problems today persisting as before.

Q: That Prime Minister Erbakan was in government before the time you were there. Did you ever have any encounters or experience with him? What he stood for even then was a stronger Islamic element certainly in government. Was that something people talked about when you were there or is that something that came later?

NETTLES: Of course, the people I dealt with were business people or professors or government people. They prided themselves as being secular. They said that they tended to think of the people on the religious right as the poor country people, but they said they would never come to power in Turkey. In every election up until recently, the religious parties had won no more than eight per cent, I believe, of the vote.

Q: Not even in the last election where they have come to share power, it was only a little over 20 percent.

NETTLES: Correct. Turkish friends of mine say that the strength of the religious right has come at the expense of left of center parties. The religious right party has provided social services which historically was done by the major leftist party, basically left of center.

Q: And that was true in cities like Istanbul?

NETTLES: Yes.

Q: Okay, have we done Turkey?

NETTLES: I think so. One could spend many years there which I did, but I think for our purposes we have.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you left?

NETTLES: Mort Abramowitz was ambassador when I left. I served under him for approximately a year.

Q: Robert Strausz-Hupé - let's say a few words about him. He was well along in years when he was ambassador, but still very actively interested in everything?

NETTLES: Yes, and I thought did a very good job. He is in his 90s now and I see him from time to time. He lives in Pennsylvania, but he still comes down occasionally to Washington. I understand he has recently written another book. Should one live to be that age, I would hope to be as active mentally as he is.

Q: I've read a memoir by Ambassador Jim Spain which I don't think has been published. This goes back to an earlier period particularly right after the military intervention in 1980. As I recall, he argues that the embassy felt very strongly that the United States should be very supportive of the military continuation of the economic program and that there was some resistance of the State Department in Washington. I was involved in the State Department in Washington at that time and I don't remember that resistance. It seems to me that we were very much on the same wave link. For the reasons, as you mentioned before, felt that it was a very correct action, very popular within Turkey and that it would probably be limited in time and as long as it was not repressive of individual liberties and was a continuation of good economic policies, it was worthy of understanding and support. So if the embassy was pushing in that direction, they were pushing on an open door, there was no resistance. I'm not asking you to particularly comment on the ambassador's views which you haven't read, but does all that I have said sound more or less right to you?

NETTLES: Correct. I was economic counselor and twice a week I would have been in Country Team meetings where these types of problems would have been discussed. I do not recall any such opposition from Washington being mentioned at those meetings.

Q: Well, you had a very rich experience and you talked about it in terms of your career. I guess it is true that if you did one thing for too long, that from a career progression point of view, it is not necessarily seen as the best thing for you, but I can see in terms of the importance of Turkey and the real content of what was happening during the eight years you were involved, there was a lot of good things to look back on and to have contributed to in a very meaningful and significant way.

NETTLES: Thank you, Ray, I certainly enjoyed it. I think it might be appropriate to mention that I did talk about my career. I retired 36 years to the day after entering the State Department. Today, it would be impossible to stay that long in the State Department

with the kind of a career that I had. The State Department has become more like the military system: up and out. So no one could expect to stay as many years as an economic counselor as I did. To serve as many years as I, one would have to be a DCM and then become ambassador. That would be the only way you could do it. I think that is unfortunate that the normal career is now 23-24 years. To a certain extent, I'm a creature of the past.

Q: I would agree with the comment you just made. I think the other aspect of staying eight years in one location even though it was broken up by a period away, the good side of it - you enjoyed it, you were able to make a significant contribution, there were enough changes so that I think it was always lively and challenging for you. The other aspect, of course, is not only could one become a little jaded or bored or one could assume they knew it all and no longer had to ask questions and dig into it. I can't imagine that was a problem for you after that period of time.

NETTLES: Thank you and certainly I thought so. Of course, the five years was not automatic. There was a three-year assignment and then two one-year extensions. Of course, that was at my request, but it also had to be approved by the State Department.

Q: And had to have the support of the ambassador and I guess we are talking about a couple of different ambassadors?

NETTLES: Yes.

Q: Where did you go from there, Clay?

