The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral Project

ELIZABETH SPIRO CLARK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Okay. Today is the 12th of June, 2011. This is an interview with Elizabeth Spiro Clark. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by Betsy, is that right?

CLARK: Yes, we should.

Q: Okay. Betsy, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

CLARK: I was born in 1937 in New York City.

Q: I see. Okay, you want to tell me- Let's start- Your maiden name is?

CLARK: Was Petersen.

Q: Petersen. Do you want to tell me sort of on your father's side, where did the Petersens come from and what do you know about their background?

CLARK: Well the Petersens- my father's father's family- came most recently to America of any of my ancestors and they came from a small village near the border between Germany and Denmark called Upper Husum. At various points in its history it was under Germany or under Denmark.

Q: It's like Schleswig-Holstein?

CLARK: Yes, Schleswig-Holstein. And my great-grandfather came over and worked in the steel mills in what was then about to be called, I think, East Chicago, Indiana. He worked all his life there and had nine children, of which my grandfather, Hans Petersen, was one. He became a very prominent businessman in East Chicago. He had a grocery store. My father went to the public schools in East Chicago. He was very bright and he went off to DePauw University, where he did very well. He went to the University of Michigan Law School, where he also was an outstanding student. He didn't want to stay in the Middle West and he managed, and I think this is probably in his mind almost his biggest achievement in his life, to talk himself into Cravath, Swaine & Moore law firm in New York City. So he moved east.

My mother came from a small town in southern Indiana and her ancestors came over to the United States very early, to Virginia and to Rhode Island, her branch of the Virginia family moving up to Hopkinsville, Kentucky. My grandmother, Roberta Green, was born in Hopkinsville. She married a man from Vincennes, Indiana, named Edwyn Watts. So her maiden name was Watts. The Watts side of the family fought in the North in the Civil War and my mother's mother's side, the Green side, fought on the South. Like my father my mother also moved East and also went to DePauw where she met my father but they didn't really know each other well in college before they both moved East. She came to Washington and worked for the Department of Agriculture.

Both my parents were partly driven by the Depression eastward. This was especially true of my mother, whose father was an engineer on the railroad who lost his work during the Depression. My parents met up again and married. I was born in New York City, where my father was working as a lawyer. My father then moved to Washington in 1940 because he had a powerful mentor named Grenville Clark. Clark recommended him to lead the drafting of the Selective Service Act, as Clark was strongly for American engagement in the Second World War, for which the Act would be needed. My father came to the War Department and worked for a man named Judge Patterson, first as assistant to Judge Patterson and then finally when Patterson moved up to be Secretary of War he became Assistant Secretary of war. So I lived in Washington for those years, from age three to 10. In '47 we moved to a suburb of Philadelphia, Radnor, and my father became president of the Fidelity Bank. For seven years I lived on Mainline Philadelphia, going to a small girls school and before I went away to college, which was Radcliffe, which was a very important event in my life.

Q: Well let me talk about- When you- Was Philadelphia when you first sort of became aware of your surroundings and all or was Washington?

CLARK: No, not Washington definitely.

Q: Alright, where in Washington as a young-?

CLARK: Well where I lived first, and even before I have some memories from New York -- playing in the park. In Washington I first lived in Alexandria, Virginia, and I very much remember the old cobblestone street I walked up to go to the old movie theater -t still there -- and to get ice cream cones. I went to St. Agnes School and I have quite clear memories of the playground and classroom. And then we moved to where I live today, Cleveland Park. Then I lived on the corner of Fulton and 34th Place. I went to Beauvoir and then one year at National Cathedral School for Girls.

Q: Well let's talk about-

CLARK: Just to back up I was very conscious of what my father was doing, even though he was never around. He was going on some great missions to Germany or the Far East but I was very conscious and identified with how his involvement in the rest of the world was. My best friend in Cleveland Park was the daughter of the Norwegian ambassador.

So for those Washington years I was very, very young but very aware of what we would call foreign service.

Q: Well let's see; '37. So by the time we got into the war you were about five or so and did you- did World War II leave an impression on you at all?

CLARK: I have to say only via things that my mother would say: you have to come inside, you can't play outside; Roosevelt the President has just died or, don't play in front of the house around the corner -- that was John L. Lewis' house. I mean, I took him to be a scary figure. But I have to say that I don't have too much memory of the war except for the fact that my father was away and for the few times when I was taken in to the newly built Pentagon, which of course was wildly impressive with all those long corridors -- that made a big impression.

Q: Did- Where did your family fit politically or were they apolitical?

CLARK: Oh no. They weren't apolitical. My father was, I want to say, a militantly moderate Republican -- Rockefeller and Jacob Javits or Hugh Scott kind of Republican. And when we moved to Philadelphia I think it was a bit of a shock to him to find out that there Republicans were far right Republicans because he certainly wasn't in that mold. As for the Democrats, he had one uncle who was a Democrat and who was a socialist. I think there was a hangover of a real fear and concern about socialism coming out of the era of the Depression and the '40s too, I guess. I mean that it was considered a real concern. So he would have been antipathetical to the Democratic Party, I think, for that reason.

My mother's side, she was a Republican but her mother, my grandmother, was a staunch Democrat because she believed that Roosevelt had saved the farmer, it was his New Deal. My grandfather was an engineer and he worked on the railroads but she owned a farm on the banks of the Wabash and some years it was flooded and of course they didn't get any money from it. Roosevelt saved them so she was a very strong Democrat. So it was an interesting political background but, having grown up in a rather social environment on the Philadelphia Main Line I will tell this one story about the election when Adlai Stevenson war running, what year was that?

Q: It was '52.

CLARK: Okay, '52. I wrote an essay. We were all asked, in this little girls school, to write an essay about the election and I said well it's a great tribute that two such distinguished Americans are running for president, you know, this was considered quite wild to say anything good about Adlai Stevenson.

And also when MacArthur was fired I can remember thinking that Truman was quite right to fire and defending that decision and for that I was called "Commie Petersen." That was my nickname for awhile in this girls school. So those were sort of some of the-

Q: Which gifs school would this be?

CLARK: Agnes Irwin was the name.

Q: This brings up were you aware of religion, or what religion and was it part of your life or not?

CLARK: Well I was brought up as an Episcopalian but I think my father had been a Congregationalist and became an Episcopalian, mostly to please my mother. Additionally, we lived in a big house on a 12 acre property in Radnor. The little Episcopal church, St. Martins, was right across the street. So we belonged to St. Martins.

I have to say that my parents were pretty nominal in their religious observance and I'm an anomaly in a funny way because I've been incredibly church going all my life, because I sing. That's been a big part of my life. Way before I joined the Foreign Service I was a semi-professional opera singer. Because I was always singing in church choirs of various kinds, I went to church.

Q: Alright, well let's- You were in Philadelphia from when to when?

CLARK: '47 to '54, right.

Q: So you were 10, 10 to?

CLARK: To 17.

Q: Seventeen.

CLARK: I went to college a little early.

Q: Where- You went- This was in Philadelphia?

CLARK: Outside Philadelphia.

Q: So you, I mean, you went to a private school. What was the school like?

CLARK: Well this was a girls school. I think every single one of my small class of 36, came out at a debutante party. We were -- I wasn't but the school was -- very into girls' sports, like field hockey and lacrosse. That was a big thing in terms of the respect that you got from your fellow classmates -- your grades and academic achievement less so. One did get some credit for having done well academically at school. We had some good teachers and the education must have been pretty good. I did extremely well on my SATs and that sort of thing.

Q: What sports were you-?

CLARK: I wasn't interested in sports.

Q: Oh my God.

Well okay, let's-

CLARK: I developed an interest in swimming because I spent my summers in Bermuda and I lived in the water and later in my life I took up scuba diving.

Q: Starting from an early age were you much of a reader?

CLARK: Huge reader.

Q: Do you recall any of the early books that you particularly liked?

CLARK: Well, at about age 12 "Gone With the Wind". I was fairly precocious in terms of picking up heavy books. From when I started reading I remember I read every story about animals I could get my hands on: "Call of the Wild," "Black Beauty," all of the animal stories. I also read James Fennimore Cooper. I must have read all of the standard, early childhood books.

In terms of school I remember liking science my senior year. I also being given a book of Socrates dialogues in my senior year. That just blew my mind. I started off at college in philosophy and I think I always had that inclination. In terms of reading I continued to would go and read in waves. The year I was in London, 1967-68 I read all of Charles Dickens for example.

Q: Well of course you were- This was sort of pre-television pretty much, wasn't it? Or television wasn't the-

CLARK: Well television is actually a very vivid memory. I picked up on my father's political views. I think we bought a television set specifically to see the McCarthy hearings which I vividly remember. My father was extraordinarily anti-McCarthy mostly because of his attack on General Marshall.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: I was very aware of that. So I was quite conscious of television and when we did get it I loved some of the early series -- the westerns and the comedy, "Your Show of Shows," with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca. I loved all of that.

Q: How about movies? Were you much of a movie goer?

CLARK: I loved movies too when I finally got to them.

Q: Can you think of any movies that particularly were fun for you?

CLARK: Well the first two I saw; one of them was a Bob Hope movie, "Monsieur Beaucaire," and the other one was "Lassie Come Home."

Q: Oh yes, with Roddy McDowall and Lassie.

CLARK: Made a huge impression on me. My father had a great sense of humor. One of the things I would have read from very early on were humorists like James Thurber -- all of James Thurber. And so I liked the comedies, I liked Bob Hope, I liked-

Q: Danny Kaye, I guess.

CLARK: Danny Kaye, yes indeed, Danny Kaye; and musicals, from a very early age. I can't remember how old I was -- probably 13 -- when I saw a great road show of "Oklahoma" in Philadelphia and that was a seminal moment for me. I actually saw "South Pacific" in New York with Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, and that was a great moment too.

Q: Was Philadelphia a place where you went downtown a lot?

CLARK: Never.

Q: I mean, you know, kids who live in Brooklyn, I ask them about going down into New York but with Philadelphia I don't- They've got a great art-

CLARK: I shouldn't say never. I did go to the Art Museum. We're speaking about my childhood now, because I did come back to Philadelphia in 1965 with my first husband, Herbert Spiro, and lived downtown in Society Hill. It's turned out that I have lived in cities pretty much my entire adult life. I count Cleveland Park as living in the city. And so the Art Museum became much more a part of my life at that point.

Q: If you weren't much- you didn't really care for sports how did you survive in school?

CLARK: Well, it's not like today where you can't get into college unless you've managed to knock off a few sports trophies. I did whatever I had to do. I can't remember which sports I did but it wasn't something I was interested in and as I say, very much except for swimming, it took awhile in my adult life before I began to get more interested in sports like tennis for example.

Q: Where'd you get your news when you were in Philadelphia?

CLARK: I'm thinking back, I suppose the answer is when we got a television set. I'm sure everybody my age has mentioned being glued to the Saturday morning programs for kids. The names are going out of my mind right now; "Let's Pretend," all of these radio programs. So I may have gotten some news from the radio but I don't think so.

Q: How about newspapers?

CLARK: I- For my childhood, before I went to college, I don't remember getting up in the morning and reading the newspaper.

Q: Well then, you went to Radcliffe because Radcliffe, I mean, essentially you're going to Harvard but-

CLARK: Well essentially indeed, and I should make a point here. People think that I'm being boring about this. but it was co-educational. Radcliffe had no faculty; all of our classes were with Harvard. At that time our diploma was signed by the Radcliffe President but countersigned by the Harvard President. Our education was entirely a Harvard education.

Q: Well you were there from when to when?

CLARK: Fifty-four to '58, and I did have a very intense extracurricular life as a singer. Because they needed girls I sang leads in Gilbert and Sullivan for four years and in other musicals -- in the Harvard houses -- and also in the Radcliffe Choral Society, and we did joint concerts with Harvard, including performing in Tanglewood. It was a very dramatic, wonderful experience for me to sing Bach B Minor Mass with Charles Munch. It was just a fabulous experience.

But because my interests, extracurricular interests, were all integrated with the Harvard boys I wasn't aware of all of the ways in which the Radcliffe girls were not full and equal citizens. I mean, if you were a writer you couldn't write for the "Harvard Crimson." You had to write for something called the "Radcliffe News" or whatever it was called that nobody read. I missed that because what I wanted to do I wasn't stopped from doing.

Q: Yes. My wife, born '34, and she was in the freshman dorm with another freshman named Gloria Steinem.

CLARK: Oh great, great.

Q: This was during the high Eisenhower period, wasn't it? And the colleges were relatively devoid of real protests and all that, weren't they at that time or not?

CLARK: I was very conscious that the big men on campus were famous for being the head of the Harvard dramatic club, for example; sports were absolutely nothing. People laughed about Harvard getting defeated by Yale 59 to zero or something extraordinary like that The arts were very important, as well as academic achievement. But whenever something came across the horizon that was related to the bigger world, I took it in -- for example when Sputnik went up in '57. I was aware of this "bigger world" lack, and this is related to why I would want to go into the Foreign Service. I was looking around. This is kind of a long story I don't think I need to tell.

Q: Well tell it.

CLARK: Harvard has this tutorial system if you're going out for honors so you're one on one with a tutor you have been assigned to. I changed from philosophy to government because I'd been assigned a tutor, who happened to be Chinese American. He was a philosopher who didn't want to have anything to do with talking to a Radcliffe female -- I didn't think to go and complain -- so he never saw me. He just opened the door to sign my study card and then closed the door quickly on me. I didn't like this so I switched to the government department. Partly I am sure because of my awareness of my father's career, I wanted to find out something about the rest of the world. I was looking around for courses about some country other than countries in Western Europe, and there was one small seminar called "Influence of the West on Underdeveloped Countries." There were nine of us, all sitting far apart from each other so and we didn't bond. I was the only girl. The seminar was taught by a man named Guy Pauker and it covered Nigeria, Indonesia, Mexico and Romania. That was a very exciting moment for me. I was very interested, and nobody else seemed to be interested.

Now that's a different subject from being politically involved with protest movements and the like. I don't think I was aware of protest movements until I was at Amherst as a faculty wife immediately after I left college. But I was aware of it when an explicitly foreign policy meeting was called by a friend of mine on the U.S. invasion of Lebanon. What year was that?

Q: That was '58, I think.

CLARK: Fifty-eight. So it was my senior year.

Q: Yes, I was in Dhahran at the time.

CLARK: Right. I remember thinking, this is the first meeting called at Harvard on a foreign affairs or political subject, on what kind of position should we take, etc., etc. I was very energized by that. Of course when I graduated from college you moved pretty quickly into the feminism and if you moved as I did to a college campus. Most importantly, I went around the world, just incidentally, in '59-'60. with my then-husband. Herb was a professor and got all kinds of grants to go study the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Q: Was he a professor at Harvard?

CLARK: He was. He didn't get but Amherst college offered him tenure. After we got back from Africa he was still at Harvard. We took three months to get ourselves to Africa via Tokyo, where one of his Harvard tutees, Tatsuo Arima, who ended up as a Japanese ambassador to Germany, lived. He took us all around Japan for a week. We then went to Cambodia and we saw Angkor Wat. Then we went to India and then flew up to Nepal. We then flew to Rhodesia via Uganda, Kenya -- game parks and all. I mean this was the around-the-world tour. It was absolutely fabulous.

Q: But this is- Let's go to the time you were at Harvard and studying. In the first place, I have to ask because I was the class of '50-

CLARK: At Harvard?

Q: No, at Williams.

CLARK: Oh, my husband, as you know, was from ___.

Q: And I sort of- the Sexual Revolution, including the pill and all that, came just sort of thereafter so I missed the whole damn- my era, we missed the whole thing; we were all married by the time the thing going- I mean-

CLARK: I sort of missed it too.

Q: What?

CLARK: I sort of missed it too.

Q: Yes, well.

CLARK: My friends who were five years younger than I am had a quite different experience because, I don't know, when did the pill come in? I was married and I-

Q: Yes but, well this is, you know, this is the sort of thing after, in the late '50s or something like that I think.

CLARK: Right, right.

Q: But was there much social life then at Harvard?

CLARK: Oh sure. I regret not having more Radcliffe friends because most of my friends were boys. I had a number of boyfriends, but, you know, the Sexual Revolution had not completely happened.

Q: I know. It was, you know, it's hard to describe that world to people today, you know, they don't-

Well, your husband-to-be, were you-

CLARK: He was my tutor.

Q: He was your tutor. Oh my God.

CLARK: Government department.

Q: What was his field in government?

CLARK: Actually Harvard had a very interesting division under your overall field of concentration; they had a sub field of concentration in the government department called "Theory and Comparative," which is what I was in. The others were international relations and American. So they had three sub-specialties within the government department. Herb was in theory and comparative. I was passed on to him by my first tutor who went off to Vietnam His name was Nicholas Wahl. So I accidentally became Herb's tutee and I think he assigned me "Das Kapital" for the first week of tutorial session and that was kind of an eye opener. And it was also an eye opener that you could be critical and critical thinking was something that one was supposed to do. That was the start. I'm a junky for being analytical. That's why political reporting in the foreign service was just down my alley, to mix metaphors, like swimming in my fish pond. I was asked -- actually it wasn't about "Das Kapital," -- about some reading Herb gave me by a very famous writer on American politics. Well, he asked, what did you think of this book? I was being asked to criticize this great man. In my school that was never something that one was asked to be.

Q: You were there, you were at Radcliffe during- the entire time you were there it was the Eisenhower period, wasn't it?

CLARK: Right.

Q: How did you feel about Eisenhower?

CLARK: Well my father had been his finance director before the convention with Taft and so I had earrings that said "Ike." and my father had been a big supporter of Eisenhower over Taft. So we were a pro-Eisenhower family.

Q: Did you find that- Well the McCarthy period, that was during high school, wasn't it?

CLARK: Yes, that was during high school.

Q: So did- The Korean War was over by the time you got involved in-

CLARK: I do remember the Korean War. I have a memory of newspapers but this was with pictures of whatever the battle was, whatever was happening. So I have memories, not so much of the Second World War, but of the Korean War.

Q: How about the Cold War? How did this affect you?

CLARK: That's an interesting question. I'll probably bring up some memories. I felt, I think without any questioning at all, that dictatorship was terrible and I suppose insofar as I got into studying the Soviet Union it was more on the beginnings, on Lenin and the early years of the Russian Revolution. I just found that a fascinating story. And then it

really was a little bit like the Iron Curtain descended. What story was there? It was just all bad. I think a little bit later on I remember the Khrushchev/Kennedy meetings.

Q: In Vienna or-?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: But that was-

CLARK: That was later. No, that wasn't college.

Q: You graduated in fifty-

CLARK: Eight.

Q: Eight. At Harvard at the time did- was race at all, I mean segregation and all, a concern of the students or I mean, was this not particularly pertinent?

CLARK: Well it was very early days. I mean there were very, very few, they weren't called African Americans then, students at Harvard. To go back a little bit I think in growing up in Main Line, Philadelphia, most of the girls that I went to school with would have grown up with parents who were perhaps really overtly racist. You know, would say things. My parents did not. My father, out of feelings from the Second World War, I think, wasn't a racist. Now my mother came from the South and she probably was but I guess it wasn't considered an issue and therefore nothing was ever said. I didn't go to college thinking oh, goodness, goodness, there's a dark skinned person there. Quite the contrary. I think I picked the idea up from my father that we won the Second World War; the world was our oyster, common humanity, we should all learn to love each other or all kinds of very idealistic thoughts in my mind. And therefore it was a little shocking to me that not everyone was like that including my mother. I had a good friend who was Lena Horne's daughter. Her name was Gail Jones in my hall at Radcliffe and I introduced her with great pride to my mother when my mother came up to visit me. I mean, I thought Lena Horne was a celebrity. And my mother hesitated to shake her hand and I was so shocked and outraged. I mean I just hoped Gail hadn't noticed. But I had a number of experiences that made me realize that other people were racist. I mean, if somebody was dating Hal Scott, for example, who was a very pale skinned, I guess I didn't know he was African American. All I knew was that Hal Scott was a big star and someone in the Harvard dramatic club plays and somebody says, "oh, she's dating Hal Scott", as if there was something wrong with that. I couldn't understand what was wrong with dating Hal Scott. That should be a great thing. So I was unbelievably innocent to the point where I didn't even recognize that somebody was a Negro or African American at Harvard so I'm not the right person to ask whether-

Q: Well it gives a feel of the time though. It wasn't something that, you know, sometimes you have these movements that are so strong that you have to either be aware of them or be on one side or the other.

CLARK: No, there were so few African Americans there that it really wasn't.

Q: Hold on just one second.

What about anti-Semitism? How much, sort of in your social circle how- both in Philadelphia and then when you went to Harvard, how much was this a factor?

CLARK: Well my first husband was Jewish, a Jewish German refugee from the Nazis and that's kind of a big thing for a Mainline Philadelphia girl. But again take my father; some of his best friends in the War Department were Jewish and he was really not anti-Semitic and my mother, for an odd sort of reason, wasn't either. In her small town in southern Indiana one of the town's most respectable and notable families happened to be Jewish. So she didn't bring a lot of baggage. It was only very gradually that I realized how fiercely anti-Semitic the culture in the social Mainline Philadelphia was.

Now in terms of Harvard, I found myself dating, maybe by accident, almost exclusively Jewish Harvard students because they were just somewhat more interesting than these boring WASPs I'd grown up with who liked to talk about cars and sports. I just found them much more attractive. They tended to be more in the theater world, I was in the theater world. Now, it's true that my biggest boyfriend was Irish and came from a poor Irish Catholic family on Long Island, the post mistress's son. I just seemed to be running away from the kind of social milieu that I had grown up in. I had a couple of dates with St. Paul's types and so on and so forth but I had a very pro Semitic view but I was aware of some facts, for example that Harvard had just lifted the quota on Jewish admissions. I think might possibly have even been '53, '54 or something like that. So I was aware that there was such a thing as anti-Semitism.

