

Interview with Susan Clough McClintock Wyatt

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

SUSAN CLOUGH MCCLINTOCK WYATT

Interviewed by: Kristie Miller

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Q: This is Kristie Miller interviewing Susan Clough Wyatt (McClintock) on March 19, 1991, about her experiences as the first FLO Career Counselor.

WYATT: When I was a little girl, one of the main poems that I remember was about “Up into my cherry tree/Who should climb but little me?” by Robert Louis Stevenson. And once this little girl was in her cherry tree, she could look to far-distant lands, and I always wanted to travel, that was something that I always wanted to do.

I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, and I had this fascination to see the rest of the world. So I got a scholarship to a college in California to go to and do my undergraduate work. I chose that college because they had a campus in Copenhagen and I wanted to make sure that I got to Europe. I certainly did that, and went on to do a Bachelor's degree in political science with an interest in international relations. I did a Master's degree in international relations at the University of Michigan. I'm not a linguist at all. I've never learned foreign languages well, but certainly from a political and cultural standpoint I was very interested in foreign affairs and meeting and living with other people.

I had managed to travel to Pakistan on a summer work term when I was in college and traveled all through Asia at that time. I saved enough from my fellowship money at

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Michigan to take a trip all through Europe and Eastern Europe after I finished my Master's program. So I had done a fair bit of traveling by the time I finished graduate school, anyway, and ended up in Washington in the State Department on a summer internship, working on the Japan Desk.

I decided that living and working in Washington was far more exciting than working on a Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan, so I found a job as a research assistant in the Office of Intelligence and Research of the State Department; about 1966 I guess it was. I worked there for a year as the Iraqi analyst, mostly reading cables and all kinds of written material about Intelligence matters that were going on in the Middle East. Then I would write briefing papers about those things that I was reading. I was very dissatisfied over the long haul with the future of working in a stateside assignment doing Intelligence and Research analysis and knew that this was not me, that I needed to be working with people and doing something else.

I was still very interested in international relations, but the one thing I hadn't done in college was to pick up a teaching certificate. Back then, (she laughs) all women got teaching certificates, so I left the State Department and did a Master's degree in teaching through Antioch and taught on an internship in a public high school in Washington, DC in 1968, the year of the Martin Luther King riots. This was enough to let me see that public school teaching, at least in an urban setting, was not something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but I did have teaching credentials by then. I had also met David McClintock in INR, who was the Saudi Arabian analyst. We decided eventually to get married and to move to Michigan, I guess in 1968, for him to work on his Ph.D. program in international relations and were married there.

He was a regular Foreign Service Officer, had already spent 8 years in the Service. After marriage in 1968, my first assignment was in 1970 when we were assigned to Sanaa, Yemen, he to be the principal officer in the Italian Embassy reopening relations after they'd been terminated in 1967, and I to be the post's secretary. There were just the two

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of us but we were to get our Consular Officer, who also had other functions, as well as an Administrative Officer. That was to be the post.

It was very exciting, it was very glamorous for us to be going back — David had already served one tour in Yemen before, so the Department wanted to send him back because he knew all the people there, to reestablish this small presence within the Italian Embassy. Back then we called it “gray diplomacy,” because we would fly another flag, yet we were the American interest section and conducted relations as if we were a full-fledged Embassy. So we lived on the compound and I worked as the post's secretary.

Q: Did you enjoy that?

WYATT: I enjoyed it. I did have a child while I was there and we could get no good help with small children, so we had the baby in my office or in his office crawling on the floor, my office being just outside his, the charg#’s office. At the Embassy I nursed her at my des(both laugh) and did all the kinds of things I could — in fact, the State Department wouldn't send in temporary secretarial help when I went off to have the baby. I can remember that David was typing his own cables and papers and that when I returned, the typewriter was in the bedroom. I was nursing two weeks after coming back from Ethiopia where I had delivered my first child and typing cables in the bedroom, then running them over to the Embassy.

Yemen was an absolutely fascinating experience. We called it ou“peace corps assignment” because it was as primitive as anything we might have come into in the Peace Corps in the sense that we were constantly battling water and electricity and just survival. It was a basic survival day in a post like that.

Q: It must have been really challenging with a seven-month-old baby by the time you left.

WYATT: It definitely was. Fortunately, I'd had a year and a half to get acclimated and so we were pretty well set up by the time she was born. We traveled all over and had

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adventures that I've kept wonderful notes and tapes about. I'd like to write about all of those at some point because it was a wholly unique experience that I think very atypical in the Foreign Service. In most places you go into, posts are established and there's a lot of protocol and entertaining and you know how things are going to be. But we had to go in and create it from scratch, and that was what was exciting about it, because both my husband and I were these self-starter can-do kind of people that like new challenges, and we certainly found them when we got to Yemen!

