

Paul Clark Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Paul Clark served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from 2005 to 2007 in an environmental program.

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Oral History Interview

with

Paul Clark

August 12, 2019
Anchorage, Alaska

By Jack Franklin Davies

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

DAVIES: [00:00:01] Now it is, OK. Testing one, two, three. It looks like it's working. I'll try to fool around with the playback tonight, so whoever is listening to this on the other end at the Kennedy Center, hello. Let's get started. My name is Jack Davies. I'm a returned Peace Corps volunteer from the Fiji Islands from 1978 through '80, which was Group 31. I have the pleasure today of interviewing Paul Clark, who was a volunteer in Fiji from 2005 to 2007. He was an environmental advisor in the Cuvu village, which is actually spelled C-U-V-U. The C is pronounced T-H. Anyhow, that's close to Sigatoka, and I'm going to let Paul take it from there. So how are you doing, Paul?

CLARK: [00:00:43] Hi, Jack. Yeah, I'm doing, I'm doing great. Thanks so much for taking the time up in sunny Anchorage.

DAVIES: [00:00:49] Yeah. Well, it's my pleasure to be here, and it is a beautiful day today. Anyhow, so how did you hear about the Peace Corps and what got you interested in it?

CLARK: [00:00:57] Well, that's a good question. I guess like lots of momentous decisions I've made in my life, it was just sort of coincidental that someone mentioned Peace Corps to me. So I was finishing up in my active duty time in the Army.

DAVIES: [00:01:16] Oh, in the Army.

CLARK: [00:01:17] Which I was an air defense artillery officer down in Fort Bliss, Texas. And so trying to figure out, well, what comes next? And one of my fellow officer friends said, well, you should do the Peace Corps. And I'd certainly heard of the Peace Corps, it's a well-known organization, but I honestly hadn't thought about, hadn't thought about going in. And this was in, I guess, 2003.

DAVIES: [00:01:46] OK.

CLARK: [00:01:47] And so I thought about it a little bit and I thought, well, you know, she's right. That sounds really interesting. And so I was also interested in doing graduate school following my time in the Army. So my undergraduate degree's in history, and I had pursued some PhD programs but actually didn't get accepted. So I was thinking, OK, well, what else? And so then started looking at, well, how does, how can we connect grad school as well as its potential for Peace Corps? And so I ended up going to graduate school at the University of Montana. And they were part of the Master's International program that I don't think is running anymore. But it's where the Peace Corps would essentially serve as my research time. So it would be incorporated into the graduate program. And the graduate program was a master's of science in resource conservation. And so that's how it came to be. I applied for graduate school and for the Peace Corps at the same time.

DAVIES: [00:03:04] Oh, interesting. And the Peace Corps called first?

CLARK: [00:03:08] That is a good question.

DAVIES: [00:03:10] Because I seem to recall waiting quite a while to hear from them.

CLARK: [00:03:14] It did take a, it did take a while. Yeah, I think. I think continues to still take. I don't remember the exact timeline.

DAVIES: [00:03:22] Was Fiji your first offer?

CLARK: [00:03:24] Fiji was my first offer.

DAVIES: [00:03:25] Oh, lucky you.

CLARK: [00:03:27] Yeah. So I got the call. I had already, in fact. So graduate school must have been first because I was at, I was in Missoula at the University of Montana when I got the call. I think it was already spring semester and so the recruiter or the placement officer said, well, what do you? I've got a place for you. Because as part of the Master's International program, I knew that it would be in the environment field.

DAVIES: [00:03:58] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [00:03:59] That was it. I didn't put any preference for location because my Spanish and French skills are pretty basic, so it wouldn't make the cut for the programs that had that language requirement. But other than that, I was wide open.

DAVIES: [00:04:15] But you do have an aptitude for languages then. Did you learn Fijian?

CLARK: [00:04:18] I did. I did. Yeah, and it's, um, that was one of my motivations for going into the Peace Corps. I was, I really love languages and love trying to learn them. It's, I have an aptitude for it, I would say. But of course, it's still a challenge.

DAVIES: [00:04:37] So before we get too far into Fiji. So what did you do with all your stuff, your personal belongings and everything while you were gone for two years?

CLARK: [00:04:46] While I was gone. Well, I originally grew up in Helena, Montana, so it was only a hundred miles away and I had moved up. I finished active duty service with the Army in 2003, moved stuff back up to Montana, and I think my, uh, I think my dad absorbed it all in his house and some went to my brother. I actually loaned my car to a friend for a couple of years. So, yeah, I didn't have too much still.