And then of course I- one of the most dramatic things, again, great moment in my college career was someone who became a good friend, Sam ___, who taught government at Harvard and he taught a famous course, _____ II, or something, and at the end of _____ II he showed two films, "The Triumph des Willens" of Leni Riefenstahl, and then a liberating concentration camps movie, and I had been sort of auditing the course and came to that session and left halfway into the concentration camp film. But it was a huge shock to me, enormous shock, and I think probably in the bottom of my mind I was going to fight against evil the rest of my life, you know. I'm exaggerating a little bit but it had such a strong effect on me and set me in certain directions although that wasn't why I was dating Jewish guys; I hardly knew they were Jewish guys. I mean that's how innocent those times were in a way, I mean-

One of my boyfriends lived in a very large apartment on Fifth Avenue and I walked into his apartment visiting and there were these portraits on the wall of, you know, men with long beards and I remember thinking to myself, you know, that sort of looks like the Old Testament. You know, maybe Vic is Jewish, you know. I was really that kind of innocent, which was good. I wish everybody was like that.

Q: Yes.

Well now did- My awareness, I used to- I spent quite a bit of time in Beverly Hills as a kid and of course half my friends were Jewish and not at all involved one way or another kind of in movies or something, the entertainment thing and I just knew that certain houses smelled different because the cooking was different. That was my way of differentiating.

But now, did- while you were at Harvard did the Foreign Service ever cross your radar?

CLARK: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think- It wasn't until my senior year. I did have two suitors who both wanted to marry me, including my tutor, but I was thinking, what do I want to do? And at some point and I'm not quite sure what kicked this off, I thought what I would really love to do is work for the UN. Now this is me the, you know, the universalist, open to the world, and I sort of made some preliminary inquiries and it looked like that was going to be a terribly easy thing to do so I, as a second thing I had heard of the Foreign Service and I did make sufficient inquiries to find out that yes, the Foreign Service took women but if you got married you had to resign. So that, I mean I knew I was going to want to get married so that just wiped that out of my mind. And the law school had something like .3 percent of the classes were women at that time, the Harvard Law School, and I wasn't 100 percent- I mean I think what happened is that I had a useful quality but it was sort of self-censorship. I didn't want to be unhappy so I was always looking for this sort of positive track, some, you know, how to make the best of things. So I think I just shut my mind quickly to the Foreign Service when I heard that rule and maybe to the law school when it looked like such a long shot, and also my feeling is that my mother wouldn't have let my father spend money on graduate education for me; I was supposed to get married. And so what I did was marry somebody who I could- who immediately bossed into taking me around the world and sort of in a sense living a little vicariously through. I mean I started writing and doing things but- I'm not quite sure, at quite an early period in my life, adult life, but I did get married in '58 at age 21.

Q: Well where were your classmates at that time from Radcliffe, were they all pretty much getting married?

CLARK: All pretty much except some of them from New York. I was quite aware that New York and they were probably Jewish although I wasn't thinking on those terms, that they were a little bit different. I mean, there was one classmate who wanted to become a professional violinist and went on to do that, moved to Canada and I lost touch with her. There was another girl in my hall which, what we called them, who wanted to be a doctor and she did go on and did that. But honestly, that's two of 50 people so I think the dominant idea was that you were going to get married.

Q: Well then, let's talk about your first husband. His name was what Spiro?

CLARK: Herbert Spiro.

Q: What was his background?

CLARK: He grew up in Hamburg, Germany. He was, as he always boasted about, first in Ville Gymnasium. He was allowed to go to a school that wasn't just for Jews because his father had been in the First World War and was decorated so there were exceptions made for Jews to go- for that small handful of Jews with that kind of background. So he went- They left after Kristallnacht in '38 and went to San Antonio, Texas, and I think with the exception of one grandmother they all got out, the family all got out.

And then, he must have been absolute dynamite. In San Antonio, Texas, he was sent out around to talk to other schools about the situation in Germany and so forth and then he joined the army and he was an interrogator of prisoners of war and had some incredible stories to tell about that. And then on the GI Bill of Rights he went to Harvard and he graduated Summa Cum Laude and immediately went into, on the, you know, professoriate track, although he did not get tenure. So he was extremely bright and extremely difficult person. But totally intellectually stimulating so it was something that was, you know, many, many pluses about our marriage in addition to our two terrific children. And he himself was in the Foreign Service for awhile as a political appointee.

Q: Yes, where-?

CLARK: And he was ambassador to Cameroon and he was in policy planning staff so we moved down here in1970 and until a change in administration he chose, well he made the choice to go out to Cameroon as ambassador rather than convert into the regular career service, as Armacost did, who I worked for. So he was a- And we had two wonderful sons, have two wonderful sons. He was older than I was and-

Q: Born in 1924.

CLARK: Right. Oh, you just looked- He died recently.

Q: I interviewed him.

CLARK: Oh you interviewed him.

Q: I mean all this time when you're saying that, particularly- I'm quite sure, yes, yes, yes.

CLARK: You probably did.

Q: Yes. I mean, first in Hamburg, he said he went back to Hamburg after the war and he was well welcomed because he was the first. I mean, he stood first in this- in Germany. I mean, priorities and priorities.

CLARK: Right. And so, you know, Herr Doctor Professor _____. There are more titles there, there was-

Q: Alright well, you went with him, you took this world trip; what's- any place, I mean it was a quick, you know, three months around the world but-

CLARK: No, no, no. It was 14 months because the three months were getting us to Africa where he was, for a year, writing about the Federation of Rhodesian and the Assalam and politics in Africa.

Q: Okay, so what were your impressions and experiences?

CLARK: Well I just loved adventure so that's why the Foreign Service was something that, had I been a man I think I would have certainly tried to join it after I graduated from college. So the adventure part of it was just something I loved and we did all kinds of adventurous things, going off the beaten path and so on.

Q: Well where did you live in Africa?

CLARK: Well we lived in what was then Salisbury, now Harare, but we traveled around a lot because the Federation included what's now Zambia and Malawi so we traveled up to Nyasaland -- Malawi -- and Northern Rhodesia, and to the Copper Belt which was in Northern Rhodesia and from there over to Elizabethville, now Lubumbashi, in the Eastern Congo. We were actually in Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, on Independence Day and saw King Baudouin up close.

Q: Somebody grabbed his sword?

CLARK: That's right. We didn't witness that. We also traveled down to South Africa at the height of apartheid. Herb looked Indian, slightly dark skinned. I don't know where his Indian looks come from. There were one or two incidents where we were not allowed to check in at a certain motel on our way down to Cape Town I am sure because of that fact. He was being turned away. This is coming back to me. But South Africa at that time in the early 60s was bizarre. As you probably know I was assigned there in the mid '80s.

Q: Well did you get any- have any contact with the opponents to the apartheid regime and all?

CLARK: The trip to South Africa was a quick trip so I guess the answer is no. We talked- In these days, in '59, '60, there were a handful of Black African university graduates from the newly integrated University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which had just been established. It did not discriminate against African applicants so you were really just at the beginning of the kind of a transition to an independent country. Herb did talk to classes and to these students.

Q: Well did you get a, I mean were the sort of the Ian Smith crew sort of throwing their weight around when you were there?

CLARK: I guess so. He got more powerful a little bit later. But one of our very good friends was a tobacco farmer. I can still remember his name, Peter Gray. We went out to visit his tobacco farm and I had mixed feelings in those days because I had some real admiration for the pioneer creation of this enterprise and the very hard work for everybody involved. It was also quite romantic. I mean we were there for some party that brought some the white neighboring farmers together at a big dinner party at the Grays. There were drinking games and I was pregnant. I was the only person there not knocking back Aquavit so it was an interesting evening, very interesting evening. We had great fun. But for the Africans at that time, there were so few who were active in any kind of leadership positions.

Q: Then you went to- Where'd you go from there?

CLARK: Well that year we came back via West Africa, making little plane stops all the way up the coast. I think we skipped a few but we spent, I don't know, a week in Lagos and that was interesting too. And so it was an around the world tour because we then spent a couple weeks in Portugal before we came back to Herb's teaching duties.

Q: You went to, what, Amherst? Or was-?

CLARK: Yes, after one more year at Harvard, we went to Amherst for five years.

Q: What was your impression of Amherst at the time as a faculty wife?

CLARK: Well I had very small children and so my life was very much, you know, the English Setter dog and the little children. I lived on the South Amherst Common, which was a kind of idyllic place. So I'd have to say that I was quite positive. I was singing. I was also doing two things one of which has a direct relationship to going in the Foreign Service. I was the public affairs producer at the WFCR, which was this public radio station in Amherst on the Eastern Educational Radio Network. I had an interview program and I interviewed Ian McCloud, the UK Secretary for the Colonies. I interviewed quite a few big names for this program. I got paid per program. So that was fun. I was also very active as a singer in the Amherst Opera Company and doing some directing as well as singing. So I had a really quite a rich life. I did a series on the Adams family correspondence called "Prospect of a Union." I only kept what I needed to get them transcribed; they're reel-to-reel tapes. But it was a 12 part series and I cast it with faculty members from the four-college area. I wrote the script and did the editing and the music and it was a really great series. So I was doing a lot, a lot of different things but all of them quite interesting.

The other thing that put me on a track for the foreign service was the war in Vietnam. Henry Steele Commager was a big name professor at Amherst and he was very anti Vietnam. So that was beginning to steam up and I was very much a part of that anti-war movement.

Q: Well how did that present itself as far as you were concerned?

CLARK: Well I'm trying to remember whether we did anything much. It may have been under the transition because we then moved to Philadelphia. In '65 there was a major march in Washington; might have had to do with the bombing of Cambodia.

Q: Which came later.

CLARK: That was later.

Q: That was '69.

CLARK: Okay, then that's later but I think there was something as early as '65 which I am remembering. I certainly remember being very anti-war. There was a professor at the University of Massachusetts, whose name will come back to me, who had written books about Vietnam. He was an expert. He was the one describing how the North Vietnamese were driven by nationalism. I was really quite shocked because there was such a disjuncture between the American position, which didn't seem to take in account any analysis of the realities of the Vietnamese situation. My position wasn't just mushy, mushy, oh, I don't like torture, although I didn't like torture, but it was also that this was stupid. I took this outrage with me to Philadelphia

Q: Yes.

CLARK: In Amherst civil rights was the big thing on campus. My feeling about the civil rights movement was terribly supportive but I was also questioning who am I, this nice white woman, to want to take a leadership position, and its true I don't want to join any organization I can't feel that I couldn't be a leader of. They should be the leaders. And so I was plotting from the sidelines but never active.

Q: Did you get at all involved, at least on the sidelines, in faculty politics or not?

CLARK: Well. Herb was, you know, the world's most difficult person so I would hear a little bit about the political science department politics. I thought he was probably always right. I was part of the academic picture in that I audited some courses, one at Smith and one at Amherst. But no, I didn't get much into the politics.

Q: How about the Kennedy election? Did that engage you at all or not?

CLARK: Well when I was at Amherst the big election for me was Lyndon Johnson. That engaged me enormously because the threat was Goldwater. And I hung out my bed sheets for Lyndon Johnson, literally. The polling booth was across the South Amherst Common from our house, and I painted a big LBJ on white bed sheets and hung them out the second floor windows. And I liked Johnson very much. The Kennedy election was tricky because my husband was actually for Nixon and I was, I don't know, a deferential wife I guess, but I did have mixed feelings about Kennedy. I pulled back a little bit from the engagement although I very quickly became a non-supporter of Nixon. I became a

Democrat in a way by subterfuge. Here's my husband for Nixon and my father is a Republican. I'm creeping along my way. The Goldwater election was where I tipped over.

Q: Well then you were there for five years. That brings us up to what, about '65 or so?

CLARK: Right, right.

Q: Then what happened?

CLARK: Then I went to Philadelphia. Herb really wasn't happy with the political science department at Amherst. He got a job, a tenured professorship at the University of Pennsylvania so we went down to my old home town, except this time we moved downtown.

Q: So you still had what, two children?

CLARK: Two young children.

Q: Did you have any area while you were basically a housewife and mother but involved in things, watching any particular geographic area like the Middle East or Africa or anything like that of particular interest to you?

CLARK: Well as I said, I had this public radio program, which was totally on large political issues and interviews. The one I mentioned was at WFCR in Amherst and that was also when I did this series on the Adams family. Now coming down to Philadelphia, I didn't find the local public radio station, WHYY, so congenial, plus I was much more serious about singing. Skipping ahead a couple of years to '67-'68, when Herb was on sabbatical at Oxford and we were living in London, I auditioned for and got accepted into the London Opera Center, which was steppingstone or training a school for the Covent Garden opera. What do you call the baseball teams, the minor leagues? That was a thrilling experience from start to finish and a totally full-time involvement. I had what turned out to be notable classmates like Kiri Te Kanawa. So that was a thrilling year.

But I think the way to put it, and probably it's a better way to put it, is that I always had a double track. I was always very interested in and did the singing but also very interested in foreign affairs. A lot of that I was doing through my husband when he was out in Africa but I also did some writing and much commentary on his writing. I can't remember the little outlets for my pieces in Amherst when we came back from Africa and I would write something on African politics. But it was a continual interest of mine, foreign affairs, and I suppose it was when -- and we're jumping ahead a little bit- when I went to Cameroon as the ambassador's wife, as Herb's wife, that it got even more intense. It was while in Cameroon that I wrote an article that was published and got a lot of prominence. A little housewife sitting in Cameroon wrote a piece that was a cover story in a magazine called "World View" entitled "A Paradigm Shift in American Foreign Policy from Self Determination to Human Rights." Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote

a column in "The Wall Street Journal" on my article, identifying me. So I was making an actual contribution to foreign policy. I was in Cameroon as the ambassador's wife but my intense interest in foreign affairs was never far away, except for the year I was at the London Opera Center. That was 100 percent singing.

Q: Alright well let's- You were in the UK from when to when?

CLARK: Sixty-seven to '68.

Q: Did you find yourself up against sort of anti-American involvement in Vietnam feeling at all?

CLARK: Not at the London Opera Center; we were just off on another planet. But had I been in any other kind of involvement I imagine I would have.

Q: How did it work? Was this a training period? Were they throwing you into various productions? What?

CLARK: I was the only American; the rest of the 30 or so singers were English or, in the case of Kiri, from New Zealand and there was one Canadian. I think the Metropolitan Studio was like this in New York as a feeder to the Metropolitan Opera. You're doing fully staged productions, which are getting reviewed in the local newspapers. You are getting language training, physical training to make you stronger so you can stand on great stages. Fencing lessons, you know, as well as coaching, coaching on many roles, not just the one you're singing at that particular moment. It was just a thrilling, intense involvement.

I was in two fully staged productions with important but not leading roles. And then there were recitals. We were taken out in the countryside, did recitals here and there, and one of the recitals was in the equivalent of Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, and so on and so forth. So it was a very exciting. As was about to return to the U.S. I asked the director well, what next when I go back to the United States? And said "well, what will happen is somebody will get sick and the Utah Symphony will ask you to come fill in and then your career will slowly develop. But I had a real, distinct appreciation that my voice -- which could have developed in a different way -- didn't get big enough for Verdi mezzo soprano roles and I didn't get high notes for some of the Rossini mezzo roles. So the only repertoire I was competitive in, maybe, was the French repertoire. And I had two small children and I wasn't going to hop out to Utah, so I gave some recitals in the Philadelphia area and I did some singing in the Washington opera -- small role in Rusalka -- but I basically I backed off in terms of thinking where would I go with this. And that was an important decision.

Q: Well how long were you- I'm surprised that the Brits took you on because it was a limited time that you were going to be there, wasn't it?

CLARK: Well the London Opera Center was a two-year and they did take me on even though I was only going to be there a year, that's true, that's true, they did.

Q: Well then-

CLARK: They put me in the second year class, basically skipping me a grade. They said they would compress my training period. You know, I did some master classes that normally I would have done in the second year, that sort of thing.

Q: Well then you came back in '68-

CLARK: Sixty-eight; the fall of '68.

Q: Then what?

CLARK: Well I did some singing-

Q: You're back in Amherst, aren't you?

CLARK: No, no, this is now Philadelphia. My life didn't have a great focus at least in a professional sense. I was very focused on my children. I may think of some brilliant thing that I wrote or did but those two years before we went to Washington were as I say pretty unfocussed. I was still doing some Public Radio interview programs and when we moved to Washington I was hired for a full time professional job at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in their public radio unit. And I think that was coming off not only the WFCR but the WHYY programs I had done.

Q: Alright so you worked for public radio, Corporation for Public Broadcasting-

CLARK: Here in Washington.

Q: -in Washington from when to when?

CLARK: Well again, another short term thing for interesting reasons. It was about a year and a half, '70 to '73 or a little bit less, and there it was an intense professional job; it got me home at 7:30 or 8:00 at night and I still had very small children and I just didn't like that.

Q: What sort of interviewing- Were you doing interviewing?

CLARK: No. At Corporation for Public Broadcasting we established NPR (National Public Radio). You're looking at one of the three foremothers, forefathers of NPR.

Q: What were sort of the objectives and obstacles in establishing this?

CLARK: Oh well I would have to think back. I was sort the third ranked of the three of professionals in the public radio office. I was sent out around the country to proselytize with the small, usually university-based, radio stations to say don't you want to become a member of National Public Radio? That was one of my chief jobs. I didn't find many obstacles. I was, again, terribly naïve about the working world though. I might have been able to talk to the head of CPB, whose name was John Macy, about structuring hours that were a little more flexi-time, that sort of thing, which you can do nowadays, but in those days it didn't even occur to me that I could make any kind of change in the basic structure.

Q: How did- Public broadcasting, was it sort of looked down upon by the major networks at that time?

CLARK: It didn't exist. We were creating it. You listen to NPR, don't you?

Q: Yes.

CLARK: It didn't exist.

Q: Was the idea sort of anathema to the establishment or they didn't get-

CLARK: No. I mean, Corporation for Public Broadcasting got its money from Congress. I think this was a period which this was considered to be a really good thing to spend some public money on. It was a very political period in terms of the war and- which wasn't over yet. So you had a lot of people attracted to this enterprise who had come out of the anti-war movement and were quite political. But we were a little insulated; I mean, we were the funding institution and we were mostly making decisions about how to set up National Public Radio, and as I say that meant getting the member stations going and that was my main job and doing related things so I was not involved at all. I knew some of the early stars at NPR but we were two different entities.

Q: When did your husband get sent to Cameroon?

CLARK: Seventy-five.

Q: So this of course obviously meant a change.

CLARK: That was a huge change. My marriage was not in great shape and I almost didn't go to Cameroon. This would maybe be a good moment to call it quits. But then, you know, I love foreign affairs and adventure and so off I went.

Q: Alright. Well I think this is probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up in '75 when you're off to Cameroon.

Today is the 29th of July, 2011, with Betsy Clark. And Betsy, the last time, we left off, you're off to the Cameroons in 1975. So what were you-

CLARK: This was before I joined the Foreign Service myself. And maybe it's important to say now that for most of my career I was Betsy Spiro, Elizabeth Spiro.

Q: How do you spell that?

CLARK: S-P-I-R-O. So if people are ever Googling me or anything you will bring up more for Elizabeth, well Elizabeth Spiro Clark will bring up quite a lot but some of the things I've written that helped in a way get me into the Foreign Service were under the name Elizabeth Petersen Spiro. And so I've had a lot of different names but this was 1975, when my then-husband Herbert Spiro was on the Policy Planning staff and then made the choice whether to join the regular career service. He had served, I think, about five years in the Policy Planning staff; we moved to Washington in 1970 for him to do that. I had two small children but I also was professionally involved with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting where I was a radio projects administrator for a period of time. But he then got asked by President Ford to go to Cameroon as ambassador so that's what took me to Cameroon.

Q: Alright, just for somebody looking at this, I think I mentioned before, I did do an oral history with your former husband.

CLARK: That's right; I think you told me that, you told me.

Q: Yes. Which is on the Internet.

Alright, then-

CLARK: And with my current husband, too, who owes you an edited copy.

Q: Absolutely. You know, we'll send our goons around pretty soon.

Okay. So you're off to the Cameroons this time as the-

CLARK: My husband's wife.

Q: You're not in the Foreign Service yet.

CLARK: No.

Q: What- From your perspective, what was the situation in the Cameroons in '75 when you went out there?

CLARK: I should jump ahead just a little bit to say that one thing happened there that was quite important to my joining the Foreign Service. My husband had been an academic and knew a lot of- good friends with a lot of prominent academics, including Stanley Hoffman at Harvard, and I was reading something that Stanley wrote about

human rights; what was the consensus in America on human rights. And he said the consensus was around self-determination. Well of course self-determination had been a very big thing after the First World War particularly.

Q: Yes, Woodrow Wilson and 14 points and all that.

CLARK: Yes, all that. But I just said to myself, with a background in government and some writing, no, the American consensus is around individual human rights.

Q: I think you're quite right.

CLARK: And so I wrote an article that was on the cover piece of "Worldview", a journal edited by Richard Neuhaus that doesn't exist any more. The title was "A Paradigm Shift in American Foreign Policy: From Self-Determination to Human Rights." The title expresses my argument. In tracing this development I looked carefully at the passage in '72 or '74 of an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act saying that the U.S. could not give assistance to "gross violators of human rights" and I traced what the impact of that amendment had been, which was pretty much zero from the point of view of the State Department which managed not to define anybody as a gross violator of human rights. At the time that I was in Cameroon from '75-'77, I think it was '77, Kissinger went to South Africa -- as I remember in '77 -- and then he traveled up to Lesotho where he gave a speech. For the first time, and I think I am correct although I'm coming here without having checked back into the record, you had a top US official giving a speech in which human rights is laid out as an important goal of American foreign policy. He would have done this at least partly because of his experience in South Africa. This idea was on a simmer. This is before Carter came in. So my article made a big splash in the following way:

The article was published in January of '77 just as President Carter was inaugurated. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., discussed the article by name and in the "The Wall Street Journal" just after Carter came in, and said, and he said siting arguments that I had made in the article that human rights was an idea whose time has come. Now, there were other events that happened early n his Presidency that forced Carter to take more of an explicit stance for human rights. For example, he received a Russian dissident who had been hiding in one of our embassies, Vladimir Bukovsky, and there had to be a decision how to receive him at a high level. Carter justified it by talking about human rights.

