

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

**ROBERT G. CLEVELAND**

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## INTERVIEW

*Q: It's good to have you here this morning, Mr. Cleveland. We ought to have interesting things to discuss. Perhaps you'd start by telling how you became interested in the Foreign Service and foreign affairs, and what your preparation was.*

CLEVELAND: I grew up in a family that had traveled extensively abroad, spoke French at home, and had many European friends. There was no foreign affairs program as such in my undergraduate days, so my major was history and languages, primarily French. After graduating from college in June, 1932, I came to Washington and entered a cram school to help me pass the Foreign Service exams. However, at the end of the summer, the State

Department announced that the exam would be given, but there would be no appointments. This was because of the depression and the Economy Act.

*Q: I remember that; then what did you decide to do?*

CLEVELAND: Rightly or wrongly, I didn't take the exam, but went straight home to New York, and was lucky enough to get a trainee job with the Chase Bank, and spent a year or so in its Havana branch, Then Chase cut back on its foreign activity. I remained in various other jobs in New York until 1940. None of these were in the foreign field, but I had some useful learning experiences.

By 1940, World War II was under way. As my father had told me of his interesting time in Washington during World War I, I decided to try the same. I joined the staff of the War Production Board, and spent two years there working on efforts to increase industrial capacity for ships and other armaments.

After Pearl Harbor, I became a Naval Reserve Officer.

*Q: What were your duties in the Navy?*

CLEVELAND: After a brief stay in the Navy Department, I was ordered to London, where I joined a small American contingent at Lord

Louis Mountbatten's Combined Operations Headquarters, which ran the "Commandos." I was far from a Commando myself, but had an administrative job relating to training British naval personnel to run the engines of Lend-Lease landing craft. In those days, very few British naval recruits, unlike their American counterparts, knew anything about internal combustion engines, most had never owned or driven a car.

*Q: I take it that you were engaged in a form of diplomacy even then in working with an international staff.*

CLEVELAND: Very much so; our daily work involved making arrangements with the British on various matters, eating and drinking with our counterparts. Also, we were living on the British wartime economy, with some additional U. S. PX perks. The "Battle of Britain" was over by 1942, so wartime London offered an interesting life, particularly for a single man on the U. S. pay scale!

*Q: How long were you in London?*

CLEVELAND: Only about eighteen months; my chief was reassigned to Washington, and brought me back with him to the Navy Bureau of Ships.

*Q: Would that have been 1943?*

CLEVELAND: Yes; I worked on the emergency program for landing craft production until the end of the War. I was then reassigned to the office of the Army-Navy Liquidation Commission, and eventually became its Executive Director. The Commission was a large but temporary organization, responsible for disposing of U. S. Government surplus property overseas. We were of course constantly involved in relations with foreign governments and individuals. At its maximum, the Commission had about 2500 people here and overseas. By Executive Order, our Commission was transferred from the War Department to the State Department in 1946 and renamed the Foreign Liquidation Commission. My job was demanding and fascinating, involving contact with many prominent foreigners.

At one point, I took off my blue suit, and like many others became a civil servant in the same job. Later, Congress passed the Manpower Act, intended to fill gaps in the middle and upper ranks of the Foreign Service caused by the war and the 1932 Economy Act. I applied for appointment under the Act, and was delighted to be appointed to the Service in late 1946.

After a very brief period of indoctrination and language study, I was assigned to Bucharest as First Secretary of Legation. The job was to handle the execution of the economic aspects of the Romanian Peace Treaty, which had just been negotiated. We were expecting our second child at that point; when I asked if I was needed at the post right away, I was told that in the Foreign Service, as in the Navy, one is present at the keel laying but not always at the launching!

An interesting sidelight on the assignment was that the widow of the late American Ambassador to Romania heard about our prospective departure. She proceeded to show us what can only be called excessive hospitality. In our naivete, we first thought it was pure altruism; however, just before I left, she insisted that I take with me a large and heavy suitcase containing all sorts of things for her dear friend, a Romanian grandee named Savel Radulescu, a former adviser to the King. I was torn between my feeling that this would be improper, and the difficulty of turning down a rather prominent and very insistent lady. With my fingers crossed, I took the bag! Later, she kept mailing stuff through the pouch until we had to get the Department to stop her.

Romania was not considered a desirable launching pad for kids then (or now), so off I sailed on the USS America, leaving my wife to cope at home. No cars were available in Europe in those days, so I brought one with me. I landed in Southampton, crossed the Channel, and after a fairly eventful trip across Europe through military zones, finally reached Bucharest.

Perhaps I should mention that during a brief stop in Paris, I ran into an FSO stationed there who was bitterly resentful of us Manpower FSO's because he felt the Act adversely affected his career. At the time, quite a few felt that way, but it soon passed. As it happens, that particular FSO didn't last much longer in the Service.

While I was at sea, Secretary Marshall made his famous speech at Harvard. I didn't hear it or know about it, and the first time it reached my ears was, embarrassingly enough, from Gheorghe Grafencu, the former Foreign Minister of Romania, who was in exile in Switzerland. He was naturally very enthusiastic about the idea, hoping it would be extended to Romania. We all know what happened!

Having been told in Washington that I was urgently needed in Bucharest, I found when I got there that the need wasn't so urgent, because the Peace Treaty had not yet been ratified. That's life in the Foreign Service! In June, 1947, our State Department office was still technically attached to the American General who represented the U. S. on the tripartite Allied Control Commission, whose other members were the British and Soviets. At that point the Peace Treaty had been signed but not ratified, so we were not yet a Legation. Ratification took place in the fall of 1947.

Beside Peace Treaty implementation, I handled economic reporting and commercial work. One of my first jobs after arriving involved dealing directly with the Soviets on the subject of German external assets. This was my introduction to "realpolitik!" After the Armistice that established the Control Commission, the Soviets proceeded to seize everything that could be called a German asset and many other things besides. Several American companies, including IBM and Singer had branches in Romania that they held through their German companies. There was also a Steinway piano in the Opera House still owned by Steinway. The Soviets grabbed this along with everything else. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to convince the Soviets that they were taking American property. We got nowhere. They had the troops!

The last half of 1947 was a depressing period. King Michael was still on the throne during the period, but the infamous Vishinsky visit caused the creation of a "coalition" government which was actually entirely under total communist control. Not only were the Soviets milking the Romanian economy, but they moved rapidly to establish Romania as a satellite. This culminated in the abdication of the King in December, and the creation of the "Romanian Popular Republic." All during this period, we were of course sending full telegraphic reports to Washington. We dutifully reported the abdication and all the events surrounding it, complete with commentary. Several days later the State Department wired that it had read about the abdication in the New York Times; where was our report? It turned out that our messages were sent through military facilities via Frankfurt, and were held up over Christmas.

*Q: No automatic switching in those days?*

CLEVELAND: No; the system was primitive, and dependent on others. It's good that State now has its own facilities.

