

Work as a CIA Librarian

VH: This is a little off the subject of Vienna, but I wanted to ask if you could just talk a little about what it was like to be a CIA librarian?

FL: First of all, I was what you call overt. There's covert and overt. I can say these things. You had the covert which is spies, and of course you knew a lot of these people. But I never heard the term 'spy'—case officers, agents, never the term 'spies'. You worked closely with them. Of course, in the library, I had to service people. Being overt, I could say my work, but of course you couldn't say what you did. I was in the documents library for many years. Again, this is before they had computers. I had a good memory. I was in charge of the documents part. Actually, I had the term 'librarian'. I was a few years in, and this guy came over. He said, 'Frank, we're starting a new operation. I wonder if you'd be interested in joining us.' I felt comfortable with what I was doing. We had already moved into headquarters. I had my own little kingdom, so to speak. I felt comfortable, I knew what I was doing. When you have a family, you don't want to take any chances. That guy turned out to be an aerial photographer, starting in the U-2 program. U-2 was a plane that flew over the Soviet Union, top secret. It was later shot down in the area of a palace. I don't know whether you studied that in history. Almost, World War III's start. President Eisenhower was in charge of it.

I worked with the photographic people. I gave them support. Finally, I could see I was hitting a stone wall. I wasn't getting promotions. I needed a Library of Science degree. They kept asking me to come over. They needed somebody for documents. At that time, we were still finding new things. We found a biological, chemical warfare plant—what does it look like? Because these guys are trying to see and identify these things over there. They knew the missile sites—you know, ICM site, sub-air missiles. They knew all these things, they knew tanks and battle-like stuff. But there were unique things. So they needed somebody like me to figure out what it looked like. They needed documents. That was my expertise. I did that, and I learned later, over a period of time, that the documents had to be classified and certain people authorized to see them. It was my job to assign the classification. There's limitations on it, and stuff. Very interesting job. I was always very proud. Of the way you had the very hard-working people. That's the thing, when you hear things talking about government workers, boy, they don't realize the hours you put in. Sometimes I'd spend twenty hours a day, go home and get a couple hours of sleep. I'd sometimes sleep in the car then get right back to work. It was interesting work.