DAVIES: [00:05:22] Sounds like a win win.

CLARK: [00:05:23] I was young and pretty young and single and little more than just what could fit in the car.

DAVIES: [00:05:29] I want to ask you, did the Army help prepare you for Peace Corps?

CLARK: [00:05:34] Yes and no. Yes in that you certainly need to learn to adapt. You're going to be flexible to a variety of environments, could be adverse conditions, but pretty flexible and flexible in coming into a situation just trying to understand what's happening there and acclimating.

DAVIES: [00:06:03] A little survival training too, right?

CLARK: [00:06:05] A little bit, a little bit. Not as much as maybe you would hope for. I bet they do more of it now, but I'd say no in that the Army is pretty structured.

DAVIES: [00:06:18] Yeah.

CLARK: [00:06:20] And there's the right way to do it and wrong way. Now there is room for creativity and thinking on your feet and all. But then the Peace Corps and especially Fiji and Fiji time, right, was a polar opposite. But I will say that the Fijians that I worked with, especially the indigenous Fijians, really highly respected military service.

DAVIES: [00:06:51] Oh yeah.

CLARK: [00:06:51] And so they were actually really confused. How? Why on earth would I have gotten out of the Army? Which is this prestigious occupation that many of them, especially the men, hope to be able to go serve with the British military or others. And here I am, choosing to get out of the Army and to come to Fiji as a Peace Corps volunteer. So that confused them a little bit.

DAVIES: [00:07:15] Yeah. Uh-huh. Interesting. You mentioned Fiji time. Tell me what that is.

CLARK: [00:07:20] So it's just the sort of non clock based, much slower pace, you know, I think often general sense of island time.

DAVIES: [00:07:32] Yeah. OK.

CLARK: [00:07:33] So in Fiji, specifically what I can remember is, it seemed like if I would press and say, well, when is this event going to start? It would either start at 9:00 or at 1:00. And nine o'clock meant sometime in the morning, probably before lunch, and one o'clock meant probably sometime before dinner.

DAVIES: [00:07:56] Or maybe tomorrow.

CLARK: [00:07:57] And tomorrow was potentially never.

DAVIES: [00:08:03] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'm sure we would call the coconut wireless.

CLARK: [00:08:06] Oh, indeed, indeed. Among Peace Corps volunteers. Now, of course, in my era we did have email.

DAVIES: [00:08:14] Oh.

CLARK: [00:08:14] So we weren't all connected quite like I imagine volunteers are now, but we could go to an internet cafe and actually be in touch.

DAVIES: [00:08:23] Oh boy, that's a big difference. Well, I want to hear all about that when we talk about Fiji a little bit more but.

CLARK: [00:08:28] You bet.

DAVIES: [00:08:28] Where did you learn the language? Where was your training held?

CLARK: [00:08:31] So our training was just outside of Suva at, I believe it's called Nandave, and it was a vocational training center for, I can't remember if it's young men and women or just young men.

DAVIES: [00:08:44] OK.

CLARK: [00:08:45] But we held about, we were there for about two weeks, I believe. And then we went out with host families at a series of villages. And unfortunately, I can't right off the top of my head remember the name of my fantastic village where we did our training.

DAVIES: [00:09:05] Yeah, we should have a map in front of us, but maybe we can reference one later on.

CLARK: [00:09:09] Sure.

DAVIES: [00:09:11] OK, so two weeks and then a village stay. Or several villages.

CLARK: [00:09:16] So we were each assigned to different villages. There was a group of, I'd say, about five of us in the village. And so there was a language trainer and we learned the standard Fijian or known as the Bauan language. And so that was the, that was our kind of primary schooling. And then our host family, you know, would help with that too. And so I was with a family, with a mother, her adult daughter, and then the daughter's two children.

DAVIES: [00:09:54] OK.

CLARK: [00:09:54] And all of the, the elder, the grandmother there, she knew some English, but she wouldn't speak it to me. She knew that I was supposed to learn Fijian.

DAVIES: [00:10:07] Good for her.

CLARK: [00:10:09] And the kids, the kids helped. So I would say I had a wonderful family who really took an interest in helping me learn the language.

DAVIES: [00:10:19] Oh, that's great. Yeah, nice. So from the language, so you did all your training in country?

