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

GRANT V. MCCLANAHAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 27th of January 1997. This is an interview with Grant V. McClanahan. This is done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Tell me a bit about when and where you were born, and a bit about your parents.

MCCLANAHAN: I was born on October 22, 1919, in Tanta, in Egypt. I was born there because my father was a medical missionary. He and my mother had arrived there in 1915. He was first stationed in a mission hospital in Tanta that still exists. That is where I spent the first two years of my life. My father went on furlough in 1922 to America. Afterwards, he was sent to open a clinic in Luxor in upper Egypt. We were there until 1925, when the mission closed that clinic. Then he went to a 125-bed hospital in Assiut, also in upper Egypt, with several doctors and worked there from 1925 until my parents left Egypt. Our family lived in an apartment on the hospital compound until they left Egypt in 1951. I lived there until 1933. Then I went to Schutz American Boarding School in Alexandria, but Assiut was still my home until I came to America in 1936.

Q: Tell us about your parents. Where are they from? And what brought them into this?

MCCLANAHAN: My father was from Illinois and my mother was from Waverly, in Ohio. My father was the son of a United Presbyterian minister who had several children. Three of the sons became doctors, and two of them became ministers. It was quite a family!

Q: What was the denomination?

MCCLANAHAN: United Presbyterian, which was a small Protestant church and now is united with the main Presbyterian one. My mother, in Waverly, Ohio, was a schoolteacher and taught there until she married. She had gone to school in Waverly and then to Normal School at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She lived there until she married my father. When she married my father, she was 25, and they went to Egypt that same year, 1925.

Q: What was it like being a young lad in Egypt during the '20s and '30s?

MCCLANAHAN: It was comfortable. There were other American mission families in Assiut. There was an American junior college campus in one part of town, a girls school in another compound of the American missionaries, and my father's hospital. There was altogether a community of about 80 Americans, so that was very nice. It was a happy childhood for all of us. There was a small American grade school at the college. From it, we all went to Schutz, an American boarding school, for three more years. That was the pattern. Then from Schutz we all went to America for college.

Q: Did you get involved with the Egyptian community and its lifestyle?

MCCLANAHAN: At that time, it was a provincial town. Most of us had been born in Egypt and as small children learned Arabic. I had an Egyptian nurse who took care of me

as an infant, and it was not until I was about three years old that I realized clearly there were other languages. I was visiting in the home of a British archeologist in Luxor with his daughter and her French nanny taught us to count in French, so I grasped there was even a third language. However, I did not learn the Arabic alphabet and to read Arabic until I was 15.

Q: What type of Arabic were you learning?

MCCLANAHAN: The Egyptian dialect, which is one of the more useful dialects. Whenever I speak to any Arabs, they always say, "Oh, you must have been in Egypt."

Q: Did you get any sense of the tensions between the Egyptians and the British as a kid?

MCCLANAHAN: We were aware of it because Egypt in 1919 and 1920 had violent demonstrations against the British occupation. We knew later that when crowds walked down the street shouting nationalist slogans, it was time to go indoors. There were never any incidents of burning buildings or violence in Assiut, except in 1919.

Q: Then you went to college in 1936?

MCCLANAHAN: No, I went to high school in Alexandria, but I didn't have any science background because the school we didn't have a lab. All of us went on to high school for our fourth year in the United States. I went to Stony Brook, a preparatory school in Long Island, and there we had courses which included physics and chemistry, so that satisfied the science requirement.

Q: Where did you go to college?

MCCLANAHAN: Then, I went to Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. It is a denominational college of the United Presbyterian Church. It was founded in 1837. I went to that particular college because of my mother's sister, my aunt, who was the librarian there. Since my mother and father were going back to Egypt, they thought it would be nice for my brother and me to be close to a family member.

Q: Your brother was already there?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. He is two years older than I.

Q: At Stony Brook and Muskingum, after pedaling around in Egypt, was it difficult to settle in?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, it put me in some respects in an awkward position. I had been living earlier in America, but only when I was in the fourth and fifth grades because the missionaries had a year and a half on furlough in America every seven years. And that grade school experience was in New Concord, Ohio, where Muskingum College was. I had been in an American community only in a small town. In those days, if you were a

student and didn't own a car, you hitchhiked, even to go to New York and Chicago, and I did. It was quite a novelty to me to think that you could do that. In Egypt, that would have been unsafe and out of the question. Also, even though Stony Brook had a religious atmosphere, most of the boys' fathers were in business and other professions. In Egypt, American men were mostly doctors, ministers, or teachers. It was also strange to be thousands of miles from our parents. However, our training in the American schools in Egypt was good, so I was valedictorian of my class in Stony Brook.

Q: At Muskingum College, were you pointed towards anything?

MCCLANAHAN: Since the age of 14, I wanted to be a field Egyptologist in Egypt. I collected ancient coins and read a lot about antiquities. That is what I contemplated doing when I came to America. My brother wanted to become a doctor like my father. My parents encouraged me because they thought that was reasonable. There was no archeology program at Muskingum College, so I majored in the classical Greek language. I was very fortunate to have an excellent teacher. His name was Merle Rife. He taught Greek. In those days, if someone were aspiring to be a minister, they needed to know the ancient Greek of the New Testament. Dr. Rife was writing his own text. We used that in draft after he was there, and he later asked me to do the index, which I did. My minor was in history and I took the required subjects. I had been taught French intensively in school in Egypt. So when I was a freshman, I took a junior level course in French, and that met my modern foreign language requirement.

I never thought about the Foreign Service, although I knew what it was, because the American consulate general in Alexandria was an important member of the international community, as well as in the American community. There was a legation in Cairo, and we knew that was prestigious and had an important function. My father and mother always knew the American minister. When they were in Luxor, during the Harding administration, they knew the minister of Luxor, J. Morton Howell. By the way, he was the first American minister and later wrote a book titled "Egypt's Past, Present, and Future."

Q: If you wanted to be an Egyptologist, where did you point to during the 1930s?

MCCLANAHAN: The places for training in that in the United States would have been the University of Chicago, or Harvard, or the University of Pennsylvania.

Q: Which one were you pointed towards?

MCCLANAHAN: Pennsylvania was strongest in Mesopotamian archeology and Harvard, I thought, had more emphasis on the art rather than the field work. So I thought of Chicago and pointed myself toward that.

Q: When did you start college?

MCCLANAHAN: In autumn of 1937.

Q: Now we are talking about three years later before you entered your senior year. All hell was breaking loose in your area of interest. I mean, World War II had intruded into it.

MCCLANAHAN: When I graduated in 1941, I was registered for the draft. I was 21. I was unmarried. So, I was eventually one of the 11 million who were to be mobilized. However, I was a conscientious objector on moral grounds, as I told the draft board in Ohio, and I filled out the form that you did for that purpose. The draft board chairman had encountered this situation before, and he said, "Let's see how you do on your physical examination." So I took it and I had a slight defect of rapid heartbeat called tachycardia. So, he said "Since you planned to go to where you have got a scholarship, to the Chicago Theological Seminary in Chicago, with courses at the Oriental Institute, can't you plead that you are a seminary student and be deferred?"

So, I assented to that, and went to the seminary, which was right across the street from the Chicago Oriental Institute, and I took Hebrew and classical Arabic. I got a part-time job to support myself in the Oriental Institute Museum, first as a uniformed guard. When they found out I knew something about the subject, they put me in charge of conducting high school groups. A year after Pearl Harbor, I was influenced by editorials in the liberal "Christian Science Monitor" and some other publications, which took a principled stand for conducting the war as a means to peace. I then joined the Navy at the end of 1942. At that time, if you joined the Navy, you could designate which branch you preferred. There was the intelligence office of the 9th Naval District in Chicago. I went down and called on them and told them about my foreign experience and they were interested to have me enlist and serve there.

Q: So you were in the Navy from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: I enlisted in December of '42, was commissioned as ensign in September '45, and honorably discharged on August 23 of '46. The Navy sent me to Cairo in August of '43. Before that, I was a Navy yeoman, working in an office typing cards and intelligence reports with an interesting group of people on my team. In 1943, the forces - the Army, the Navy, and the Marines - set up a joint intelligence center, JICAME, in Cairo, really mainly to draw on the British Middle East intelligence reports for the American military. So they set up an office headed by an American Navy captain, Thomas A. Thornton. He had Army and Navy, and one Marine officer and then the appropriate Army enlisted men and Navy yeomen, and that's where I fitted in.

I traveled to Egypt with four others from Chicago on a Liberty, the David S. Terry, ship as a member of the gun crew. We sailed from New York in August and landed in Egypt at Suez. We were the first American convoy going through the Mediterranean, because North Africa had just been occupied and the fighting was in Sicily, so it was relatively safe to go along the southern coast of the Mediterranean.