*Q: When did our mission formally become a Legation?*

CLEVELAND: This took place after the Peace Treaty was ratified; our Minister, Rudolf Schoenfeld arrived in October, 1947.

*Q: Did you feel you learned from him?*

CLEVELAND: To begin with, none of us, including the Minister, had any experience in operating in a Soviet satellite. It was a new and totally different experience for everybody. Mr. Schoenfeld was an odd, controversial character; he was an old-time FSO, a bachelor, and very difficult to work for. He had enormous respect for the Department and its rules and methods, which he'd learned in the '20s and '30s. Most of us found it hard to adapt to his way of thinking. His specialty was drafting; he was hard on his own and everyone else's. Getting a telegram out of the Legation was a major production, involving many drafts. To answer your question, all this effort did seem to improve my drafting. At least, when I got to Paris, my stuff went out without a hitch!

*Q: What was life like in Bucharest in those days?*

CLEVELAND: When I first arrived, life was fairly easy. After my wife arrived, we rented very cheaply a beautiful house that had belonged to a member of the royal family. Help was cheap and competent. Food was fairly good, especially when supplemented from our small commissary. We met many Romanians, mostly of the old regime, whom we found agreeable and fairly interesting, but not really informative as to political developments. These contacts ceased after the King's abdication; our Romanian friends were afraid to see us. Their fear was well founded; at least one person whom I knew well ended up digging the Danube Canal at forced labor. The entire Western diplomatic colony was isolated, and became very intimate and social, living in each other's pockets and trading rumors about developments. However, we did make some lifetime friends among our colleagues.

An awkward feature of life was foreign exchange. When I first arrived, there was galloping inflation, with the value of the local currency reachings millions to the dollar. For example, when I reached the border on the way to Bucharest, I changed a five dollar bill into *Lei*, out of which I paid for gas, food and a hotel room for the 500 mile trip. My first weeks were in a "luxury" hotel where I had a suite for fifty cents a night. Then came currency reform which impoverished the whole population, and faced the Legation with an outrageous official rate, a form of highway robbery. It also threatened to impoverish the Legation staff. We got some relief in the form of increased allowances from the Department, but were hard put to make do for a while.

*Q: What language did you generally communicate in?*

CLEVELAND: Regrettably, our opportunities to talk with Romanian officials were almost nonexistent. I spoke pretty good French; it is the *lingua franca* of Romania; however, I did work hard on Romanian. By the time we left, I'd made some progress; in fact, we still use some Romanian phrases in the family

*Q: I note that you left for Paris at the end of 1948. Why such a short tour?*

CLEVELAND: My assignment was, as I said, Treaty implementation and economic and commercial work. We tried to negotiate the practical application of the Treaty provisions; with great trouble, we would get an appointment with someone in the Foreign Office. We requested action on these matters, and kept pressing, but nothing ever happened. By the end of 1948, it became clear that we were wasting our time. Perhaps our proposals went through Party channels to Moscow, or perhaps they were just dropped. In light of the experience in Romania and other Eastern European Countries, Washington called a conference in Rome in June, 1948 to discuss the fabric of our relationships with Eastern Europe. Mission Chiefs and staff members from each country met with officers from the Department. Based on the consensus at that meeting, Washington decided to reduce staffs in the area. Several of us were transferred; the Clevelands were ordered to Paris. I was delighted at the challenge after the frustrations of Bucharest, but we were both very sorry to leave friends and colleagues, more than we ever made in a subsequent post!

*Q: How could sum things up?*

CLEVELAND: Prewar Romania had some of the trappings of democracy; it had a king, but also a constitution, a parliament, political parties etc., But it was politically oligarchic and economically capitalist but monopolistic. There was an enormous gap between the haves and the have-nots. The Communists had fertile ground.

After the War, we watched it become a servile Soviet satellite. We were not there to witness the process of agricultural collectivization, which ruined its rich agricultural potential, nor the industrialization which created an urban underclass out of its peasantry. We did observe this in several later visits.

*Q: They did of course have some oil.*

CLEVELAND: At Ploesti, which we bombed during the War, there was the oil which, along with agricultural exports, had kept Romania in fairly good shape for many years. When we were there, the Soviets were taking most of it, so petrol and fuel oil became very scarce.

*Q: Are there any short anecdotes about life in Bucharest?*

CLEVELAND: Here are a few snapshots:

A long procession of "voluntary" peasants on their way into town for some demonstration or other, all stopping to relieve themselves in the street outside our house. Our elderly American child nurse, while pretending to be shocked, watched through binoculars!

Dinner at the house of a pre-revolutionary magnate with a footman in white gloves behind every chair.

A "furnished" summer cottage we looked at - when we asked about staff quarters, we were shown a couple of tiny rooms whose only furniture was straw on the floor!>>

The Royal Swedish Embassy and the Swedish Ambassador - both real pre-war products - the kind of thing one reads about in novels - everything impeccable and old-fashioned.

The visit of Marshal Tito to Bucharest. His train arrived at the Royal Station near our house. Uniformed soldiers entered our house. My wife was sick in bed; she called me at the office; I rushed home in a rage and pushed them out of the house. Lucky I wasn't shot!

*Q: Well, I guess you had a liberal education in Romania! Let's go on to Paris now.*

CLEVELAND: Needless to say, Paris was very different, very large, and very exciting. As a sidelight, when we left Bucharest on the Orient Express, nearly the entire Western diplomatic colony saw us off. In Paris, only an Embassy driver met us. The contrast between the warm collegial atmosphere of Bucharest, and the rather frenetic environment of a huge Embassy was striking.

Great things were happening; the Marshall Plan was beginning; the Cold War was developing apace, NATO was on the drawing board, the Coal and Steel Community began, and Paris seemed to be the center of it all.

I was peripherally involved in much of this; I started as number two in the Embassy Economic Section, with many routine duties, reporting on various aspects of the French economy, working rather closely with the Marshall Plan Mission to France, and sometimes with the Harriman Mission. One particular responsibility was transport and communications, which involved me in civil aviation and telecommunications very actively. For example I helped negotiate an agreement permitting Pan American to operate in France.

*Q: Your biographic data mentions your involvement in the Central Rhine Commission.*

CLEVELAND: That was an aspect of transportation assigned to me. "*Le Commission Central Pour le Navigation du Rhin*" was established in the early 19th Century by the riparian states to establish "rules of the road" for shipping on the Rhine, and to act as an appeals court for tort cases. Germany, of course, had been a founding member, but during the early post-war years, the occupying powers acted for her. Thus the British and the United States had seats on the Commission, and I acted for the US. From the U. S. standpoint, it was not a very crucial concern, but it gave me an experience in multilateral diplomacy which was valuable and interesting. It was a small group, very collegial and friendly; it gave me the privilege of knowing a group of great people, and enjoying the delights, culinary and otherwise, of Strasbourg. It was good to get away from Paris once in a while!