CLARK: [00:10:27] Yes, except for a three-day pre-service in Los Angeles.

DAVIES: [00:10:33] Oh, just staging.

CLARK: [00:10:33] The staging, exactly.

DAVIES: [00:10:34] Yeah, OK.

CLARK: [00:10:34] But yes, the rest was in Fiji.

DAVIES: [00:10:36] Did you happen to drink kava while you were in the training?

CLARK: [00:10:40] Yeah, apparently that was definitely a key part of the training.

DAVIES: [00:10:44] So tell us about kava.

CLARK: [00:10:46] We did. So kava, or in Fijian known as yagona, which is made from the roots of a pepper plant. And it was sort of humorously called dirty water, but it kind of looks and kind of tastes like dirty water. But it's, you know, it's common in really across a lot of Pacific islands and Fiji, they get in into the drinking yagona. It's part of just every community.

DAVIES: [00:11:25] It's kind of like the passport into a village, as I recall,

CLARK: [00:11:27] It is, it is. It's part of what's called the *sevusevu* or offering when. So if you're going into a new place, including when we got to our sites and even, you know, when we certainly the ground had already been laid for us to the training, the training villages. But my guess is that there was one of the Fijian Peace Corps staff went in and did a *sevusevu* where they offer a big bundle of kava and some kind of ceremonial talk goes back and forth.

DAVIES: [00:12:06] Did you ever learn the presentation of the kava?

CLARK: [00:12:09] Not, not perfectly.

DAVIES: [00:12:11] Because usually the chief would have a spokesperson, but I learned it if you'd like to hear a little bit of Fijian for the record, or would you like to say something?

CLARK: [00:12:19] Oh, it's too rusty.

DAVIES: [00:12:21] Well, let's have a little conversation. *Ni sa bula*, Paul.

CLARK: [00:12:26] *Sa bula vinaka*.

DAVIES: [00:12:26] *Sa vacava tiko?* How are you?

CLARK: [00:12:30] Uh, sorry, I have some Spanish mixed in there now too.

DAVIES: [00:12:34] Isn't that how it goes?

CLARK: [00:12:35] Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:12:35] Well, let me do this *sevusevu*, because I should have brought some kava to present to you because I'm here in your office. So let's just pretend that this recorder is some *yagona*. [speaks Fijian] So that was in the northern island dialect, which probably sounded a little different than what you're used to speaking.

CLARK: [00:13:16] A little bit. But excellent. Well done. Well done.

DAVIES: [00:13:20] I remembered it over the years, and practiced it.

CLARK: [00:13:24] I think certainly mine's gotten rusty. But yeah, so I did learn a little bit, but definitely in. And so where I was located in Cuvu village was in western Viti Levu. So the main island, about a little closer between Nadi and Suva.

DAVIES: [00:13:46] Oh, OK. Sigatoka. On the south side, I believe.

CLARK: [00:13:49] Right. And just about six miles west, right next to the Shangri-La Fijian Resort. So big, big resort along the coral coast.

DAVIES: [00:13:58] Nice.

CLARK: [00:13:59] And the language there is, linguists considered a separate language.

DAVIES: [00:14:04] Do they?

CLARK: [00:14:05] And so. So for example, [speaks Fijian], right? I'm full or I'm hungry in the nandrolone dialect is [speaks Fijian]. So it's just, it's just different. Even grammatically, there's some structural differences so that the present tense indicator is at the end of the sentence. So there's enough changes both in the grammar, the lexicon, and just the sounds, the phonics of it.

DAVIES: [00:14:45] Did you have much trouble learning Fijian?

CLARK: [00:14:49] Uh, probably learning well, just because most people's English was better than my Fijian would ever get. So they would typically speak to me in English, and if we were actually doing something official or business as opposed to actually just sort of banter or practicing with the language, mostly it was in English. So it was kind of on my own as more of a hobby. And I, all throughout, I was trying to learn the dialect and actually put together a little tiny dictionary of about three pages of words and phrases for volunteers that were going to follow behind me.

DAVIES: [00:15:37] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [00:15:38] In the area. But I never got. In retrospect, I wish I would have made more effort to learn the dialect because that's what they could understand the standard Fijian.

DAVIES: [00:15:48] That's what endears you to the people, I think.

CLARK: [00:15:50] Exactly.

DAVIES: [00:15:50] And how were you received in the village when you first got there?