That part of my time in Cameroon t had a direct connection with my coming into the foreign service. That article got significant attention and led to some other publications, and an editorial job at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This all beefed up my résumé, and made me more plausible as a mid-level entrant and I came in as a mid-level officer. It's something I'm extraordinarily proud of. I mean, I honestly think if you had to pin me to the wall that's one of the things in my life I'm most proud of, that article. The experience in Cameroon was of course rich and fascinating because I traveled around with my husband everywhere and Cameroon's a really very interesting country. I

think it has some 200 language groups in a fairly small territory, tremendous variance of topography and tribal backgrounds, so I had a wonderful time.

Q: Well one thing, if, when you get the final transcript of this, if you can somehow, particularly if you can call up your article-

CLARK: Yes, it's on the Internet; it is on the Internet.

Q: Can you amend it- or you know, add it in?

CLARK: I can send it to you all.

Q: Add it in to your- Because you know, get a good solid record of what you were saying.

CLARK: No, it is-

Q: Yes, we're talking about Henry Kissinger talking about human rights; I mean, you can just practically feel his heels dragging.

CLARK: Yes, Henry Kissinger's heels probably were dragging. He had no idea how this would spin out. Of course, when Carter came in everybody thinks he came in determined to change things but he didn't.

Q: Congress had already-

CLARK: Well Congress had done the "gross violators" amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act. However the story of how human rights developed as a foreign policy goal supports my view of how things happen in the world. There were many accidental and unforeseeable events that played key roles in the human rights story, for example the President having to decide how to receive this Soviet dissident, and using human rights as a justification. And that justification producing follow ons. It wasn't until April that Vance gave a big speech on human rights.

Q: Yes. And if I recall Congress had- at a certain point had asked for a human rights report, too, on each country.

CLARK: That's right.

Q: And that-

CLARK: That was after Carter came in. I would have to check the date that the human rights reports were launched. It happened at the same time that the new Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, as it was then called, was created, headed by ….

Q: Patt Derian.

CLARK: Yes, Patt Derian. The human rights reports turned out to be more important, I think, than most people thought at the time.

Q: Yes. Well the whole saga of Patt Derian and how she was put into this and sort of seized control and- it's a great bureaucratic story as well as a policy story.

Well, okay, what was the situation though in- Is it Cameroon or Cameroons with an "s"?

CLARK: It's Cameroon. The first President of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo was in office, an authoritarian dictator, followed by another one, Biya and since you've had your little friendly authoritarian dictator Biya, I think the main thing I remember then and of course I didn't have any responsibility here but I can't stop being a political analyst -- slash my wrists and that's what I bleed -- is that the French colonial part of Cameroon had just finished fighting the British colonial part. Cameroon. There was a big referendum about whether the British side of Cameroon would join Nigeria and those who wanted to join lost. There was a lot of pretty vicious fighting; there were still roadblocks when we were there. You were very aware that it was not a happy situation.

Q: Was there any legacy of the German rule?

CLARK: Well, I have one funny story on that subject -- at least I think it's funny. Someone told me, some Cameroonian who I was chatting with, said that the Cameroonians' view of the Germans was that they were "les vrai blancs" -- "real whites". They knew how to beat you down -- not patsies like the British or even the French. Yes they remember. I think we even were taken to a German cemetery. There were "remnants" of the Germans.

Q: Well, let's talk about being the wife of an ambassador and here you are, you're coming out of politically activist reporting; I mean, you -- and all of a sudden -- this is before all sorts of things were happening in the world of the Foreign Service and all. How did you find this?

CLARK: Well my tour happened after some very key things happened that affected the life of an Ambassador's wife. Your performance was no longer included in his efficiency report.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: I think that was, what, '72, '74?

Q: Something like that, early '70s.

CLARK: But that was recent, and that was a pretty big deal. In addition I had a husband who had been in the Foreign Service for five years, but he certainly wasn't going to expect me to be in the traditional mold. It happened that I was very active. I liked doing big receptions, being relevant to events, traveling and so forth. There was part of the job

of being ambassador's wife that was a job that I enjoyed very much. And there were some very funny and interesting things that happened.

Q: Well can you tell me some of them?

CLARK: Well, one that I remember vividly was there was a huge international meeting up in this new hotel on Mount Febe of, what was it, an International Telecommunications organization. A very large number of international delegations attended. And we invited the American delegation to a reception. We were standing in the reception line and after a while of greetings I whispered, "Herb, what's going on outside? There's a big bus that just pulled in." And people kept coming in and joining the reception line. What's going on here? With some whispers to Embassy colleagues and questions it turns out the invitation had gotten misconveyed to the entire conference. So the entire conference was descending on our residence. I don't know exactly but probably 400 people instead of 30. This is a very big crisis for the ambassador's wife who scoots out in to the kitchen to make an emergency assessment. Fortunately there was always enough liquor but we were not offering the usual nice spread of food, to say the least.

There were very interesting trips. I especially remember visiting western Cameroon where you have some traditional customs that were still alive and well and very colorful. We went to the "Entronation" of the Chief at Banjun with our two small boys. We were the only foreigners, certainly the only whites, there. Because of Herb's position, we were up on the reviewing stand under a tin roof. There was dancing in front of the stand for the chief and his distinguished guests, including dances by all of the chief's 40 wives. After he has been enthroned, everybody shoots off their rifles. All of a sudden I realize I have a five year old and a seven year old, and it's raining down bullets on the roof.

Q: Oh yes.

CLARK: So it got quite lively. And terrific food, terrific music; it was very, very memorable.

Q: Did you get involved with women's groups in the area at that time?

CLARK: Nothing especially springs to mind. I had made a decision early on I was not going to be one of these people who got up and went to the American Club at 10:00 for tennis and came home at 8:00. I was interested in meeting Cameroonians. And so I did, but I can't remember any particular venue that involved women only except the ambassadors' wives. They met.

Q: How did you find them? Did you-?

CLARK: It was fascinating. This is meeting a lot of different kinds of people from different countries. What I thought particularly funny was that the ambassadors' wives were more protocol conscious than their husbands. If you went to a luncheon you would be seated in the exact rank of your husband's precedence. And that meant I was always

next to the Belgian ambassador's wife and she was one of the world's most boring people so I had mixed feelings about this.

But taken altogether it was very, very interesting.

Q: Well were you able sort of to continue your writing or-?

CLARK: Well, I wrote this-

Q: You wrote that article.

CLARK: -Which was a big deal. I don't know if I wrote anything else while I was there but that took some serious research and thinking.

Q: Was there any feedback from the State Department at all on that?

CLARK: No. Herb sent it around to some of his former academic colleagues. We knew Sam Huntington well so we sent it to Sam and he sent it to Stanley. I can't remember the exact details but one of them circulated it in the Carter campaign. It did get read. Stanley was a big pusher of the article and I think he may have been the one who sent it to the ultimate publisher of the article, Richard Neuhaus. I did not know Neuhaus at all, who was the publisher of "Worldview", but I am almost certain there were some letters that got sent to him.

Q: With the Cameroonians, were you able to make contact, particularly with sort of the wives or the women in the area?

CLARK: Oh yes. I remember the wives used to go off in a corner at a dinner party and complain about men and that was fun. We had jolly conversations.

I remember something else very well. I had also, in the past been a semi-professional opera singer. I had the idea to put on something called the "Christmas Jazz," an opera for kids, with students from the American School. It was put on in the Ambassador's residence, on a stage facing the audience seated in our enormous living room. One of the missionary's wives played the piano. It was fully staged by me, and my star was Edith Walla. She was one of the few Cameroonians in the school. Her father was a minister or deputy minister. I held general auditions and I picked her for the lead in the opera. I got some complaints from my missionary's wife's friend about whether I thought Edith will be able to handle this? And I said absolutely. And she was a totally, totally wonderful star. It was a very nice event in the diplomatic community. Everybody came. It was a big enthusiastic audience. I was very pleased. One of my sons was in the chorus which was another great fun also.

Q: What about the American embassy wives? Was this a happy place when you got there or an unhappy or what?

CLARK: Pretty unhappy. I don't know all the details but a lot of the wives had decided not to come for various reasons. Their marriages were not in good shape or something else. It was not a happy embassy. Both the DCM's and the economic counselor's wives were absent. They had made these decisions before my time. The AID (United States Agency for International Development) officer's wife was extremely traditional. In the tradition of respect to the hierarchy of Embassy wives she come to the residence to pay respects to the ambassadors' wife -- me. That occasion was so stiff I rather thought to myself, "well, that's that -- I've done that". But AID was different. The AID mission in Yaounde was a very big mission because it covered a number of countries. The Peace Corps was also a very big component of the US mission in Cameroon. Relations were rather stiff between the various agencies and State except for USIA (United States Information Agency).

Q: How about were you able to get out in the field and talk to the Peace Corps people?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: What were they up to?

CLARK: Oh my. I thought they were so admirable. I didn't go on as many trips as my husband did to meet with Peace Corps volunteers but I can remember a visit up north having a long talk with one Peace Corps volunteer, on the banks of a river in a village, as I remember. He was off in the middle of nowhere doing very good work and he had very good relations with the people in the village. I thought he was just inspiring. I also went to a training session.

Q: Had you become interested in joining the Foreign Service at this point?

CLARK: I guess the answer is yes. There was a personal aspect to what triggered this interest, which was the breakup of my marriage. If that is going to happen you have to ask yourself what are you going to do to earn a living? However that serious thinking came after we got back to the United States. But certainly I loved the life, I liked traveling to countries and living there and understanding what was going on and so I was, definitely open to the idea. I don't remember whether I came to the point in '75-'77 and said, "okay, why don't you join the Foreign Service?"

Q: I don't want to obviously get into sort of personal details but the breakup of your marriage, did the Foreign Service aspect have anything to do with it or was it-?

CLARK: No, not really.

Q: Well then, so you left the Cameroons when?

CLARK: Seventy-seven.

Q: Where'd you go?

CLARK: Back to Washington.

Q: And then what were you doing?

CLARK: Well it was a difficult time because of personal aspects of my life. It was not the happiest time. Professionally, I did a lot of different things; one of them was working -- part time, as I recall -- at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where I became an editor. I also co-edited a book on Human Rights and US Foreign Policy, contributing a chapter on international financial institutions and human rights. That was the main thing I wrote. Because of contributing a chapter I was doing quite a lot of research for that book. I also got some traction professionally because of my article on human rights, which had been published in January of '77, just as Carter came in, and then because of this Schlesinger piece in the Wall Street Journal on my article all of a sudden I was asked to be on academic panels on human rights and participate in various forums, although I had no advanced degree whatsoever.

Q: Well I would think with, I mean, you know, as you were alluding to before, human rights didn't sort of come on the radar when Carter came in. I mean, it had- the concern with human rights had been around for some time but when Carter came in, I mean, it picked up a lot of momentum.

CLARK: A lot of momentum. I was very pleased to read, just recently, a book by a Columbia University professor named Samuel Moyn on the "invention" of human rights. I did get at least a footnote in there. He very much has the thesis that the high point of human rights in terms of U.S. foreign policy was the Carter administration.

Q: Well were you seeing, from the Washington perspective, a growing concern about human rights, say particularly in European governments?

CLARK: You mean concern about what the European governments were doing?

Q: Yes. I mean in other words we were picking this up but had the movement already moved ahead in the European context? How stood sort of the European factor?

CLARK: I'd have to think a little bit about my answer, trying to think back. I was more focused on American foreign policy. However, and this is a bit of a fast forward, I was political counselor in Norway in the early '90s and I remember one of my contacts and friends in the foreign ministry saying: "You know, Betsy, we set up bureaus. When you in the State Department set up a bureau of human rights and humanitarian affairs and you started to issue a human rights report we felt -- and it wasn't only Norway -- we had to do the same thing." So I think one of the really good impacts of human rights policy in the Carter Administration was the pressure to have somebody for the Americans to talk to. If the Americans had this new bureau on human rights set up in the State Department, who, they would ask were we going to get to talk to them? You're going to have to designate someone.

Q: Yes, otherwise you turn over the academics and it was out of the foreign ministry's hands.

CLARK: Right, right.

Q: Which is anathema.

CLARK: Right, right. That was a very good effect, of institutionalizing human rights in foreign policy. Of course everybody was annoyed that we issued a human rights report that didn't cover us. Therefore part of the motivation for all these other foreign ministries was for them to have their own human rights reports that covered us.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: So, it was slow. To be very simplistic -- but I think it's absolutely what happened -- was when Reagan came in they changed to democracy. They didn't want to do human rights because that's what the preceding administration had done. Hence Reagan delivers a big speech on democracy at Westminster by Reagan. Human rights stayed though, and that's another long story. However, four years isn't that long, and a major policy initiative can get marginalized or transformed.

Q: Well were you, say, active in a- I mean, I assume there was a human rights area within Washington by this time, when you came back.

CLARK: Well I'm trying to remember. CSIS-

Q: CSIS is-

CLARK: That was new for a think tank to have someone focusing on human rights. Walter Laqueur was sort of behind the focus at CSIS. We produced a book. I was co-editor with Barry Rubin on "Human Rights and US Foreign Policy." That was still coming out of this idea of whether the US should be giving aid to "gross violators of human rights". I'm not very good at remembering what Group X or Think Tank X was doing but I think it was still very much in the academic arena.

Q: Well then, when did you start looking at the Foreign Service?

CLARK: It took awhile. I entered in '80. I must have taken the mid-level exams in '79. I can't remember exactly when. And I took the entry level exam also. So I took the entry level complete with the written and the oral and then the mid-level exam which at that time was, as I recall, mostly an oral exam by a panel-

Q: Well I was with the Board of Examiners '76, '77, and they were just starting it and it was basically an oral of people who were at sort of the mid-level or something or other.

CLARK: Something or other, right.

Q: Yes. You know, would be in addition.

CLARK: Right.

Q: And the idea was basically to look forward women and minorities.

CLARK: Right. Which was a plus and a minus. I mean the mid-level exam was, for me much easier than the entry level written, although I passed it. But I had this funny advantage with the three individuals on the panel because one of them had been at that conference I told you about on Mount Febe in Yaounde and so it seemed he could hardly resist saying: "Oh, what a wonderful job you did in Cameroon." He was throwing me softballs. The others on the panel were glaring at him and saying: "Let's get back to questions." So I had a very friendly panel thanks to him. I didn't realize until I went into the A-100 course that it was a plus and a minus coming in at the mid-level. The regular Foreign Service resented this.

Q: Yes. Well, I mean, any time, I mean, any time you have these programs- I came in at a time when they had what they called a resident program in which they amalgamated under almost duress many of the State Department Civil Servants who had no desire to go overseas but this is- they wanted to put everybody under the Foreign Service banner. This was not a great success and you know, both sides looked at each other with a great deal of suspicion. But anyway, I mean we've gone through these various things.

CLARK: Well it was interesting because the mid-level types in my A-100 course were all over the spectrum. One, I think, became an ambassador. She was really, really formidable. She had just become an American citizen -- I can't remember her foreign background -- but very, very formidable. And then there was one woman who indeed only lasted a couple of years. So there a huge variety, I thought, in terms of the mid-level people in the A-100 course.

Q: When you came in were they talking about what they were going to do with you?

CLARK: I was so upbeat and gung ho that I just assumed the answer would be good. I didn't go through the ordinary first tour of being a consular officer. I think FSOs resented the fact that the mid-level entrants didn't have to do that first tour as consular officer. However, I think in terms of bidding on my first assignment I thought it was a fairly typical process. In my case, and I probably shouldn't tell this story because it will make me look like a bad Foreign Service officer, there was a little wrinkle. One of the jobs being offered to me was in Mauritania. Well, the new ambassador to Mauritania had been the Consul General in Douala when I was in Cameroon as the ambassador's wife. I was really uncomfortable with the idea of serving under him for a variety of reasons and expressed my discomfort and they did give me another assignment. I went to Reykjavik.

Q: Alright, well you were in Reykjavik from when to when?

CLARK: From ’81 to ’83. I guess I took the A-100 course, the political reporting course. Yes, it was ’81 to ’83.

Q: Alright, what were you doing?

CLARK: I was the political officer. And at that time, actually, the U.S. was interested in Iceland because you had Soviet subs going up and down the “Gap”. We had a huge base in Iceland. Icelanders were basically very anti-American, so I think the State Department actually wanted to know what was going on there and of course what the Russians were up to. The Russian embassy was like some science fiction object. There was a satellite out every window, tapping into whatever moved in the area. It really was quite funny. So Iceland was livelier than you might imagine. It was less stuck off at the edge of the world.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

CLARK: Well that was another very interesting story. It was Marshall Brement who had basically been fired by Jeane Kirkpatrick as her number two at the UN Mission. He came to Iceland with a lot of baggage; beat up his poor DCM until there was pulp on the floor. He wanted to treat the whole embassy as if we were the NSC (National Security Council). We few officers had to come up with “mid-morning reports.” It was very funny. But Brement got into oodles of trouble because. It is hard to believe that an intelligent man would let the things happen that did. This isn’t a secret. I mean, he was forced out of the Foreign Service because he was spending taxpayer money on a very demanding and interesting wife who went around touring the country and was writing articles. He was not, to put it mildly, scrupulous, and it caught up with him after I left.

Now, I confess I enjoyed the Brements because they were hugely social. But to give you an idea of how much trouble she got him into, she built -- and this is in the middle of Reykjavik -- an aviary. You would walk out from the living room not to a screened in porch or something similar but into a two or three story aviary where birds were flying around. Somebody was delegated to follow around cleaning up bird poop so that the Ambassador’s wife could have really, really glamorous parties in the aviary. That was kind of fun. So it was not a normal first assignment there. But I had a terrific time because politics in Iceland was absolutely fascinating.

Q: You were saying that the Icelanders, they were not very sympathetic to-

CLARK: In terms of politics and I liked this about Norway too; we don’t translate the names of the political parties but the “Peoples Alliance”, was the party headed at the time I was in Iceland by Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, who later became the president of Iceland after a woman, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who was president when I was there. It is a post without much power but he was a communist. At the time I was the only American diplomat allowed to go to talk to him. The Ambassador had no contact whatsoever with him, but he was the head of one of the political parties and was enormously anti-

American. But then I think most of the parties were pretty anti-American. They don't have a military in Iceland. I took politicians on two NATO tours, including one that visited the SS Nimitz aircraft carrier. They were saying to me that this is just all very strange to us. One of the parliamentarians on that tour was a member from the agrarian party, and came from northern Iceland. Now, the SS Nimitz is-

Q: Is a big carrier.

CLARK: A very different concept of living from the isolation of Northern Iceland. We also went to East Berlin and that was very interesting. All of my NATO tours were interesting.

Q: Well let's talk more about Iceland. I mean, in the first place, how did the fact that we had this very important base sit in the middle of an anti-American country?

CLARK: We accepted a lot of restrictions. I'm trying to think back and I don't want to be inaccurate about this but I don't think anybody from the base was allowed into Reykjavik. The base is quite a distance away; maybe a 40 minute drive from Reykjavik to the base. You never saw American military personnel in Reykjavik.

And television, when I arrived the Icelanders had just gotten television for the first time and it was kind of this nice, Scandinavian, public television style and no American television. So there was a real effort to fence off these external influences. The base was really quite its own little world.

Q: Were you able to make contact and talk to the people who owned a, was it the ____ or whatever the-

CLARK: Well that was my job, yes.

Q: Yes, I mean but how easy was it to talk to Icelanders?

CLARK: Oh, it was quite easy. Maybe it was me; I can be quite easy to talk to, I think. There was also the fact that although I wasn't divorced I was separated so I was single; I was single in Iceland, which made me of interest. I mean- But no, I found it- I had dinner parties, was invited to dinner parties; I had friends; I enjoyed the Icelanders very much. Oh, I was a member of the chorus in their opera company. Icelanders are incredibly over the top culture. I mean, if there were more than 250,000 of them you would be reading about what they were doing all the time. But- So I sang in the Icelandic chorus and I'd been given Icelandic at the Foreign Service Institute. Now, it's one of the world's hardest languages because they sort of froze it in the 12th century or whatever so it's a little bit like learning Old English. But- And I'm not a great linguist so I never was really good but I can read, I can watch their television, participate in things like this opera.

Q: Did- Were there any, outside of being anti- This is early Reagan period, wasn't it?

CLARK: Oh yes. There was a huge, you know, the huge issues, what was it called? The missiles into Europe-

Q: Yes, this is-

CLARK: -and that was my big job -- going out, proselytizing, talking to members of the Social Democratic Party about why this was a wonderful idea.

Q: Yes, this was when the Soviets introduced the SS-20 into Eastern Europe and we were responding with the Pershing and the Cruise missiles.

CLARK: Right, right. The Cruise missile issue.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: And that was top of the agenda. Now, in Norway, where I also served, the Social Democrats dominant but in Iceland it was the conservative party that headed the government

Q: When you say "conservative," that was still a left wing government?

CLARK: Well, as you well know the left wing in America is centrist in Europe and-

Q: Yes.

CLARK: It's impossible to talk about the American political spectrum right now so I'm not going to make any analogies.

Q: Well did- Were there efforts to get at Ice- I mean, I take it to get Iceland to support our Cruise missile response and all, did it get anywhere?

CLARK: Well I think we probably did have. I should remember this key fact. It's a parliamentary system so you have coalition governments and I was going out to talk to party leaders. We did have pro forma support but not among the public, certainly.

Q: I assume there were no human rights issues in Iceland.

CLARK: I can't think of any.

Q: You know, I find it almost inconceivable.