1949-52 was the period when the cold war began to take hold, and much of our work was related to it. For example, I accompanied David Bruce to the French Foreign Office to propose the establishment of what later became COCOM; its purpose was to control exports of strategic items to Soviet bloc countries.

This international body became active very soon, and continued right down to the present.

*Q: Did COCOM actually issue export licenses, or just regulate?*

CLEVELAND: Its purpose was to reach agreement among the Western democracies on lists of items whose export to the Soviet bloc would be controlled or prohibited. Member countries were bound by its rules, but they issued their own licenses. While COCOM may not be as important with respect to the Soviet bloc as it was, I hope it will concern itself with other areas, having in mind Iraq, for example. Personally, I was glad to let others in the Embassy take on that work, as I preferred to be involved in more constructive activities.

*Q: Does COCOM still have influence today?*

CLEVELAND: It hasn't been dissolved; I hope it continues with the terms of reference I just suggested - slowing international arms traffic.

Toward the end of my tour, I was reassigned as the Ambassador's special assistant for MDAP.

*Q: This was still Bruce?*

CLEVELAND: By then, no. My first Ambassador was Caffery. He was succeeded by Bruce for two years, and then followed by James Clement Dunn. All three were great men; they had different styles, but they were real pro's and I admired them all.

*Q: Well, they were certainly all famous men of their generation, or of any generation. This is a good place to put in any special comments on their techniques or other memories you may have.*

CLEVELAND: I remember all of them. My main first impressions of Caffery were two: First was his insistence on a certain pomp and ceremony surrounding the Ambassador's office. But professionally, he was absolutely marvelous. For example, my immediate boss told me to write a long telegram on some subject, the substance of which I forget. When I brought the message to Caffery, he read it and asked why it was being sent.

He saw instantly that it wasn't worth a telegram, and I had to agree with him. He was the professional's professional, who could always separate the wheat from the chaff.

David Bruce was a man of great stature and impeccable judgment. He had enormous charm and warmth. He always seemed to know what to say and not to say in every circumstance. I

remember one time in his office with a congressman, I made a rather tactless remark, and he was able to correct it gently, and got me out of the hole. I admired him for his leadership, judgment and kindness.

It was during Bruce's watch that French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, proposed the Coal and Steel Community. David Bruce, with the advice of the then Treasury Attache, had the imagination to see that this was an important and desirable political development. He convinced Washington that the United States should support the concept. This was despite a suspicion held by some in the Embassy that the Community would likely be some kind of European cartel, contrary to our interests. Tomlinson the Treasury Attache, a brilliant man, had Bruce's full confidence, and this left our economic shop a little in the shadow where policy issues were concerned.

*Q: Could you touch briefly on Dunn?*

CLEVELAND: Personally, Dunn was a very experienced Foreign Service Officer of the old school. I wouldn't say he was as brilliant as the other two, but his judgment was sound, he was well-liked by the French, and he had a very successful tour. My job as his Special Assistant for MDAP was liaison with the Military Assistance Mission on supply matters. The French needs were for materiel to assist them in their fight against the Communist insurgency in Indochina. You may remember that in those days, the US was unenthusiastic about continued French colonialism in Indochina, but we did give them military hardware based on broader policy considerations.

*Q: Was this grant aid or loans at that time?*

CLEVELAND: I think it was grant aid. It was during the period of the European Recovery Program (ERP), also called the Marshall Plan, helping France and other European countries recover from the effects of World War II. As I mentioned before, I was also involved in the ERP French Mission, and was lucky enough to become acquainted with many fine people in that work, including Livingston Merchant, Henry Labouisse. Barry Bingham and Francis Parkman. That was a great privilege.

*Q: Was that the period when there were five American Ambassadors in Paris?*

CLEVELAND: Paris was crowded with American brass. The Harriman Mission included two persons, including Governor Harriman himself, with the rank of Ambassador. There were also two other people with Ambassadorial rank connected with negotiating military base rights. This was in addition to Ambassador Dunn, who was the American Ambassador. It drove Jimmy Dunn up the wall. It was a strange arrangement. I particularly remember an engraved invitation to a charity event issued in the name of "The American Ambassadors in Paris." Mr. Dunn was outraged, and took strong exception. Those were weird times. There were certainly too many high level people around, and this created plenty of personal conflict. For example, the general in charge of our military aid mission was an extremely difficult man, heartily disliked by the Ambassador and the economic aid

mission director. Evidently, one of the reasons I was given my special assistant assignment was to keep the peace. Those were the days!

A few more points: The Embassy was grossly inflated with personnel. This was almost entirely Washington's fault. There was no coordination between Departments, or discipline by the State Department. The various Departments would send all sorts of requests for information or action, presumably cleared by State. Many of these were marginal, and some were impossible to comply with, even with our large staff. A horrible example, which I'll never forget, was a request for a list, including a technical description, of every telephone switchboard in France. The French themselves had no list of the thousands of such units. It looked as though some people in Washington didn't have enough to do.

*Q: These weren't private commercial interests you were serving?*

CLEVELAND: No. This particular matter was for intelligence purposes. While we're on the subject of coordination, there were so many U. S. agencies represented in Paris that there was overlapping, conflicts and confusion. Executive Orders establishing the Ambassador's overall authority were issued, and then ignored!

This was nearly forty years ago, but I hear that things haven't changed in that respect.

*Q: Wasn't there an intelligence coordinator for the Embassy who was supposed to coordinate intelligence operations?*

CLEVELAND: There was the CIA Station Chief, but I'm not sure he did much coordinating.

*Q: But nobody on the Embassy staff? I had filled that function in Vienna.*

CLEVELAND: I'm not certain.

*Q: Let's talk briefly, so we'll have your slant, about French Governments during your stay there. It was a chaotic period, and the single thread, I guess, was Robert Schuman, wasn't it who was the element of continuity in the French Government?*

CLEVELAND: The chief feature to remember about France at the time was that the French Communist Party was an important player in internal politics, and the perceived menace of Communism was the most important feature of our policy toward France. Internal French politics were not part of my assignment, but of course I was very much aware of the constant changes in government, caused primarily by shifting alliances among the many parties in the Assembly. On the other hand, in my constant dealings with the Government, including the Foreign Office and economic ministries, there were very few changes among the faces that I saw. Schuman was Foreign Minister, and Jean Monnet was in the background. Hervé Alphand was at the Foreign Office, and Giscard was also active. De Gaulle came long after I left.

*Q: Do you have any snapshots of those days in Paris?*

CLEVELAND: One or two:

A high level conference in Bruce's office with Secretary Acheson; it was attended by all sorts of brass from both Washington and Paris; its purpose was to brief Acheson for a meeting with Robert Schuman; the Secretary asked for suggestions and received many. He then made a brilliant statement of what he was going to say to Schuman. It was so clear and so right that I've never forgotten it. It put Acheson in my pantheon.