Q: Well, I guess the Germans were too busy mucking around with the Sicilian campaign

to be mucking around with convoys going to Cairo at that point.

MCCLANAHAN: We were, of course, on the look-out 24 hours in both the South Atlantic and Mediterranean. That is where I learned to use the Bofors machine guns. We stood watches. We spotted no submarines, but it was wartime and they were there. When the ships went from New York down to Norfolk, Virginia, ours flew a little red flag. We were at the rear of the convoy. I asked one of the experienced gun crew, "Did it mean anything?" He replied that it meant that if the ship is torpedoed, you won't need a life jacket. You won't go down; you'll go up because we have quite a load of ammunition in the hold. We also had a load of deck cargo, like tanks, including some tanks which we heard were going to be delivered to Turkey. It was thought that if we were hit by dive bombers, the tanks would serve as a partial shield against the impact. We just kept our fingers crossed.

Q: So, in Cairo, what did you do?

MCCLANAHAN: I was used for various jobs by the officers. For example, I was an aide to Captain Thornton when he called on the Egyptian Minister of Health to discuss sanitary conditions for the Navy. They used me a few times for visitors' shopping trips. I edited reports with Arabic names, because only I knew how to spell them. I was given the job of logging in the things that came in, and marking them for internal distribution. That was an interesting intelligence program and I was able to live in Cairo at the home of one of the missionaries there, and that was nice. I was in Cairo a year after the important victory of El Alamein. The British and American headquarters were shrinking down because the interest was moving to Italy, Greece, and eventually to France. There was still a lot of military presence, and every security precaution taken. The war was moving away, and things were gradually looking better for the allies. I was in Cairo until April of 1945.

Early that year, the Navy personnel office said they needed to train more officers in Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Malay. Apparently, planners thought the war might go on in the Pacific for years and be a much bigger operation than it turned out to be. I had moved up four notches to be a yeoman first class. I applied for Japanese training and was accepted then was transferred. That was the first time I had ever flown in an aircraft across the Atlantic. I flew on the Air Transport Command (ATC) to Libya, and then I was overnight in a tent camp in Casablanca. I went to New York, where my wife was working as a social worker. We were married August 4, 1943. Nine days later, I was on the ship in New York, heading for Egypt.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

MCCLANAHAN: She was from Columbia, Missouri, and had come to the University of Chicago to train as a social worker. We met there at the university because we ate at the same eating cooperative.

Q: So you meet your wife, you're back, and then where did you go for training?

MCCLANAHAN: The assignment was to go to Boulder, Colorado at the University of Colorado at Boulder. There was an established language school there for the Navy. I went ahead to look for an apartment for my wife and myself to live in, and to survey the school. However, the Navy decided to greatly expand the program in the Japanese language and relocate it to Stillwater, Oklahoma, on the campus of Oklahoma A&M. That was a comedown, but that was alright. We rented a place in Stillwater and I started the course. Approximately nine months after my return from abroad, our first daughter was born. When the war ended...

Q: This would be August 1945...

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. The Navy decided to round off the training course. I had been commissioned in July 1945 and finished the course on June 22, 1946. I was assigned to Washington. My unit was cataloging captured documents from Japan in a DC [District of Columbia] warehouse. We sorted them into categories by regions and subjects. We did not have to read through all of them, but like a librarian, we had to learn to catalogue by the title page and table of contents. I did that work for several months and then asked to be discharged. There was a system of eligibility for "points" such as age, service overseas, etc. When mine were added up, I was discharged in August, 1946.

Q: So, we are talking about towards the end of '45. So, in 1946, where then?

MCCLANAHAN: I had a wife and baby, and needed a job. I went to the Defense Department and to the State Department, and I applied for a scholarship at Harvard, where they had a new Asia area studies program. I knew Japanese better than Arabic at that time and I had an interest in Japan. Harvard said its program was filled, but they would put me put me on the waiting list. The Defense Department and the State Department noted my interest in Japanese, but indicated they were more interested in the fact that I knew Arabic. I got that reaction from the personnel people repeatedly. The Department was then setting up INR, an intelligence office, and a man in charge of considering applicants for the Mideast was Joseph Satterthwaite. He had as his area advisor Edwin Wright, a colonel in the army intelligence during the war. They knew about me, and when my application came in, Ed said good words for me and took me to be interviewed for a position. I was very pleased to be accepted. My starting salary was $4,132.00.

Q: I came in at $3,500. That is a good salary. I was a level 5.

MCCLANAHAN: I was not contemplating the Foreign Service at that time. I met people in the Foreign Service, but I thought, like many, that the Foreign Service is for people who are Harvard grads or that I couldn't qualify, or would not be able to keep up.

Q: I was told the same thing. I thought they would not be my crowd, until I discovered, that, in fact, they were my crowd. During this time, where were you in the Department of State?

MCCLANAHAN: I think I started in November of '46. I remember the Department's outgoing telegrams were signed by Burns.

Q: Secretary of State James Burns.

MCCLANAHAN: The new and expanded office used a lot of former OSS people. It was in an apartment building that then stood on 23rd Street. It has since been demolished.

Q: That is where INR was. That was from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: That was from 1946 until I came into the Foreign Service in August of 1954. That was eight years.

Q: Well, when you first arrived, was Ed Wright in INR at that time? He was in the outer office of NEA.

MCCLANAHAN: He was a senior adviser on Iran in NEA. He consulted on U.S. and Russian relations with Iran. I was placed in charge of Egypt and the Sudan, so I started immediately writing studies and papers on that area. The British wanted their occupation of Egypt to end in a very gradual and orderly way, and the American policy was to do things in a similar way. They were concerned about security in the Middle East and possible Soviet expansion there. So, I went to a lot of early morning briefings of park Armstrong, the head of INR in Egypt, before he went to the Secretary's morning briefings. INR was expected to give the intelligence view or to know the significance of events, and words that could help policymaking.

Q: From a policy point of view, how did we view Egypt at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, in modern times it had been an area of British responsibility, where we wanted to be watchful, but not to take the lead. We wanted to consult the British closely and to make sure that their military presence in the Middle East was not weakened because we thought it was important to counter Soviet influence. There was the preoccupation that Israel was a new state and that...

Q: Israel became a new state in 1948?

MCCLANAHAN: On May, 1948.

In the mid-1940s, it was only a question of how to get the two sides, Britain and Egypt, to amend their 20-year treaty so they would have a smaller British presence there. When the Egyptian government appealed to the UN Security Council, then Jack Jernegan went from NEA, to be with the U.S. delegation. I went with him as an advisor for a few days in New York.

Q: When was this?

MCCLANAHAN: It was in August, 1947. This was my first impression of the U.N. It was at Lake Success, not yet at its present headquarters. It would have been interesting, except for the fact that the Security Council sent the dispute back to the two parties. The Council did not explore or even vote on the dispute, so it didn't turn out to be an important meeting.

Q: Do we have any kind of a stand in the British-Egyptian dispute? Did we lend our good offices to either?

MCCLANAHAN: There were high level talks in the State Department with the British on the Middle East and particularly Egypt. I believe that Assistant Secretary George McGee was one of the ones who presided to the high level talks about Egypt. I was one of the ones who sat in the back and listened to the comments made.

Q: What about King Farouk? What was the analysis of him at this particular time?

MCCLANAHAN: He was considered a problem because of his authoritarianism, lifestyle, and so on, but on the other hand, he was a symbol of stability and a tolerable status quo. He was thought to be better than what we were likely to get if the regime were changed, so there was that kind of support. It was a dramatic day in 1952 when the military revolution occurred. There was a great deal of interest and some hope was pinned on the new group, but while Farouk was in office, he was probably uneasy about the idea of a total departure of the British. He had to appear patriotic and Egyptian and in favor of Egypt uniting with the Sudan and other extreme goals, but he didn't have his heart in it really.

Q: How were you impressed by the reporting coming out of Egypt at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: I had to be something of a critic of it, because of my position. I had to analyze embassy and academic reports, then suggest what the State Department should conclude. The ambassador at the time was Jefferson Caffery.

Q: He had been in Latin America. He was sort of an autocratic type, of the imperial ambassadors of the older era.

MCCLANAHAN: One of his characteristics was that, since he was so eminent, he could exercise his idiosyncrasy through various telegrams. There would be an important event related to the upcoming elections, and the ambassador would only write brief and rather perfunctory paragraphs about it. He had been ambassador in Paris before, and I guess being in Cairo was a bit of a let down. I believe the British were sometimes uneasy because he had an Irish name, so they thought he was not sufficiently sympathetic to their interests. That was a factor that I heard of at that time.

Q: Did you get any feel from an intelligence end about this?