How did Iceland, from your perspective, fit both in NATO and particularly the other Scandinavian countries?

CLARK: Well, I should have thought about this a little bit more before I came here today because that was something that was of interest to me. The other Scandinavian countries

tended to think of Iceland as a bunch of eccentrics and very different from "us". And they were different. For example some Icelanders said to me, and I think seriously: "We'd like to be your 51st state. Remember, we're not really in Europe, we're in the middle of the Atlantic. We're halfway over to you." And so there was by no means an automatic pro-Europe stance in Iceland. But they were members of all of the many, many, many Nordic institutions.

Q: Yes. Well how about- how stood things with Greenland? Was there any natural affinity between these two groups?

CLARK: No. Not really. First off, Greenland was colonized. Greenland is a Danish colony and so had Iceland been. However Iceland was colonized by Norwegians along with some Irish slaves and had a really quite a different sense of national identity. I don't think they felt any particular common identity. It was quite difficult to travel to Greenland and I don't think people did a lot of traveling to Greenland, either.

Q: Did- Where did the young students in Iceland who wanted a further education go, towards Europe, the United States or where?

CLARK: Denmark had been their colonial power and they still were very focused on Denmark.

Q: What were the, outside of listening in and radaring in, what were the Soviets up to there?

CLARK: I don't know. I think we were mutually spying. I can't remember any big incident, although there was constant surveillance going on. We had one of those..

Q: AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System)?

CLARK: Yes. I was actually in one of those AWACS on a surveillance missions. And fish.

Q: Well you know, they constantly have fishing wars with Britain, don't they?

CLARK: They had just won one and that was a huge matter of national pride. The Cod War; this was called the Cod War.

Q: Cod War, yes.

CLARK: It was against Britain. So that victory extended their fishing limits and they made a lot of money off of fish. You'd go to little fishing villages with BMWs in driveways.

Q: Were the British very active there?

CLARK: Not that I remember. Canada is very important to Iceland because every time their fish dried up they would immigrate and where did they immigrate to? They immigrated to Canada. And there are areas of Canada that had and have a significant number of Icelandic immigrants and keep an Icelandic identification.

Q: Well then, you left in '83?

CLARK: Eighty-three. Went directly to South Africa.

Q: Ah ha. So what were you doing in South Africa?

CLARK: Well, lots happened in South Africa. I don't know if we want another session on South Africa. I was the political officer in Johannesburg. That meant that I had in my mandate anything that moved in Transvaal, which included the top journalists, the top English white South Africans and Afrikaners. But mostly my focus was on the internal ANC (African National Congress), which then was under the banner of the United Democratic Front -- so it was the UDF. That was my beat, along with Black Consciousness Movement. I am unabashedly going to totally brag about this: I had much better contacts than anybody else had with the internal anti-apartheid opposition.

Q: Alright. Well should we set up another and then we can concentrate on that and you can sort of review your memories and all that?

CLARK: Well I'm a lot fresher on South Africa than other parts of my career because I wrote a couple of pieces for the Foreign Service Journal.

Q: Okay. Well these also can be melded into-

CLARK: I've got four Foreign Service Journal pieces and one, maybe two, are on South Africa.

Q: But I would like to, you know, talk to you about this so-

CLARK: Actually I would like to talk about it because it might stimulate me to do what I've always wanted to do, which was to write more about my experiences.

Q: Good. Well you can always extract from our thing. Anyway, so we'll set something up. And you're in South Africa from when to when?

CLARK: Eighty-three to '86.

Q: Okay.

Q: Today is the 14th of September, 2011, with Betsy Clark.
And Betsy, we left off last time, it's been quite a hiatus, we left off, I think you were on your way to South Africa. Where had you been?

CLARK: I was coming directly from Iceland to South Africa and South Africa had not been my first choice. I had been bidding on a job as political officer in Lisbon but when this job in Johannesburg came up as political officer I was very pleased with the idea and looking forward to it. I didn't realize how incredibly exciting those three years would be and for me personally they were the high point of my career in terms of both the intellectual and the emotional stimulation and the feeling I was making a difference. I was doing some political reporting that was actually quite valued back in the Department and I found myself was in situations where I was able to see what was happening with the anti-apartheid struggle from a pretty unique perspective. That was very intellectually satisfying.

Q: Alright. What were the dates you were in South Africa?

CLARK: I was there from '83 to '86.

Q: When in '83 did you arrive?

CLARK: I guess I came in sometime in the summer.

Q: Alright. What was your job actually?

CLARK: Well, I was the political officer attached to our consulate and my job really in was cast quite broadly, which was exactly what I wanted. The chief target was the internal anti-apartheid movement; i.e., I was covering black politics. At that time the ANC (African National Congress) was banned but there was an organization called the United Democratic Front that was essentially the internal ANC and that was my chief beat. But I was also allowed to talk to anything that moved in the Transvaal and since Johannesburg was the headquarters of the press and media, I had a lot of contacts with Afrikaners and with English whites, as well as with the Indian and colored populations. As you know, at that time South Africa was divided pretty strictly into four racial groups so I was able to do rather broad reporting. This was a time of a great deal of violence and, just from a practical point of view, the State Department was facing queries from the press every day on X instance of violence. I was normally the officer who had the most facts and so my cables -- for a mid-level officer -- I think got very high attention because they needed to know on a very quick basis what they should say to the press. I wasn't aware that this was giving me a higher profile than one would normally have doing this kind of reporting. I had such a rich assignment there that in terms of this oral history I think I should throw out maybe four little ticks an bullets as an introduction and then please ask questions.

There was the violence that I just talked about, the high interest back in the Department. There was also a major deficit in knowledge about black factions -- the splits within the black anti-apartheid movement, and so on. I was able to send in cables on the difference between the Black Consciousness movement and the UDF/ANC. I had a little less to do with Inkatha because I wasn't stationed in Durban.

Q: That was a Zulu movement mainly.

CLARK: That was a Zulu movement. But it was very important because there were very serious tensions including mutual killings, or at least Inkatha killing UDF figures. I had background and facts on these events but the Zulu part of Black politics was the part that There was another important element in the political scene I was able to inform the Department about, that were connected with the violence. I had a white Afrikaner "Deep Throat" who was a University professor. He was so naïve he was talking to me about how the government was going to ask him to testify at a trial of some resistance leaders. He wouldn't give me their names but I got a heads up on their upcoming arrests and a lot of information about what turned out to be a very important trial that took place in KwaZulu-Natal. I also was able to find out some key information about what the plans of the government vis-à-vis the UDF were. Some of this information has never made it into books written about the period. For example I was told the commissioner of police happened to be out of the country when they picked up these people. The commissioner had apparently decided the government wanted the arrest made under a different law than was used because they wanted to look like a normal country. There was a great deal of criticism already from the outside world and they didn't want to use those of their laws that were being particularly criticized but because the police chief was out of the country they got arrested under the law they had been using -- I can't remember the name of the law- and that forever made it into books about this period of time but not that it was all a mistake.

So I was writing about these internal events; I was also writing about what I would call the cover organizations that the internal black opposition was using. They had something called the Educational Crisis Committee, which sounds very erudite but that was basically your cover for the internal revolution, and I remember asking some very high level journalists who were there at that time, like Alan Cowell: "why aren't you covering this?" And they said, "well, Betsy, who would understand? Our readers wouldn't understand." Back in the Department, though, they'd read that that was the cover that the UDF and the internal opposition to apartheid was using at the time. So I covered that.

Also, because of my contacts with all these journalists, including Afrikaners, I got some insights into what the government was thinking, and this was also not standard analysis. For instance, the conventional wisdom in the government and elsewhere was that the apartheid government had all the power and so that was the only thing you really had to know. But when I talked to a number of interlocutors it was clear that they thought that the fact that the black population was so much larger than the white population -- I think something like 20 to 80 percent -- that they felt as power. They felt that the black numbers were power so they did not feel they had all the power and that was very important.

I was also told, and this was also against conventional wisdom, that there had always been a plan within the Afrikaner leadership to actually give rights to black South Africans. The leadership had set up these parliaments for the Indians and for the coloreds.

They didn't have any real power. They were planning to do that for the blacks. De Klerk always planned that the next step would be to have a kind of parliament for the blacks. Now, they made this tremendous mistake of not understanding that once they released Mandela the whole game would change entirely. During that period, '83 to '86, I felt very proud that I was able to bring substantial knowledge to bear in analytical cables about where this movement was going.

One other thing and then you can ask questions. I should mention that Congress had passed sums of money to be used for projects for anti-apartheid movements. There was no AID mission in South Africa at the time and so the political officers -- not just me but one in Pretoria and one in Cape Town and I think in Durban too -- were the ones out there finding organizations to give money to. I would want to check this fact for this record but I think I had 71 envelopes in my file cabinets on organizations that I was giving small amounts of money to, and this was the first time these organizations were getting money from the United States government. I don't usually notice this sort of thing but when AID finally did come in I remember them talking about how of course nothing really happened before we came and of course money was being given organizations that weren't of any importance. That was all wrong. The internal black opposition had to cover their tracks so that giving money to anti-apartheid leader Sally Motlana for a school in northern Transvaal was both giving to the school in Transvaal and also giving money to an anti-apartheid leader. So that was another very important thing I did.

And so, I will stop with that little kind of overview.

Q: Okay. Well, in the first place, I assume you were talking to these- the people you were talking to and giving money to, they knew who you were.

CLARK: Oh yes, there was nothing secret. They knew completely who I was but that's an important point. Who was I talking to? For my coverage of both of the violence and the plans of the United Democratic Front and the anti-apartheid movement I was meeting with people who became top government ministers in the first Mandela government, with Patrick Lekota, who is minister of defense; with Frank Chikane, who was chief of staff to Mandela, with a long list of leaders who became very important. But I was sometimes meeting them on the run or in between jail sentences which was quite interesting in itself.

Q: Well I would assume that the reports you were going in would obviously have to name names and all that. You must have been quite concerned about leakage, weren't you?

CLARK: Well no. I guess I didn't think my cables were going to leak. I did think my phone was tapped, and I'm sure it was, but no, I didn't think my cables would leak so I did indeed name names. The exception was the case I told you about where I had pre-knowledge that some anti- apartheid leaders were going to get picked up and thrown into prison. I actually felt considerable moral qualms about not naming names because I could figure out who some of those who would get arrested would be. I didn't know what my responsibility was, how much further it went than simply reporting what my "Deep Throat" was telling me to actually saying we should stop these arrests.

Q: Well how did you develop this source, this "Deep Throat" source?

CLARK: It was accidental. It was a wonderful assignment for me. Ken Brown was my boss and he was a very wise boss and he realized the best thing we could do with Betsy is let her out there and let her go talk to people. I must have had some appointment every day out of the building and people coming to me. That could be another very dramatic part of my job. On at least one occasion some white Afrikaner came to my office terrified for his life because he felt the security services were going to pick him up. He told me this story: he'd been fighting in Namibia, then Angola, and he'd been outraged by the torture -- what they were doing there -- and he had gone to his father who was a general and he'd screamed at him and stormed out of the house. When he came back the next day he saw that there were soldiers lined up outside his home. He knew he was going to be picked up so he came to the consulate. We did facilitate his getting out of the country. I personally was the facilitator -- very directly -- because I drove him to the border and told him to get out and go to Botswana. He did make his way to our embassy and got asylum.

I had a number of dramatic experiences. In fact, one of them led, at the end of my tour of duty, to Assistant Secretary Crocker pulling me out a couple of weeks early because of a threat they thought was credible on my life. That threat had come from a man who I had met with and who was trying to pretend to be something he wasn't. He was actually part of the Afrikaner government security services. There were lots of little cutout organizations and he was part of one of them and was under threat from another part of the security establishment. He came to my office and said if I don't make it to Cape Town tell my wife this, that and the other thing. His mask just dropped completely and he told me the truth about who he was. I reported that. He apparently did get out of the country and, in my own view, in order to sell himself to the CIA revealed a threat against my life. In the Department they did take it seriously enough that Crocker decided to take me out a couple of months before the end of my tour of duty.

There were more very dramatic moments. I went to some major meetings, one of the Educational Crisis Committee outside of Durban. There had just been information about Inkatha assassinations of some UDF leaders -- UDF was behind the Crisis Committee. At the huge meeting there was the Swedish DCM and I and one other woman from the South African Foundation as the only three whites there. I think we had been invited to offer some sort of protection so that the meeting itself wouldn't be attacked. And maybe our presence is the reason it wasn't attacked. There were other meetings that I went to where an attack by the South African police was disrupted at the last minute and had it not gotten disrupted might have very serious consequences for me. So covering this period in South Africa was basically very thrilling.

Q: Did you feel you had almost handlers within the white South African security apparatus who were following you and that sort of thing?

CLARK: Well, I just told you about this one plot or that the State Department felt was credible enough to pull me out so I think that I was being watched and so were the people

who came to my house because there were very strict regulations and laws about entertaining Africans in your home. I'm sure that my house was under surveillance. I don't think they were always aware of where I was going.

Q: Did you have any contact with our Agency people there?

CLARK: I did. I did get to read a product from the CIA officer in Pretoria predicting that the government would be in power for 20 years. I had a very different view. I said to myself, "well, we'll see whose reporting turns out to be right," and it did turn out to be mine.

Q: Well I've interviewed, the name escapes me who was the assistant secretary for African Affairs.

CLARK: Chet Crocker.

Q: Chet Crocker; I've interviewed Chet Crocker. And he describes almost the war that he was fighting over-

CLARK: With the CIA?

Q: With the CIA.

CLARK: Oh, I'm delighted he said that.

Q: You know, talking about, you know, they had their policy. He said he had his spies finding out what our spies were doing.

CLARK: I was one of them.

Q: Yes.

CLARK: I mean, Chet is absolutely right. I'm delighted he said that because their analysis was completely different, as I just said, and I was one of his spies.

Q: Because, you know, it was, you know, an operation where you had to move around because they were very- the CIA was very close to the white Afrikaner security people.

CLARK: Right.

Q: And they were, you know, they had one view and we had another.

CLARK: That's right.

Q: Did you find, was there any problem with you reporting the way you were seeing things?

CLARK: Problem from?

Q: Well in other words from Washington saying-

CLARK: Don't do this.

Q: -we don't agree with you or-

CLARK: No. I had a very, very receptive audience in the then-office director. I think the office directors changed while I was there and he went on to much greater things and Chet Crocker too. But they were not focused so much on the internal black opposition. They were more focused on the war in Namibia. And I don't fault that at all but it did mean that they didn't have too much information on the internal anti-apartheid movement. They were getting some information, most of it from me, about what was going on in terms of the internal opposition and how powerful it was. Everything I'm saying to you I would have said in cables in one way or another and I never got any negatives about it.

Everybody tended to think that the sanctions movement was the main reason that apartheid fell and I don't think that's true at all. There were enormous movements inside the country. I mean, they started to organize what were called "stayaways", which got more and more powerful -- blacks just not going to work. There was also the boycott of the schools. I remember reading the local papers about some troops being stationed in churchyards and thinking well, if they're stationing troops in church yards they've gone -- they've pushed that button in as far as it can go. There was not anything they could really do except what? Wipe out Soweto? I think they didn't have very many options. I think I was one of the few people who thought that the white Afrikaner government had run through all of its options. And not only that but I had a lot of white friends too and some of them had sons who would get conscripted and they would tell me, "I don't want my son fighting in Soweto." So they were getting some pressure. South Africa was quite democratic when it came to the white population so that there really was pressure that was internal from the white side. There were many events internally that affected the white population's view of things. The Dutch Reform Church came out with a statement that reversed their edict that separation of the races was the right policy. There were many developments that were affecting the whites too. I think I had a very open ear in Washington.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

CLARK: It was Herman Nickel and he was a political appointee and that was a little- I liked our ambassador very much but of course he was supporting Reagan's sanctions policy. Now of course the internal black opposition did not support Reagan's sanctions option and fortunately I was not a USIA officer. My job was not to get out there and sell sanctions or no sanctions, sorry, no sanctions that the Reagan policy so I think without

my being unprofessional at all I think there was probably a sense that Betsy was kind of quite supportive of us.

Q: Did- What about some of the other embassies? What were they doing?

CLARK: Well that was very interesting. I went, and this was another very dramatic event, to witness something called a black spot removal. Now, most of the "removals" had been done by the time I got to South Africa in '83. What these removals were was wiping out black communities that were in white areas and taking all the people in those communities and dumping them in one of the 10 Black tribal homelands, which the rest of the world did not recognize but which it was the intention of the Afrikaners that they would get recognized. There were two "black spots" left. I went to one removal with the British consul and, as I mentioned, I went to this very important rally of the Education Crisis Committee with the Swedish DCM, so I think that the European embassies were certainly trying to do what I was trying to do and what our consulate was trying to do, which was to support the internal opposition. So my contacts were fairly close with my diplomatic colleagues, particularly with the Brits.

Q: How about the Israelis? Were they playing any particular role there?

CLARK: Well not that I was aware of, although you're tweaking my memory because I did get into the big issue of nuclear weapons -- the South African government developing nuclear weapons -- but quite peripherally. I would have to try to revive my memory of a couple of interviews that I played back to the State Department. I was aware of that the Israelis were trying to be close with the South Africans on that issue.

Q: How important were people talking about Nelson Mandela at the time? I mean, did they know kind of where he would be coming from if he came out? Were they seeing him as the savior or a firebrand or what?

CLARK: Well that's a very interesting question, in a way. The whites that I talked to, and this is both Afrikaners and British weren't allowed to go into Soweto. They had to get special passes. They didn't know any black leaders; all they knew were their black servants. They'd all heard of Nelson Mandela but that was just about it. I remember introducing a really quite senior United Democratic Front leader to someone who should have known who he was and didn't. There was, I think, minimal, if any, contact between the sides but they all knew about Mandela and they all knew he was. I'm sure it was widely known where he was in Robben Island. I knew from contacts, I think mostly inside the journalistic world, that he had gotten moved off the island to a house at the edge of Cape Town. I think this was right at the end of my tour of duty. If you've seen the film "Invictus," which is a wonderful film-

Q: Yes, I've seen it.

CLARK: It was a secret. The press was not a source of information; this was all secret. But he had been moved to that Cape Town house. And I did talk to one white journalist

who had been allowed to go and talk to him. That was a very interesting interview because he was saying that he was the first to be able to talk to Mandela. So it was coming; you could clearly see it coming, I thought.

Q: Did you find the media- Normally you have, in a democracy, you've got investigative reporters going around but I take it this was a blank area or something?

CLARK: This was more like covering the Soviet Union, trying to read tea leaves in the press -- who was where when there was maybe a meeting. There was a black newspaper "The Sowetan," and again, reading between the lines of very bland stuff certain things would strike you as worth following up on, but the press was certainly not free or open.

Q: Was there the equivalent of a women's movement in South Africa, both black and white or either?

CLARK: Not that I can remember. I remember there was a very important woman I mentioned before, Sally Motlana. She was the head of something called The Black Housewives League, which basically functioned as a cover for political action. There was a very important and brave bunch of mostly Afrikaner women -- the Black Sash. That was a women's organization devoted to fighting apartheid and fighting the government. I don't think I finished talking about the black spot removal that I witnessed with the British consul general. There was a representative of this Black Sash organization who came out to witness a removal. We weren't allowed in the areas -- rural settlements -- where these black South Africans had been living. We could see the buses taking them away, coming out from the township. The police were stopping us, in a very nasty way. They were particularly nasty to this poor South African woman who was brave and tough. They were just screaming at her in Afrikaans, "what are you doing here, how can you, you know, support this?"

The other black spot removal spot that I went to, I went as the control officer for a very important delegation. Ted Kennedy spent a week in South Africa, a very important delegation, including family members. There was big tension between Kennedy and the Ambassador Nickels and I knew that my role was to be a spy for the Ambassador. So the people on the Kennedy plane and the Kennedy bus were not always chatting me up as much as I would have liked. They did a very, very good job. They went to one of these areas scheduled for removal to publicize it and to talk to global leaders and they did a first class job. During the Kennedy visit there was a much bigger demonstration at a church in Soweto. That was an interesting moment for me, actually. I went to the church; Kennedy and his party who were to appear there stayed back at the edge of Soweto, perhaps at Bishop Tutu's house. They were being told it wasn't safe to go. I had an consulate car and driver and I went. I came back and it was my recommendation to Greg Craig, Kennedy's assistant, that although I couldn't be 100% certain I think it's safe.

Now, I want to be accurate here. I did not say flat out it was safe but I did report on what was going on in the church. In the end they didn't go. But it was fairly dramatic because that that particular part of Kennedy's trip got reported widely, certainly in the American

press. And of course a Reagan Administration appointee, Ambassador Nickel, was very negative about this trip.

Q: Well did you feel that American support was important to the black movement?

CLARK: Well we didn't really support it until the sanctions bill was passed and that was just after I got back. I actually went to work in our Legislative Affairs bureau, partly to work on South Africa. So that wasn't passed until we got back. I think the feelings towards the United States in the anti-apartheid movement were mixed because at that time the U.S. Government did not support sanctions. To answer your question a little more broadly, there was universal condemnation of South Africa and I do think that mattered. To make another kind of riff on events, I think that unlike Burma or North Korea the South Africans cared about what the rest of the world thought. They didn't like being a pariah and in terms of sports -- you saw the film "Invictus" -- they hated being cut out of international competition. They were all sports fanatics and they just-

Q: Rugby and-

CLARK: Oh, all of it. They just hated being cut out of world sports. So particularly in that sense having a kind of universal condemnation was effective. I happen to think that what was happening inside South Africa was more important but certainly this outside condemnation was important.

Q: How about the Inkatha movement and Chief Buthelezi? What sort of role were they playing while you were there?

CLARK: Well that was not my beat, but I have to say that President Reagan liked Inkatha and he sort of liked the idea of tribalism and that that was what should be supported because that was what really was important. So there was a kind of pro-Inkatha coming down from the White House. Now, there were -- I don't know if Chet Crocker talked about this -- splits between the State Department and the White House on a lot of this stuff. I was on the side of the United Democratic Front and didn't like the Buthelezi position.