CLARK: [00:15:55] Definitely, definitely friendly. And we were supposed to have our own housing when we got there at that time, for the Fiji groups at the time, and there was not housing available for me yet. So I stayed with my counterpart's family.

DAVIES: [00:16:16] Counterpart being somebody else at the office?

CLARK: [00:16:20] No, the counterpart is sort of my main coworker, the main person.

DAVIES: [00:16:28] Fijian counterpart?

CLARK: [00:16:28] Fijian counterpart, exactly, my main contact in the village. The person that I worked most closely with through the two years. And so, yeah, we definitely had the, certainly had the *sevusevu*.

DAVIES: [00:16:45] I'm sure you did. How long do you recall staying with him before you did get another place?

CLARK: [00:16:50] It was about four months.

DAVIES: [00:16:54] OK.

CLARK: [00:16:54] And that was a, that was a stressor for my time. Just because if I knew all along it was going to be with a host family, then it would have been fine. But the expectation was to have my own space and.

DAVIES: [00:17:08] Oh, I see.

CLARK: [00:17:08] And in a cross-cultural setting, it's kind of nice to have a home base where you can just kind of decompress and relax. And especially I'm more on the introverted side.

DAVIES: [00:17:23] Really?

CLARK: [00:17:24] So Fijian culture is not on the introverted side. Really social.

DAVIES: [00:17:29] It's probably where I picked it up.

CLARK: [00:17:31] You might have fit very well. So it's. So that was a point of contention. I actually left my site for a few weeks and was potentially going to move to another site. And they said, OK, no, wait, we've got a place for you.

DAVIES: [00:17:50] Oh, that's good.

CLARK: [00:17:51] And fixed up one of the teacher's quarters at the primary school. So I ended up being living on the just outside of the village on the school grounds.

DAVIES: [00:18:04] Nice. So what would an ordinary day look like?

CLARK: [00:18:10] Oh, that's a great question.

DAVIES: [00:18:13] If there is such a thing.

CLARK: [00:18:13] There wasn't. Yeah. One day a week there would be community work. And that's, I think, was usually Mondays.

DAVIES: [00:18:22] Like farming or what?

CLARK: [00:18:24] If it was cutting the grass or clearing the *ibulubulu*, the cemetery there.

DAVIES: [00:18:32] Oh, yeah.

CLARK: [00:18:32] So it would be kind of whatever the community had going on.

DAVIES: [00:18:40] OK, so that was one day of the week.

CLARK: [00:18:42] So that was one day. And then like I think a lot of Peace Corps volunteers, I feel like my biggest job was figuring out what my job was supposed to be. And so what I ended up kind of shaping was, since I was at the school and there was certainly a need at the school. Well, teacher was not part of the job description or anything, I just found a need there. So I actually organized the books in the library and started a checkout system and started an environment club for middle schoolers.

DAVIES: [00:19:21] Middle school. OK, so what ages would that have been?

CLARK: [00:19:24] So it would have been. The school was equivalent of like first through eighth grade. So it would, it was primarily 12, 13 year olds.

DAVIES: [00:19:35] So sixth, seventh, eighth.

CLARK: [00:19:36] Exactly.

DAVIES: [00:19:38] As we understand.

CLARK: [00:19:38] Yeah, yeah. And so that was about. And I worked with the slow English readers as well, just giving them some one-on-one time. And so that equated to about two full days a week. And then really the other days there was nothing standard. There was nothing.

DAVIES: [00:20:00] Except Sunday maybe.

CLARK: [00:20:02] Sunday was a day of rest.

DAVIES: [00:20:03] Yeah. And church probably.

CLARK: [00:20:04] And church, absolutely. So I would typically go to the local church, which was Methodist.

DAVIES: [00:20:15] Methodist, yeah.

CLARK: [00:20:15] And then afterwards, we would usually go to someone's house and have a meal and sit and watch some rugby on TV.

DAVIES: [00:20:24] That's a popular pastime.

CLARK: [00:20:26] Maybe a little different than your experience.

DAVIES: [00:20:27] OK. You just said TV. Now we didn't have TV back in '78. Do you remember when it came about?

CLARK: [00:20:34] No.

DAVIES: [00:20:35] But it was there when you got there?

CLARK: [00:20:36] It was there when I got there and it was primarily, um, people watch movies. So there were DVDs as well. But otherwise it was, Fiji One was the main channel. And then if it was, if it was other programming, kind of Western programming, it mainly came from

DAVIES: [00:20:58] BBC?