We met at the Gare de l'Est an American security guard from Bucharest and his wife on their way for home leave. Driving from the station to our home by way of the Champs-Élysées we encountered a Communist demonstration against the newspaper *La Figaro*. Seeing our diplomatic plates, some of them broke our windows, and started to drag me out of the car until told to stop by a cadre. The security guard and his wife dropped to the floor of the car. Later, they said they wanted to get back to Bucharest, where things were safer!

*Q: You left in 1952, after about four years.*

CLEVELAND: Right. In the summer of 1952, one thing happened that I've sometimes regretted. I received orders to Ankara as Economic Counselor. The Embassy didn't want to release me, so the orders were canceled, and I stayed for a while. Then Washington decided I'd been in Paris long enough, and I was recalled to Washington for a job in the European Bureau.

Put mildly, that did not turn out to be the apex of my career. The job was disappointing; I had expected a better assignment when a particular job slot opened up. However, at that point, the administration changed, and Dulles came in. There was a big shakeup in the Department; my expected reassignment fell through. There was a general reduction in force. The person in the slot I had expected to fill was not allowed to leave for his overseas assignment because of his China background. This was the McCarthy period!

After a certain amount of wrangling with Personnel, which was no doubt a mistake, I was reassigned to our Consulate General in Sydney, Australia. Parenthetically, I should say that in those days, the negotiation of an assignment was not looked upon with favor, and the grievance concept didn't exist!

In January, 1954 the Cleveland family traveled to Australia by train and boat, a luxury no longer possible. We arrived in Sydney after 18 days at sea. With the exception of the Communist longshoremen, who were at the dock, we found the Australians to be more friendly toward the United States than people of any country we had visited.

Sydney was a big change from Romania, France or Washington. The pace was totally different, and life was very agreeable. My title was Consul, and though the consular district was only New South Wales, my own assignment was Australia-wide. The reason for this

was that most of Australia's economic ministries were then located in Sydney. My successor went to Canberra as Economic Counselor.

The job was reporting on Australian economic matters, and trade promotion. We were a very small group in my office. In those days, American trade and investment in Australia was a fraction of what it is today. Australians wanted more. This gave me a real opportunity; I turned my energies to promoting American investment and trade. I traveled around Australia visiting banks and chambers of commerce, explaining to them the need for more Australian promotional activity and a better legal climate. Perhaps partly as a result of these efforts, things started changing. American interests grew rather fast in the following years. Compared to jobs I had previously and later, my duties weren't demanding. On the whole, it was a satisfying period, and especially good for my family.

*Q: It was, after all, a variety of Foreign Service experiences which you need.*

CLEVELAND: Yes. It was very different from anything I'd done in my two previous posts.

*Q: What kinds of American investments were made in that period?*

CLEVELAND: Several major companies had been in Australia for a long time, including General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. There were a few other rather small manufacturing branch operations. A few of these were branches of British subsidiaries of U. S. companies. Australia was having balance of payments difficulties at that time; when GM applied for authority to repatriate earnings, the press would compare the dollar amount of the repatriation to the amount of GM's original prewar investment. This made GM look greedy, and gave a negative spin to the idea of foreign investment in Australia. It made my job of pushing for liberalization of investment more difficult.

*Q: Were there extractive industries such as mining?*

CLEVELAND: Yes, but there was not much foreign investment there. A copper mine in Queensland was partly US-owned; the oil industry was represented, but in the marketing area. Some oil exploration had been conducted with negative results. Coal and steel and other extractive industries were almost entirely Australian, but there was probably British money in some of them.

That was then. Major changes have taken place since. When we revisited Australia thirty years later, it was hard to believe it was the same country. Sydney had developed from an overgrown very provincial village into a major metropolis. Nearly every major American company is now there in some form, not to mention the Japanese and others.

*Q: Did you find a difference in Australian attitudes toward the United States in thirty years?*

CLEVELAND: Yes and no. In the post-war period, including the '50s, we were extremely popular. They looked on us as their saviors from the Japanese. The battle of the Coral Sea was celebrated every year as a kind of tribute to the U. S. Every year, a prominent American would be invited to the celebration as a guest of the Australian Government. One year Admiral "Bull" Halsey came, and received extraordinary adulation. It was very heart-warming.

*Q: What about the Japanese?*

CLEVELAND: They were still hated and feared. I knew the poor Japanese Consul General very well, and he was having a rotten time. He even had trouble getting his kid into school. He was really isolated. In contrast, today Japan is Australia's main trading partner, and a major investor.

There were observable changes taking place even during our short stay. Prewar Australians were almost entirely of British stock. Their chief interests were sports, and otherwise taking life easy. Music, art, good food etc. had a low priority, and to us, Australian life seemed rather boring. There was little communication between men and women. However, European immigration was beginning to have its effect on Australian lifestyles, and by the time we left, European immigrants had produced many beneficial effects on the culture.

*Q: But weren't they rather selective in their immigration policy?*

CLEVELAND: Yes. To get a visa, one had to have some kind of a skill.

*Q: A needed skill.*

CLEVELAND: Certainly; it was and still is a huge country with a comparatively small population. Every new immigrant creates a major capital infrastructure expense - schools, roads, utilities and other public facilities. Thus immigration policy was and is restrictive because of capital costs.

*Q: That problem didn't seem to arise in U. S. immigration policy. What were your relations with the Embassy and the Ambassador - Peaslee, I believe.*

CLEVELAND: Yes, Amos Peaslee was a live wire. He was a famous lawyer, and we admired him greatly. However, the Australians kept asking for a professional diplomat, somehow feeling that political appointees downgraded their importance. Regarding my relations with the Embassy, they were OKAY; I did my own thing without the Embassy's or even the Consul General's supervision. The posts in Melbourne and Perth also did their own thing without much supervision from either the Embassy or the Supervising Consul General in Sydney.

*Q: You spoke of traveling to promote investment. Was that throughout Australia?*

CLEVELAND: Yes. I went to all the major cities to make speeches on U. S. trade and investment. My efforts, paid off in the long run.

Toward the end of our tour in Australia, the Foreign Service Inspectors arrived to make their periodic check on the post. During a conversation with the senior inspector, he mentioned negative stories in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine about Embassy Bangkok and our Ambassador there. He said that if he were assigned to Bangkok, he'd resign from the Service.

*Q: I remember the stories. What happened?*

CLEVELAND: Soon after that, we left Sydney for home leave and eventual transfer to an undetermined post. When I got to Washington, I was asked to take the job of Economic Counselor in Bangkok. With many misgivings, I accepted the assignment. It looked like a challenge, and it was certainly closer to the action than Australia.

*Q: One thing about the Foreign Service is or was that you could count on having a change, but this assignment looked rather menacing.*

CLEVELAND: In those days, you were expected to accept an assignment without much question. Also, in my case, there was a record of my having contested an earlier assignment, so I felt I didn't have much choice. Nowadays, assignments seem much more negotiable.