MCCLANAHAN: One of the things that they had to watch and report upon was the possibility of emergence of a radical fundamentalist regime. It seemed to me that they overestimated the Islamic threat. Hassan al Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, was assassinated, probably by order of Farouk. The prophet of the movement was gone. Then there was the concern in the West about the corruption that pervades any Egyptian establishment. They had some trained young soldiers, more cosmopolitan than your average Egyptian, and so they would stay aware of the situation.

Q: We want to capture the feeling about the Department of State, of the creation of Israel. Looking back, what was the feeling during the '46-'49?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, let's see, the people in the research office with me knew a great deal about the Arab world. We were surprised and concerned about the rapidity of the change, but realized that because of the domestic and international implications, the issue of a Jewish state would be handled by the very top level. That would be in Congress and not predominantly the State Department or even the White House. We could see that, in general, a senior Arab official got the attention of NEA, and an Israeli got the attention of the White House and the Secretary of State. In Congress, that was very much the attitude and with the American public. So I felt that... Well, I don't think there is anything analogous to Israel in terms of our long-range interests in the Middle East, which are security of the oil and of transit in both and access to this vast area for our communications. There is a great need to give weight to the interests of both the Israelis and the Arabs, but the sympathies of the public, the effectiveness of presentation, are factors for Israel. You have to live with that as an official or a diplomat, and the only realistic thing to do is not be a missionary or crusader for either side, keep long-term interests of the U.S. in mind, and realize that you may not be able to have much success.

Q: Foreign Service officers trained in the Middle East know about our long term interest, because that is what they are suppose to do. So they would not be sympathetic to the creation of Israel and be described as being anti-Semitic. Did you find amongst the people you worked with a grudging work on the issue?

MCCLANAHAN: What it seemed to me is what happened in the Foreign Service, a place where a lot of people with a background in the Middle East have worked was such that people were disturbed by the lack of balance in the favoritism toward Israel. I think there was a policy for a time of not having Jewish Foreign Service officers involved in the Department, and not directly in the area. There were other FSOs who later rose to be ambassadors, who learned to sound quite accepting and friendly to Israel. Then there were people like myself, who are not anti-Semitic but were sympathetic to whoever was being pushed around and mistreated anywhere. In the Middle East, that is what happened to the Arabs. From a more positive point of view, we could see that if Israel could normalize its relations with its neighbors, it would thrive and be secure and the natural one to raise standards in the area toward modernization and efficiency. The Israelis didn't see it that way apparently. I wish that they would. I feel that in the generations after I am gone, the area will settle down. Maybe they will even agree to declare it a non- nuclear zone.

Q: In the NEA, did you find that there strong personalities regarding this issue? Were storms raging in the State Department in terms of what was happening or not?

MCCLANAHAN: No, I didn't. The key figure in NEA was Loy Henderson. From the way I understand it, it seemed that he was very well regarded by members of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate. He had been an early one to take a hard line on the Cold War. He was regarded as one to be trusted and not to be criticized. Someone in that position could have been vulnerable and he wasn't. There were a few in the Foreign Service who were very bothered by that and by Israeli behavior. I, fortunately, never had anything directly to do with it or with the Israel problem.

Q: What were you seeing from the INR perspective of the advent of Israel and Egypt?

MCCLANAHAN: It had less impact on Egypt than on the other neighboring Arab states. Later, after the military coup in 1952, the officers, including Nasser, had a grievance that they hadn't been given sufficient armaments in 1948 to be effective militarily. They were a regular army and quite numerous and so were able to move right up into Gaza, and hold it. There is an Egyptian postage stamp showing the map and their army flag raised during Gaza, but then they were besieged at the time of the cease-fire. They complained later that their arms had been inadequate. But the conflict had less effect on Egypt. Egypt, unlike some Arab states, is a historic country, and does not have a geographically scattered population. It is homogeneous religiously. It is a recognizable state. Jordan can't be. Syria and Lebanon have minority problems and so on. I was concerned with Egypt, so I was somewhat insulated from the Israeli-Arab issue.

Q: Well, how did the office coup of '52 come across?

MCCLANAHAN: It was a surprise to the intelligence community, and to the embassies in Cairo. It was almost immediately recognized as being a successful coup. Egypt is such a centralized country, and the coup leaders took control of both Cairo and Alexandria in the first two days. You don't have the problem of a Bosnia. Actually, I had the idea that this would be an interesting event for a case study. How could this surprise have happened without the knowledge of experienced people? It was a military coup. Let's see if we can learn how that happened. My notion of trying a "post-mortem" within the intelligence community was naturally not a popular idea.

Q: What were the lieutenant colonels thinking about it?

MCCLANAHAN: Two thoughts on that: one, when I later was in the Africa Bureau and sitting in on discussions in the bureau in the '60s. That was the time when most parts of Africa were getting their independence. I used to say to my colleagues specializing in Africa and the Sub Sahara, "I think that African military may be important in the creation of regimes." They often demurred, saying that Africa is different and it won't happen there as it had in Egypt, Iraq, and Libya.

That summer of 1951, a year before the coup, my wife and I were in July in the Middle East, and the area was rather calm. People moved around without apprehension. In Damascus, the ambassador invited us for a drink in the garden, and a part of the outer wall was sort of not there, because there had been a bomb the previous week. Somebody from Syria was obviously angry at America, but otherwise there weren't any special precautions being taken, nor in Baghdad.

Q: Did you find that the Sudan raised anything on their radar at time?

MCCLANAHAN: Not particularly, no. That is to say, it was a very much a British responsibility, a country which the British had been administering, as well as representing internationally. The U.S. presence was only represented by a few missionaries, most of them in the south. Then we sent a "liaison officer" before independence. That would have been in 1955. So, the Sudan was an issue between Britain and the Egyptians. The British wanted the Sudan to be independent eventually, and the Egyptians wanted to have it as a satellite of theirs. And so, that was a question that I don't think we took part in. We probably sided a little more with the British on that one. The American government agreed to send a retired Foreign Service officer with the rank of career minister to the Sudan to be part of an international commission, to go around and survey opinion in the country. In a mainly illiterate, partly jungle-like country, it is hard to get a sample of opinion. There were groups out doing so, and my friend Harold Glidden was sent as an expert who knew Arabic and the area, and he advised the career ministers. We thought that we would be helpful and would lend our presence, as it has a certain prestige.

Q: Did you find our interest in the Sudan was pretty well limited to the Arabic part rather than the black part?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes . In the Sudan, there were Catholic and Protestant missionaries who had actually converted the Animists, but you can't expect to convert Muslims. The South had such a simple elemental level of civilization that missionaries could come in and at least set up a little medical practice or schools which were needed. No, the U.S. did not have an interest in the Sudan. The Sudan did not then have oil, and it was not an influential state when it became independent in the area. Now it makes trouble on human rights issues, but it didn't then.

Q: What about the fact that this was the Cold War? When you got there, the Cold War was just being invented. At the time you were there, from 1946 to 1954, was there Soviet influence or a perception there of it?

MCCLANAHAN: That was a matter that was an issue with the Nasser regime. The new regime was willing to deal with the Russians, although Farouk, of course, had not been. The Department was very preoccupied with the Middle East as an area of competition with the Soviet Union, which was relatively near, while we were far away. The northern tier countries were of strategic interest to the United States. Several times, Arabs have said to me, "All that Americans are interested in is oil, keeping out the communists and supporting Israel." I would rebut that as an unfair simplification, but they always had me

a little on the defensive, I'm afraid. It was pretty much the case in Congress. That is what they were particularly aware of.

Q: Were there any significant efforts made by the Soviets to get anywhere?

MCCLANAHAN: No, that came later, I guess, after '54, when Nasser was in power. The Egyptians asked for assistance with the new High Aswan Dam. We were supposed to keep an eye on the threat. We were supposed to look for the Communist Party in Egypt, but it was small. They were no serious threat. They were watched by our intelligence and Egyptian intelligence also watched them.

Q: What about the universities? Were we able to keep an eye on them?

MCCLANAHAN: No, not very effectively, although almost all the Egyptian educated class emerges from the Universities of Cairo or Alexandria.

Q: Well, in 1954, where did you go?

MCCLANAHAN: I was assigned to the consulate in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. I was quite pleased with that prospect. Parker Hart was the NE office director. I admired him, and he briefed me on the situation in Saudi Arabia, where he had served.

Q: Didn't he open the post?

MCCLANAHAN: I believe that he did, and that he built it up significantly.

Q: Had you been brought into the Foreign Service by this point?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, I had been. I went through an oral exam. I was admitted then, and I was assigned. This was all in a period of two months. There was a great move in 1954 to integrate officers from the Department into the Foreign Service. A few of the older and more specialized people in INR wished not to go in, but for anyone in my position it was a good opportunity. There was a searching oral exam for those who had been working eight years or more such as myself. The test took maybe an hour and a half. There were four panelists.