CLARK: [00:20:58] From New Zealand.

DAVIES: [00:20:59] Oh, New Zealand.

CLARK: [00:21:00] Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:21:01] New Zealand, Australia, about a thousand miles away each. So you had TV. That means you must have had electricity.

CLARK: [00:21:08] I did. I did.

DAVIES: [00:21:09] Lucky guy.

CLARK: [00:21:09] I had electricity and most of the time I had running water.

DAVIES: [00:21:14] Oh, OK. And lights I assume, with the electricity?

CLARK: [00:21:18] Yes.

DAVIES: [00:21:19] OK.

CLARK: [00:21:19] Yeah. Light. You know, really pretty, pretty nice housing, I even rented a refrigerator.

DAVIES: [00:21:27] Oh, wow.

CLARK: [00:21:28] While I was there, which was my finest luxury, and I don't regret it one day.

DAVIES: [00:21:32] Yeah, you probably had lots of visitors. Were you able to keep anything cold in there?

CLARK: [00:21:37] Not, not too bad.

DAVIES: [00:21:39] I'm alluding to Fiji beer.

CLARK: [00:21:41] Yeah, little Fiji beer may have been in there occasionally. And then one other time a gecko got in there, which was, I don't know how he got in there.

DAVIES: [00:21:50] A gecko like a little lizard?

CLARK: [00:21:51] A little lizard, yeah, yeah. And the poor guy fell out of there all frozen because, yeah, being cold blooded. And then he had to thaw out

and I saw him kind of scamper his way back up, back up the wall. But oh, it was nice.

DAVIES: [00:22:09] And what did you do for fun in your pastime?

CLARK: [00:22:12] So you mentioned drinking kava, so there would often be, right, if you just kind of stroll through the village and they'd call out in our dialect, *dua na bilo*.

DAVIES: [00:22:27] A *bilo* is a bowl.

CLARK: [00:22:28] One cup. Well, come have one cup of kava and.

DAVIES: [00:22:33] A coconut bowl, right?

CLARK: [00:22:34] Exactly, exactly, about half of a coconut shell. And for whatever reason, you just sort of kind of walk back and forth and don't go in right away and then finally go in and you, gosh, you can sit there for quite a while. So that ended up passing the time quite a bit. I really loved learning the language, and so I absorbed whatever I could by book and by listening to it. But again, that was the standard Fijian, so it was a little harder.

DAVIES: [00:23:08] Do you remember singing or music?

CLARK: [00:23:13] Mostly at church. And I didn't do. I played the saxophone, but I didn't take the saxophone there.

DAVIES: [00:23:20] Oh, that's too bad, they would have loved that.

CLARK: [00:23:22] I bet they would have.

DAVIES: [00:23:23] Was there a guitar in the village that people played while you're sitting in the circle drinking kava?

CLARK: [00:23:31] You know, I feel like I saw more of that when I visited some of the other volunteers.

DAVIES: [00:23:37] Oh, OK. Because that would have been my story.

CLARK: [00:23:40] Oh.

DAVIES: [00:23:41] Largely related to music.

CLARK: [00:23:43] What a great way to integrate.

DAVIES: [00:23:44] It was. It was a good key to the culture. So back to work. So what did you do on a daily basis for work?

CLARK: [00:23:55] So the school was, and I really struggled with that. I think as Americans we're trained to be productive, to value productivity, to ride that through schooling. That's how you achieve. And the Peace Corps is such an astonishing wakeup call in that regard, because I can't speak for all volunteers, but I sure was not feeling productive. And on a day-to-day basis, usually we know what we need to work on and we go set out to it and we can get it done. And there, it just was difficult to figure it out. What? So, you know, the village did have to request a volunteer, but I think really they only had about two or three months' worth of work that they had in mind. Setting up a waste management workshop and some follow up with some non-profits, some non-governmental organizations, NGOs, that had done some work in the area and so.

DAVIES: [00:25:01] Well, waste management would be a big deal in the village. What did you have, pit latrines or?

CLARK: [00:25:06] So they were on a, you know, septic system. So it, really it wasn't a huge issue. It was a, in terms of Fiji, it was a wealthy village because they own the land. The *tokatoka*, the kinship group, owns the land that the Fijian resort is on.

DAVIES: [00:25:29] Oh boy, they get some premiums from that, huh?