Q: Who was the consul general in Johannesburg?

CLARK: That was Ken.

Q: That was Ken Brown?

CLARK: Yes, it was Ken Brown. Wonderful boss. As I was saying, particularly, you know, I had a great deal of freedom in getting my reporting sources and so forth.

Q: How did the police treat you?

CLARK: I didn't know until I was taken out of the country for this- I think it might have been a plausible, looking back on I because I found out more details on the informant who got Crocker to take this action. But I had no contact with the police except- No, I just told you about witnessing actions when you go to the black spot to witness these removals, my contact was very negative.

Q: Were you able to show the equivalent to an ID card to get into places other people couldn't get in?

CLARK: Yes. I think I had a laissez passé of some sort to get in because I don't remember ever having to make a special request when I went to Soweto to meet with people or to other townships. So I think I had a- maybe it was just diplomatic- nothing more than proof of my being a diplomat. But there might have been something more special that allowed me in.

Q: Did you find yourself becoming a point of contact for black dissidents and all at your office?

CLARK: Yes, absolutely. And partly because they wanted some protection and they wanted the State Department to know what their plans were, what they were thinking and I was definitely their point of contact.

Q: How about the Foreign Service national staff? I assume most of them were blacks or-?

CLARK: We had very few, and I can't remember any. In Johannesburg we had a- I didn't work with any Foreign Service nationals, I don't think.

Q: Did you ever feel under threat or, I mean, were you getting threats sort of from the white Afrikaans?

CLARK: Well. As I say, this big instance; I wasn't aware of this threat against my life until I got back to the United States and get a little more unraveled, who it was, who was informing about this. I did feel- I did not feel under threat from the white security forces, as I say, until this plot was supposedly revealed. I felt under threat in a number of situations. Well no, I take that back. Ordinary police threat, not directed at me, several instances, one I was at a black consciousness convocation in Durban; second floor of a building, all the doors- very crowded room, only one entranceway. Again, my friends with South Africa Foundation, we were the only two whites in the room. She got too hot, she said she was going to faint, she left. And then all of a sudden in the room it started something; I was clearly going on because people kept running in to talk to the speakers and there was a lot of whispering and so forth. But I think we left in a normal manner but when we got out there were South African police with dogs and my friend, white, from South Africa Foundation, came rushing up to me and said Betsy, if I hadn't told them there was a U.S. diplomat in there they were going to storm that meeting with tear gas and dogs. And had I been in that room with, you know, tear gas and dogs and only one

exit it would not have been good. So there was- but you know, personal threats, except for this plot, I should say no. But I was in a number of dangerous situations, also from the point of view of the black side.

I realized I'd been conned by some black activist who was saying he was, you know, the ANC had sent him down to South Africa. Oh, we had a very interesting conversation; he said I want to take you to a meeting, and it was in one of these black townships, and there was something really weird about it. I was left waiting while some- the black leader of this particular group and the township was very interesting because he had kind of taken over the governing of this township and he was talking to residents about particular problems. But I was just left waiting over there in the corner with my- the guy who had brought me and it became pretty clear that the people at the meeting started grilling him, that they thought he was a spy who had- for who, I don't know, but that I had walked into a big, black opposition problem and that- and, you know, it was a very scary kind of atmosphere, I have to say, that particular meeting. But I got out of it.

And there were many, many, many, many games being played in South Africa.

Q: Did you find being a woman American diplomat gave you a certain amount of protection in a way or attitudes toward-?

CLARK: Well I don't- That's an interesting question. I felt people had sort of opposed, I think, my assignment on the basis of my being a woman and I found it a plus because most of my interlocutors were men and they really wanted to brag so it was a plus being a woman.

Q: Well you were playing this game.

CLARK: They wanted to show me how wonderful they were so I thought basically it was kind of a plus. I may have been, personally, a little too slow to suspect really nefarious goings on.

Q: Well also I would think, I mean, one would- the plus would be the bragging thing and the other one would be that you weren't raising the, was it testosterone level of either side, trying to-

CLARK: Right.

Q: You know, it's hard to bully a woman within sort of the Western society in a way.

CLARK: Well except this plot though was to kill me. That's a little bit of an exception there. But I think you're right; I think you're right.

Q: Well you know, I mean obviously these things are all, I mean, I found as a consular officer sometimes using a female officer or a female local national to deal with rather

belligerent people usually calmed them down. They came storming in, including drunken seamen and all that.

Now tell me about this plot. What was its cover?

CLARK: Well to this day, I mean, who knows? I was just told that, taken in by Ken Brown to say Betsy, I've had a call with Chet Crocker and they feel there's a credible threat against your life so I don't know, I think I left three days later, so they want to pull you early; they want to pull you out early.

Now, in terms of the details, I don't remember the name of the man but this was the man who had a cover and I'm not sure I'd even remember what his cover was; he'd also been a contact of my predecessor's who had been suspicious of him as a, you know, a security officer coming to check out the consulate political officer and not who he said he was. And so I too was particularly that warning quite suspicious of him. He came in maybe once or twice and I don't even remember; I mean, his cover must have been so limp, you know, whatever he had to say was not very interesting. But then the day he came in and the mask dropped it was just incredible. I mean, he used the "f" word every other word, he was a totally different person; he was clearly scared to death and he said they're out to kill me, "they" being another element of the security services. I have to think back to see if I remember any other details of what he said. And that he was going to Cape Town where his wife was and if he didn't make it he asked me to try to contact her. I think my memory is correct on this. I was just a kind of cruel woman sort of, hmm. But I didn't quite say to him I bet you deserve this, because there had been some just very recent stories about some very noble black South Africans getting knocked off by security services.

So anyway, he leaves and as far as I know that's that, although I may have heard that he did get out of the country from Cape Town. So that had all happened, I don't know how many months before; maybe quite a few, quite a few months. But the plot was as follows: Supposedly there was the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's getting picked up. It is true that the American embassy or consulate had some role in that in terms of information about where to find Mandela or at least I think this is the story, and the plot was supposed to be to blame the ANC who was supposed to have killed an American consulate officer because the Americans had been so important in uncovering Nelson Mandela. So that was supposed to be the plot and that sounded pretty farfetched to me but right after I got back, I mean like five days, I was reading cables. There was an article in the Durban press on precisely this, you know, the America role in fingering Nelson Mandela so I thought to myself ah, I don't know; maybe there is something to this. What I thought and I still think is that this guy was just trying to sell himself to the CIA to get protection and he was offering them this plot that he knew about. But it's conceivable that it was a real plot.

Q: So they moved you?

CLARK: They took me home. I was scheduled to- the end of my tour of duty I was scheduled to leave so I simply left, I don't know, two months early? Something like that.

Q: Where'd you go?

CLARK: Back here. My next assignment was in Bureau of Legislative Affairs so I just0

Q: When did you leave?

CLARK: Well I probably, I don't know, May sticks in my mind and I probably was supposed to leave in August.

Q: May of?

CLARK: Eighty-six.

Q: Eighty-six. What sort of, I hate to call it "debriefing" but when you came back, I mean, you'd been involved since the very exciting but very important stuff, you know. Did the- Did you find that people were trying to pump you for information and that sort of thing?

CLARK: Well I did- I remember being asked to address a big class of CIA officers. I mean, there was a certain, yes, there were a number of things when I came back. I think because of the circumstances of my departure accounts for the fact that Nick ____, I don't know, I think he was undersecretary at the time asked, you know, met with me, I think invited me over to his home actually. And certainly I had long conversations with others but I think there was not just a ____ but a number of high level State Department talking to somebody they wouldn't normally be talking to, partly because of the circumstances of my departure but partly because of my reporting. And I did get some awards.

Q: What awards?

CLARK: Well I'm- Somebody told me I should be really proud of this one. Chas Freeman was also somebody who I- I forget what his role was at the time but I talked with- I got the- I was the first State Department recipient of the National Humint Collectors Award, which I got from Bill Gates in person. And I got a meritorious award and a superior award although that's- you'd have to ask Ken about this- Ken had put me up for a superior honor award and there were some rumbles at the embassy that that would be singling me out; it should be a group award. I mean, I actually don't remember what- I don't remember- I mean, I have gotten both a superior and I meritorious award but one of them may have been a group award. I do remember the National Humint Collectors Award because that was a fairly big deal and I was- they tried to recruit me, the CIA tried to recruit me. The kind of good CIA guy replaced the bad one, I'm trying to remember this now. They'd gone through my files and obviously thought that I was

pretty good at culling information and contacts so I got a telephone call asking me if I'd like to move over to the CIA.

Q: You came back what, to Legislative Affairs?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: How did you find that?

CLARK: Well in one sense pretty awful, I mean because that is totally political. I mean, there was one poor career FSO (Foreign Service Officer) as an assistant secretary but everybody else in that office was political and of course I didn't find myself very comfortable with that, partly because, among other things, I felt that the political- they had contempt or no interest in the Foreign Service at all so that was a bit of a shock. And also I was there to go- be active, pushing the administration's position on- against the sanctions bill so I went around talking to congressmen themselves, not just to aides and that was pretty interesting, that was pretty interesting. Certainly the day that the sanctions bill passed was a very dramatic moment, that was pretty interesting, but I was trying to get out of there from the minute I got in there and I think one of my big successes in the Foreign Service was to get myself invited to be a special assistant to Mike Armacost, NP, so I only was one year in H and it was interesting but it was very frustrating.

Q: Did you run into Jesse Helms' staff?

CLARK: No, I didn't ever go. I went to- I'd have to remember which offices I went to; I just have to bring that up. I also- There was a very distinguished woman ambassador who was being- Jesse, Jesse; did you say- Who did you say, Jesse Helms?

Q: Jesse Helms.

CLARK: Oh, I did indeed. I had a terrible experience with Jesse Helms. I mean personally but I was taking Ambassador- oh, what was her name? I can't remember. Who had been nominated to go to, I believe to Mozambique and she just got this terrible grilling from a really dreadful aide to Jesse Helms. I mean, I've never sat in on anything as unpleasant as that particular interview. But, oddly enough, Jesse Helms had a black assistant who came down to South Africa early in my stay, about '84, and he had been talking to a lot black South Africans and I was very popular with that group and he actually told me that he had gone back- oh, how did this go?– that Jesse Helms had asked who should be the next ambassador to South Africa? And that his aide had said it should be Betsy Spiro; Spiro was my name then. That's important to remember; I was a different name then, Betsy Spiro. So his aide, I got along very well with his aide but when I was back in H the- I can't remember the name of his chief of staff but they were very, very unpleasant.

Q: Well then, when you went around to try to stop the sanctions bill, what was your argument?

CLARK: I hope I did a good job, since I didn't believe my own arguments. I would imagine that some of them were the standard argument, that it would hurt the people that you wanted to help. I think that was probably the main argument.

Q: I would imagine, I mean, that's usually- sanctions tend to do that.

CLARK: Right.

Q: Well then you, after a year there you moved where?

CLARK: I became- I went to P and I was Mike Armacost's special assistant for Africa and for Europe; Europe exclusive of NATO. I had another colleague who was doing NATO. I had two very, very good years, fascinating years.

Q: What were you doing?

CLARK: Well in terms of my Africa beat, oh goodness, this has now come back to me; I should have written some notes before I came today. But Namibia was the big issue because the Namibian independence had been an issue which I guess this is, to be candid, Mike Armacost was saying, you know, Chet Crocker has been pushing this for a long time and I got the impression that nobody was paying any attention to this. And this was another, I mean, I am here to talk about myself; the thing I was very proud of, the Cubans sent more troops to Angola and I wondered whether the South African attitude towards Namibia and their help for fighting in Angola might be changed were there a change in the military situation. So I got a CIA briefing that came over and briefed me on that and they said they hadn't- before my request they hadn't really looked into it deeply but yes, yes, it had changed the sort of balance of power so it made quite a lot of sense to think that the South Africans might say we want out of Namibia. And changing the political calculation. So I was bringing all of this stuff so I started pushing a lot of stuff into Armacost's office and that got passed onto Shultz so that was a kind of an exciting moment. I went up on the plane when Namibia, I guess, was accepted into the UN. Anyway, it was at the UN that I was going to, some ceremony there, with Crocker and a big entourage. I think Crocker must have been there.

Anyway, that was my main Africa issue and my main Europe issue was base closings and repercussions, you know, just keeping information going. I was focused on that. And then I also got focused on, when did I get into this? Maybe I'll have to remember for our next session. There was another very high profile issue but why was I involved in the- I'll remember, come back with it because it was a very interesting, very high profile issue where I was able to get some quick information to Armacost. I just can't remember all the details; I'll have to-

Q: Well, you know, you had Liberia and Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.

CLARK: Well there was a lot, of course, still going on with Zaire, with Mobutu. That was another issue I focused on because we had been supporting Mobutu so that we could support Savimbi in Angola and after Namibian independence we didn't do that anymore and so there was the collapse of Mobutu, was another- was something else I followed and read a lot of cable traffic on. I don't know; I thought before this session, I did do a little thinking about my South African experience and maybe I could- because there were a number of quite dramatic events that had to do with PE that I could come back to.

Q: Alright. Why don't we stop at this point?

CLARK: Yes, I think maybe.

Q: And kind of- Well I mean, things were happening. So why don't we pick this up the next time. We're talking about what? About '70-

CLARK: This, no, this was my time in P was '87 to '89.

Q: Eighty-seven to '89. Of course we had the fall of the Soviet Union essentially but-

CLARK: Well yes, we did. I wasn't doing Eastern Europe. I was doing Western Europe. Yes, I forget when I exactly left in '89 but I was doing Western Europe and Africa with an emphasis on Africa for those two years. I mean, of course I witnessed, I wasn't responsible but you know, Tiananmen Square, I mean, Mike's special assistant for China, you know, slept in the office, just never went home. And so I was kind of fortunate not to be-

Q: Yes. Okay, well we'll pick this up next time with rather tumultuous events. Great.

CLARK: Okay.

Q: Today is the 17th of October, 2011, with Betsy Clark.

Betsy, we've been in sort of a hiatus, I've been away on vacation. Let's come back and talk over, in the first place, sort of in a specific- you mentioned before that you'd left out your impressions and meetings with Nelson Mandela's wife, Winnie Mandela, who was a very controversial figure. Could you talk about her for a bit?

CLARK: Yes. After I talk about her, though, I would like to use that as a lead in to the more general issues that we were looking at. But of course we were interested in meeting with Winnie Mandela. There were a number of icons for the black South Africans who the government had exiled or had sharply restricted their ability to move around. And Winnie Mandela was restricted to a township basically in the middle of nowhere in the Orange Free State near Bloemfontein but we did get an opportunity to visit with her -- Ken Brown, the consul general. And I think one of our goals for the meeting was to find out who she was meeting with. Some of our questions were whether she was hooked in with the leadership of the United Democratic Front, which was the internal ANC (African

National Congress), and also to find out what she thought about the chances for her husband's release. We also wanted to report on the conditions in which she lived.

Now on that subject, Winnie lived in a bigger house than the average township houses. I'm going to be very frank about one aspect of her home. There were some clear evidences of the rumors that had swirled around her as being quite promiscuous and that she had romantic liaisons with many of her leadership contacts. These were all rumors but, in fact, in her house, the most prominent piece of furniture was a huge king size bed with a great red heart as the headboard. And I can be forgiven for raising my eyebrow and thinking whether that didn't give some credence to all the rumors.

I don't recall that there was anything very dramatic that she said to us, but this was an unusual meeting. I think it had been perhaps the first meeting of an official American with her. Subsequently I had many conversations with individuals in her circle. The circle was basically a royal court with courtiers circling around her. They were very eager, these figures, to say nasty things about each other, in order to make sure I knew that they were the ones that were closest to her. There did not seem to be any, at least as far as I could judge, connection with the very serious and intelligent planning that was coming out of the internal black anti-apartheid leadership. I was never sure who the top decision makers were, but certainly focused in the United Democratic Front leadership which was coming up with strategies -- how to counter the South African government, how to make sure the government couldn't make themselves look good in the international community. That was particularly important in the case of a major event that I covered which was a treason trial held in Durban. The government did not achieve its goals and, in fact, the treason trialists were eventually released. This seemed to me to be the big arena and I was so interested in political analysis that my interest in Winnie Mandela was actually somewhat less than it was with a number of other leaders of the internal black movement.

Q: Well there had been a case of some young man being killed.

CLARK: That was after I left. Indeed that incident blackened her reputation. That incident also fits into a much bigger context on which I was doing a lot of reporting and that was the increase of violence in the black townships. There was a tremendous anger against the stooges, the black township "councilors" who had been appointed by the government and had no real power. Anger against them resulted in "necklacing", where people were burned to death by putting a tire around their necks which was filled with gasoline. There was the intense hatred of these stooges, but also a strategic concern by the opposition to make sure the government didn't sell there policy in the townships as reasonable, even democratic.

Q: You call them stooges; can you explain?

CLARK: Well stooges, in other words they were carrying out the government's orders. They were close to the government. They were not members of the United Democratic Front or the Black Consciousness Movement. I would like to say one more word about after this dynamic.

To illustrate I will give you an example of one meeting I had with a leader whose name was Sally Motlana. I had been in some larger meeting of black activists and her husband, Nthato Motlana -- now as we speak a very wealthy businessman- who was a senior black leader in Soweto, particularly of something called the Transvaal Education Crisis Committee. The committee was the internal ANC at work in one of its many guises. So he was a very important figure and so was she independently. But I remember at this particular meeting I had a conversation with her. There had just been a report of somebody killed in the township, of one of these "collaborators" the word that was used. I said the name and there was immediate consternation because she and the others in this little circle were worried that it was a councilor who they knew was just doing it because he had to put his kids through school or something like that. He was not the real bad guy collaborator who they were going to feel absolutely no regrets about disposing of and that was a part of a very much larger strategy, which was maybe nasty but very effective. But my point is really that everybody knew everybody and so even somebody who was a councilor who might be under this general rubric of a "collaborator" but thought of differently. They were making distinctions and they did not want to kill the one they were worried had just gotten killed.

I think that gives a bit of the flavor of the times. Also, there was a lot of worry about the intense violence, supported by the youth who were out from under the control of their elders. One of my jobs was reporting back to Washington on these internal leaders, including Bishop Tutu and other very well known names. In fact Bishop Tutu was stopped from talking to one big meeting in the township because "nobody wanted to hear his peace message." He was not an "elder" in control. He was also not terribly popular in terms of the reactions I got from my interlocutors, even those who weren't violent students. COSAS (Congress of South African Students), which was the student organization was a real powerhouse at the time.

So this was the context also of Winnie Mandela's involvement in violence. She was clearly allied, in everybody's mind, with the most violent strand of the anti-apartheid movement. And-

Q: Well in the first place, let's talk about being an American Foreign Service officer, getting in and talking- I mean, you had a rather brutal South African police intelligence organization. How were you dealt with?

CLARK: Well you know I assumed my phone was tapped and I assumed I was followed but I had nothing to do with the police.

Q: Were you stopped or I mean, were there no go places?

CLARK: I think I may have mentioned in my last session here that when I arrived in '83 there were still what were called "black spots". The government had not finished its grand master plan of removing all black settlements within "white territory." People really do forget that every square inch of South Africa was divided into four race groups.

They hadn't quite finished removing these so-called black spots and on one occasion the British consul in Johannesburg -- maybe it was the vice consul -- and I went out to be witnesses to a removal. There were buses coming out of this area of settlement -- the "black spot" -- that were carrying away their black residents to be dumped on a hillside in the nearest "homeland" or rather their tribal homeland. The South African Afrikaners, justified this separation of the races. They also believed in dividing up the tribes, as well as black and white and colored and Indian. They believed that that was what God meant to do and they justified this on very religious grounds. All of these 10 "homelands" were for 10 tribes. Therefore this particular bunch of South African blacks were going to be dumped on the Tswana homeland. We were witnesses to this removal and not definitely stopped by the police from being their at the edge of the settlement area which was over a hill and not visible to us. We asked to go in to the settlement and a very nasty policeman said "what are you doing here?" There was another very interesting part of that incident in that there was a white South African group of witnesses. Some whites -- English in particular -- were members of very liberal organizations, one of them called the Black Sash. One of the things they did was bear witness to these black spot removals. The police were vicious to this young woman, speaking in Afrikaans to her because she was Afrikaans. The police of course were all Afrikaners. They said very hostile and threatening things to the two of us also, but we were really concerned for her safety. I am not sure what were have happened if there hadn't been two foreign diplomats there, playing a protective role. So yes, I did have some run ins.

I don't know whether I mentioned in my last session being control officer for Teddy Kennedy's trip to South Africa. He was there for a week and I was assigned by the ambassador as his control officer. He had a big entourage. We had an airplane and helicopters and so forth. We did go to another black spot and he and all of his entourage, including some of his nieces and nephews, fanned out around the township. They organized soccer games with the kids. They really were good politicians. I was full of admiration for what they did while Kennedy was sitting talking to the village elders.

Then there was a third black spot I went to which had been increasingly cut off so that, you know, there were really no roads at all, services were basically non-existent. That was one of my jobs, was to report on what was happening that undercut the government's message.

In that connection, the South African government, as I may have mentioned, decided at the time of Biko's death they no longer wanted to get that kind of bad press internationally so they weren't going to overtly murder or kill the black leadership. I remember one of my reporting exercises was the murder of one of the major black leaders on the Eastern Cape Matthew Goniwe. I remember his name because there was so much good said about him, how popular he was, how he organized these areas. I talked to a lot of people, which made it quite clear that when he and three others were killed they would be murdered by the deniable arm of the South African security services. I was certainly trying to undercut any deniability strategies on the part of the government in my reporting and obviously they didn't like that.