NETTLES: I went to Geneva in 1990 as economic counselor at our mission there. Primarily, the mission is for the international organizations which are based in Geneva, mostly United Nations organizations, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Red Cross, and various environmental organizations.

It was a good retirement post. We had good people working in the section. There was enough to do, but it was basically a nine to five job except when there were meetings going on in your area of responsibility. Then you could be very busy and work all night on the weekends. But, I still had a lot of time to travel within Europe. This was my first real European assignment and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Q: Even though Ankara was in the European bureau, Ankara is in Asia Minor. Let's talk a little bit more about the organization of the mission on the economic side in Geneva. The Office of the Trade Representative had an office there too, I believe, that handled GATT and trade negotiations which was not under you or in your section?

NETTLES: Correct, we worked very closely with them. The principle UN agency for which we had responsibility was UNCTAD which is part of the UN General Assembly. It is based in Geneva and it was seen as the UN agency primarily devoted to the developing countries. There would be meetings of all types which, of course, we attended. When the

major meetings occurred, USTR would have a representative there, too, but we had primary responsibility. Unfortunately, UNCTAD had not fulfilled its early promise. It had a very low reputation.

Q: A very low reputation with whom?

NETTLES: With everyone. To give a good example of that, every four years there would be a meeting of UNCTAD almost always outside Geneva where major issues would be discussed. However, it was very difficult to find a developing country who would host such a meeting. It took five years instead of four until Colombia finally agreed to host a meeting.

When I arrived, the ambassador at our mission there, who was very capable, said, "UNCTAD is a very ineffective organization. We have withdrawn from ECOSOC because it was not effective and it was wasteful. Should we do the same for UNCTAD?" I said, "First of all, we can't withdraw from it completely because it is a body of the UN General Assembly, so we would still have to pay our contribution for it. Secondly, tactics are very important. If UNCTAD collapses, it shouldn't be seen as the fault of the Americans so since we have this major meeting coming up in a year, we should have a major campaign to persuade not just the developed countries, but the developing countries that if we don't have fundamental reforms of UNCTAD, then UNCTAD will just be a travesty - a joke." Washington supported this view. The U.S. government worked very hard and tried to persuade others, especially the developing countries that UNCTAD had to be reformed if it was going to be an effective organization. Our efforts paid off. We met for a month in Cartagena, Colombia and were able to accomplish significant reforms within UNCTAD, much more than I thought would be possible. It was an ideal way to end one's service, feeling that one had accomplished something.

Q: And, you really had a game plan, a strategy that you had developed at the Mission in Geneva? It probably couldn't have been developed say in Washington, because there probably wasn't that much interest in UNCTAD, or nobody really had the time or energy to think it through. You were able to do that because you were on the scene and got the support of the ambassador. Who was the ambassador?

NETTLES: Maurice Abrams was the ambassador. I want to give full credit to IO, the International Organization bureau within the State Department. They took UNCTAD very seriously and they gave full support, particularly Melinda Kimball who was the DAS and who actually headed our delegation in Cartagena. I gave the initial idea, but Washington supported it fully. Much of the work, if you were going to get other countries involved, had to be done outside of Geneva by demarches in foreign capitals and, of course, IO had to be the one to draft those demarches. That went on for a full year.

Q: What was the position of the Secretary General of UNCTAD? Was he resisting changes and reforms to make it a more effective and efficient organization?

NETTLES: Not really, but he was a somewhat of a controversial figure which as you

know he was a Ghanian. He was a likeable person, but he had a different constituency. He had the U.S. advocating reforms and many developing countries resisting - very similar to the situation in the UN General Assembly. He was a capable individual, and once he had the developing countries themselves pushing for basic reforms, he could work with the different groups. He was very good in that sense, but he was not a natural leader. He was not an improvisor, but a capable individual and certainly likeable.

Q: When we talk about reform, not just of UNCTAD, but of the United Nations system as a whole, I think one of the proposals that we've made or perhaps the Secretary General of the United Nations has made or has been encouraged to make is to consolidate some of the economic functions of the UN system. I think some of those economic functions included UNCTAD - I'm not sure what else, ECOSOC, UNIDO, maybe, and to pull all those functions together. Is there a lot of duplication and overlap, would you say from your experience?