*Q: I agree. So you went on to Bangkok?*

CLEVELAND: Yes. Despite my fears, Bangkok turned out to be a fascinating and demanding job. Thailand was a key post in those days because of its strategic location, and strong anti-communist orientation. The economic section had many functions beside routine reporting and trade promotion, ECAFE and economic aid matters, for example. So we had quite a sizeable staff. Aside from managing the section, my personal duties involved advising the ambassador on economic and politico-economic matters. Contrary to my prior concern, I had good relations with the ambassador, but found his judgment rather questionable. He had very close, certainly too close, relations with the then Prime Minister. When the latter requested something in the economic aid area from the United States, the Ambassador would wire Washington recommending it. These messages had little result, and I tried to persuade the Ambassador to let things go through proper channels, namely the aid mission. It was part of my job to interface with the aid mission.

Thailand has always been independent and sovereign. The citizens have none of the sense of inferiority of some of the former colonial peoples. They revere their King, which seems to give a sense of stability to the country. The military hold most of the power, and over the years, power has changed hands through a series of bloodless coups. While we're on the subject, we had one or two coups during my tour. The first one caused us a real problem. The Ambassador, as I said, had been close to the Prime Minister, and did not permit the

Embassy staff to make contact with opposition groups. No civilian in the Embassy knew the new Prime Minister; fortunately, however, our military attaché had maintained clandestine contact, so things worked out. It was a good lesson in diplomacy. I should add that coups in Thailand have always been bloodless. Being for the most part good Buddhists, they don't seem to believe in violence.

*Q: Was that called the ICA mission?*

CLEVELAND: Yes. The mission had a very big staff and a very ambitious program in many fields. Because of the importance of Thailand to the United States, large dollar amounts had been allocated to the program, especially for major projects --

*Q: Infrastructure type things, roads?*

CLEVELAND: Roads, dams, utilities, agriculture, education etc. The big programs went very slowly because at the time Thailand didn't have the skills needed to carry them out. Also too many Americans were used; this was expensive. We were learning that it would be much more effective to concentrate on training and education. This would upgrade the capacity of the Thais to absorb aid. So we moved from project aid to human resources development. This was more than thirty years ago, and thanks to the Thais themselves plus our assistance, Thailand is now no longer considered a less developed country.

The aid program for Thailand was plagued by a political problem. Each year, Washington would announce the dollar level of aid for each country. The Thai Government would compare the level allotted to Thailand with those allotted to other countries, and then tend to judge the state of Thai-US relations on this basis. Both the Embassy and Washington took this attitude seriously, with the result that much more aid was programmed than could be absorbed by the fairly primitive economy. The backlog of unspent funds became enormous, and remained so over many years.

The '50s were a learning period in the aid business, not only in Thailand, but in all other underdeveloped countries. The Marshall Plan in Europe had been successful because the European countries had the infrastructure and institutions capable of effectively utilizing aid. Our early assumptions for the Truman Plan seemed to have been modeled on the Marshall Plan. We thought that throwing money into massive projects would work. We were wrong, but we did learn that economic development is a complex business, and perhaps a science.

*Q: Regarding building human resources, how was that undertaken? Did we send experts to Thailand, or did they send people for technical training?*

CLEVELAND: Both. In fact, there was a huge program run by AID that persisted up until quite recently. Institution building was the name of the game. I believe it was quite successful, to judge by Thailand's present prosperous state.



*Q: I'm not sure that all countries have learned what we know about the subject of economic development.*

CLEVELAND: I agree. We are doing better now, although we're doing much less. Thirty years ago, we really didn't know what we were doing.

*Q: Going back to Thailand, wasn't there a change of Ambassadors while you were there?*

CLEVELAND: Yes. U. Alexis Johnson arrived in early 1958. He was a breath of fresh air. He was a great Ambassador. His superior judgment, leadership and organizing ability were impressive. It didn't take him long to get a grip on the job, and his tenure during my short period with him was one of the high points of my career.

*Q: What would you say was the secret of his success?*

CLEVELAND: Alex is and was a man of superior judgment; that is quality enough for a good diplomat. His other assets included leadership, self-confidence and a way with people. He never made one feel he was superior, and was always ready to listen. Thanks to his experience with Korea, he had the special respect of the military. This was a great help in Thailand, where the Thai military have a central role. He was very much respected by the US generals in our military aid mission.

*Q: Was the MAAG primarily in the hardware business, or was there training also?*

CLEVELAND: Training was a major component, and involved a lot of US military trainers in all branches. I should have said that the program had a heavy political content. Much of it was to maintain good relations with the Thai military. They got a lot of goodies from us for being good allies and providing the headquarters for SEATO. In the '50s, there appeared to be multiple threats of Chinese communist origin - particularly through surrogates, including Vietnamese in the Northeast and the insurgency in Malaya. Thus our military aid program was massive, and included hardware, training and advice. Thus we had a very big MAAG with a lot of brass. Alex kept them under control.

*Q: Alex has always amazed me; he certainly is one of the ablest operators I've ever known. I've never been able to analyze why he's so good; perhaps it's his rather unassuming style. In any event, he was always very effective, and is to this day. How did you wind up your tour in Thailand? You said you were wanted in Washington.*

CLEVELAND: I was ordered back to Washington to the Southeast Asian Office to take over the economic job in that Office. This involved coordinating the State Department's interests in the area with those of other parts of State and other Departments, including mainly ICA (the aid agency), Commerce, Treasury and international agencies. It was a very demanding and somewhat frustrating job, involving reconciling differing views and achieving agreed drafts of instructions, etc.

Upon my arrival, I was faced with the job of working with the IMF to organize a major monetary and economic reform in Laos. It's hard to believe it now, but at that time Laos was almost totally a US financial responsibility. Without going into details, the purpose of the reform was to stop an egregious currency black market which was undermining our aid program there and costing us a lot of money. This effort kept me up night and day for my first weeks in Washington; after we got the reform, I landed in hospital!

*Q: You'd had experience in international finance before. Why was this so difficult?*

CLEVELAND: To begin with, I had little experience in the process of monetary reform; also there was a great sense of urgency and a lot of people in the act. I never had the comfortable feeling of knowing what I was doing. However, the mission was accomplished, Lao currency was made convertible, and the black market was terminated.

*Q: Was this all done in Washington, or was some done in Vientiane?*

CLEVELAND: Our monetary specialist in Vientiane also played a major part. We couldn't have done it without his valiant effort. However, just to show how things go in the Foreign Service, the whole thing was reversed a few years later. To make a long story short, when Kennedy became President, he decided to give Laos a lower priority, and a new set of presidential advisers trashed the idea of a convertible Kip as ridiculous.

*Q: What years are we talking about?*

CLEVELAND: I was in the Bureau from 1958 to 1963, about four years altogether. In the early period, Laos was our main preoccupation. Those were the days of SEATO, and a continuing confrontation with the Communists, particularly the North Vietnamese. It was the Dulles-Eisenhower policy to try to keep Laotian governments aligned with us, neither neutral or pro- communist. As you know, Laos was and is a large and underpopulated country, often referred to as a "geographic expression" rather than a sovereign state. It was partly occupied by the Pathet Lao, a pro-North Vietnamese group.