Q: Did the other two people ever come?

WYATT: Oh yes, they came, and we had people coming and going. By the time we left, I think there were about seven at post. Within six months after we left they had sent out an Ambassador and established full diplomatic relations. And the Peace Corps arrived — then there were 85 Americans within a year after we left. So it was exciting, and being the post's secretary certainly saved my sanity, gave me something to do, and I felt like I was very much a part of that post because I was involved in all the — I would help write the cables, too, and I was out picking up information. I just happened to have the job title of the secretary but I was very much involved in that post and all the people and the Yemenis that we were meeting. Of course I didn't have the Arabic but I felt very much a part of the post.

After Yemen we were assigned to Amman, Jordan, where my husband was chief of the Political section. I had a small 10-month-old child then. In Jordan I felt more detached. I felt I was much more in the role of a Foreign Service spouse because I stayed at home with my child. I did get to teach — every other semester, I don't quite know why, things would break down — English as a second language at the University of Jordan, to science students who were seniors and had to get their English in good enough shape so they could go on to graduate school in the U.S. That was okay but it was very part-time and wasn't satisfying.

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I did all the entertaining, the bridge parties, and took art classes, and did a lot to try to keep myself sane while I was in Jordan. That was a very difficult post in the sense that my personal security was much more at risk there. This was after 1970, “bloody September” in Jordan and we were constantly worrying. The fedayeen didn't know whom to trust. David and I were arrested in Syria — they accused us of being Israeli spies. That lasted for about three hours but we had to go back to Damascus, I was taken away to another part of the city with my daughter and strip-searched for Israeli spy papers. Of course they didn't find anything.

That was the time they kept our Military Attach# instead of David. They released us to the Belgian Embassy and they escorted us to the border. Their holding our Military Attach# resulted in Americans being kept out of Syria for a year afterwards. But that happened early on in our tour. I got psychosomatic illnesses, I was constantly going to a doctor. I had allergies, I had stomach problems. I know it was all stress- and tension-related.

Q: From the stress of the security problem?

WYATT: Yes. We never entered the car without checking it for bombs — looking under the tail pipe, and under the hood. In Amman we also went through the Arab-Israeli war of '73 and worried about an Israeli air raid, so we lived with the shutters down on the windows and had my daughter's mattress in the hallways so that if there were shelling, glass wouldn't hit her. We got involved also with some Palestinians. We never knew whether they were on the king's side or somebody else's, which created some very scary incidents for us of not knowing whom to trust among the people we were meeting and talking to. As Political Officer, that was part of David's job and I met a lot of these people, and we found some of these people actually fascinating. The whole trust issue was very apparent there.

Q: Was there any counseling given to anybody at post by the State Department?

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WYATT: About how to deal with this kind of stress? Oh heavens no. You just took it as a matter of stride. I can remember one type of situation: a man pulled up beside me at Amman's third circle and was giving me the eye as though trying to pick me up. Of course I thought he was a fedayeen about to kill me. He followed me all the way out to the university. I memorized the license plate, reading the Arabic numbers backwards in the rear view mirror, did a U-turn and got back to the Embassy and reported it to our security. Of course I had to go in and identify him. He was just trying to pick me up, he'd heard about this American girl driving a black car. But it scared me to death.

You were constantly on the alert about whom you were meeting, what was going on, because that was the time the Ambassador or the Charg#, Kurt Moore, and two other people were held hostage and murdered in Khartoum and we felt we were sitting ducks. That was one of the reasons why we were very anxious to get back to the United States, because we knew that if anything happened on Washington streets it would be a random attack but we were sitting ducks there. The Ambassador had his steel plated car for protection and lots of security but the rest of us in the Embassy didn't. Abu Daoud was doing all sorts of things. We were there when there was an attempted rocket attack on the Embassy by his group.

Q: And of course there was no training then about counter-terrorist tactics until after '79.

WYATT: Right. So we really felt very insecure there, and that was one reason that I was anxious to get back to the States. We came back in '74, I had my second child within four months after we returned, and we ended up staying eight years in Washington. When I came back I would find baby sitters, and took care of the child thing — play groups and all that — for two or three years. At the same time I'd become involved with the American Association of Foreign Service Women because they were lobbying very strongly to get better recognition, benefits, etc. for the Foreign Service family.

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One of their goals was to set up the Family Liaison Office in the State Department. I was working on the task group within AAFSW looking at dependent employment, because I knew that if I went overseas again my children would be older, that I would want to be able to work at post — whatever it might be, but I wanted to have some work option to express myself. One of the early things that I did was to take the Foreign Service Institute course for spouses on career planning which Barbara Hoganson and Stephanie Kinnehad put together for the Association and eventually managed to get it taught through the Foreign Service Institute.