CLARK: [00:25:32] Right. So it was a little different. So trying to carve out a Peace Corps volunteer generalist at best, right? I didn't know what I was doing in terms of waste management, coming out of school with a history degree

and then working for the Army and air defense artillery. So it didn't exactly equate to waste management. So I was kind of trying to get one chapter ahead. And so that took some time. And so we did that. We set up the workshop and then tried to, from that workshop, tried to follow up on some ideas that that these different villages. I mentioned I worked in six or seven villages. And it just didn't, it just didn't end up being that much work.

DAVIES: [00:26:22] Well, six or seven villages, I can only imagine the coordination and the power structure. How did that work with the chiefs?

CLARK: [00:26:29] Sure. Well, with Cuvu village being the chiefly village of the whole province, it was the traditionally, right, the most powerful village.

DAVIES: [00:26:43] And your chief would be the high chief.

CLARK: [00:26:44] Exactly, exactly. And so if the traditional structure came into play, then that was fairly, fairly simple. Easy. You could go talk with the person at the top. From village to village, though, I would work with the *rokotuli*, which is sort of loosely translated as the village headman. It's kind of a funny way. I love that translation, but kind of the mayor.

DAVIES: [00:27:15] Right. Well, *iliuliu* does mean chief so.

CLARK: [00:27:17] Right, right. So it's an elected, but an elected position.

DAVIES: [00:27:22] Oh, well, that's interesting. Yeah. And did he have, did the chief have a *mata ni vanua*, the spokesman that would generally accompany him on all visits?

CLARK: [00:27:33] Yes. Yeah, that was built into it. And I, you know, I don't think it was ever specifically explained to me. Like there he goes. But being at some of these large, large ceremonies, in fact, when Ratu Mara, former prime minister, when his wife died and she was connected to my village, there was a giant ceremony attended from all over the islands and other countries.

DAVIES: [00:28:11] How many days did that last?

CLARK: [00:28:12] The event itself was one day.

DAVIES: [00:28:15] One day. But the gathering, yeah.

CLARK: [00:28:18] Giant gathering and offering of gifts to the chief, the provincial chief. Yeah, so who exactly that was. And at different events, it would kind of be different people and it's probably who was there, but there was certainly the *mata ni vanua* role being served.

DAVIES: [00:28:41] I'm sure there was. Yeah, I recall a wailing tent from one of the funerals I attended where the women would just go into the tent and the most blood curdling scream would come out of this tent. The men wouldn't go. The men would be sitting there drinking coffee.

CLARK: [00:28:55] They would drink coffee all day.

DAVIES: [00:28:57] While the women wailed.

CLARK: [00:28:58] Right. There was, I mean, for, they definitely the big ceremonies or funerals, weddings, first birthdays.

DAVIES: [00:29:09] And church holidays?

CLARK: [00:29:11] Church holidays, around Christmas was very, very big. But they could kind of blend in your mind because most of it was sitting and drinking kava.

DAVIES: [00:29:20] Yeah.

CLARK: [00:29:21] There'd be some nuances to the ceremony. And of course, the words would be different. But the procedure was very similar. But, you know, that was a really neat thing about being in the village while finding work and knowing where I could be valuable. Being, you know, barely being as competent as a two year old in terms of Fijian culture and the local politics and dynamics. So quickly realizing, and I don't think I suffered illusions that I was going to be extremely knowledgeable technically to

help out. But while that was a challenge, the benefit was being immersed in the culture. And even though a lot of people in my village went to work six days a week because it was pretty well.

DAVIES: [00:30:19] Did they work in the village or outside the village?

CLARK: [00:30:22] Outside. So in the various resorts.

DAVIES: [00:30:24] Ah, yes.

CLARK: [00:30:26] Because my village was pretty well integrated into the cash economy. And so that makes for an interesting dynamic, right, for a Peace Corps volunteer. So it's not like going into a subsistence setting and figuring out a nice project scope. It's instead trying to figure out what's going to enhance the wellbeing of these communities that, right, they're still immersed in Fijian culture. One foot there, but also one foot in going to work. Going to work every day or six days a week and, you know, having to earn some cash.

DAVIES: [00:31:09] Yeah. And who did you report to?

CLARK: [00:31:11] I reported to a man, so my site supervisor in the village.