Q: Do you remember any of the questions?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. I had mentioned on my application form about my playing tennis for my prep school and in college. One of them said to me, "What about a certain change in the rules in tennis? What effect would that have on the game?" I was greatly helped by my experience not only as a tennis player but as a debater in college. I survived that.

Q: What was your impression of ARAMCO and how they deal with the Saudis?

MCCLANAHAN: The ARAMCO was in its period of great expansion in my two years

there. They had discovered the Abqaiq oil field, which was going to be a bigger one than they had located before and had a great future. They also created a refinery at Ras Tanura, where there hadn't been one before. Previously, they had utilized a refinery in Bahrain. Their production went to over a million barrels a day while I was there. That was the landmark that everyone considered significant. It is now over seven million gallons. They introduced a catalytic converter at the new refinery, which was a technological breakthrough, so we heard a lot about that. ARAMCO was very enlightened in their treatment of their own workers, Saudi workers. They also encouraged the creation of small businesses, and built a new housing area for Saudi employees while we were there. The structure of staffing at that time was that all the key jobs were held by Americans, the next layer by Pakistanis and Palestinians. Most of the less skilled workers were Saudi Arabians. The American families had house workers from Goa, on the coast of India. I always thought that it was something that may have caused friction at that edges between the groups. What they were interested in was that, as they expanded and had more local employees they were training them and preparing them for more responsible jobs. Many Saudis were drawn from the oasis of Qatif that was largely a Shia Muslim community and some were drawn from the areas that Sunni. I foresaw that as potential trouble. That was the kind of thing that one thought about and discussed with the government relations experts in ARAMCO.

Q: What about normal problems did American citizens have? How were those addressed there?

MCCLANAHAN: It was an unwritten but known rule in ARAMCO that any American citizen who was caught making trouble or who was arrested was immediately sent out of the country. Most of the Americans who worked for ARAMCO had been informed of that when they were hired, so they weren't surprised and didn't make any resistance. The consulate, the Saudi authorities, and ARAMCO were in tacit agreement with the policy. There was one time when an American was being detained in a worrisome jail. In that case, the consul general himself got involved. Then the detainee was sent back to America.

Q: Do you remember what the problem was?

MCCLANAHAN: No, I don't remember what it was, but the concern was that the offense he committed was punishable in Saudi Arabia by lashes. Another time, one of the five Marines at our consulate general was caught with a jug of liquor in his car. He was swiftly reassigned to the consulate in Cyprus. In general, the problems were few. People were averse to publicizing problems, and no one was ever shot or anything like that. If something happened and someone died, ARAMCO had a policy in the company of having one man trained to embalm the body. The consulate would seal the coffin and send the body would be sent home by air. ARAMCO had its own small air fleet.

Q: What was the social life there like since alcohol was prohibited?

MCCLANAHAN: It was strictly prohibited, even beer. That was something one heard

discussed. At the consulate, we had a little personal alcohol imported from Bahrain in the consulate bag. When I was given my authorized bag, I was given an authorized letter permitting me to have it. It was, of course, against the law and policy to serve it to Saudi guests.

Q: What about relations with the Amir of the eastern province?

MCCLANAHAN: The government of Saudi Arabia in that area was headed by an influential, experienced Saudi amir. He was Saud Bin Jiluwi, a powerful man, though not a member of the royal family. He was a trusted old retainer of the royal family. He was well-known, respected, and feared. He did not have to refer to the Supreme Court, so to speak. My consul general, John Carrigan, dealt with him regularly, calling on him about once a week, and through an interpreter they sometimes joked and made small talk. I went with the consul general to meet the Amir one day, and when he discovered I spoke Arabic, he was very pleased. Once or twice a week, he would invite us to have dinner at the Amirate. If we were invited to dinner, it was always scheduled for one hour after sunset so they could say their sunset prayers.

We mostly relied on British reporting on Gulf affairs. We reported on interesting new developments, which there were about every few months. We once reported the installation of the first traffic stoplight in eastern Saudi Arabia. There was an American Air Force base at Dhahran, but we did not report on it, because it was the responsibility of the Pentagon.

There were a few Saudi visits by ministers or the king. King Saud was not as able as his father, Abd al-Aziz. I remember when I was in charge and the king came to Dhahran. This was around the time of the Buraimi incident, and there was a military parade. There was a lot of shouting. The king himself spoke to calm the crowd down and said these were important times, and "As far as the military matters are concerned, I am the first soldier of the kingdom." Everyone applauded, and the atmosphere became more calm. When we all went to dinner that night at the Emirate, I sat next to the king and spoke to him. I told him I had been impressed by the effect his words had had. I added that I considered him to have been the first diplomat of the kingdom.

Q: Was there a concern about the Palestinians in the area because they're in the army rather than the Saudis?

MCCLANAHAN: Palestinians were not in the army, but in the local administration, although everything concerning finance was dealt with by the Saudis. The Palestinians and a few Egyptians were very necessary to the Saudi administration at that phase, but I suppose they were probably watched because they had international contacts, and they were much more educated and sophisticated. I am not sure how they were recruited. I guess each one probably invited some of his relatives.

Q: What were the concerns and interests in Bahrain?

MCCLANAHAN: The Bahrain Petroleum Company [BAPCO] was owned by Americans. The chief officials were therefore Americans and they had a comfortable compound on Bahrain, where we would stay during consular visits. We would always take an important American visitor to Bahrain, accompanied by the British agent. Many political agents visit there. I suppose the negotiations for the U.S. Navy presence in Bahrain must have been worked out with the British political agent and advisor and then the British arranged matters with the Bahrainis. We studied and reported on marginal problems such as the cultural stratification in Bahrain, where a majority of the population were Shia Muslims, and the ruling family and a minority were Sunnis.

Q: Was there not a large Iranian population there also?

MCCLANAHAN: No, but there were families that went back and forth between Bahrain and Iran because they were Shias. They would travel for business and personal religious pilgrimage reasons and trade wherever there was money to be made. Most of the Bahraini Shias lived in small villages.

Q: How were relations with the British?

MCCLANAHAN: They were good. Bahrain had been a troubled issue for the UK because Iran made a historical claim. The British officials were always helpful and generally candid about talking about discussing Bahrain and other places in the Gulf. I visited Qatar, part of our consular district and a British protectorate at that time. I stayed with the British political agent there, and later he and his wife came to be our guests in Dhahran.

Q: Please tell us about the United Arab Emirates. Tell us about the Buraimi problem.

MCCLANAHAN: The Saudis built up a claim that the oasis had been an early tributary to the Saudi Dynasty, said Buraimi leaders. They brought gifts and paid a formal homage. That became a political problem because oil prospecting was involved. The probability and the actuality of it made the situation heat up. The Saudis sent an official agent with some lightly armed forces to Buraimi Oasis and attempted to install them. The British maintained Buraimi was part of the Sultanate of Oman and expelled the Saudis. The American government was concerned about ARAMCO's possible involvement.

Q: How did the Suez crisis affect things?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, my wife, I, and my children took a few weeks of local leave that summer of 1955 in Austria. On our way back on a day in Athens, I saw the headline in the newspaper that Egypt had seized control of the Suez Canal. We returned to Dhahran and the crisis was indeed very much in the wind, because the airlines using Dhahran would have to reroute. When we left Dhahran at the end of my tour in December, 1955, we flew to Beirut and Istanbul rather than the regular route via Cairo. I think we gathered that in Saudi Arabia, the educated Saudis were sort of exhilarated by the spectacle of an Arab government challenging a colonial power. However, the Egyptian coup leader,

Nasser, represented a different kind of Arab nationalism than most Saudis wanted to see in their country. Probably, they would have preferred to hold an Arab summit. I remember, some younger Saudis took me aside and asked, "Will Nasser succeed? If so, what a wonderful thing he will have done."

Q: What happened when Nasser seized the canal?

MCCLANAHAN: It was an issue that got shifted to the United Nations. The British agreed to that. Nasser agreed to do it also. The Secretary General wanted to work out a formula for preventing war, such as what happened later in the Suez. If there had been a war or serious trouble in Saudi Arabia or Iraq, that is in an oil-producing country, that would have really stirred things up and would have caused a really serious complication for everybody. In Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, I recall, the price of automobiles went up because they all normally came in through the Suez Canal.

Q: When the war started with Britain and France with Egypt, I believe the war was in 1956?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. In November and December, as I was leaving Saudi Arabia at the end of my two-year tour, there was a lot of concern about it. It was followed on the radio, but it didn't much affect the operations in the oil company. None of the activity was interrupted. The economy there in the short-term was pretty self sufficient. They, of course, had to readjust the ordering of machinery and vehicles, but other than that, their needs were taken care of.