But in terms of the anti-Americanism, I don't think I ever said anything I wasn't authorized to say, but I know I had a reputation of being very sympathetic with the internal-

Q: Well it would be pretty hard-

CLARK: Not to be.

Q:-not to be.

CLARK: Well I was always kind of amazed because big leaders of the United Democratic Front, people who became the minister of defense, Terror Lekota, or the chief of staff, Frank Chicane, for all these people I was their contact. They preferred to channel stuff through me and of course they wanted protection also. They wanted to invite me to rallies and events so the police wouldn't move in and kill them.

My contacts were very anti-Reagan. I think it was Bishop Tutu who was quoted as saying Reagan was basically a racist. It was a difficult thing at that time because of the very general feeling against the U.S. and very relevant to many of the specific big events that I was covering, like the treason trial of the Durban 16. there were rumors that we basically were somehow behind this and rumors were always swirling. But I was close to or knew some of these figures before they were picked up and put on trial and I went to the treason trial as a witness and there was a "Rand Daily Mail" reporter who I knew quite well and he wrote up a piece which mentioned my presence there in kind of very favorable sorts of terms so that I do think that when those treason trialists were found not guilty we at the consulate, I knew all of them and, you know, would call to say glad you're out. I was very proud of the fact that some of them were saying that we were responsible for actually getting them out so that I am pleased that, you know, there wasn't just a kind of cut and dry anti-American feeling against American diplomats when I was there.

Q: Was there a- I mean, obviously you were carrying out the policy of the United States.

CLARK: Right, right.

Q: I mean, was this a policy that you felt was too sympathetic to the white Afrikaans?

CLARK: Well the big issue was sanctions. I came back from South Africa to be in our Legislative Affairs Bureau and my job there was to try to stop the sanctions legislation from going through when I actually was for sanctions. I think the sanctions was the big issue but I never, you know, I was not the PAO (public affairs officer), I did not have to get out there and I didn't have to talk about it at all because I was mostly talking about internal politics and so I could avoid talking about the sanctions policy.

Q: I know on sanctions, right now I'm reading a book that's quite popular called "In the Garden of the Beast" by a man named- oh my God, I forget his name- Nelson, I think it

is. Anyway, it concerns our Ambassador Dodd to Germany in 1933 and the- when Hitler was just taking power-

CLARK: Right. Herman Nickel was my ambassador-

Q: No, no, but this is- this goes back to 1993 and the issue of the Jewish community in the United States was very divided on sanctions against Germany because of the treatment of the Jews.

CLARK: Right.

Q: And one of the major arguments was well, it will just hurt the Jews.

CLARK: Right.

Q: You know, as sanctions always do; they often hurt the people you're trying to help but-

CLARK: That was certainly the argument and, as an aside, I had something to do Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma when I was head of our democracy fund in the State Department and of course the same argument was made about the sanctions in Burma. My own personal feeling is that sanctions, in the case of South Africa, were not nearly as important as the internal dynamics, what went on during particularly the years I was there. But the fact the outside world was united, that was very important. Sure there were little gaps, the French and Israelis with building the nuclear bomb or other splits here and there but basically it was a solid front. The sports ban as I think I probably mentioned last time, was for the whites just so important. They would do anything to get back into international competition.

Q: The fact that, you know, they always had a big role in rugby and things like this.

CLARK: Well absolutely.

Q: And the fact that they were, you know, considered despicable did not sit very well.

CLARK: No. Unlike Burma, where I don't think the government cares what the rest of the world thinks. But South Africans did care; they cared partly because of sport but also I had some South African white friends that had some very interesting perspectives in this connection. For instance, one of these friends I'm thinking of, her son was in the army. She didn't want her son being assigned to go into Soweto and mow down people in Soweto. So the white government was faced with some pressure from their white constituents. There was a draft; everybody served in the military. I think there were some real internal pressure on the government to say "no we don't want to go any further. We need to cut a deal; we need to release Mandela."

Q: Well did you feel while you were doing this that there was going to be some significant give on the part of the white government or did you feel that, you know, all these efforts weren't going to get anywhere?

CLARK: Oh I did feel the government was going to give. It's what I characterized as "they pushed the button in all the way and they couldn't push it in any further." If you've got troops stationed in churchyards and schoolyards and you're facing "stayaways" you don't have much margin. The black opposition was increasingly upping the stakes to the national level so that the stayaways were increasingly working, you know. No people from Soweto coming in to work in Johannesburg and the threat of continuing national school boycotts. What can the government do about that? They didn't have any answers. So I did think that they were going to have to give. I also sort of believed some, not 100 percent, But some of my interlocutors who said there was always this plan. In '84, while I was there, you had elections for the Indian and colored assemblies. So they were going to be part of parliament. Now, they really didn't have any power because these were separate houses of parliament, and they couldn't really exercise any overall power but a lot of my interlocutors were saying that was the plan, to then to move to the black population and that they really thought that they could control it. I do believe that. They didn't know enough black leaders. Most of the whites, very senior whites I talked to, had heard of Nelson Mandela and that was what it came down to.

But there was another very specific meeting that I'd like to put on record that I attended it and I was sort of astonished at what it turned out I was attending here. Again, it was the Education Crisis Committee and it was meeting in a major hotel in Johannesburg without any press about this meeting with the police. All of a sudden I realized that, the senior members of the United Democratic Front, that is to say, the internal revolution was lined up on one side of the table and on the other side of the table who walks in the room but Johan Coetzee, the cabinet chief of police who sits down at the other side of the table and I say to myself, "what is going on here?" They were theoretically negotiating about the education crisis, I mean, school boycott talks. But it was clear that this was a little second track diplomacy. I do believe that the white government wanted negotiations but did many things that would ensure they wouldn't get them like clamp down so much on activity in the black community that the black South Africans couldn't even talk to their supporters. How were they going to negotiate if they can't move around.

So there was a lot going on but I think, in answer to your question, that the government felt they could control a transition, a transition that would go on forever, where there might be a black house of parliament but somehow it would be circumscribed so that there wouldn't be a real power and that they could even control the release of Nelson Mandela. They really wanted to release him because they really truly did not want him to die in jail. And that I absolutely believe. Many of my sort of white interlocutors and I should say I talked to a lot of the press lords because they were all in Johannesburg , including one of the chief reporters from the main Afrikaner newspaper, Die Beeld, for example. I was also talking to the "Rand Daily Mail" but they were on the left. Lots of people were telling me that and I finally came to believe that line.

Q: Well you were doing this, were you- were there others doing this or did you find that you were becoming a figure? I mean-

CLARK: Yes, I think I definitely was a figure. And with some of the things I did, word of mouth got around in about one second in this leadership of the internal black opposition. In one case I had put up- and this was against the law -- overnight a leader of the Transvaal, Joyce Mabudafhasi. I remember her name because she was so incredible, had been in and out of jail in Northern Transvaal where she was basically telling her jailers what to do and where to get off. As a footnote, after Mandela was released, and the coming of majority rule, she was put on the peace commission with her police chief, the head of the police or the head of that district in Transvaal, and they were co-chairs. I just would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in those conversations. But at the moment I am talking about she was escaping. A lot of these people were on the run all the time. I did put her up overnight and I think the word got around on that. And this is my hunch, nobody told me that, that it got around in about a nanosecond, and so I would get all these smiles whenever I was talking to these United Democratic Front leaders.

But I also had- I don't know if I said- told this really funny- it was a really interesting period because in Johannesburg at least they stopped the petty apartheid. You know, restaurants, you could take your black contacts to the best restaurants and since the Rand had just collapsed, my representational allowance was very generous so I took them to the best restaurants. And in one case they were on the run; it was this guy, Lekota, who became minister of defense and Popo Molefe became the head of the Transvaal province. They were in exquisitely well dressed, in starched very clean, overalls, like a workman's outfit -- head to toe blue denim -- and we waltz into Johannesburg's fanciest restaurant which among other things includes a buffet so we all have to get up and go around the buffet. I just loved to think of the conversations about "who is that?" Well, they did that deliberately, Lekota and Molefe; among other things they had had very good senses of humor.

But there were lots of stuff going on sort of underneath. The theater in Johannesburg, had been desegregated. That was a big meeting place for opposition forces who could also meet with whites, including diplomats …

Q: What was the role of the other consular operations in Johannesburg? I mean, obviously you had the French and the Israeli, the German, the British, you know; how-

CLARK: Of course the embassies were all up in Pretoria. I told about this one time when I was out together with the British vice counsel. They were very active doing similar things -- trying to meet with the internal black opposition. I think I mentioned the South African Council of Churches, headed by Beyers Naudé, who I had contact with, took out to lunch, and his deputy, Frank Chikane, who became chief of staff in the majority government. But the Brits were doing exactly the same thing. I don't remember much about the activities of the Germans and the French. Of course the Swedes and the Scandinavians were totally behind sanctions and totally there to help and do whatever they could do with internal opposition.

Q: What about the newspapers? Let's take first the white newspapers in the area. How did the reporters contact- where were they and how were they reporting?

CLARK: Well they- I did have contact with the two chief, well the three chief things. There was the big "Journal," which is like "The Economist," the-

Q: You can fill it in later.

CLARK: Anyway, there was a glossy magazine like "The Economist," which my son actually worked on for six months when he was visiting me. And then there was the "Rand Daily Mail," which was English South African and therefore more liberal. And then there was "Die Beeld," which was the main Afrikaner newspaper, also headquartered in Johannesburg, and finally there was the "Sowetan." The "Sowetan" was important. I read the "Sowetan" every day; that was the newspaper out of Soweto. You would never find anything in "Die Beeld." There was censorship, maybe mostly it self-censorship. It was very difficult to find real news in it.

Q: Could you talk to the reporters?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: And how did they- how informed were they?

CLARK: Well as I say, I think it was a little bit like the government. There were some who did know a lot of the black opposition leaders, but most of them were like the government leaders, they really didn't know the black opposition leaders. They had no contact with them. They couldn't go into Soweto. A diplomat was able to go into Soweto; other whites had to get passes. People just really didn't know.

Q: What about socially for you as a diplomat there?

CLARK: Well I was extremely socially active. I also did invite these black leaders to social events. And if there were some white leaders there too, it was always the first time that they had met. It's a bit of an exaggeration but not much. I was just remembering before I came over here that the DCM and I were invited to dinner at the home of a man named Ishmael _____ who had been one of the Durban treason trialists. The dinner was after they were acquitted. They wanted to tell the story to the Americans.

Q: Well let's talk about this treason trial. What was this all about?

CLARK: Well this was the treason trial was where I had this very naïve Afrikaner professor's as a "Deep Throat" even before they had made arrests. Other black opposition leaders had been tried before going back to early '80s. the governments hadn't had a very good success in getting convictions because their evidence was very flimsy and the South African judiciary did have some independence. It was not just being jerked around by the

government so the government had a very bad record. One of the chief things that they would accuse these people they rounded up with was actually going outside the country and going into the ANC camps to get instruction. The charge was always planning the violent overthrow of the government. It was very hard to find evidence of that because in fact the movement was peaceful. "We're going to do boycotts", "we're going to do strikes and we're going to do this and that; no violent overthrow of the government." So they had a very weak case. I think it ended up being 12 defendants and I think it was in Pietermaritzburg although they were referred to as the Durban 16. But they were all accused of violence.

Now, I had found out from my inside sources that there were all kinds of mistakes made by the government. I can recall one of the strategies they wanted to use which was to use the fact that in '84 the government had had the Indian and colored elections. They wanted that to look really good in the international eye. Therefore they didn't want to arrest Indians or coloreds to put them on trial for treason. Apparently they held back on that but then somebody made a mistake and arrested some key Indian leaders anyway. So there was a lot of incompetence inside the government.

In fact one of the things that I began to conclude was there was a lot of incompetence in the government. That trial was a good example of the incompetence. I think there's a mistake in the analysis in the books about this trial, namely, that the government simply wanted to put these leaders "on ice." That was kind of the theory. However, most of what I gleaned from my talks with people was that, no, the government actually wanted to put them into jail. There was a lot of incompetence but, no, they wanted to put them into jail.

I think there is probably never going to be a lot of clarity on what the government was doing. I do think they thought they could control a transition but I do not think they thought what our CIA thought, which was that they could keep power by military force for another 20 years or so. I don't think they thought that.

Q: Did you find yourself- you mentioned the CIA- did you find yourself sending out things that were in contradiction to the- what you knew were the CIA analyses of developments?

CLARK: Well it turned out- the answer to that question is yes. They didn't show me what they were reporting and they were not officially supposed to be reporting on South Africa at all during the time I was there. In theory the CIA officer who was in the consulate was reporting on Lesotho. That was pretty clearly not the case but they weren't showing me what they were writing. They certainly could read what I was writing. But I did read -- at the very end of my three years in South Africa -- a report that had obviously come out of Pretoria. They were reporting that the white government would keep control for another 20 years. And that was in contradiction to my analysis.

Q: How about white society there? I mean, I'm talking about the upper reaches, the type of people that as a consular officer you'd normally be in contact with. Were they shunning you or what?

CLARK: No. I was focused on the United Democratic Front. One of the key things that I could do for Washington was to try to figure out myself -- because nobody else was writing about this -- what was the difference between the Black Consciousness Movement, which became ZAPPO, and the United Democratic Front which was really the internal ANC. I mean everybody knew there were fights with Inkatha (Inkatha Freedom Party). I won a reporting award for writing on internal black politics. So white society interested me a little less. I have to say however that one of my white interlocutors, and he wasn't alone, was so far to the left he talked about the great day that would dawn when the Afrikaner government was history and there would be re-education camps set up in _____. Some in the white opposition were flat out communists and they were pretty extreme.

But just to answer your question the social level, I would say that, you know, I circulated pretty widely.

Q: I was in INR dealing with Africa back in pre-history, back in the late 1950s.

CLARK: Oh, wow.

Q: And I had the Horn of Africa so I didn't have South Africa but obviously South Africa was a subject that came up quite often. And you know, we used to talk about, you know, there will be a night of long knives. When you were there, you talk about re-education camps and all that, was there- were there schools of how a transition might come about or was anybody even talking about a transition?

CLARK: Oh yes, they certainly were. Among the Afrikaners there was all this talk about a white state -- setting up a white state. I didn't spend too much time on that because my own not very flattering judgment was they were all talk and no action and they wouldn't actually do anything about it. They -- many of them -- just big bullies, but they wouldn't do anything about it.

But yes, there was definitely talk about that. And there was talk about violence. And the black opposition leaders I met might not have been able to control people. Mandela, of course, was the absolute key to all of the relatively peaceful transition, in my view. But I don't think there would have been a night of long knives. I did write one cable at the end where I did predict violence between Inkatha and the ANC. KwaZulu/Natal might even break away and there would be a lot of violence. I attribute the fact that that didn't happen entirely to Mandela.

Q: Talk a bit about the- was it the KwaZulu and try- This is the KwaZulu tribe wasn't it?

CLARK: KwaZulu/Natal, yes.

Q: Yes. How did- What sort of role was it playing?

CLARK: Well they've had a big chief, Chief Buthelezi. Everything is always about power and Buthelezi was heading up this movement in Inkatha. It is true -- I know this from my subsequent assignment -- that President Reagan really liked Buthelezi and he liked the tribal idea -- that this was the natural way things should go. And Buthelezi was against the United Democratic Front/ANC and was cozying up to Big Business that was coming to South Africa to get a cut of the action. I wasn't in Durban but I know for a fact that before I went to one major UDF meeting outside of Durban that three UDF leaders had been murdered by Inkatha just a week before. I didn't think the violence would dissipate. I think the way Mandela dealt in giving Buthelezi a lot in the negotiations diffused he threat.

To make a quick comment on another function I was able to play because I had been with the Kennedy group: I spent a lot of time with Alan Boesak who was an important leader from the Cape. He was what was called "colored". And he ran afoul of the internal anti apartheid opposition for some things he had done -- sleeping with his assistants for example -- and fell out of grace not too long after I was meeting with him as I was taking Kennedy around the Cape. He was a big power but something I don't think Washington quite understood at the time was how different the coloreds were from the black South Africans. To this day they have different parties. They speak Afrikaans. There are all kinds of subtleties that were going on which meant the leaders up in Johannesburg didn't like Alan Boesak but the U.S. thought he was wonderful. I thought these underground issues were important to report on.

Q: Well did you find that you- We had a large number of visitors, didn't we? I mean-

CLARK: Oh yes.

Q: -who were politically important. It wasn't just visitors to see the, you know, the beautiful scenery but you know, the Jesse Jacksons and some of the Kennedy-

CLARK: Oh yes, Steve Solarz was another example. There were lots of members of Congress.

Q: Well did you spend a significant part of your time trying to explain the subtleties of the-

CLARK: I did. Some of them were not going to be teachable, so to speak.

Q: You know, people came with pretty strong ideas.

CLARK: Yes. And there were a lot of very top level visitors. I was so interested in what I was doing that I found it a terrific bore that I had to pay attention to these important people coming through because it took me away from what I was doing. But no, they were. Steve Solarz played a better role but-

Q: He's a congressman who- I've interviewed Steve so you can read his account in the Library of Congress's file. But was known for- somebody who came in very intensive, went everywhere, talked to everyone he could. How did you find him?

CLARK: Steve Solarz?

Q: Yes.

CLARK: I thought he did a good job. Yes. I thought he was very serious.

I'm trying to remember the name of another congressman who came through. He was a little bit like today's Tea Partiers. He was just interested in some religious sect and how it was going to get along. But we did have a tremendous number of visitors who would come. And we had very high level journalists. I don't want to repeat myself because I do think I mentioned this last time: I tried to keep away from them because they really wanted a nice story where they can say a mid-level State Department official doesn't agree with U.S. policy. I just ran out the door every time I saw them.

Q: Well look at this later and anything you can-

Well then, let's move on to when you- we've already talked about it a bit- but you came- you left South Africa when?

CLARK: Eighty-six.

Q: And you went to, what, public affairs?

CLARK: I went for a year to the Bureau of Legislative Affairs. I was very happy to get sprung from H, although it was exciting. I was in the room when the sanctions bill passed and you don't get many times in Congress when actually something rather big is happening and every single member of the committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, is there. It was quite exciting.

Q: What sort of role did the State Department play, if any, in the sanctions bill?

CLARK: Well we were trying to dissuade members from voting for it. So I would get sent up to talk to Howard Wolpe and his staff. I actually talked to Howard Wolpe himself, not just the staff, to try to make a case for why we shouldn't have sanctions. It was mostly a case about hurting the people that it's supposed to be helping. That was our main line. I did go up to the Hill. It was my job to talk about the situation in South Africa. I'm glad I was only there for a brief time because that bureau was almost totally political. There was one career officer at the senior level in who had a very rough time. They just had no interest whatsoever in the career Foreign Service officers.

Q: I mean, was it a matter of that if the president said this that's the way we're going to go? Or was it-

CLARK: Sort of that.

Q: Or did they have their own _____ logical roots?

CLARK: Yes. They just were there for one purpose and they really didn't want to be briefed. It was just them in self isolation out there in the front office.

Q: How long were you with the H?

CLARK: I was there for a year and then, happily, got plucked out of H to go into P as special assistant to Mike Armacost for Africa and also for Europe, exclusive of NATO. Another colleague was doing NATO. I almost find it hard to remember what I did vis-à-vis Europe except be the go-between between bureaus and the undersecretary of political affairs on base negotiations. We were closing bases -- Portugal and Spain I think. There were at least two base negotiations where I was sitting in meetings and reporting back on what was going on.

Q: Yes. Yes, for years opening bases was a big deal and closing bases must have been, you know, it's a- how to reverse gears.

CLARK: Yes. This was something that I was reporting back to Armacost on but it didn't seem problematic. I don't think there were any big issues that were rising to the level of the Secretary. The issue that was most important when I was there was Namibia, specifically Namibian independence, and the war in Angola with the Cuban troop build up factor. Obviously high levels in the State Department were very interested in that.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed, I've had a long set of interviews with Chester Crocker-

CLARK: Oh yes.

Q: -on this. But did you find that your involvement in South Africa, were you carrying a reputation around, being a bomb thrower or any of these things?

CLARK: No, I think I had a good reputation. I mean maybe later in my career things went in a different direction but as having done a very good job in South Africa yes.

But I was just quickly reading here about Namibia. Of course if you interview Chet Crocker you're going to get the Namibia story. Yes, I did say something about this the last time about what the South African calculus was and why they might be interested in pulling back from Namibia.

Q: Getting away- If we can get the Cubans out of the South African side.

CLARK: Right, right.

Q: We'd go out.

CLARK: Right. So I spent quite a lot of time with that issue.

Q: Well did you, on this, because I go back to my interview with Chester Crocker, where he found himself in a way dealing with practically a foreign enemy and that was the CIA at the time, which was- had quite a- was very cozy to the white South Africans.

CLARK: Yes, sure.

Q: Did you find that was a calculus that you were seeing in the job with Armacost?

CLARK: Well by then the tide had shifted. I'd have to try to remember the specifics. I did mention, which I think was very important, my getting a briefing from the CIA on whether the Cuban decision to send more troops was actually going to make a difference in terms of the military balance on the battlefield which would affect South African calculations. And the answer came back from CIA. I got a straightforward, I think, analysis. A briefer came up to my room from the CIA. He said yes, it was going to make a difference. Now, I do think my getting into Armacost was the first time that idea had gotten up to the seventh floor. There was a real change in the power calculations of some of the analysts.

Q: Well when were you- In doing that, you were with Mike Armacost from when to when?

CLARK: Two years; '87 to '89

Q: When in '89 did you leave?

CLARK: I'd have to think back but I suspect it was December, something like that.

Q: So the Berlin Wall was coming down when you left?

CLARK: Well what month-?

Q: Well the big thing started happening around November/December '89.

CLARK: It's possible I had just left. I went to FSI for three months, where I wrote a piece on South Africa; it appeared- cover story in the Foreign Service Journal. I don't think I was there when the wall actually fell.

Q: Alright well how did this FSI appointment come about?