I took that course and got some ideas mostly about me, what it was that I wanted to do, you know — where do I go with the rest of my life, Richard Bowles's type of thing. I knew that the kinds of things I had done in the past were not particularly satisfying, that I wanted to have much more of a people-oriented kind of job. Obviously school teaching was out because I'd had a traumatic experience teaching in the ghetto school in Washington during the Martin Luther King riots, and I just decided that public school teaching was probably not what I wanted to do. Again, that was another security thing. In Yemen I was not particularly scared but our Consular Officer had bombs go off in his house; fortunately his daughters were not in the bedroom. There was just the constant insecurity for your physical survival and not knowing whom to trust. And of course in public school I'd come across the same problem during my unfortunate experience there.

So I got very involved in the whole career-planning process — my own self-assessment, my skills assessment, what could I do, what did I want to do. And also at that time I was working with the AAFSW, lobbying Congress, trying to get the Family Liaison Office established — it came out in the 1980 Foreign Service Act about the Family Liaison Office although it was set up earlier than that, having been institutionalized by the 1980 Act. But we opened the Office in March 1978.

Q: Who was involved in that besides you?

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WYATT: Janet Lloyd was the first director and Mette Beecroft was the deputy. How I had become connected with Janet: while she was at the AAFSW education and counseling center which was across the street from the Department, at the Foreign Service Club I think, in one of those buildings, I had gone to her for one of my first informational interviews, which was part of the career-planning process of figuring out what it is you want to do with your life — who's out there, who's doing something that's very interesting to you — and she was the counselor. I thought counseling might be something I wanted to do. So during that year that we were working to set up the Office — it was under Carter and Cyrus Vance that we managed to get it set up — and Leslie Dorman was very active as AAFSW president. I had kept up my ties with AAFSW as I was spending a year apprenticing myself at Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) as a career counselor and doing my own informational interviewing hoping that when my year's apprenticeship ended I could find a job.

I kept up with Janet. After about six months that the office was functioning, they were ready to send a proposal to the Secretary about setting up the Dependent Employment Program. This was the time Cynthia Chard had come up with the Skills Bank, and we had about a thousand spouses, I guess, with names on Skills Bank forms that we could house some place. So I wrote the proposal. In fact, Jewell Fenzi and I put in a joint proposal. We wanted to job-share this Dependent Employment Program and be the career counselor in the Family Liaison Office.

Well, it finally boiled down that the Department's Under Secretary for Management agreed to a half time position and that I would be the person who would come in and see if I could get the Skills Bank going on the inside, in the Family Liaison Office. So I worked I guess it was half time for a while. Finally I got a regular appointment, in December 1978. I'm trying to recall if I started at 32 hours a week then, or not? I think that may have come later, but anyway my hours gradually increased, and I went in in '78 and had nearly four years of the most exciting work I had ever done. It was really me, because I was revamping the whole

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Career Planning Workshop at FSI and going over and doing the training several times a year as spouses would come through either en route to post or returning to the work force in Washington; doing individual counseling in the Department as spouses would come in from overseas and work with them; I had a program assistant, a Foreign Service staff individual. That's when we got this functional training program going at FSI so that the spouses could go through the Consular training program, and admin training.

We set up the whole PIT program — Part-time Intermittent and Temporary. I guess the program had always been there but we started identifying PIT jobs at post and as spouse jobs. They could go in and be Consular assistants or Admin assistants or whatever. Then we funneled them through training at FSI, so they went and did the regular Consular Office training course, then they could work in these PIT positions at post in the Visa section. That was one of the programs that we did.

Another thing I was very involved in was negotiating Bilateral Work agreements with foreign governments. Our directors had been doing a lot of that because I think by the time I left in '82 we had on the books about 15 or 18 Reciprocal or Bilateral Work agreements with different countries. I did an awful lot of legwork for that.

Another big project, besides all the career counseling and the Bilateral Work agreements, was getting an Executive Order through — that's probably one of the biggest things I did — in the early 80s, which President Reagan signed. It allowed spouses who had worked in part-time, intermittent and temporary positions overseas to accumulate credit. Three months here, six months there, nine months somewhere else, and when they finally got three years of PIT employment credit with the federal government, they would have non-competitive eligibility for two years, once they got back to Washington, to go into a Civil Service job. It was the same as having career conditional status to be re-employed, it was something the Peace Corps volunteers had had when they returned from Peace Corps service. We modeled our legislation, i.e., Executive Order, after that. I did an awful lot of work with the Office of Personnel Management and all kinds of lobbying groups to get that

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Executive Order through, so that would have been another one of the major programs that was under the work I was doing at the State Department.