Q: Where there any concerns about Nasser?

MCCLANAHAN: The Saudi government as a conservative monarchy was concerned about this new revolutionary Egyptian regime that had come to power in 1952 by the fact that it was a strident Arab nationalism, an assertive Arab nationalism. Nasser came on a visit to Dhahran before I left, and I saw him briefly on his arrival at the airfield. He was warmly greeted by the crowd who were there. He came at the time of Ramadan and spoke one evening. The gathering was actually held on the tennis court area at the ARAMCO compound. It was not for the Americans, but mainly for the Saudis to attend. Anwar Sadat also spoke with an Islamic tone. It was night. There were the great flares of burning gas from the refinery in the distance in the. He spoke of the great light that had burst out in Arabia in the past, meaning Islam, and how it had illuminated the whole world. I was in the front row of seats and I recall that only a few times did he denounce the West.

Q: You left there at the end of 1956 and you went where?

MCCLANAHAN: I went to Lebanon and Istanbul to visit for a few days. I was assigned to a Foreign Service mid-career course in Washington which started in February. I was allowed to take leave, and I already knew I was going to London, so I just stopped to spend a few days visiting our embassy there. Then I went to Washington during the

height of the Suez crisis. It was interesting that I had come right from the field and had been reporting from Dhahran, but they didn't use me to do anything but interpret Arabic a few times.

Q: When did you get to London?

MCCLANAHAN: I went to London in June of 1957. I left early in 1962. Then I went to Paris for six months to attend the NATO Defense College.

Q: What was your job during this period?

MCCLANAHAN: The embassy political section staff was about eight or nine officers, and the section chief was Brewster Morris. There was so much Anglo-American political business in the Middle East that we had two officers for that area. Evan Wilson was the senior one and I was the junior. The first year I was a class four. Then I was promoted to class three. Wilson finished his tour and went back to Washington. His replacement, Bill Burdett, came from NEA and there was a delay before his arrival in which I was the only one. There were a lot of interesting things going on, including a minor war in Oman. Morris always accompanied me on the important occasions. He was not an Arabist, but he was very helpful.

Q: You arrived there during a very difficult period after the British Suez crisis and in the middle of our growing involvement in Vietnam. Was this a very difficult time?

MCCLANAHAN: It was a difficult time. The Suez crisis had been a most difficult time in U.S.-British relations. By the time I had got there, Mr. Macmillan had taken over from Anthony Eden as prime minister. The foreign secretary, Lloyd Selwyn, had been an active spokesman for the Suez situation and not one to apologize for it at all. There was a lot of public feeling against America for not having backed the British more firmly. In fact, we had been critical of Britain and France in the United Nations at times. My two daughters, who went to British schools at that time, found that their fellow students were often anti-American.

There was an interesting meeting convened by Chatham House, the Royal Society of International Affairs. The topic was the Middle East and U.S.-British relations. The attenders were people from our embassy and the foreign office. There were also British academics and businessmen concerned with the area, a roomful of about 60 persons, all by invitation. I sensed that Chatham House was exploring the policy of the new Macmillan administration, which was, let's not allow U.S.-UK differences to affect other issues or even to go on further. The British had no post in Cairo and Cairo was a key area. Evan Wilson and I, under the direction of the State Department, were encouraged to share our information with the British. This type of consultation was appreciated by the British, and we actively reported their reactions and views on the area.

Q: Were you getting at the professional Foreign Service level a certain annoyance of the British Foreign Service about how the Suez issue was handled?

MCCLANAHAN: Some of the professionals who had thought that Eden's Suez policy was a mistake at the time of the military attack resented later having to deal with the consequences. They did not say that directly, but I learned that there were more than two or three that felt this way. At this Chatham House meeting, the tone was one of harmonization and reconciliation. At the end of it, during question time, one of the British attendees said something like, "Can we ask the American embassy to give the American position on the full support of Israel?" Ambassador Whitney turned to me and said that, "Our Middle Eastern officer is Mr. McClanahan." I sensed where that question had stemmed from. The questioner wanted an affirmation of an American policy of priority for the security of Israel. I responded that a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Arab nations was our aim. We recognized that the dispute was a very serious one and is one that is not only political and rhetorical. Israel in its history, attitudes, and culture was very different from the other Middle Eastern countries. I said that personally some years hence when I retired, the Arab conflict might still be one of the most serious problems in the world. The questioner replied that this sounded as though U.S. policy was bankrupt. The chairman turned to Harold Beeley, the senior foreign office official, an ex-ambassador. Sir Harold Beeley, to my relief (He was someone I had several times consulted), said that he found it difficult to disagree with the view of "my American colleague."

Q: Well, during this period you had some more serious things. The overthrow of the Hashemites.

MCCLANAHAN: That memorable day happened in Iraq July 14, 1958, when I had been in London for a year. The British interests at stake in Iraq were very great. Iraq had a great future for investment and influence in the region. It was a monarchy. Iraqi politics and society allowed Western countries to have many advantages. The military coup was very a total change of regime. By coincidence, the Baghdad Pact countries were scheduled to have a meeting on July 20th in London, right after the incident. In the embassy, we were making preparations for what we thought would be a routine conference meeting. Secretary Dulles was not planning to attend. Well, when the Iraqi revolution, led by General Kassim, happened, Dulles decided to come, and the whole meeting was upgraded. The embassy was under stress on that one for a while. Fortunately, Bill Burdett and I were there and we carried the burden of recording meetings and informing Dulles about British actions. One thing I did directly for the Secretary was to help relations between Dulles and the Jordanian officials. The Jordanian ambassador came alone to call on the Secretary and I sat in and kept notes for them. I typed up a draft telegram while Mr. Dulles paced back and forth in the American ambassador's living room. Later, I asked him for one of the doodles that he did in one of the meetings, and someone on his staff gave me one. Until today, I have it with his initials.

Q: Did you notice in the administration, did you sense an American administration view on Israel in comparison with that of the UK? Was ours more driven by domestic politics as opposed to the British or not?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, I think it probably was. The repercussions of a radical regime in Iraq for Israel would be given more weight by the Americans, whereas the British had their eye more on Jordan. Yes, there was a difference. The day of the revolution was a Monday, and my parents had come to visit me two days later, on the 16th. My wife, Pauli, with a friend, a member of Parliament, was supposed to take them to a tea party. That day, they sat in the gallery and they got to hear the discussion in the House of Commons about the revolution coming to Baghdad.

Q: What was the reaction of the British to our landing our troops in Lebanon?

MCCLANAHAN: I think that it was well accepted. It was recognized as a precaution, but one that was probably called for. The British sent reinforcements to Jordan and there was discussion of sending some troops that were Cyprus-based. Their first attempt at an overflight of Israel was turned back by the Israelis because they hadn't made a formal request to fly. They later did get their permission and then proceeded. The British ambassador to Lebanon was in London at the time, so he contacted our London embassy to see if we could get him back to London quickly. I think he did eventually travel on a U.S. military aircraft.

Q: Was there any concern after the Iraqi thing that the whole Middle East might turn over to the radicals?

MCCLANAHAN: That was an object of concern. Because it had been so sudden and unexpected, there was a feeling that General Kassim in Iraq might turn out to be a brother-in-arms with Nasser. If they took over Baghdad and Cairo, all the little countries would be bent in their direction. That did not happen. There soon appeared the traditional differences and rivalries between Iraq and Egypt. The ideologies were different. Iraqi nationalism had a narrower horizon. Egypt's was regional. There was a concern that the area would ban Western interests, but that is the nightmare that didn't happen.

Q: Was there any concern about Soviet interests, and what was happening?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, I think there was. It was a situation where the Soviets could back a new leader and gain advantages. The new Iraqi regime did a reversal of Iraqi policy when it accepted military assistance from the Soviets.

Q: Did you get involved with the British when the Saudis were starting trouble in Oman in the Green mountains?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes there was a rebellion in that area. It was not an Arab nationalist movement. It was a local tribal rebellion by villagers and sheepherders. It was a delicate time for the Sultan of Oman, so I used to report on what I could hear about this in the foreign office.

Q: Did Algeria fall within your area or was it out of your area?

MCCLANAHAN: That was a reporting responsibility for the Paris embassy, as Iraq was for London. We had really little to do with that. It was a smoldering crisis and a real problem for France.

Q: Did we share our views with the British or with Nasser?