*Q: What was the French role at this time?*

CLEVELAND: Not very important. Laos, along with the other former colonies of French Indochina were Francophone, and most of their elites had studied in France. The Laotians, as I remember it, didn't take part in the fighting against the French. After Dien Bien Phu, Laos became independent of France, but soon very dependent on us! We backed the anti-communist Lao government at great expense until Kennedy became President.

Of course, our office was not only concerned with Laos, but also with Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma. Along in there, I became deputy and sometimes office director. The job involved working with and supervising a group of very talented desk officers; also meeting regularly with the senior people in and outside the Department in our efforts to achieve coherent policies. During that period of our intense involvement in the area,

believe it or not, our office sent and received more messages than the rest of the Department put together. It was a seven-day twelve-hour job which never seemed to let up. Weekends, we'd dress more informally, but were there just the same. We felt as though we were swimming underwater in a tunnel. Discouragingly enough, were not really making progress - perhaps holding the fort, but perhaps losing ground.

When Kennedy became President, there were major changes. He sent Averell Harriman to the area to look into the situation. Based on Harriman's and other opinions, Kennedy decided that to maintain an anti-communist Laos was politically hopeless, and economically too expensive. In effect, we withdrew our support for an anti-communist regime, and agreed to accept a neutralist government. On the other hand, Kennedy came to believe that we should give full backing in the form of economic and military aid to Vietnam. He seemed to feel, and so did I and my State Department colleagues, that with enough help, South Vietnam could withstand the communist drive from the North.

As a result, my daily grind became mostly involved with Vietnam. To some extent, Laos had reverted to the back burner; relations with the other countries of the area required plenty of attention, but Vietnam needed the most. When Kennedy came into office, the North Vietnamese were pushing the South very hard. We were giving the South substantial military and economic aid. Saigon was full of US advisers, military and economic. The US military were pushing for greatly increased amounts, and wanted to shift the focus of policy-making to the Pentagon. It was a real bureaucratic struggle! One day the Under Secretary, George Ball, called me to a meeting in his office; he said it had been agreed to establish an interdepartmental task force on Vietnam. The chairman of the task force had not been chosen, but the Pentagon was pushing hard to put it under General Lansdale, who had gained a reputation as an anti-guerrilla expert in the Philippines.

Even before this decision was made, however, I was assigned to work with Ed Lansdale in preparing a major proposal to put before the President respecting our Vietnam commitments. It was clearly the President's wish greatly to increase them. So we developed a proposed "National Security Action Memorandum" for final signature by the President. This paper called for large increases in military hardware, training and economic aid, including multiplying the number of US military advisers several times. At the last minute, the decision was taken to appoint a Foreign Service Officer as task force chairman. This was done following a private discussion between Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara. Kennedy then signed the paper.

In retrospect, I should say that this document effectively committed the United States to almost open-ended assistance to South Vietnam. It could be argued that it led almost inexorably to the despatch of US forces several years later. Incidentally, I've been told that George Ball was skeptical about a commitment to the program even at that time; he certainly made no comment at my level. Dean Rusk was certainly very strong for the program.

*Q: We then started to build up a self-perpetuating bureaucracy to handle Vietnam matters, which I suppose had something to do with our future policies and action.*

CLEVELAND: I guess I agree. Going back to 1961, there were more than military matters to deal with in our office. Politically South Vietnam was internally unstable, and in light of our commitments, we became involved willy-nilly in their internal squabbles. I particularly remember a major instance of this. We received a NIACT (night action) from our Ambassador Durbrow, telling us of an attempted coup by the military against the then President Diem, and asking for instructions. I went to the office at 4.00 a. m. and drafted a message saying in effect, "Tell both sides that the enemy is North Vietnam, not each other." At that particular time, we had doubts about Diem, and weren't sure he would last. Thus the telegram was ambivalent on purpose. I woke Governor Harriman, then the Assistant Secretary and read him the proposed message. He told me to send it.

When the contents of the message were relayed to Diem, he took it as a sign of lack of support, as we put him at the same level as his opponents. After that, he never seemed fully to trust us. Whether this could be called a failure of our diplomacy, or whether it helped lead to his eventual overthrow, we'll never know; it is all part of the sad history of the period.

Perhaps I've said enough about those days. It was a terribly difficult time for all of us. We were all tired, saw little of our families, and were discouraged with progress. Its only merit was that I did get promoted to Class One! But from the standpoint of the United States, it was a period when, despite all we were doing, Southeast Asia was moving in the wrong direction. However it's true that we were keeping monolithic Communist expansion at bay, or so we thought!

Perhaps I should mention that for an interim period between assignments, I spent several months on the faculty of the Foreign Service Institute in its "Counterinsurgency Seminars."

These were organized on the initiative of Robert Kennedy, who believed that Americans didn't understand the social forces at work in underdeveloped countries. As a presumed "expert" on Southeast Asia, I organized lectures, discussions, and developed reading matter on the area. Our "students" were middle and upper grade officers from the military services and the Foreign Service. Our speakers were drawn from social scientists, military and foreign policy experts, including some rather controversial figures. I remember one man who said that China would not assist North Vietnam, owing to their historic hostility. That view was received with skepticism and hostility on the part of the Department. This program continued for several years, long after my departure for my next post.

*Q: Your next post was Belgrade. How did the question of that post happen to come up? Were there any interesting sidelights on how you received the assignment?*

CLEVELAND: Although my Asian experience had been interesting, and there were several assignment opportunities in the area, I hoped to return to Europe, my old stomping

ground. At the time, an old friend, Bill Tyler, was Assistant Secretary for Europe. One day in October 1962, I called on him in his office, had a rather relaxed chat, and expressed my desire for a European posting. I mention this only because that was the day before the Cuban missile crisis became public. You would never have known it from Bill's demeanor! Soon thereafter, I was asked if I would like to go to Belgrade as Economic Counselor and Director of the AID Mission. It was a familiar area; George Kennan was Ambassador; having served in Romania under very negative conditions, it seemed good to work in an area that seemed to be moving in a positive direction. I accepted with enthusiasm.

We arrived in Belgrade in January, 1963. We found comfortable quarters, including a very competent staff waiting for us, and settled in very quickly. My first concern was the AID Mission. The Mission had been established in 1950 not long after Tito's break with the Cominform. It had provided substantial economic assistance, including agricultural commodities, industrial equipment and technical advice during the period. By 1963, however, it had been removed from the list of countries eligible for economic or military aid. As Mission Director, it therefore became my job to wind down its activities while maintaining contact with the principal Yugoslav officials who handled aid matters.