I thoroughly enjoyed that part of my work. I knew that if I went overseas again I could be a PIT or a CLO, a Community Liaison Officer, and was very content with what I was doing. My husband, on the other hand, decided to take early retirement as soon as he turned 50. He could have gone to Rome as Science Attach# — by then he had moved into OES and science and technology area — but he really wanted to teach. So we left the Foreign Service in August 1982 and I had to resign this wonderful job that I had and went to Rome, Georgia, instead of Rome, Italy.

Q: How did you feel about leaving Washington?

WYATT: I did not want to leave Washington. We had a wonderful house right by the Cathedral at \$400 a month mortgage, which I haven't seen since, and I really liked my work. I figured I could eventually move into a regular Civil Service job if I stayed in Washington after I left the Family Liaison Office. But he did not want to stay in Washington, he wanted to get out. Being the dutiful spouse that I was I was not going to fight that, so we all went. Our children, I guess they were eight and eleven by then when we left Washington.

Q: Let me interrupt again. You had said when we talked earlier that you felt that David had some problems with the kind of work you were doing. Do you want to talk about that a little?

WYATT: Oh, right, right. Well, this probably led eventually to our divorce. (pause) I don't know how to even get into this.

Q: You said you were bringing work home a lot?

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WYATT: In the Family Liaison Office I was so much into my work, I didn't have what we would call good boundaries in that I brought my work home, which I think is a typical thing in the Foreign Office, you sort of get absorbed in and consumed by it, but I don't know that it was that as much as that I was really discovering who I was professionally and career wise. I had moved into the counseling and training area, and even though I hadn't gone back to school to get a degree in counseling, those were the kinds of things I was interested in. I wasn't into reading history and art and doing a lot of the things that would go along with keeping up my international relations interest. I really was much more focused on helping people discover who they were and find out what they wanted to do with their lives. Career counseling was really “it” for me, that was just what I wanted to do.

He felt I was pulling away from the marriage because I had professional interests. At the same time that we were in Washington, we also, as a family, renovated a 25-acre farm out in Virginia which we bought for our weekend place. He and I cleared three acres of land by hand and restored these old houses. We were the typical “Type A Family” — both of us had full time jobs, two young kids, worked nonstop all week, and then went for relaxation which was further strenuous work but at least it was physical labor. And we did have some wonderful times at our farm in Virginia, which we also had to leave and rent out when we moved to Georgia.

I think that we created the stress ourselves because we were not able to deal, I think, with a lot of the emotional stress that was coming for us. And both of us having grown up in dysfunctional families, this was beginning to surface. I didn't know it, but I found out later that I had a low-grade depression all those years that I was trying to play the superwoman, housewife, do everything right and raise my kids and have this fantastic job. And it was really hard to turn the job off and to compartmentalize my life and to really know how to relax. I know that that was a threat. Probably my coming into my own was the threat to my husband in terms of how he felt a marriage should be and what he wanted for us as a family.

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After we moved to Georgia — we were down there for two years in this very remote small town, very conservative, and leaving Washington, DC and the sophisticated cultural life that we had led up here was very difficult to cope with. He was happy in his teaching but I never found anything, really, for me to do. I did some independent career counseling, picked up a few contracts here and there, but it wasn't much of anything.

So we were thrilled to be able to move to North Carolina State University two years later. And then the marriage came apart in 1985 when he left. The kids and I are still in Raleigh, reevaluating our lives and going in totally different directions. Right now the Foreign Service seems like something that was really part of my past. But I know it was an important part of my past because it represented the first 20 to 25 years of my adult life in terms of the interest in living overseas and being with the Foreign Service.

Q: Now, the work you did in the Foreign Service in Washington, the career counseling and what not, have led to your current work.

WYATT: Oh, right. In fact I have now been a career counselor for 15 years, because I did find out who I was and what I wanted to do professionally — which all started with that career planning workshop at FSI; I have to certainly give it credit for that. And the job that I did in Washington was what led to me getting other jobs as a career counselor. I worked at the Women's Center in Raleigh running a career counseling program and training the volunteers who were career advisers — much along the same model as we had at Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). Then I went on to be a placement counselor at N.C. State University, helping students find jobs.

I also worked as a consultant with an outplacement counseling firm. And again, the reason they hired me, companies now in these days of dual-career families are moving couples across the country, and one person had to be the trailing spouse. Glaxo, a British pharmaceutical company, is finally getting on the bandwagon, that they have to do something to help the spouse find a job if they're going to get a couple to relocate

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to the [Research] Triangle [in North Carolina]. So I have been hired as the “spouse reemployment counselor.” All the spouses that Glaxo brings in here come to me through this outplacement counseling firm, and I help them link up in finding jobs and networking in the Triangle.