CLARK: I think I did leave in September- between that and my next assignment which was in Oslo as political counselor, and I was going to be taking Norwegian, which I did

in the spring and then went, I guess, in the summer of '90 to Oslo. I do remember, I left P in September. Maybe I shouldn't say this on the record but P was one of the few assignments where officers got comp time. And I had been very interested in writing. And I did write a political thriller in a three month period of comp time before I went to FSI to study Norwegian for six months.

Q: Well did you- How did the Norwegian assignment come about?

CLARK: Well it was, in a way, sort of amusing because my husband, my present husband, tried to recruit me. He was ambassador in Gabon and heard good things about me so he tried to recruit me to come and be his DCM in Gabon. I decided I didn't want to do that. And so I bid on the Oslo assignment. I had gotten interested in getting back into EUR. I mean, there were a couple of things which I probably didn't mention but I remember going with the deputy assistant secretary of state for EUR Wilkinson, with Mike Armacost, to Turkey for very senior annual consultations at the highest level. I also accompanied Wilkinson separately as an official delegation to Cyprus. That was quite fascinating. It was also funny because my name at the time was Spiro. It's just true that the people in Cyprus thought that the State Department was sending a message by sending a Greek out to Cyprus so I got much more attention than Wilkinson did in the newspapers: "Elizabeth Spiro!, blah, blah, blah, blah." It really was very funny. We went up to the north and then we went to Athens to give equal time with the Turkish consultations and I also had some funny moments then.

I don't know if I mentioned that I did a couple of missions on my own. I went around to Brussels and Strasbourg selling a new human rights initiative that Chas Freeman, who was then deputy in the Africa bureau, had come up with. It was a new human rights initiative vis-à-vis South Africa. I had consultations in Brussels and in the Council of Europe. I enjoyed that very much. Also on my own I was sent to Brussels to debrief them on Armacost's conversation with the Turks. And I think all of this made me think I wanted to get into EUR.

Q: What was your impression of the Cypriot situation, which means Greece and Turkey and the Cypriots?

CLARK: I had one sentence. I said to Jim Wilkinson: "you know, this isn't going anywhere." This was absolutely, as far as I was concerned, a frozen situation and I just didn't see any angle to move things along there at all. Today we still have the Cyprus situation.

Q: Going to Norway, I can't think of in a way a more tranquil spot on the European map than Norway ____.

CLARK: Well that's true, except of course this was just at the end of the Cold War so there was much that was going on in all of the Nordics. I got very interested in what I found out was called "security architecture" or "European security architecture", chiefly

the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe). When I was there it was the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe).

Q: It's all part of the LCTN and accords

CLARK: It was the preceding organization. But there were many end of Cold War initiatives and I remember thinking at the time -- from the vantage point of Oslo -- that we, the Americans, had been very inventive. I was a little disappointed to find out this inventiveness came out of the White House. New organizations were being set up specifically to bring in the Eastern Europeans, to, as I put it, wrap a little "net" around Eastern Europe. I thought that there were a lot of rather quick and good initiatives on that front. I was very involved in that from the point of view of the Norwegian government and what it wanted to do.

It was also not boring because this was when the former Yugoslavia was breaking up and the Norwegian foreign minister was Stoltenberg, who had been ambassador, along with Larry Eagleburger in Belgrade. In my view they were rather pro-Serb. In Oslo the foreign ministry below Stoltenberg were saying out of the corner of their mouths to me "you understand what we have to deal with here." They didn't feel that way at all. I was absolutely appalled at my very good friend the British DCM. The Europeans just seemed to want to let them kill each other -- "they've been killing each other for thousands and thousands of years, just let them go at it." The plans they came up with were totally undoable. Again I think the Americans with Dayton are to be commended. I spent a lot of my time in Oslo with those issues.

However the main issue was pretty boring, which was at that time will Norway join the EC? Yes. Compared to South Africa this was not exciting.

Q: Yes well they didn't, did they?

CLARK: No, they didn't. And I called that wrong. I thought that they felt such an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Swedes, that if Swedes went in they would go in. But they actually felt rich enough to stay out.

Q: Is there oil?

CLARK: Right, oil is the answer.

Q: Well looking at Norway, you know one of the things that one is struck by and that is significant wealth to a family or to a country which is sort of unearned. You know, it's there in the ground and all, particularly oil, which doesn't require an awful lot of work to get it out. It's a real curse, usually. I mean, you look at it, it means that you have a significant number of the people unemployed; getting a good education but nowhere to go, not developing the rest of society. The Norwegians from the outside seem to have done a pretty good job of handling this. How did you feel about that?

CLARK: I felt very much they were doing a good job of handling it. And the sort of Nordic values that I had picked up in my first assignment in Iceland were full strength there -- put a lot of money into social services, have the best old age home. I got a nice tour of a couple of old age homes that were pretty fantastic. Then dig holes through mountains for, let's see, a 26 kilometer road to a village. Lots of infrastructure was built. This was interesting. Making the comparison with Canada for example which has vast unpopulated areas with no infrastructure. In Norway keeping population along the coast line was a security issue. There were heavy subsidies to keep people in these fishing villages along the coastline. You can get a subsidy for painting your barn so it stays picturesque with the three little cows in front -- nothing is economically viable. and I would notice and ask a few questions. The government was pouring money in and that was partly to keep population along the coastline.

Q: Why did they want to keep population along the-?

CLARK: Fishing's very important to the Norwegians and of course. These are all fishing villages so fish is a very big part of it. But they felt it was security and that was plausible. They had been having Soviet subs coming around the corner forever and so I think they did think of it in a security-

Q: Well now, of course the Soviets had this big naval base and area up there; it's Murmansk, wasn't it, by the Kola Peninsula and when the Cold War ended I sort of had the feeling that we had our subs patrolling up there, you know, shouting on megaphones saying can Ivan come out and play, you know. I mean, we'd invested a lot of stuff and all of sudden that sort of threat disappeared. How did that affect-?

CLARK: Well I'd have to try to remember a little more but yes, the Norwegians, all the Swedes and Finns too, actually cut up and divided the area between them. The Swedes got Estonia. I mean there was seriously a division. I read some of the cables from the Baltic counselor; they had all kinds of ways in which they could coordinate their policies. However up on the Kola Peninsula, that's the Norwegian border and I do think the Norwegians got in there early on because of the terrible health threats. I mean apparently there were no, you know, no safeguards on any of-

Q: Now we're talking about nuclear?

CLARK: Yes. And so I think that was, for the Norwegians, a very big issue because the Kola Peninsula had sort of been ecologically devastated by the-

Q: Yes. You know, once these pictures of these subs sort of being dismantled and just lying there pulsating nuclear energy.

CLARK: I don't know how classified we should go but they put something down in the ocean that was a very big issue, that floated around in the embassy.

Q: Oh yes. Well later the Kursk submarine sank there but others- But I mean it's the Soviets have not done a very good job, to say the least-

CLARK: No.

Q: -in taking care of their non-useable submarine fleet.

CLARK: No, and that was for the Norwegians quite a big issue.

Q: How did we see the Norwegians vis-à-vis the European Union?

CLARK: We were all for a strong European Union so I think we were all for Norway joining.

We were not for a French proposal, which got fought out at a big meeting of the CSCE in Oslo, which was that the CSCE, then OSCE, should have a military capability. And we were constantly slapping down French proposals.

Q: Well the French have been doing this for, well since, certainly from de Gaulle's time on.

CLARK: Right.

Q: Coming up with some idea of anything to get out from under NATO.

CLARK: Right.

Q: How did you find Norwegians? Were they well informed? I mean, the people in power.

CLARK: The people in power were. Let's start with Gro Harlem Brundtland. She is just dynamite. She ate up every male politician. In hindsight, she was so much the most capable politician in Norway and she then moved on to the World Health Organization, which she headed up, and I think at one point was proposed for UN secretary general. So they had an extraordinarily capable leader while I was there. And they were very well informed. But some of the political parties are another story. They had a party -- that's grown in strength -- called the Progress Party. That's a right wing party that thinks it's modeling itself on our right wing but actually when I went to their convention they were talking about how to improve social security or some welfare measure, so they had a ways to go to hit the Tea Party mark there, but they did think of themselves as being libertarians and modeling themselves on Americans.

Q: How about immigration from the south? How was that playing?

CLARK: Well the immigration was a big issue and it still is. I mean, since I've left anti-immigrant movements have blossomed. While I was there they were not very vigorous

but there were big areas of Oslo with refugee populations, maybe mostly from Afghanistan.

Q: I would think Bosnia would be picking up.

CLARK: Who?

Q: Wouldn't Bosnia, wouldn't there be quite a few from Bosnia?

CLARK: Well, I'm trying to remember. But it was an issue even when I was there. They are very homogeneous. They just are not a multi-cultural society. There was one political party that was basically the farmers' party. It has occasionally produced prime ministers. They ran the Lillehammer city council. My conservative party buddy would say to me, "Betsy, do you realize, they want to declare Lillehammer dry for the Olympics".

Q: Oh God.

CLARK: So they were laughing about the farmers' party. Now, they fought them back on that one but they were a temperance party.

Q: Did you- was there any connection between the Norwegian American community and the, I mean, people coming back and all that?

CLARK: Big time. I think their ambassadors are always-

Q: Named Anderson or-

CLARK: Right, right. My ambassador was Norwegian stock, a very fine woman who had been head of the Peace Corps. But yes, I don't remember the last time we had a career ambassador.

Q: Were there any sort of issues between Norway and the United States during this period? You were there from when to when?

CLARK: Ninety to '93.

Q: Any particular issues?

CLARK: Well, we talked a lot about the war in Yugoslavia, you know, but no. I would have to say fortunately my economic counselor colleague had to deal with "the" issue, which was whales. You know, there was an almost constant stream of denunciation of Norway for its whaling policy and I was very happy I didn't have to deal with that.

Q: I recall talking to somebody who was, I think, dealing with that in someplace like either Chad or the Central African Republic and they wanted to get a vote and so they

went in and made a big pitch to the foreign ministry and all and after it was all over the foreign minister said would you please explain what a whale is, you know.

CLARK: That's very funny. I'm sure that, you know, this is an issue that's probably still taking up too much time.

Q: Oh yes.

Well then, I was looking at the time; this is probably a good place to stop.

Where did you go after this?

CLARK: After Oslo, yes. I might think of a little bit more because those were key years in Europe and I really haven't thought about it and so maybe next time. But what I did was I came back and I have to say, from then on my assignments were -- my personal life became very important. I got engaged to be married to the ambassador to Gabon or former ambassador to Gabon, Warren Clark. I was sort of shifting, you know, I was deliberately shifting to sort of a Washington based mentality. I mean, there were some very good assignments I was offered, you know, go be DCM in Estonia or at least the ambassador was trying to pitch me for that, which under normal circumstances I would have kind of jumped at it but I wanted to come back to Washington. So I came back to DRL because that was coming back to a subject that I had written about and published, co-edited a book and published on human rights.

Q: DRL is?

CLARK: Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. At that time- Well no, I think that was the name when I came back.

Q: Okay, that was in when?

CLARK: That would have been in '93.

Q: Today is the 24th of October, 2011, with Betsy Clark.

Betsy, let's talk just a little more about being undersecretary. How was the undersecretary used at that time?

CLARK: Well-

Q: This is Mike Armacost.

CLARK: It was Mike Armacost. Under Shultz it was a very orderly process. Things were funneled directly up to Shultz through the deputy undersecretary and the hierarchy was very smooth. And then there was a switch. I worked for six months under Bob Kimmitt.

Q: Shultz was a Republican.

CLARK: When the undersecretary position changed to Bob Kimmitt it became more like a court. I would be sent as a spy to go find out what the other courtiers are doing in, say Political-Military Affairs. Everybody was channeling in their opinions. There was a lot of competition, a lot of back stage shenanigans, so to speak, so that one of your roles as a special assistant was simply spying on what the other seventh floor offices were up to and that had been completely different under Armacost. There were really quite strong differences in approach, I think it's fair to say.

Q: You were there how long now?

CLARK: I was there for two years, from '87 to '89.

Q: So you would have picked up the switch from, well it would have been the switch from Carter to Reagan.

CLARK: Right.

Q: Did you- How did that switch go? I mean, was there a lot of turmoil and nastiness?

CLARK: Well as I was saying there was a lot less transparency -- that is the word I'm looking for. Everybody was constantly trying to find out what other senior State Department officials were up to and so there was a lot less transparency. And there was also some feeling that these people coming in, and I'm expressing my prejudice here, were not particularly interested in foreign affairs. Baker, we'd joke about Baker -- "has he met any foreign leader yet?" And except for European G-7 leaders and people he was used to dealing with from his Treasury perspective I am not sure he had. So there was a big change in style.

Q: Well did- How come you hung on for that?

CLARK: I can't remember precisely but I think it had probably to do with bidding on a next assignment. There was this six month period before I went on to Norway. Actually I had a three month stint in FSI where I did some writing.

Q: You mentioned this before; what were you writing?

CLARK: Well I wrote the main writing from that time, was a piece on South. It was a cover piece in the Foreign Service Journal and I spent quite a lot of time on writing that. I think I did some other writing too but that was the main thing.

Q: Well was that designed for you to get some information out or to get you out of the way?

CLARK: Going to FSI was a gap before my assignment. No, I don't think they were feeling that they had this unsympathetic special assistant. In fact, I think I wanted the FSI because I wanted to reflect and write about my experience in South Africa. I got along perfectly well with Kimmitt. But I was just thinking about him yesterday and this is maybe an aside, and it's more atmospherics than anything else. When Obama announced that we'd be out of Iraq by the end of the year it reminded me of my feeling when Kimmitt came in because he had served on active duty. I forget which service he was in but he had served on active duty in Vietnam and right behind his chair was a big artillery shell that he had gotten from Vietnam. So that was, you know, the most prominent thing that he wanted in his rather large office. This is just a personal opinion but I thought I thought everybody knew Vietnam was a mistake but maybe that was not true. Not everybody did know Vietnam was a mistake and some people thought that we should go back and redo it and I'm pretty sure Kimmitt was one of those.

Q: What about the group around- James Baker was secretary of state, George Bush was the new president; was there a feeling of a court around- I mean, James Baker had- there was a reputation that he had an inner circle and it was not easy to penetrate for people outside. Did you sense that?

CLARK: Yes. Who became head of the World Bank? He was an Undersecretary and was a competitor to Bob Kimmitt and I would be asked to go over and ask where various memos stood. There were senior officials who were working for Baker without bringing each other into the loop at all.

Q: Well then, did you find, just to get a feel for how the State Department worked, did you find people coming to you to try to get their ideas or to bust into this closed atmosphere, I mean, using an assistant to-?

CLARK: Yes.

Q: Well then Norway; you were in Norway from when to when?

CLARK: From '90 to '93.

Q: Now this must have been quite a difference, wasn't it, for you?

CLARK: Well it was very interesting. I was the head of the political section, I was the political counselor, and this was of course the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the time that Yugoslavia was breaking up. Norway was not as out of the way a place as you might assume. The foreign minister the whole time I was there was Stoltenberg, who had been ambassador in Belgrade with Larry Eagleburger and tended to be a little more pro-Serb than-

Q: Stoltenberg had been in Belgrade before being ambassador.

CLARK: Yes, that's right, that's right he had.

Q: I recall because I served in Belgrade for five years and Stoltenberg at the end recall annoying him.

CLARK: Ah ha. No, he had a very- that was a very important part of his background.

Q: What was sort of the body politic of Norway like?

CLARK: Well it was very interesting. I had been in Iceland so I knew about the parliamentary system. I thought it was a good idea because you would have elections with five parties, let's say, and let's say nobody got the majority, you'd have to go into negotiations with a potential coalition partner and I thought that was pretty good because it moderated the views of the different parties. I saw that the three years I was there. Although at least at the beginning of my tour there Gro Harlem Brundtland and the Social Democrats, just completely dominated politics, partly because of her outsize personality but also partly because of their history and their strong roots in the labor movement. They had other powerful figures who've gone on to be major figures, including Stoltenberg's son, who's been prime minister and Thorbjørn Jagland, who I knew when I was there, who was their general secretary, so it was a dominant party. Interestingly, in Iceland it was the Conservative Party that was dominant.

In Norway they had political parties that were very specialized and one of them I've been very surprised at the developments. You know the terrible shooting in Norway, the massacre of students, of Social Democratic Party.

Q: This is just three or four, about two months ago.

CLARK: Now, the assassin had been connected with a party on the right of the political spectrum and when I was there it was quite a small and considered rather eccentric party. As I believe I have mentioned they modeled themselves on American libertarianism but what's been interesting is that they were a very minor party in the '90s and they have grown, pushed by the anti-immigrant feeling has clearly grown in Norway. At the time they were a very small, eccentric party but obviously has produced at least some people aligned with terrorism and-

Q: Well did you feel that the fact that by this time Norway had already achieved a lot of sort of oil independence and a lot of excess income at this point but this was changing Norway's stand in Europe and all, that it was trying to distance itself?

CLARK: I think so. I mean Norwegians had always had an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Swedes but I think because of the oil wealth they had a decrease in the feelings of inferiority. Norwegians have prejudices, they're anti-Catholic. I was told anti EU feeling was partly based on that: an aversion to going into the European Union with all of those "Southern Germans who are all Catholic." I mean they were very negative about Southern Europe.

Q: Well did- How about the Soviet Union? It was falling apart while you were there.

CLARK: It was interesting, the change from the Soviet Union to Russia because as an American diplomat all of a sudden I could invite over the Russian political counselor to a dinner party in my house and I took immediate advantage of this because it really was very interesting. One dinner party I would like to spell out a little bit more maybe when I get a transcript because it was just so interesting. The far left in Norway and even just regular Social Democrats thought, "oh, the poor East Germans getting crushed by the West Germans." My dinner party didn't have any of those, although I knew some. A newspaper editor, Jan Egeland, who's gone on to all kinds of major UN positions was there. Popo Molefe, who I'd known well in South Africa, the United Democratic Front leader who is now the president of Transvaal Province was visiting because they got a lot of money from Norway for the anti-apartheid movement. I'd known him quite well when I was there. The Russian political counselor was a dinner guest.

Molefe was asking the Norwegians how can we -- the South Africans -- become a good social democracy and he was asking the Russian about all the great things about communism. The Russian said we can't wait to become capitalists and don't ask me about communism at all, we never thought about that. Obviously the conversation was all over the place -- not really a normal dinner party, but fascinating. When Jan Egeland tried to pull out the line that Norwegians are superior, I did throw in the statement, "Jan, tell them about oil." One can afford to do a lot of good things if you are 4.5 million people with buckets of money. I thought this assembled group was quite an amazing moment in time.

Q: How were relations with Sweden?

CLARK: I had practically nothing to do with the other Scandinavians, except for a great interest in all of these Baltic and Nordic councils and committees. They coordinated policy, particularly their foreign policy, very, very closely. And at the breakup of the Soviet Union I would report back to the State Department that Sweden, for example, is going to take Estonia and Norway is going to take Lithuania and move in and help. They were very sharply coordinating their policies and had a special network to communicate back and forth with each other.

Q: How did Finland fit into all this?

CLARK: They were pretty peripheral was my impression. That wouldn't be true now but at that point it was. And Iceland was always considered in terms of eccentric people out there. They never counted. But Sweden, Norway and Denmark were pretty tight.

Q: How did this organization or the Scandinavians, particularly for the Norwegian respective work with Germany?

CLARK: Well that was another interesting thing in terms of sovereignty. The northern German provinces participated in many of these regional councils without the rest of

Germany being in the council. I found that quite interesting. We wouldn't do this in the United States -- have Texas on some council with Mexico. But they did. It was the old Hanseatic League. That got very interesting, to look back on the history. Bergen had been a terrifically important member of the Hanseatic League. I think there was still a real feeling that these city states are united historically

Q: How did you find working as political counselor in Norway? I mean different- I understand the Norwegians all head out to the country on the weekends and up in the mountains and all. Is this a problem or-?

CLARK: Well not a problem but it was amusing. I may have said this last time but one day about 4:30 I called over to the prime minister's office and nobody is there. I mean nobody. And I turned around and said to my colleagues in the embassy: "You know, we are not an imperial power here. We're not running the place. So what are we doing if their chief of government's office is closed? What are we still doing here working?"

Q: Yes. Each to their own culture.

CLARK: Yes. Again, oil gave them a cushion and still does for very different ideas about work.

Q: Well was there the feeling that okay, they've got this oil; most of the time a small country with oil is essentially ruined by the oil. But I was talking to somebody and was saying yes, that's true except for Norway. How did, at that time what was the feeling of the embassy of how Norway was handling this oil wealth?

CLARK: Well again, this is Gro Harlem Brundtland. I forget the name of the fund but there was a huge fund that the oil money went into that was to secure Norway's future. I think being a democracy makes a huge difference because they had such an articulated welfare safety net. A lot of people who got elected to parliament were social workers or teachers or people who had been public servants. And so what happened was that legislation was passed very much to benefit the population and build infrastructure, and there was very little corruption. At least while I was there I didn't hear about any corruption. After I left there was what must have been a quite fascinating story about the big new international airport and the huge competition for which district was going to get this international airport. One of my old friends who I had lunch with when I went back to Norway said, well you know in Brussels when they were hammering out this deal, the Norwegian "fell" out of a sixth floor building in Brussels. She gave me his name.

Q: You're putting air quotes around "fell."

CLARK: Yes. She was certainly saying that the shenanigans that went on and the major corruption that went on was out in the open. There were investigations, and so forth and so on. This is after I left but that was one project that definitely tarnished the squeaky clean Norwegian image.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

CLARK: It was Loret Ruppe, who had been the head of the Peace Corps. She was a really terrific and admirable woman who wasn't much interested in politics -- in Norwegian politics. She was a wonderful representative of the United States.

Q: How did her lack of interest manifest itself, would you say?