Nevertheless, the Yugoslavs really appeared to wish to continue U. S. technical aid programs even at their own expense. To me, this would have been in the U. S. political interests; I therefore enthusiastically pursued conversations at my own level with Yugoslav officials to work out a proposal. However, at that time, Ambassador Kennan was disturbed at some of Tito's speeches, and became unwilling to support me. Consequently, the whole proposition fell through.

*Q: This was when the Nonaligned Countries movement began, in which Tito was exercising leadership.*

CLEVELAND: That's right. Neither Ambassador Kennan nor Washington were very keen on that movement, nor really on Yugoslavia, despite its independent status. Yugoslavia still professed to be a "Peoples' Republic" with a one-party system led by the League of Communists. Thus Congress, especially several important members, lumped Yugoslavia with the rest of the Communist world. This made the Embassy's job difficult. On the other hand, I found my dealings with the Yugoslavs very pleasant; we could always reach agreements with them on many matters - textile exports to the U. S., for example - but then gaining the approval of Washington was always difficult.

As I said, State and other Departments were getting a hard time from certain members of Congress who had anti-Tito constituents - Americans of perhaps Croatian origin. This really impeded a number of things that would have been in the joint interest of both countries.

*Q: You refer, of course, to the Ustashi and their friends.*

CLEVELAND: Yes; it's rather sad that much of the opposition to Yugoslavia from within the U. S. came from people of Croatian background, many of whom had cooperated with Hitler before coming to this country. They were probably more anti-Serb than anti-communist. The division continues to this day, based on religious and historical differences.

I made up my mind that at this post, I was not going to be office-bound; I managed to travel to all parts of the country, visiting all the republics, AID projects, farms and industrial sites, even including a uranium mine. It was good for our relations, and certainly helped our reporting.

*Q: There are also some very pleasant tourist places in Yugoslavia.*

CLEVELAND: Frankly, we did a lot of tourism when we could find the time, but that was often included in official trips. We saw most of the old monasteries and other historic spots as well as the tourist centers. There was a huge low-price tourist industry going on, much of it directed at both Germanies. German tourist agencies were shipping people in wholesale, and putting them in rather tacky hotels. The hotel staffs were country folks, most of whom didn't seem to understand our idea of cleanliness. If you're brought up in a farmyard, why should you?

Perhaps the most striking things one saw on these travels were the enormous differences between the republics. I've already mentioned the Serb-Croat problem, but there were other strains. The prosperous republics didn't like supporting the poorer ones. As long as Tito was alive, there was grumbling, but none of the outright hostility of today.

There were two memorable events during our stay in Yugoslavia:

The first was the assassination of President Kennedy, which of course was a terrible shock to us all. Marshal Tito was truly upset; he visited the Embassy for nearly an hour and talked about his memories and thoughts about the President. He had visited Washington earlier that year, and was a guest of the White House. He seemed to have developed a real admiration for Mr. Kennedy, so his feelings were obviously sincere. If my memory serves me, he also commented that when something happens to one Head of State, it could happen to others.

The other important incident was the earthquake at Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. It was a terrifying event, which almost completely leveled the city. We visited it as soon as possible and sent urgent messages to Washington recommending major assistance. A military medical group came down from Germany right away and did emergency work. At the same time, all the European countries arrived with all sorts of assistance. We had recommended that the military also provide shelter by setting up Nissen huts; we also proposed a financial package. The huts finally arrived, later than we'd hoped. A team of Engineers did a fine construction job under difficult circumstances, particularly bad weather. The financial package was more or less of a fiasco.

On my staff at the time was Second Secretary Larry Eagleburger, currently the Deputy Secretary of State. We assigned Larry as POLAD to the military unit in Skopje. He was and is bilingual in Serbian. It was a difficult but essential job, and he performed brilliantly. The work was done fast, with less than the normal friction, and we ended up looking pretty good. I should perhaps add that Larry's tour was up shortly thereafter; on his departure, I gave him by far the best performance rating I ever gave anybody. His subsequent career, including Ambassador to Yugoslavia, has certainly confirmed my high opinion of him.

*Q: Somewhat earlier, I had a similar experience with Bill Sullivan, then a young officer at the Embassy in Rome. At the time, I was stationed in Salzburg as POLAD to the US occupying forces in Austria. The military were building a supply port and depot at Leghorn; they were having a terrible time because of labor troubles etc. They spoke no Italian. Bill went up from Rome, and was able to turn matters right around. That was the beginning of his brilliant career.*

CLEVELAND: I can give you more positive comment on Sullivan. He worked under me in the Southeast Asian office as Burmese desk officer. He could handle that job with one hand. He drafted like an angel. He became Harriman's assistant, and went up fast from there.

*Q: Forgive the digression, but we are off the subject!*

CLEVELAND: Both men were exceptionally brilliant, and were lucky to have the opportunity to shine.

*Q: George Kennan was your Ambassador for a while. How was he to work with?*

CLEVELAND: Kennan was a very attractive human being, for whom I have much affection. He was and is a fine historian, a brilliant draftsman, but a faulted Ambassador. He really didn't use or listen to his staff. He didn't like Tito, and it seemed to be mutual, so his analysis of events in Yugoslavia suffered.

*Q: That's not an unusual assessment. Then Burke Elbrick came.*

CLEVELAND: He did, and we were glad to have him. He was a solid professional, very experienced, and very agreeable to work with. He was one of the last of the "Prewar" Foreign Service Officers.

*Q: After Belgrade, you returned to the United States. What did you do between then and retirement?*

CLEVELAND: Quite a lot! The summer of 1965, although technically on leave, I traveled around the country attempting to explain our policy in Vietnam to various groups. In those early days of our military actions there, there was very little opposition.

During the winter of 1965-66 we lived in New York where I was assigned to do a free-lance job of meeting with executives of major firms, attempting to explain US foreign policy and Foreign Service activities. It was interesting and perhaps useful.

From early 1966 until my retirement in April, 1970, I was the Director of the then Office of Public Services in the Department. Our job was explaining US foreign policy to the public through answering mail and organizing meetings and public speaking. Owing to the Vietnam War, the job was more demanding than you might expect. Myself, I spoke all over the country, not only on Vietnam, but on many other topics as well. My staff numbered about forty, most of whom were organizers of speaking activities. The speakers were drawn from substantive FSO's in the various Bureaus. Many officers were reluctant to participate; the culture of the Department reflected an attitude that the less the public knew the better. So I spent a lot of effort trying to bring about a realization that public support is essential to the effective conduct of foreign policy. Toward the end of my tour, I ran into more and more hostility among my audiences, particularly in the East and Far West.

*Q: Well, now, Mr. Cleveland, you retired from the Foreign Service in April, 1970, but as with many other people, your subsequent career had much international content. It's of considerable interest to know what Foreign Service Officers do after they retire. Perhaps you could talk for a few minutes about that. I know some are foreign affairs related, and others are more community related. Could you tell us a little what you did?*

CLEVELAND: Prior to retirement, I started looking around for ideas of what to do. For family reasons, I wanted to remain in Washington, so I confined my efforts to the local area. By good luck, an old friend and former colleague, Ambassador Lucius Battle, was a Trustee of the Meridian House Foundation (now Meridian House International, or MHI). Through him, I was offered the job of Executive Vice President at Meridian House; I accepted, and went to work there the day after retirement. I subsequently became President. It is located in a historic house on Crescent Place Northwest.