I must say that one of the best things the Foreign Service taught me was how to network, and to know people and remember names, remember who's doing what and where and when. That network is one of my primary skills that I market myself with. And that's why I was chosen for this job in Raleigh, NC, because I knew how to make contacts with people and uncover job leads and introduce the right people to the right people so that they could make fruitful contacts between the two of them.

So, yes, definitely all my experience in the Foreign Service has had a profound effect on who I am today, probably professionally more than personally, because I do a lot of work in therapy, some group programs, and programs for dysfunctional families, and through them have managed to get a lot of my own emotional and personal life sorted out that I wasn't able to deal with in the Foreign Service. I think part of that was the nature of the Foreign Service. That nature of the diplomatic corps gets right back to the trust issue we were talking about earlier, that it's almost like a game and the game is to go out and you meet people and you want to find out what they're doing but you don't want to tell them everything that you're doing because after all you're going to go back and report on what you're getting from them.

It is not the kind of career conducive to open, honest relationships. There's a lot of very much surface living, very superficial, in that you do a lot of things and you can keep very secret who you really are. That was something that I had kept to myself for years and years. I wasn't in touch with my own emotions. And I think that not knowing whom to trust in the type of situation I was in the Middle East led to a lot of problems — many people spend their life being afraid of becoming who they really are, because “if I do this, then this

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might happen.” It's just too fearful. I think the Foreign Service actually fosters that in a lot of people.

It's fascinating, it's exciting, you meet lots of people, but I'm not sure it's the kind of career you can have where you really can have those open, honest, intimate relationships with people; you can only go so far in this — some of our personal relationships and friendships were very open and honest but in terms of the people that you deal with cross-culturally, there are the people you get to know, the locals, whom we thoroughly enjoyed, and I did make some good close Palestinian friends in Jordan — I haven't kept up with them — that were at a level of relationship that I had with other people I'd met when I traveled overseas. But that's very different, the people that you really get to know, from the official exchanges that go on at the dinner parties and receptions and so on. I just don't feel that the nature of the work allows you to really get to know people.

Q: Do you think that the nature of the work also makes it hard for you to maintain your marital relations or your relations with your family?

WYATT: Well, I think that in the case of my husband and I, neither one of us because of our own family backgrounds have ever been able to really be in touch with our emotions, certainly not to talk about them — we could not communicate what was really going on inside. I never got angry; in foreign service, diplomats never get angry, you keep your cool. In our situation, since we never talked about these feeling that would come up or negotiated or dealt with our anger, if we got mad at each other we basically just “stuffed it.” There was a lot of anger toward other things outside the marriage. We happened to focus on raising our children and being as busy as we could be to avoid feeling. And when the marriage came apart it just erupted like a volcano. There was nothing that could have saved it at that point, because there had been no counseling. I didn't know we needed counseling, I thought everything was fine because this was the way I'd grown up; this was the way the life had been, you kept a stiff upper lip, you made do, and kept on going. I know that there have been wonderful counseling services, we would help people in the

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Family Liaison Office, go down to the Medical Division and get whatever counseling they'd need.

It was just the way I was raised, I didn't need it, I thought I was okay. I found out that I wasn't okay, that I had a lot of issues that I needed to deal with. And I must say that because of the work I've been doing on myself the past five years I am a far better career counselor than I ever could have been. I would hear spouses come in whose husbands had left them and they'd been in the Foreign Service for 30 years and they had no marketable skills, they were approximately 50 years old, their children had left home. Thank God for the Foreign Service Act which gave us in 1980 pension-sharing, because these women had at least a little something financial to fall back on. But they were going out, retraining, and taking entry-level jobs.

It was a rude awakening and tremendous shock for all those women. I would hear those stories. I thought I had a good marriage and it would never happen to me, but it did and it happened in a very violent kind of way. It never even worked out — my ex-husband passed away in 1989 but prior to that we did not have an amicable divorce because I think we had just stuffed everything so long the anger had been there building up. It was very difficult. So many times I kept saying my prayers to AAFSW and those people that got the Foreign Service Act passed. There are probably other things. I can think of one in particular that I know would be helpful to ex-spouses, in addition to the kind of legislation that we've already gotten.

Two things that happened, actually, before my husband died and we had negotiated the divorce agreement financially: children are supposed to get a death benefit and that is to be divided. There can be three children, an amount, I don't remember the amount exactly, perhaps \$200 a month, during their minority. And what my husband and I and nobody knew was that it doesn't specify that they be natural children. Adopted children share in that pie. My husband remarried immediately and when he died I thought I would have a certain sum of money for my children, and they had to share the money with the new wife's

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two children. They're all getting the same amount of money which is a lesser amount than what I had assumed it would be.