CLARK: In these Foreign Service memoirs I don't think one shouldn't get into a lot of personal stuff but-

Q: Well I think what we're trying to show is that foreign policy and embassies and all are run by people and particularly when you get two different cultures coming together, the Foreign Service and the political, I try to pick up some of this. I'm not trying to dig up dirt but you know, just attitudes or-

CLARK: Well I think that there is a clear and deleterious lack of interest in the Foreign Service -- in going to bat for the Foreign Service -- from the political people who are appointed for a short period of time and I think have the idea that it isn't important for them to understand the intricacies of the Foreign Service and so forth. And I do think that Loret fell into that trap. I will say, I know for a fact she wanted to get rid of her DCM -- which would have been a wonderful thing if she had been able to do it. She was trying to get him a job, a good job so that he would take it. So what did she do? He would give her these wonderful efficiency reports on how he walked on water and she signed off on them hoping that he would get another job. And what happened, was that he got promoted. I do think that political appointees do have an obligation to find out something about the people who are running their embassy or the system, how the system works. So I would have that criticism of her but she was a wonderful and popular figure in Norway and a really good representative of the United States, so she did a very good job.

Q: Were you a skier?

CLARK: I did learn how to ski cross country. That was wonderful fun, it really was, but to learn to ski sort of late in life is certainly not Norwegian. In Norway you go out on the trails and there are these little two year olds toddling along. They are just incredible athletes. But learning to ski played a small role in my personal life. My future husband came out to visit me in Norway. He was an athlete so it was good to be able to take him out cross country skiing.

Q: How did you find the social life there?

CLARK: Well I was extremely lucky. I mean, I must say I always think- thought all of my overseas assignments that my job was not palling around with the Americans and so I may have made some enemies, I'm sure I did, because of that attitude. But pal around with the locals wherever they were. And I had a very, very dear friend who was a wonderful- still a dear friend, a Norwegian painter and her husband, who were painters,

and I was very lucky because I lived on a little island that this house, the house that the political counselor normally lived in was no longer available so I was allowed to kind of look around for what was on the rental market and took this wonderful house on a small island called Nesøya which was linked with a causeway and easy driving distance of Oslo. But a wonderful life on that island, you know, with trails that you could hike around on and this dear, dear friend that lived on the island too. So I felt I had a very interesting social life. And of course the embassy, if you're the political counselor you tend to get invited to everything so there was an interesting- And Loret was a wonderful-wonderful at that aspect of her job so there was a lot going on at the embassy.

Q: What was your impression of the Norwegian foreign ministry and the Norwegian Foreign Service, I mean sort of-?

CLARK: Oh I liked them very much -- especially Jan Egeland. Did I talk about the Oslo Accords?

Q: I don't think so, no.

CLARK: Well that was an interesting story in which I played a role at the beginning. The wife of Foreign Minister Johan Jørgen Holst, Marianne Heiberg, was a good friend of mine on a personal basis. I did get invited over there to dinner. That was obviously good for my job to be "chummy" with the foreign minister, although you have to be careful about that from the point of view of embassy hierarchy -- that you're not getting too out of your grade level. Marianne was out in the Middle East as a result of the Madrid process in '91. Madrid set up a lot of committees. One of them was on water. Marianne Heiberg and Terje Roed-Larsen, went out as a team from a Norwegian institute where they were associates to help with this water project. I was at a cocktail party. Terje Roed-Larsen had come up to me and said that there was something I might be interested in going on with these talks with between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And I said I was sure I would be interested. As a result of our conversation he came over to the embassy and debriefed me the next day on what was quickly apparent was a second track in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What he described were the very first contacts that turned into the Oslo Accord. As a result, of course, of our conversation the cable went back immediately to the Department. Dan Kurtzer was interested and so the conversation at the Norwegian end moved up another level to Jan Egeland, who I think was then deputy in the foreign ministry. He would come over to the embassy to call Kurtzer on a secure line from my office and I would sit there listening and discretely taking notes. He must have done that three times reporting on the progress of this second track. I remember him mentioning over the phone -- and I'm sure this was the first time the State Department had heard this -- a "statement of principles" that they were drafting. The reason the State Department may not have taken this very seriously is not only because it was little Norway doing it but because Yossi Beilin was the head of the two track talks on the Israeli side. I didn't know the ins and outs of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process at that point but his participation apparently meant not to take these talks too seriously. However what I was listening in on matured into the Oslo Accords. At that point of course Holst

had taken over. It became public, and so on and so forth. So I feel that I was in on really quite the ground floor of the Oslo process, culminating of course in '93.

And so to answer your question, Norway thinks of itself as doing this type of very serious diplomacy, punching way above its weight. I think it's true. Per capita, their aid and assistance may be the highest in the world way, way above America's. They tend to get tapped by the UN. Jan Egeland himself is now, I believe, the head of peacekeeping.

Q: Did you get involved in whales?

CLARK: Fortunately, thank heaven, that was the economic counselor's problem. I think he didn't do anything else but talk about whales.

Q: Did the Norwegians eat whales?

CLARK: Yes. I think they mostly sold whale meat but I actually have pictures of myself going to a whale slaughtering station and believe me, that is some spectacle. Whales are bloody and they're huge animals. People hacking up whales are in long rubber boots, standing on top of the carcass, with great knives. You have no idea what a sight that is.

Q: Did- I can't remember; were you married at this time or-?

CLARK: No. I was divorced.

Q: Well then- Well how did you find in Norway, being a divorced woman running sort of, you know, single at the time; was this a problem or not?

CLARK: I don't think so.

Q: No, I was just wondering the society-

CLARK: Oh, no, no. This is Scandinavia.

Q: Did the Norwegian Americans play any particular role or were they doing their thing back in Minnesota or Wisconsin?

CLARK: Well I think almost all of the ambassadors appointed to Oslo were from Minnesota/Wisconsin, as Loret was.

Q: Well I'm whether, for example, you were called in to brief the Norwegian bachelor farmers as Garrison Keillor and his radio show referred to them or not.

CLARK: No.

Q: Were there any other- You were there- This is all the Bush I administration, wasn't it?

CLARK: Well it was and at the time of the Gulf War, which they didn't support. Yugoslavia loomed the highest on the foreign policy agenda.

Q: I was just thinking of the Gulf War. I mean, of all the wars that we've had over a period of time, this is the one that was in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, would be the one that most countries would get behind. I mean, the invasion of a- essentially an innocent country is not a pleasant thing and in the body politic this is about as high a no-no as you can get and I would think that the Norwegians would respond to this.

CLARK: I think at the official level, I cannot remember having any disagreement. However many certainly thought of themselves as pacifists, that they were different from America and the Soviet Union and that was one of the big differences.

Q: Well did- Was there and did you find was there sort of residual resentment of Germany because of what they had done to them?

CLARK: I'm sure it was there. There is a fantastic resistance museum in Oslo and I took people who were visiting there. I was socially at the home of the director of the museum, who had been involved in the resistance. I think there is enormous and well deserved Norwegian pride in the story of the resistance. And I would say every Norwegian knows that story.

Q: The heroes of Telemark?

CLARK: Yes, heroes of Telemark, definitely. I can't think of an impact on anything that was happening in their foreign policy or their politics, although I'm sure if I scratched the surface there were people who were collaborators and there may be more history than I know of what happened to the collaborators.

Q: Because somebody of my era knows Vidkun Quisling.

CLARK: Really?

Q: And the term "quisling" hung around. You don't hear it anymore but it was basically a term for "betrayer."

CLARK: Yes. And the people knew that Family X was in league with the collaborators. So I think there's probably very bad feelings that have remained, but under the surface.

Q: Well then what happened- you left there when?

CLARK: I left there in '93. I have to say from this moment on my career was being planned by my desire to stay in the United States because I got married in '93 to Ambassador Warren Clark. He retired in '96. I knew I didn't want to be assigned overseas again. I was making a lot of decisions on a personal not professional grounds. I had got recruited for what would have been a terrific job as DCM in Estonia. So I got

some nice job offers but didn't take them because I wanted to come back to the States. And I also had written about human rights before I entered the Foreign Service and had a book that I co-edited on international financial institutions and human rights. I wrote a chapter in that book. I also wrote a rather important article also on human rights in '77 -- it got attention from some notables like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., but this is before I entered the Foreign Service. So I felt I was returning to human rights by wanting to go to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. And so I then got very involved as deputy office director for our human rights reports, I got very involved on issues like Haiti or Srebrenica. I wish I could say the involvement was effective. I remember one of my colleagues saying in the case of Nigeria, "Betsy actually wants to stop this from happening, not complain about it afterwards," which was quite true. But I'm afraid in the State Department you find yourself complaining afterwards.

Q: How about Rwanda?

CLARK: With Rwanda there again I always felt I was putting forward ideas which the bureau assistant secretary would say were good ideas but then nothing happened to them. In the case of the Rwandan war, for example, the idea of a safe haven, carving out a geographical area that's right up against the border of another country. You create a safe haven. Maybe you have a no fly zone. Maybe you bring troops in. The reason that didn't work was because they thought that the French were playing other games. What happened in the Congo, which we also got involved in trying to save, was instructive. You probably remember that there was huge assistance going into the refugee camps. However the aid was funneled through the camp leaders, the Hutu, who were the "genocidaires" -- he ones who had run the killings in Rwanda. USAID didn't want to take any direction from the government -- our government -- because they thought the government had dirty hands, while they were "squeaky clean". Therefore they didn't want to take any direction from the State Department, but what they were doing was assisting these leaders. The aid was not getting to the people it was supposed to go to. The same thing happened in Haiti.

Q: You're talking about NGO groups.

CLARK: Yes, aid groups. There was some astronomical number. I got involved in that issue. I did something I'm still very proud of even though it actually didn't make it through the bureaucracy. The powers that be were putting together a directive that would lay out comprehensive guidelines that would govern when the U.S. military could intervene or not intervene. I can get the number of that document. I was, unfortunately, a little too late in the game brought in on what our bureau was saying in those negotiations. I was brought in because I had proposed in a memo to my assistant secretary that a new category should be created for something I labeled a "human rights crisis". Shattuck liked the concept and I was allowed to chair some meetings in the State Department with representatives from relevant bureaus on the proposal. A "human rights crisis" was different from a humanitarian crisis. We were very used to talking about humanitarian crises. Starving people in Somalia tends to be that kind of crisis. But a "human rights crisis" would have to be so labeled by the UN Security Council. There would have to be

international agreement on what constitutes such a crisis. At that point U.S. military could be deployed to deal with the crisis, say, for example, Libya. We have moved in that direction although we aren't calling it that. But I was gratified that my assistant secretary thought that was a good idea. The trouble was that DRL didn't carry much weight in the State Department. I was very naïve. I remember asking at some meeting of bureau office directors with Shattuck, "why aren't we talking about Bosnia?" Nobody knows. This happens in the State Department all the time. Some issues are too important for the bureau that might seem to be the relevant bureau, so they are taken up and out and you are left talking about peripheral stuff.

Q: Yes. Yes, one of my impressions is that sometimes when an issue becomes so important it's taken away from, you might say the bureau that knows it, and the experts are sort of brushed aside and the political operators take over and they're more worried about what the press will say and how to get things done and all that.

CLARK: Absolutely.

Q: And really don't know how to, you know, actually get things done or understand the situation on the ground.

CLARK: Yes. That is absolutely right. We were important in the Haiti crisis when Aristide was reinstalled. And we developed the principle Clinton used as his justification. This was a justification on human rights grounds. I worked on the statements we came up with that were used to justify our military actions in Haiti. We played an important role.

And although it wasn't me, it was somebody who theoretically was reporting to me, who was sent to Dayton. So we also played a role in the Yugoslav crisis. But there were other things that were taken away from us.

Q: Who was the head of DRL?

CLARK: It was John Shattuck for most of the time I was there.

Q: Then what was your position?

CLARK: Well I shifted around from a position I wasn't very happy with, which was deputy office director of human rights to heading up a new office directing a democracy and human rights fund. It was the democracy money. It was you might say "accidental money." There was some ESF money left over that the higher ups didn't know what to do with. So they decided to give it to DRL, to a new office, for the promotion of democracy and human rights in situations that were going to be very politically tricky and for that reason USAID absolutely wouldn't be as well equipped to deal with. So DRL had money all of a sudden and that gave you a little cache. The regional bureaus were willing all of a sudden to come to your meetings and talk to you because you could give out money. Because of my position I also directed separately the Burma funds. Congress voted some human rights money for Burma and it was given to this office in DRL to administer and

direct. That was a very interesting responsibility I had. Mitch McConnell's aide, Robin Cleveland -- who later became a senior official in the World Bank under Wolfowitz -- thought she was running the show but they had to give the money to the State Department. I didn't necessarily just do what she wanted. I had to defend rather vigorously giving funds to an organization called World Concern that was operating inside Burma. This happened as a result of a trip I took to Burma to see if there were any organizations operating inside Burma that would not legitimate the government. It was Robin Cleveland's view that we shouldn't be giving any money to anybody who was operating inside; it should only go to exile groups.

I went to Burma and did get to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. She was under house arrest but they kept changing the degrees of house arrest. I was allowed to have an appointment with her and I went with our chargé. I would say she's the most extraordinary person I ever met. She took my breath away because her evident strength of will was so extraordinary. I only met Nelson Mandela after he was released, at an embassy reception here in Washington and just to shake his hands. I do think of those two in the same category because somehow their spiritual strength and strength of will frees them. They're absolutely free people. They are even free enough to take an interest in you. I felt very privileged to have met with her and to have gotten guidance from her. I was clear that I was going to get a stamp of approval from her for everything I did.

After meeting with her I traveled up north to see this particular operation of World Concern. I think I was one of the very, very few officials from any embassy to go up north, including our chargé who certainly went only rarely into the north. It is an enormously sinister place. You could tell that all the soldiers were on drugs -- there were these trucks full of drugged out soldiers and a very repressive feel everywhere. But it was in that area in the north that this NGO, World Concern was operating.

Q: What were they doing?

CLARK: Mostly what we did give money to, through them, was schools, especially schools for girls and perhaps for some other projects. And the only reason I was willing to give grants to World Concern was that the father of the director had been a missionary in the north and was apparently beloved by all the people. Therefore I did believe he'd have quite a lot of independence from the government, and I think he did.

Q: Well then, you did this for how long?

CLARK: I did this for a long time because I was trying to transition into something I could do after I retired from the Foreign Service. My decisions started to get very aimed at what I would do post Foreign Service. I wanted a full 20 year career so that meant I would retire, as I did, in 2000. So I went to the National Endowment for Democracy; I was seconded to them after I left DRL.

I should mention before I left DRL I went on other trips for the Democracy and Human Rights fund I directed. When I had money, right after Suharto was thrown out of

Indonesia, I went out to Indonesia to see what we could do with a democracy fund money. I was almost five years at DRL at two different jobs in the bureau and then off to the National Endowment for Democracy, where I wrote a number of published articles and ran some forums among other things.

Q: In Indonesia, what were you looking at?

CLARK: Well Suharto had just been kicked out so my job there was to interview all of the political actors to make some judgment on how we could best help in the transition to democracy. I can remember one conclusion I reached after meetings with a range of political actors. My conclusion was that in a situation like that many of these emerging forces are tremendously weak and one should to look for where the strength is -- where is the strong line. The strong line was elections; they all wanted elections. You know, there's a slight tendency back in the State Department to poo poo elections but that's where you should absolutely get on the train and I mean. That was my main report.

This conclusion did not find favor in USAID. Everybody knows within the government they are differences between different entities. AID tended to want to shy away totally from elections, not only in Indonesia but elsewhere. I think the main reason for this is, A, they didn't yet have any cadre of experts in the area of democracy, and B, an election happens is a one day event. You can't fudge it with language on how you have this pilot project and you are working on this and in five years you will have all these good results. In addition the AID bureau in Indonesia had just been criticized in a "New York Times" article and they were determined to play things safe. When I got back to Washington there were some meetings that came out of my reports aimed at hammering out that we were going to take a strong democracy program in Indonesia.

Q: You know, when you're going over this, if you want to flesh out what you saw there and some of the personalities in Indonesia at the time. I know Sukarno's daughter was involved and-

CLARK: Right. I know, I should refresh my memory. But it was-

Q: Did you get involved in the election process in Bosnia?

CLARK: Not directly. As I say, there was a person that worked for me that went to Dayton and in that sense we were very involved. The framework that Holbrooke set up created the three member council or presidency. Nothing really in the structure that would encourage true nation building, as I am afraid we have seen. The Serbs are as eager as ever to get out of this.

Q: Did- Were there any other sort of hot spots?

CLARK: Well I'm trying to think. I went out to Burma, I went out to Indonesia.

Q: East Timor?

CLARK: No, but I thought that was a fascinating case. I didn't get personally involved but I have thought about in terms of a focus on how you build global democratization, which I've written about since I've retired. East Timor was a fascinating example because it demonstrated that through the UN you can create requirements for political participation. I think this is alive and well as an issue in the Middle East right now. There is a lot of agreement in principle that you have to up the ante for parties that want to participate in elections, requiring them to make a commitment to periodic elections in the future. They have to make commitments that maybe they break but they have to be held to. Well in East Timor you did have the UN for the first time getting into setting requirements for parties to participate in elections. You weren't allowed to have religious campaigning materials and I thought that was perfectly appropriate to have these kind of requirements. For it to have a UN imprimatur I thought was very important. I also thought, and have written about, that the State Department and other foreign ministries governments just can't stand the idea of partition. In my view you are actually going to have to say okay to South Sudan or East Timor and for my key example, Somaliland.

Q: So then you moved over to what, the-?

CLARK: I moved over to National Endowment of- National Endowment for Democracy.

Q: How did you find the- it as an organization? Was it different than what you'd been used to?

CLARK: Indeed. I mean I was there in the '90s. The people who were encumbering their positions then are still encumbering their positions now. I mean there is basically no rotation and not much moving up either. I had met the director, Carl Gershman, when I was in South Africa. At that time NED had been just established, and he came down to South Africa to see what kind of money they could push out to help democracy or to help the opposition movements in South Africa. And I had a lot of time for what they were doing and still do. As you may know, there are four institutes that get money from NED: the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, a labor organization and a business organization, CIP (Center for International Policy). So there are four NGOs that get money from Congress through NED and I've had a fair amount since retirement to do with them as a consultant and as an election monitor with NDI (National Democratic Institute). I thought a lot of their work.

Q: Are you still there?

CLARK: My last sort of assignment with NDI was observing the elections in Jordan in '10.

Q: What was your impression?

CLARK: I wrote a long piece on this as an essay for an organization I am a member of, the Literary Society of Washington. You have to be very skeptical of the briefings and

presentations that you get when really you don't have democratic institutions. They are trying to get international legitimacy by running elections. External independent monitors played an important role in this goal. NDI is much better than other election observation institutions and governments and regional organizations so but the process in election monitoring has gotten down to administrative stuff, universally applicable procedural standards. If you're a smart government you can sit there and figure out that all these independent monitors really care about are standards like transparent ballot boxes so you just make sure they are transparent, and just make sure that this or that on a purely administrative basis is going right and they will give you a gold star. Well too many of these election observation organizations buy into that and that's a whole big subject. There are elephants in the room. In Jordan, for example, the king has all the power.

As another example: mean, NDI observed the elections in Morocco. They had some leftover money so they ran some focus groups to find out why there was such a low voter participation. The answer was people know the king has all the power. However NDI really pretty good at writing reports saying there were transparent ballot boxes and not saying too much else. The trouble is the international press picks up on anything positive said by these international monitors and tells the world that it was a free and fair election. That is a problem. And of course I'm very interested in Tunisia; I write a blog for the Women's Democratic blog and I wrote one on the Tunisian-

Q: Now Tunisia's going to have its first election.

CLARK: It did, Sunday.

Q: Sunday, that's right.

CLARK: It will take another couple of days for the votes to be counted. But it looks like a good first election.

Q: Well we have some interns here and I wonder if you have any questions to ask about any part of this and all. Let you identify yourself and ask.

JASPREET GILL, INTERN: My question was, you were in Norway from 1990 to '93 and so Yugoslavia was kind of splitting up so how was Norway addressing that versus what you were doing at the U.S. embassy as a political officer? Was it really involved? Seems like a lot of- every European country had-

CLARK: Yes, they were very much involved, You may remember that Secretary of State Warren Christopher went to visit Europe and said to the Europeans that this problem is your ballgame and you shouldn't expect the U.S. to come in and solve this for you, In my view Europe played a very bad ball game. And Norway was very involved because Stoltenberg, as I recall, was the head of a group that was charged with coming up with a new map of Yugoslavia. It looked a little bit like Swiss cheese. It was totally unrealistic as a basis for a settlement. At the time I was fairly knowledgeable about this because I would talk to the foreign ministry in Oslo about our views and so I would report back

information on what the Norwegians were doing. My good friend, the British DCM, said in effect that they would until they kill each other off and then pick up the pieces. No one wanted to get involved or spend any money. It was really almost racist

Q: The Balkans had a- they were, you know, people are still talking about the third Balkan war, and this is after World War I.

CLARK: Yes, that's right. They just sort of thought these are hopeless.

Q: Well this is what Balkans do.

CLARK: This is what Balkans do and so we're not going to take this very seriously. And they didn't. I mean they came up with these solutions that weren't solutions at all and we had to come back into it with the Dayton process and it was a very bad mistake of Warren Christopher's.

Q: Well I remember at the time they, I'm not sure we need to say the Europeans, but basically there are- America got so this is a European matter, we'll handle it. I think the Europeans were feeling very- the Americans are too, you know, too much involved and now is the time when we can do something, and they couldn't.

CLARK: They couldn't. It was a very, very major failure. I don't know if there's been any books written about this, It has some implications for just how much you're going to be able to expect from the European Union. How they're going to develop institutions that manage foreign policy and-

Q: Well as we're speaking right now they're unable to deal with the currency crisis.

Any other questions? Okay.

CLARK: Thank you very much.

End of interview