Meridian House works in the area of international exchange of persons. This happens to be one of the few areas in which I did not work in the Service. I'd been in economic, political and public affairs, but never in what was called cultural affairs. It was therefore fun to involve myself in something new. The job of Meridian House is helping foreign visitors to the United States in all sorts of ways. It has five different units, each with its own special mission.

The Washington International Center (WIC), under federal contract, provides orientation to short and medium term visitors, here for training. They report there upon first arriving in the US, and are given an intensive briefing over one or two weeks about how to function in this society. Believe it or not, experience has shown that such orientation is quite crucial to the success of training programs. It's been going on since 1950. It has a professional staff and a large group of volunteers.



The National Council for International Visitors (NCIV) in my day was part of the MHI complex. It was a central office for some 90-100 organizations throughout the US who assist foreign visitors. These are volunteer citizen groups, the members of which are interested in foreign policy matters; in many ways, they are one of the few State Department constituencies. Through this group I had the privilege of meeting Americans from all over the country who had strong foreign policy concerns. NCIV is no longer under MHI auspices, but continues to work closely with it.

The Hospitality and Information Service (THIS) helps the families of the huge local diplomatic community become oriented to life in this town. On the face of it, this sounds like a boondoggle - Welfare for diplomats! - I confess I felt doubts about this group when I took over, but I became converted. At the behest of the Department, THIS started many years ago when former African and Asian colonies opened embassies in Washington. Many of the diplomatic personnel, particularly wives and families, from these countries were quite unable to cope with life in the United States, and many difficult situations arose which the Department could not cope with. Some of these diplomats, and particularly their wives, had never been out of their country; they were fish out of water, and needed help. THIS volunteers help them get settled and find their way around Washington, organize programs for them and their children. THIS has become quite a fixture in town, and even the Western embassies participate in its programs.

The International Visitors Information Service (IVIS) is physically located in downtown Washington and has an office at Dulles Airport. It helps non-official visitors to Washington by providing general information and language services. It's essentially a volunteer group.

The Visitor Program Service (VPS) is the largest Meridian House operation. Its job is programming the activities of international VIP's brought here under Federal grants. Its professional staff of over 30 people organizes the travel and daily programs of these guests of the United States. This may sound easy, but to organize the total 30 day program for one person, or a group, for that matter, is very time-consuming. The professionals at VPS work closely with the NCIV groups all over the country to work up the programs. For example, a visitor arrives in San Francisco, or wherever, and is met at the airport by a volunteer from the local NCIV group, who guides him through his entire visit to that city. I'm very high on this program, because it's good for our international relations, but perhaps more importantly, it's good for our own private citizens.

*Q: As you say, it gives the State Department a constituency all across the United States.*

CLEVELAND: That's right. I was glad to have had the job. My own role was central and fiscal management, maintaining a strong and prestigious Board of Trustees, and a lot of fund-raising. While some of MHI's major functions are federally supported, the others were not. When I arrived at MHI, we had very little development capability, so I really had to initiate it. We did the usual things - benefits, travel programs, grant writing, corporate and private solicitation etc.. The international business community was most helpful. By the time I left in 1977, we were in pretty good shape. The most noteworthy of our travel

programs was our Trustee trip to China in 1975. It was quite an experience for my wife and me, and for the Trustees who went.

*Q: That's very interesting, and of course it perpetuated your relationships with the Trustees you traveled with.*

CLEVELAND: Nothing like a trip with a group to China to make people close to one another. We've kept up with them ever since. At the time of this visit, Mao was still around, and billboards were still covered with Maoist slogans. We went back in 1980, and all the slogans were replaced by colorful ads for radios, soft drinks etc.

*Q: Are the slogans coming back now?*

CLEVELAND: I doubt it. But just to finish with Meridian House, I retired from there in 1977, and was succeeded by Ambassador John Jova; he in turn was succeeded by Ambassador Walter Cutler. They both have done a terrific job and the organization has gone from strength to strength. You asked me about my other activities.

*Q: You were involved with the newspaper business at one time, and also a hospital. These are worth mentioning. Also your involvement in the Dacor Bacon House Foundation.*

CLEVELAND: Regarding the newspaper business, because of a family connection, I was a director of the old *Washington Star* until it was sold. It was an interesting but difficult period for the *Star*. Its radio and TV stations were profitable, but the paper was not. We had a large circulation, but the *Post* was getting most of the advertising. I was deeply involved in negotiating the sale in 1975, and was glad to be out of it.

The Washington Hospital Center is another activity I'm still working at. At the suggestion of an FSO colleague, I joined a committee early in the 70's, became chairman, and then a Hospital Trustee. I'm now Emeritus, but continue with committee work. It keeps me out of trouble.

*Q: We are now sitting in DACOR Bacon House; what was your role in its creation?*

CLEVELAND: In about 1980, I was asked by Ambassador Lucius Battle, then its President, to join the Board of the Bacon House Foundation as Secretary. The Foundation had been established by Mrs. Robert Low Bacon as the heir for the house in which she lived here at 1801 F Street. Mrs. Bacon was still alive when I joined the Board. It was her idea that upon her death the property, along with a financial bequest for maintenance, would be used for some unspecified international purpose.

After Mrs. Bacon's death, our Foundation found itself with this fine house in a state of really miserable disrepair. Mrs. Bacon at age 90 found the house okay for her purposes, but as a public or even private facility, it required major rehabilitation. We started to do this, but soon found our cost estimates were far too low; so we suspended work. Soon thereafter

DACOR (Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired) Inc. was offered \$1,500,000 for its property on H Street. This really changed everything, and was a bonanza for both organizations. It would provide an excellent home for DACOR and really fine use for the house. Negotiations began between our two boards, and as I was on both, I took on a lot of the details of the deal that led to the merger of the Bacon House and the DACOR Educational and Welfare Foundations. Created was the present DACOR-Bacon House Foundation which owns the property, provides scholarships, offers welfare if needed, carries out world affairs educational programs, and provides a home for DACOR. This was a fortunate and very worth-while effort, and I am glad to have had a part in it. It is really great to sit in this place, remember what it was, and observe the beautiful place it now is.

*Q: I remember the negotiations very well, including some of the more difficult aspects. It was not all easy, and we had problems, but now the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and we're all very lucky. It's nice to be having this conversation in this pleasant room which we both had a part in creating. Many thanks for this record of your activities; do you have anything to add?*

CLEVELAND: I just recommend that my fellow retirees keep busy as long as they can. That's how to lead a long life!

*Q: You are certainly a good example.*

*End of interview*