That's something that needs to be looked at. He never adopted those children at all but that's what the law is. Social Security does the same thing and it's really certainly hurt us financially, because I had counted on having that additional money. That's something I have been very angry about.

Q: Is anyone working on that?

WYATT: I don't think so. I talked to the Retirement people about it and one said, "Well, that's the law." I have written to the Family Liaison Office that that legislation needs to be corrected. I mean, if I had known I could perhaps have spelled it out in the divorce agreement or something, but I didn't know that, I had no idea.

Q: And you thought that he didn't know it either.

WYATT: I don't think he did. I think it was just one of those loopholes that nobody could have known about. And I am getting my pro rata share and that continues even after his death, which is very fortunate. The one place that I'm very resentful about is that the Foreign Service still looks at this ex-spouse who is pension-sharing in the same way that you would look at somebody you were divorcing and it was treated as alimony instead of a pension or annuity — because I am not allowed to remarry until I'm 55 or I will lose my pension. Only after that age could I keep it.

Here I was, divorced at 42, and if I want my pension, which I worked very hard to get — I have not had any kind of career-type position where I could earn my pension, again because I'm not in a pension-type program at NCSU any more — that little percentage of his annuity is all that I have for my own pension, and I am 48 now. I don't see that I could ever earn my 20 years or whatever, it will be that and Social Security and whatever assets I can hang onto that I came out of the marriage with.

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So that needs to be corrected. I saw that some military family raised the same issue. I need to get busy with Pat Schroeder [U.S. Congresswoman] and some of the committees that can change that legislation, because I think that it's very unfair in that it's still seeing the Foreign Service spouse as a dependent of this male. They don't see it as an annuity that she earned in her own right for all those hard years of service overseas, that she's going to lose it if she goes out and finds another man to take care of her.

Q: It's as if, then, that it isn't hers.

WYATT: It's not hers. It's subsistence while you're in this single status, but it should be ...

Q: What about the various plans that have been put forward for paid work for the various kinds of representational and other work that we have to do overseas? There have been a lot of suggestions ...

WYATT: Right.

Q: ... on how that could be legislated. Do you have some thoughts on that?

WYATT: Well, it was something we started to work on 10 or 12 years ago. There were all these ideas put forward. I don't know what the status of it is now, whether they would ever give the spouse's wife — at what level, how far down did you go, was it only the Ambassador's and DCM's or First Secretary's wife? Who would be included in this to get pay for, say, 20 hours a week of work as a PIT; they could give them a PIT assignment. Maybe they could do it as a contract.

We were looking at contracts for spouses to provide a certain amount of entertaining each month. I do not know where that stands right now, not having talked to anyone in the Family Liaison Office about it. It's definitely one way of remunerating the Foreign Service spouse. Many of them estimated that they spent up to 40 hours a week in representational

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duties. An Ambassador's wife, certainly, would be doing more than that, yet she was expected to work for nothing.

Q: And then if she got divorced!

WYATT: She still had nothing to show for it except half of his pension.

Q: Which, as you pointed out, she doesn't get if she remarries at a certain age.

WYATT: Right, if she remarries before age 55. There have been a lot of results and good strides made but there's still a long way to go, I think, for recognition of the Foreign Service spouse and the mobility, the life style that we have to lead — it really has tremendous impact not only on your career but on your personal life.

(End of side, A, Tape I beginning side B)

Q: (beginning mid-sentence) about how you started FLO, and how that got going.

WYATT: I think I mentioned earlier that the American Foreign Service Women's Association was the catalyst, the lobbying organization that started talking to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Management in the State Department and Committees on the Hill, because they had seen that military families got legislation passed that helped them in some way; at least the pension-sharing had come earlier. But I think the real impetus came when the Foreign Service Education and Counseling Center started, I don't know when, maybe in the early 70s or late 60s. Because education and Foreign Service mobility was, I think, the first topic to surface, as this crazy mobile life style of ours is having an impact on the children's education and their emotional stability.

Again, a woman was trailing along. It was the children's educational and counseling needs that got the FSECC, or whatever it was called, organized first — on the outside, it was not inside the Department. They had counselors working there who were Foreign Service spouses who were trained in educational testing and all the problems that people

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have educationally as they move among school systems. Of course, therapy was slowly beginning to surface as a tool back in the 70s when people came out of the closet, “Yes! I need help, I'm not emotionally able to handle this particular move” or whatever it was. Fortunately, people began to speak up for their mental health needs too.