NETTLES: Not a great deal of overlap I don't think, but, for example, ECOSOC used to meet every year in Geneva and, of course, we would have a great deal of responsibility for that. We changed it to every other year, but there is no reason why we should meet in Geneva or any place outside of New York. There was some duplication, but duplication is not the major problem with the UN in economic functions.

Q: What is the major problem, would you say?

NETTLES: Unrealistic expectations of developing countries. Too often, the developing countries want the UN to do things or draft some resolution which the developed counties, particularly the U.S., are not willing to do.

Q: Or, even if a resolution is adopted over, say the vote of the United States, or even with our abstention, does it change anything?

NETTLES: I think our goal that the OECD should be the role model for UNCTAD. The OECD is an organization which has no real power per se. It cannot force a country to do anything, but, because of its technical research and the respect it has, when they issue guidelines which are agreed upon by everybody, these are accepted. It is a meaningful organization. We felt that this should be the model for UNCTAD and for UN economic organizations in general.

Q: This was your only assignment in the area of multilateral diplomacy, although you had gone to many OECD meetings and maybe others when you were in the Economic Bureau? What kind of observation would you have about that dimension of our diplomacy? Is it something you enjoyed or would you have liked to do more or probably less or no more?

NETTLES: I did enjoy it, but I prefer bilateral work. I'm glad the bulk of my service was bilateral as opposed to multilateral work.

Q: Where you could deal with real people about real problems, but where, not only, you could report, but sometimes exercise influence?

NETTLES: Right.

Q: What else about Geneva - anything else or does that pretty well wrap it up?

NETTLES: I think that pretty well wraps it up.

Q: I think you retired in Geneva?

NETTLES: I should add one thing - we were also, the Economic Section, had the responsibility for the environmental organizations based in Geneva.
Q: The United Nations Environmental Program is based in Nairobi, I think. What sort of organizations or meetings are you talking about that took place in Geneva?

NETTLES: There were about 15 different environmental organizations based in Geneva.

Q: Did you have any presidential visits or other major visits while you were there?

NETTLES: Yes, but none that affected me directly, but the President came so often that I was told that it was the only mission to which the Department did not send an advance team.

We did have a visit from then Senator Gore who was very interested and came because of his environmental concerns. One of the people working for me was his "control officer" and spent three days with him and he came to a Country Team meeting. He was very persuasive in what he had to say about his environmental concerns.

Q: Did you get involved with the Swiss government or Swiss officials or things in Geneva other than the international organizations?

NETTLES: None with the Swiss government per se, but the Swiss, although not a member of the UN itself, are members of various UN organizations. They assign some of their top officers to these organizations and I worked very closely with some of them.

Q: Geneva is a very expensive city, but did you enjoy living there?

NETTLES: Yes I did, but, as you know, the State Department has a system of providing a cost of living allowance which supposedly equalizes it to the cost of living in Washington, DC. I thought that worked very well.

Q: Okay, and in 1993 you retired in Geneva, because you wanted to travel in Europe a little bit more?

NETTLES: Exactly, and I spent a month traveling and staying in Spain and Portugal. By

car and a month traveling by train in Austria and Italy.

Q: And, you say it was actually to the day 36 years after you entered the Service in 1957 that you retired? Is there anything else we should say to wrap up your whole career - this has been a career interview?

NETTLES: I would say that if I were giving advice to anyone who is thinking of coming into the Foreign Service, do something that interests you. Don't worry too much about your career, because who knows what might happen, rules can change, you can be lucky and unlucky. But, you should enjoy what you are doing - and to enjoy something, you have got to feel that you are doing something which is worthwhile. Also, have outside interests. For example, I'm an amateur historian. If you enjoy what you are doing whether you become ambassador or not, you will have had an enjoyable experience and that is what life is all about.

Q: Thank you very much, Clay, that's a good last word and maybe we'll stop at that point. Thank you and I've enjoyed talking to you.

NETTLES: And, I've enjoyed it as well.

End of interview