MCCLANAHAN: I don't recall much about the Algerian issue at the time. The British, I think, felt even more strongly about Nasser than we did. Some conservative members of Parliament would say that "Nasser was not negotiable." They believed that he was a fundamentally anti-Western man, and we should have nothing to do with him. So, I guess there was that kind of sentiment in the Parliament and probably in the country. We weren't as interested in Nasser. I would try to let the Department know how the British foreign office was feeling about eventually reknitting relations with Egypt. The Department wished that we would be able to facilitate their steps. I also used to go to the colonial office, although that office was more reticent with us than the foreign office. When we would consult them on the problems in Africa or Aden, they would provide little more than a press release.

Q: You were a Libyan desk officer from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: I took it over from my predecessor Richard Post on September 10, 1962. My head of section was Bill Witman. His deputy was David Newsom.

Q: You stayed in that job from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: I stayed there until the end of 1965.

Q: What were concerns when you took over the Libyan desk at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: We had no idea that we were heading into trouble, and no one foresaw a military coup leader such as Qadhafi. It was an interesting period, the mid-1960s, because oil had been found by exploration, but was not yet in production. Libya was not a rich Arab country and in fact was an aid recipient. Second, the U.S. had an air base there, Wheelus Air Base, from the end of the war. That was an important strategic asset to the Defense Department. In the Cold War, they wanted to have bomber bases in Libya and in Morocco. We had signed an agreement with Libya to have that base, and they were payed 10 million dollars of "rent" a year. It soon became obvious that that would not be enough rent when they became a wealthy landlord. On the other hand, it was also likely that the Libyans would become sensitive about a large foreign military base because those were going out of fashion in Egypt, Iraq, and Morocco. Libya would be likely to follow that broad regional trend.

So, that was the situation. I found it a very interesting and challenging assignment. One of the things I did after I had been on the desk for some months and gotten to know the situation was to draft a circular to be sent to the U.S. government agencies in Libya and in Washington on the importance of Libya. In one and a half pages, I spelled out the

value of the oil in the American concessions. They were the largest single investment of the United States in any country in the whole continent of Africa.

Secondly, the Wheelus Air Base was extremely active and had more takeoffs and landings by military planes and far more training function use than most other air bases. Thirdly, I noted that Libya was a conservative monarchy, friendly to the U.S. and UK, and supported our somewhat unpopular China exclusion policy, dealt with Taiwan on technical matters and was a good asset in the Arab world and in Africa when we were getting criticism from many other countries.

Q: What was the rationale for sending that out?

MCCLANAHAN: It was to call attention to this little-known country, which had more significance in terms of the U.S. interests than most people realized. From the Pentagon, I got lots of appreciative phone calls, and some other agencies also expressed interest. Anyway, that was Libya.

Q: How did we view the government of King Idris at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: He was well accepted because he was not an Arab nationalist, and the Nasser phenomenon was still perturbing the British particularly and also the Americans. He was a contrast to that radicalism in many other arab countries. He was old, which made you wonder about how long that could last. He was something of a difficulty communicationwise because he was partial to Cyrenaica, although Tripoli was the main center of commerce and population and was where we had our embassy. He liked to stay over on the eastern side of the country. And so he was resident mostly in Tobruk and Benghazi and even sought to move the government to Baida, inland in Cyrenaica. He probably used his absence from Tripoli as an excuse not to be bothered by foreign ambassadors or to do detailed government work, so that was something of a practical problem. Other than that, we appreciated him.

Then another question in Libya at that time was the succession, as it always is in a monarchy. The crown prince who had been designated as successor was weak, to put it mildly, in personality. He had not been given any responsibility as a man, I suppose in his late 30s, and didn't appear very promising. Earlier Libyan desk officers had sometimes in private referred to him as "His Royal Shyness."

So, one of the parts of our policy toward Libya was to do what we could to keep contact with the crown prince and try to build him up. But, on the other hand, if the King didn't want that done, you could not go very far, and this came to my attention very clearly. When I took over the desk, my predecessor told me, "A state visit by the crown prince of Libya is going to take place. We have got to handle it with the Protocol Office and you will go with him on his visit to the United States." I see from my date book that was in the week of September 17th. I met with the Libyan embassy and Protocol on the itinerary for the crown prince's visit. I had only been on the job for a week and it was a time when I still needed to get to know the people involved in the embassy.

We went out to Tripoli on October 7th on Air Force One, with the chief of protocol, Angier Biddle Duke, and his wife. I met Ambassador John Jones. I knew the DCM, John Dorman, for many years. The prince was supposed to come to Tripoli that week, so it was our time to brief the crown prince, and get reacquainted with the embassy. I remember it vividly. Mr. Duke was accompanied by a photographer from The National Geographic who was preparing an article on the Protocol Office's functions. The article would describe what the White House and the State Department do with all the foreign dignitaries. It could be an interesting article and favorable for the image of the Department.

We called on the Crown Prince, who was nervous, even a little hesitant. He mentioned that one of his wives was sick. Although that excuse might be alright for the Libyan government, it was not for us officials of the U.S. government. I helped convince him to go through with the visit as scheduled. He arrived at Andrews Air Force Base on October 15. Such a visit is a big job for any desk officer behind the scenes, because, for example, he went to the UN in New York to San Francisco, where he was driven across the Golden Gate bridge to see the scenery. People were interested in him because he was dressed in Libyan robes. He had been told not to give press conferences or talk about Libyan policy. He was accompanied by the minister of defense and a senior official of the army of Libya, a senior Customs officer, and a few other top Libyan officials.

I remember, at the end of the visit, which was quite smooth and successful, that USIA had a cameraman following us everywhere and taking photographs of the Prince. Later, USIA produced a nice color film documentary called "The Crown Prince Visits America." I don't think it was of much interest to the American media, but in Libya it was shown repeatedly. And again, it was part of our policy to build up the image of the Crown Prince.

Q: What was the evaluation of King Idris' support to the crown prince? You know, sometimes crown princes are left out in the cold. Other times, they are moved right in the system and working. What was the feeling about this?

MCCLANAHAN: The feeling was that the King didn't want to share responsibility with him, and it was a little hard to see the wisdom of that. It may have been that the King assumed he himself was going to live long enough, so he wouldn't need to until later. At any rate, nothing could be done about that.

Q: What about Libya and Israel and Jews in particular?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, the Libyans were a part of the Arab solidarity on the issue. They certainly didn't have a numerous Jewish population in their country. Probably at most a few hundred individuals, who I expect had probably gotten out to Italy over the previous years and went on to Israel or America or somewhere else. So, fortunately, that was not a complication in our relations. I remember, it occurred once when an American film company got clearance to make a film using the Libyan desert. The story was about

British wartime desert operations in World War II. They gave me an outline of the scenario. I saw that one of the scenes that they put in showed some of the soldiers in the desert in their tanks. One was saying something like, "You know we are Jewish, and we dream of establishing a state in Palestine. Now we are training with military equipment so that for a future state we would be prepared and have practical experience." Well, I said, "If you can avoid telling the Libyan crew, or any other Libyans about that scene, I think it would be wise on your part." They were surprised to hear this, and I don't know if they acted on it. I never saw the film.

Q: When you were on the plane talking to the head of the military, what was your impression of his competence?

MCCLANAHAN: He was an officer who had been trained in Britain. It was noted that he had bought souvenirs from a gun shop in the U.S., five very nice revolvers - partly silver-mounted - and our intelligence people said, "I wonder if there is a secret group of five officers that he is going to give these to as souvenirs." The minister of defense, I remember, in New York went out to a shop and bought a video. The title of it was, "The Most Famous Ride in History" and it was subtitled "Lady Godiva." I remember also that the head of Libyan customs told me, "I have some savings now, and in my position I want to invest the money. What do you suggest?" I told him he should consult one of our big brokerages, and that there were mutual funds for every purpose and some of them are very conservative, some of them not. That's what I would do with my savings. If I had 10 or 20 thousand dollars, I would have done that. He said, "What about if you have a million dollars?" So apparently, he was not just an ordinary customs official.

Q: How about relations with the British and Italians?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, the British had a military mission there at that time carried over from the war. I think they used it for training their soldiers and some Libyans in desert warfare. It was under a UK-Libyan agreement, so there were consultations periodically between the Americans and the British about the status of our bases in Libya. U.S.-UK relations were good except that there was some competition between the two militaries because Libya obviously had to buy all of their arms from outside, and there was money to be made for the industries. The State Department had to watch that, but it didn't become a complication in U.S.-British relations. In London, I had been aware of how that same sort of thing was happening in Iran, where we were both supplying arms.

Q: Did the State Department, the desk, get involved in pushing American goods at all?