So that's why FSECC got started, and through that group and Leslie Dorman as president of AAFSW, it happened at a time when politically the Foreign System was being run by Cyrus Vance and the Democratic leaders under Jimmy Carter. That window of time between '76 and '80 was the only time possibly that a lobbying effort came to fruition because they got support from the powers-that-be. It was sort of the right place at the right time, and there was a lot of effort. As I mentioned, I primarily was on the subgroup that dealt with dependent employment. Other people were working on getting the main Office started, talking to all the people they needed to talk to, testifying before Congress, and Leslie Dorman will have that story in these very tapes about how all that got started.

The employment picture was just one of several issues. One of the committees was “the representational spouse.” “Employment,” “education,” and the whole issue of the “pension-sharing and the divorced spouse”, the displaced homemaker. There were four or five different categories that different groups of people were working on to get this Family Liaison Office started. And “dependent employment” — our little subcommittee got the Skills Bank started under Cynthia Chard. We had the idea, when that was started, that if the spouses had down on paper all their favorite skills, the things that they could do, then those skills could be sent ahead to the Post, which could say, “Oh, there's a spouse coming whom we can give a contract-writing job to” or “she's had administrative work” or “she can be a secretary for us.” They would know in advance and the spouse might know in advance whether there were going to be employment opportunities for her at post. I think eventually they've gotten that information about the spouse's employment qualities on the basic bio form of the primary spouse, the FSO; so that when he's assigned a post, the post knows immediately what the arriving spouse can do.

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That was the goal behind the Skills Bank. Another part of the 1980 Foreign Service Act was to negotiate bilateral work agreements as well as to provide career counseling to the Family Liaison Office; those are both spelled out in the agreement. So our goal was just to figure out any way that a spouse could be employed overseas, whether it was through this functional training program or getting a contract job or working on the local economy. And that was only going to happen in the places where we could get the bilateral or reciprocal work agreements.

That was the primary impetus of what my job was all about, as well as teaching spouses how to transfer marketable skills — how to identify their skills and, say, if I'm a writer here, I can be a writer some other place. I can carry my administrative talents to another post if that happens to be my interest. The transferable, marketable skills is what we kept focusing on in our career planning workshops.

The “tandem couple” was another issue that was addressed by this Spouse Employment committee, and a number of spouses, including a spouse who was on our committee, did get into the Foreign Service. They have continued to have a lot of problems trying to get joint assignments, or the spouses will be at two different levels. I know that some spouses had to resign their positions when they married into the Foreign Service. They were allowed to reapply and come back into the Foreign Service at a later date. I don't remember whether that was in the early or late 70s that spouses were able to reenter the Service; that's a matter for the historical record.

Tandem couples have always been a problem, and I believe you and I have cited earlier that the Foreign Service is not really conducive to family life in terms of how the modern American family has evolved, with women wanting to work, the stresses that go into children's life — uprooting them, moving them, having them change schools. There are a lot of resilient people out there but there are a lot of people that fall between the cracks. It's not likely that any Foreign Service family, the whole family, is going to stay intact through the entire Foreign Service experience. I think that might have been easier a long time ago

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when women's roles and children's and family roles were much more prescribed, where there were far fewer divorces, but it seems like today you're better off if you're single.

Q: Which is too bad, because it's not very representational of our life.

WYATT: That's true, because we want to be able to show a good face to the world. But a spouse always has to give up something. It is not, unless they have a tandem job, and even then that doesn't work because they can never get an assignment that's going to be in their best interest to go to the top of the career ladder if that's what their goal is; that it's a way to keep the marriage together and keep the people at the same post, but they're not ideally going to be having the job that would be in their best interest.

One thing that has come to mind, in terms of women in the Foreign Service or spouses having careers in the Service, we could always find a job or something to do. There would at least be some part time income, part time work to keep us from going crazy at some of these remote posts. But it was never upwardly mobile work, we could not move from one job to a better job at the next post. You took what you could find and it was usually free-lance entry-level type of work.

So over the years not only is that terribly frustrating for the spouse but it can also put major strains on the marriage, particularly the professional spouse who wanted to have a career all along. She did not want to be a full-time representational spouse who really wanted to spend all her time entertaining and cultivating the spouses and dignitaries of the country they were assigned to but wanted to do something professional. So as the husband moved up the ranks and had increasing access to higher levels of decision-makers within the country, had a really interesting job and was a mover and shaker at his post, the spouse was still doing her entry-level PIT job or her contract work or her teaching. And there was really no way unless she became a Foreign Service Officer that she could professionally grow in a career field. We used to say we had "portable jobs," it was not a portable career. I think that could be one of the reasons why the numbers of marriages are declining in

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the Foreign Service — there's been such a high divorce rate because those women have become more professional. There just hasn't been any opportunities for them — how can there be when you're moving from post to post?

The bilateral work agreements were a good idea, but I don't know that we have seen too many successful placements where a woman could go off and be a marketing rep in Germany for a company, then be transferred to Argentina and pick up the same level of a job! She might have to go into something totally different. We tried to pick out patterns and threads for a person, but the whole goal was to get back to Washington so that then you could begin your career. And spouses, once they got back here, if they were professionals, they did not want to leave when that eight-year assignment ended. It was a big sacrifice: they had just gotten into retirement programs, they had finally gotten a career Civil Service position, or what it was that was their career aspiration; and that would lead to maybe separated families. The spouse would stay back and work — not that that happens frequently but it certainly explains how the modern woman's professional desires came into major conflict with something like the Foreign Service. It's bad enough to have the trailing spouse or what we call “dual career couple” in the United States. At least you can get on a commuter airplane and go see your husband on weekends if you live in New York or Washington. But you can't fly halfway around the world. There's no way you can maintain a marriage indefinitely that way.

So increasingly there is a far greater hazard to the marriage of a dual career couple living in the Foreign Service than in the U.S. And most of the people like that you interview in the U.S. can't carry that on indefinitely. It'll be for a couple of years until somebody can get another assignment located in the same town, or they have career counseling programs where the company is willing to help the spouse find employment. Corporate America is slowly getting into that just like the Foreign Service has been into it for a long time — at least to help somebody find a job. But it may not be professionally the next rung up the

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ladder or what that spouse would really have wanted to do if they had located in the place they came from.

Q: You'd think, with all of this, that there would be increased interest in making the tandem couples work, because that is really the only solution.

WYATT: That would be true, except as we all know when the two people work their way to the top, there are fewer and fewer opportunities at the top. And if you've got everybody at mid-level, FSO-4, there's just not enough space for people to keep on going to the top. In some cases the spouse has to have a less illustrious career always, while the primary officer works his way to the top if it is that situation; or they both choose less than desirable types of post and they both plateau out at mid-level or lower senior level and never make it to one of them having a really stellar position. They can reach retirement age and both get their retirement and that's fine. It depends on the goals of that marriage — if the career for the FSO is more important than the marriage and the spouse is willing to make that sacrifice, that's fine. But if you have a professional spouse who really wants to shine in his or her — mostly her — own right, then it's just really difficult to do that in the Foreign Service atmosphere. Unless they could be based in Washington.

Q: But then it's not really the Foreign Service!

WYATT: That's why they put in the eight-year rule. Too many people wanted to stay in Washington because that's where all the decisions were made and I guess where the real power and influence is — back in Washington. That is one problem that I really see where the interest in being a professional really has created havoc for the Foreign Service marriage and for the Service in general, because of the lack of mobility for the Foreign Service spouse.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

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Spouse: David W. McClintock (Deceased)

Spouse Entered Service:12/59Left Service: 8/82 You Entered Service:12/68Left Service:
8/82

Status: Former spouse of deceased retiree; divorced March, 1987

Posts: 1968-70Academic leave, University of Michigan 1970-72Sanaa, Yemen
1972-74Amman, Jordan 1974-82Washington, DC

Spouse's Position: Political Officer

Place/Date of birth: February 6, 1943, Fort Worth, Texas

Maiden Name: Susan Melinda Clough (Wyatt, her mother's maiden name adopted in
1988) Parents (Name, Profession):

Forrest W. Clough - Radio station traffic manager

Mildred Wyatt Clough - Secretary, USG

Schools (Prep, University):

BA Whittier College;

MA University of Michigan

MAT Antioch-Putney Graduate School of Education

Ph.D. in progress, Columbia Pacific University

Date/Place of Marriage: December 29, 1968 Children:Lesley Karen McClintock, born
6/14/71 in Asmara, Ethiopia, now a sophomore at Bard College, NY

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Nathan Crane McClintock, born 7/2/74 in Washington, DC

Profession: Career Counselor/Human Resources Consultant

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:A. At Post: (Paid) Foreign Service Secretary (temp LIR appt.), Sanaa, Yemen 1970-72 (was post secretary for 7 Americans); Teacher, English as a Second Language, University of Jordan, Amman

B. In Washington, DC: (Volunteer) Career Counselor, American University Criminal Justice School; Career Advisor Wider Opportunities for Women; Community organizer for ANC-3. (Paid) After School Program Director Horace Mann School, Washington, DC; Personnel Officer/Employment Counselor, Family Liaison Office, Dept. of State, Washington, DC 1978-82

Honors (Scholastic, FS):

Meritorious Honor Award, 1982 (For work in FLO)

Who's Who Among American Women, 1988

Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow, with husband 1977-82

End of interview