MCCLANAHAN: We wanted to encourage trade and there was a large AID mission. By the way, that was another problem for the State Department and, therefore, for the desk officer. AID was encountering criticism about Libya from the congressional committees. Congressmen asked why we should have an AID program for this country which was going to have oil income and already had some. AID couldn't use the arguments that they did for developing countries and so they were looking for ways to scale down. However, the AID program was going to be for some time a significant part of Libyan economic

development, and if it got into education or trade policy, it could be an asset to U.S. interests and AID could actually have a positive influence, it seemed to me. I had a harder time adjusting to an AID downsizing than those higher up in the Department. So, when I would discuss this with my supervisors, tell David or my contact at the White House, they would listen to me but didn't feel that I should do any more than I had done. But, I do think that an opportunity was missed. It's one of those things a desk officer has to accept.

Q: Were there any issues that particulary engaged us with Libya during this three year period?

MCCLANAHAN: It was the future of the Wheelus Air Base that was the concern on our part, especially to the Defense Department. That was a long story, and eventually they came around to thinking the loss of Wheelus would not be too great a setback to them. There were several other interesting things about Libya. Our relations, for example. The ambassador in Washington was Fekini and his wife was an educated, liberated, Arab woman. She was head of the Libyan delegation to the United Nations in New York, which was to Libya's credit that they had a woman who was very well trained and qualified. On the other hand, it meant that ambassador Fekini liked to be in New York more than Washington. He was often in New York with his wife, and would leave the embassy here in the hands of the number two, who was a man named Ben Jaluud. I found myself dealing more with Ben Jaluud than with Fekini because Fekini was away so much of the time. But, I got along very well with Ben Jaluud. He even invited me to sit beside him as his interpreter with the diplomatic corps on the floor of the Representatives on the historic occasion when President Johnson first addressed a joint session after becoming President.

Q: How did the Wheelus Air Force Base situation play out during the time you were there?

MCCLANAHAN: It built up to what was much later the eventual closing of the base. There were criticisms that would appear from time to time in the Egyptian press, and a little bit in Libya. In August of 1964, the Libyan prime minister announced that the U.S. and Britain had agreed to give up their military bases in Libya. I remember that. What had happened was the Libyan Parliament was meeting in their new capital, Baida, so there was no officer from our embassy there. The consul general from Benghazi had gone to Baida, which was a three hour drive from Benghazi, and attended the session. It was a session at night, and it went on a long time and there was not much happening, so he got in his car and started back to Benghazi. Then, later in the session, the prime minister had made this statement involving Wheelus. It must have been based on the talks that the British and American government had been having. Both the U.S. and UK didn't want a public statement, and they didn't want it announced by the Libyans, and they particularly did not want it without warning.

Q: But there had been no agreement to give up the bases?

MCCLANAHAN: No, there hadn't. The prime minister probably said something like, "This is a matter of concern to the government, but in general we see it as a problem which can be resolved, because they will both agree to go eventually," and that calmed the mood in the parliament. However, it was picked up as a significant statement, which it was. That whole issue had been smoldering. Now, perhaps the significant thing that happened was in 1963, on September 30th. Ambassador Fekini had returned to Libya and been appointed Prime Minister of Libya. He later visited Washington and met with President Kennedy on that day alone. Nobody from the State Department was present and the record was kept by a senior member of the White House staff who was a very good friend of Kennedy's. It was a long conversation in which Fekini made some complaints. The President was directly quoted in the memo that the White House prepared as saying something like, "Well, if you want us to leave, we will go." We in the Department had to take account of that remark.

Q: What about the relations between Libya and Nasser's Egypt at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: The Libyan regime was deferential to Egypt, because Nasser was a leader of the region in those years.

Q: Did Algeria spill over the trouble between the Algerians and the French or spill over into the Libyan context?

MCCLANAHAN: The French had accepted and recognized Algeria's independence. In 1962, De Gaulle, while I was in Paris in the NATO Defense College... I believe it was on July 3, 1962, that De Gaulle took that major step. That main issue in France-Algeria relations was out of the way. The Algerians had an embassy here in Washington. But even earlier, the tensions between Algeria and France did not affect Libya seriously.

The first ripple about the Wheelus air base question was that the U.S. forces had been periodically carrying out amphibious exercises off of the coast of Libya. They would come in from the Mediterranean and dash out into the desert for the maneuver. After Fekini became Prime Minister, when the routine request to do that was denied for the first time, that was an ominous sign. I remember one of the Defense Department liaison officers called me saying, "We're having trouble here with our military people because the Libyans have refused us. How serious is this?" I told him that Fekini was the prime minister and so that decision must have had the approval of the King, so I didn't see what could be done about it. Pentagon officials had phrased the situation to me as, "Our people said that we bought that sand lot and now we want to play in it."

Q: What was your experience of the U. S oil companies with the Libyans?

MCCLANAHAN: I think that in Libya, they had learned in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to be careful in their relations with a sovereign government. As desk officer, I had the most attention from Mobile Oil because Mobile, although it is one of the companies that owns ARAMCO, was on its own in Libya and felt a need to consult to protect their interests. I think they did a prudent, wise job. They would often ask about the succession

question and the stability of the country. The security of the petroleum concessions was obviously on their minds. They hedged their bets in various ways. I believe that they later maintained their interest by turning it over to non-American subsidiaries.

Q: During the period of '62 to '65, did any Americans get into trouble?

MCCLANAHAN: No, but one of the events that affected all of the State Department, of course, was the assassination of President Kennedy. Many governments sent important people. Therefore, it would have been was disappointing that Fekini did not come, especially since he had been ambassador in Washington and had met Kennedy. It would have been natural for him to come. Instead, he sent his minister of finance. The ambassador who replaced Fekini was Fathi Abidia. He was very friendly to the U.S. and to me personally. He spent almost all his time in Washington.

Q: Was there anything else that during that period that particularly hit you?

MCCLANAHAN: Let's see. At the end of my tour, I was very pleased that my chief, David Newsom, was designated to be ambassador to Libya. Therefore, I briefed him extensively. He took James Blake, who had been his deputy head in Washington, to be his DCM. So, they asked me if I wanted to be consul general in Benghazi. I did not want to do that.

As desk officer, I had once an unpleasant American entrepreneur who had got in touch with a Libyan of the royal family. I had to fend him off and warn the Libyans about him. I told Newsom that I was worried about this and he told me, "That's your problem. Every desk officer has such a person from time to time." At least he trusted me to cope, which I did. Ambassador Lightner (who had replaced Ambassador Jones and was before Newsom) had come from a career almost entirely in Germany, and specifically in Berlin. He needed a lot of briefing by me and the embassy in Libya on the Arab world and on Libya.

Q: Why was he appointed there?

MCCLANAHAN: It was a surprise to everyone in AFN, I think. Prior to Libya, he had never been an ambassador. It may be that it was a kind of reward for good work in Berlin. There wasn't any apparent reason for it.

Q: Often to reward people who have worked in Europe most of there careers, who have been outstanding are sent to Africa or especially the Middle East and elsewhere, but they don't bring anything to the position other than their previous experience. How did this one work out?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, what I've observed is a frequent arrangement is to send the post a particularly experienced DCM. That means that the ambassador has an expert advisor right next to him, someone who can help. I liked Lightner and his wife personally, and the Department had already sent a very qualified DCM, Herman Eilts. I talked to him, whom I knew very well. Later, I saw that he ended up having to do a lot more than what

DCMs normally do in an embassy.

The desk officer is the most interesting job in the Department, I believe, because you deal with more substance and have fewer administrative chores than other positions. The fact is, almost everything that comes to the Department concerning your country comes to you first. When anything needs to be written, you write the first draft. Everyone else just gets to clear or comment on it. You have to know the personalities of the post and most of them are interested in your views. You don't have to spend much time in committees. Your work is often drafting instructions, questions, and statements and getting them cleared and sent promptly. Sometimes you draft "suggested remarks" for the Secretary or even the President, drafts which go through their staffs, of course.

Q: In '65, where did you go?

MCCLANAHAN: I went to Baghdad. Then I came back in 1967 and was the Tunisian desk officer. I had been for 12 years in class three and, if your not promoted by then, you are at the top of your class but are retired. So, I was retired on that ground. I would have liked to have stayed on, but...

Q: Let's go to Baghdad.

MCCLANAHAN: In '67, the Six Day War happened, and the British and Americans were expelled by the Iraqi government on a few days' notice. We were evacuated overnight by land in our cars to Teheran. The Department decided that I should be the one to go back with a couple of more junior officers if we could open an interests section with the Belgian embassy. I would be the head of the section. I waited three months based in the Teheran embassy. A Belgian officer came to Teheran from Baghdad and told me they saw no time in the foreseeable future that Baghdad was going to permit an American diplomat to be in Iraq. I reported that information to Washington, and we were allowed to come back to the Department.

Q: Iraq was seven years into their overthrow of the King. What was the situation when you arrived there? What was your job?

MCCLANAHAN: The ambassador was Robert Strong, whom I had known when he was head of the NE office in NEA. His DCM was Enoch Duncan, and I was number three in rank. Iraq had overthrown the monarchy and killed King, and later Kassim, the officer who had carried out the coup. The regime in 1967 was military, under Abdul Rahman Arif. It was rather pro-Nasser and willing to give lip service to eventual unity between the Arab countries and Egypt. The Egyptians showed Arab solidarity by stationing a token force near Baghdad to demonstrate that they were trusted by the Iraqis. In Baghdad, I rented a very nice house and garden on the Tigris. It was very near the American embassy. After the first six months that I was in Baghdad, the president, Abd al Salam Arif, perished in an air accident. Later, there was an attempted coup that failed. The prime minister, Abdul Rahman Bazzaz, was educated in Britain, and I believe was an economist, very enlightened and moderate, someone who's policy was to make a

compromise with the Kurds in the north. He was also rather friendly with Britain and America.

In general, it was a regime that was not easy to understand and therefore predict. For example, the cabinet was balanced but, the real power was the military. Our ambassador was invited to see and talk with the president of the country occasionally, but I never met anybody, cabinet members or even many senior officials. I met the minister of education once. The military attaché might meet some senior officers behind the scenes when they wanted to explore buying arms from the United States. So, you didn't have the normal direct sources of information, only the press, bazaar rumors, and contacts with the professional class. So we in the Political Section had to cultivate academics, architects, businessmen, artists, and such. And some of them welcomed casual contact with Americans, British, or Europeans.

Q: Did you have any concerns about Soviet connotations in Iraq?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, we saw it as a real problem. They had a large embassy there. The CIA portion of the embassy naturally tried to keep a constant eye on them. The Bulgarians had extensive trade relations and contracts to construct highways. Iraq also had contracts with the Romanians and also had good relations with Hungary. With Kuwait, the relations were all right. When Kuwait's ruler visited, the theme was "my brother Arab," and Kuwait gave them some funds for development.

Q: What about when President Abd al Salam Arik was killed?

MCCLANAHAN: It was a good outcome in a way. He was succeeded by his brother and the prime minister was continued. I had a fairly good impression of him. However, even before the war, they installed a military officer, Naji Talib, as prime minister. When the war broke out, they reacted formally in severing relations with the U.S. and UK. They mobilized, but never acted. The president was replaced by a Baathist. And President Arif was fortunate in that they allowed him to leave the country. Our relations had considerably improved with Iraq until the war.

Q: Was Saddam Hussain around then?

MCCLANAHAN: Certainly, he was around, but the Baathist party did not install him until later. People had been very guarded about talking about the Baathists. I was sorry I didn't get to be in Baghdad longer because it is an interesting country with great potential. It has plenty of oil reserves and adequate water, and is not densely populated. Iraq had many trained people, including engineers. If it could only get rid of its oppressive regime, it would probably do quite well.

Q: What effect did the war have on the embassy?

MCCLANAHAN: It came as a complete surprise to us. I have written a chapter in a book, Diplomacy Under a Foreign Flag, about the experience of closing the post and evacuating

its personnel. We evacuated the dependants and the non-essential people first. It was a difficult time and a bit frightening to everybody. The Iraqis decided they wanted us out in a hurry, apparently wanting it to be a resounding diplomatic rejection. There were demonstrations and one mob came over the walls and broke some of the windows on the front of our fine embassy building. When we left, the police remained on guard at our compound, and they sent motorcycles to escort us all the way out of Baghdad. At night, we took off in a caravan of cars led by the military attaché. The police saluted us when they left us.

Q: You came back to Washington in '67.

MCCLANAHAN: I had sent a telegram to the Department asking, "Do you have any assignment that I should be preparing for?" The reply was negative, so I asked if I could come back by an indirect route and take a month in doing it. I said, "I would like to go from Teheran up through Russia and see Central Asia, Moscow, and St. Petersburg." The Department said that if it was all right with the Russians and the American embassy in Moscow, it was alright with them. I suppose they were sympathetic because they had closed down many embassies in Arab capitals, so they had a lot of Arab specialists, and no particular place to use them. We had an interesting trip. When I returned to Washington and reported to NEA, the desk officer for Iraq told me that I could pick up my check at State, but there was nothing planned for me in his office, so I was free to look for other options.

I went around in NEA, the UN office, and I went to AFN in AF. The chief at that point was John Root. I knew him slightly and he was more sympathetic than most. He said he had an opening at the Tunisian desk. I was glad to accept it, and I was very fortunate to have a job as desk officer with a chief I knew and liked. Again I was faced with the immediate task of taking over. Fred Sacksteder, the departing desk officer, briefed me on what was involved.

It was interesting to note the contrast with my previous desk. The Libyans had needed advice on many areas. They wanted to know more about the role of Congress, the role of the press. The Tunisians sometimes knew more about such areas than I did. They knew who in Congress was a good contact for them and invited him to dinner at the embassy, sometimes with me. They knew who on the White House Staff did what. They knew the background and history of U.S. policy toward Tunisia and so on. They knew journalists and columnists.

Q: Wasn't the son of President Bourguiba an ambassador or something?

MCCLANAHAN: Habib, the son, had been ambassador, and he came as an advisor on the official visit President Bourguiba made in my first weeks with his father and sometimes served as an interpreter for him. It was against this background that the state visit was made. Bourguiba was elderly and still a little known leader in the U.S. LBJ had already announced that he was not going to run again for President and so I don't think that Tunisia or foreign affairs was particularly important to him.

LBJ had asked one of his staffers what was to be the theme of the Bourguiba state visit. I told the staff member that relations with this country were good. We worked out that the theme could be Tunisia as an example of what kind of positive relations could be developed between a big power and a smaller country. We regard Tunisia as a good friend, in an area, Africa and the Arab world, where we would like to have friends.

Bourguiba was a possibility to address Congress. The Congressional Liaison Office got in touch with Speaker John McCormick. At that time, he was the one who would say "yes" or "no." McCormick liked the idea, but when it turned out Bourguiba could only give his speech in French, an address to Congress lost favor.

But Bourguiba did have a long session on the Hill with interested members of Congress, and he was very well received. He said positive things about the United States. No one asked him any really hard questions, and they liked him. We went on a tour to New York City, including the Ford Foundation, and to Texas with him to see the Tunisians who were in an agricultural school there. President Johnson asked James Connally, who was then the governor of Texas, to receive Bourguiba and walk around a state fair with him, which he did. I was interested in the press conferences held in each city. Bourguiba was very able. He spoke in French. However, he spoke Arabic to the students in the agriculture school. His theme with them was the importance of modern techniques of agriculture for Tunisia.

They had a state dinner at the White House for which there was a proposed menu and, of course, including a dessert. The arrangements were planned by Protocol, who had consulted the desk officer. They wanted to give the dessert a special name in honor of a Tunisian. I told them that they should name it after Bourguiba's hometown, a place that he had done a lot for, a place called Monasterly. You could call it Coupe Monasterly. It was ice cream dressed with fresh fruit, so you could call it anything. Protocol liked that. I suggested they give him a cigar box. He didn't smoke, but he'd like to have it for his desk. I suggested to them, "Have an etched signature of the President inside a map of the United States and inset semi-previous stones in it at the cities that he visited. Later, Protocol told me that was an idea that they might also use for other heads of state in the future.

Q: I take it that before you left, there were pretty much standard things with Tunisia?

MCCLANAHAN: That's right. For example, Vice President Hubert Humphrey made a tour of Africa. He went mostly to sub-Saharan countries and went then to Tunisia. When I was drafting the briefing papers, I found that there was a Minnesota building materials company with a branch in Tunisia. We suggested that he visit a factory of their's during his trip. He said he looked forward to that and to Tunisia with special pleasure at the end of his trip.

My last week of my employment at the Department, I called on a number of senior Department officers to say goodbye. I requested a signed photo of Secretary Dean Rusk,

and, as an experienced desk officer, suggested a sentence for him to inscribe. He kindly complied.

I called on the Tunisian ambassador, Rachid Driss, also. I told him I wanted to keep in touch, which I have done. In my last months, I also occupied myself in finding a job.

Q: What was that?

MCCLANAHAN: I became the associate editor of "Africa Report Magazine," which was published here in Washington.

Q: You kept your ties to the Foreign Service?

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, that's right. I am a life member of DACOR and enjoy the annual Foreign Service Day at the Department. In 1990, I published a book, Diplomatic Immunity: Principles, Practices, Problems. That involved many consultations with the Protocol Office and the Legal Advisor's Office. Later, when I worked with an American joint venture company in Egypt, I enjoyed conferring with the embassy in Cairo and the consulate general in Alexandria. I had often helped businessmen at my posts, and it was interesting to be working from the other side for the same services.

Q: Great. Well, I'd like to thank you.

End of interview