DAVIES: [00:31:20] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [00:31:20] So I had a counterpart, a site Fijian counterpart, and then a Fijian supervisor. And so those were the, and they were brothers. So those were the two men who were kind of in charge of putting me to work or keeping me out of trouble. Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:31:39] Interesting. OK. Well, so you spent two years there?

CLARK: [00:31:46] Yes. Yes, I did the two years.

DAVIES: [00:31:48] And do you recall your feelings as you prepared to leave Fiji?

CLARK: [00:31:53] So leaving Fiji. You know, I think that first, after the first year at the halfway point, I definitely had a little bit of a meltdown. And I think I had not quite shed all of my American values around that productivity. And so you're just wondering, wow, this is stressful, right? Because I'm pretty capable. I'm pretty competent in an American setting. And that's, you know, eye-opening about living a cross-cultural life and being immersed, is you don't feel competent.

DAVIES: [00:32:29] You're kind of starting over.

CLARK: [00:32:30] You're starting over. Your jokes aren't funny.

DAVIES: [00:32:34] Especially in another language.

CLARK: [00:32:35] In another language. You got to learn so much in the context, and um.

DAVIES: [00:32:42] I have to share one joke with you.

CLARK: [00:32:44] Of course.

DAVIES: [00:32:45] Since the Fijians used to be cannibals, the last guy to get eaten was the missionary, but their biggest insult is, we wouldn't even want to eat you. And I'd say, oh please, just a little bite.

CLARK: [00:32:55] And I can see, I bet that was funny the entire time.

DAVIES: [00:32:58] Pretty much.

CLARK: [00:32:59] And so it just, it takes learning that. And so at the one year mark, I don't, I didn't think seriously about leaving, but we started with 34 volunteers in our, at the beginning of training, and we finished at the two year mark, I think, with 24. So it was, you know, pretty decent amount lost. And yeah, I feel like that was maybe because it was so uncertain that I think the sites at this time, because Fiji, the program closed down from '98 to 2001 or 2002.

DAVIES: [00:33:40] Oh, that's right, I forgot about that.

CLARK: [00:33:42] And I don't think. I don't know exactly why. I think it might have just been reallocating resources, but then it opened up in I think 2003. So we were the third group after the program reopened. So we were called FRE-3.

DAVIES: [00:33:58] Free three?

CLARK: [00:33:58] F-R-E dash 3, Fiji Re-Entry Three.

DAVIES: [00:34:04] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [00:34:04] Which I think the program has gone back to the more chronological numbers which I think was really great so you had the continuity. So that was really, that was hard for me. And the second year, I guess in a way, I'd say I got it finally. Quit taking myself so seriously, right? Shed that Army command and control that I had been trained to do.

DAVIES: [00:34:36] Oh, oh yeah.

CLARK: [00:34:36] Of moving things forward, of being able to see that progress. And stepping back and saying, let's just, let's just roll with it. What do the folks I'm working with want to work on? I have this little bit of structure at the school. So, great. That made a big difference. So I did know I had at least 15 to 20 hours established, so that second year was just much more relaxing.

DAVIES: [00:35:06] That's good.

CLARK: [00:35:08] And so that coming to the end, you know, there was definitely some relief just because it's, for me being immersed in that Fijian culture and that social communal aspect, which is so awesome, so amazing. But hard for someone who doesn't mind some solitude and solo time. So there was definitely a relief. And definitely also real sadness to be leaving these people I'd gotten real close to, including other volunteers.

DAVIES: [00:35:49] Yeah.

CLARK: [00:35:49] Such an important network of volunteers and fellow teachers and people I worked with in the village, people in some of the non-governmental organizations. You know, I think moving on from anything is really tough in the sort of the emotional cauldron of Peace Corps. I think that's even more, that's even more powerful. So it was a real mix. And I remember, you know, we talked about drinking quite a bit of kava. So even the last day, a fairly large contingent, probably 10 or so, we actually all came to the airport with me and we sat out on a tiny little strip of grass out in the parking lot and had a couple more tanoas, a couple more bowls.

DAVIES: [00:36:43] Bowls of grog, yeah.

CLARK: [00:36:44] Of kava before I went and checked in. So definitely a lot of tears.

DAVIES: [00:36:52] On both sides, yeah.

CLARK: [00:36:53] On both sides. And so, yeah, hard. But it was also, I'll admit, definitely a sense of relief when I got on that plane. And it was just kind of like, wow, OK. It's just such a powerful experience.

DAVIES: [00:37:12] Did they have a nickname for you?

CLARK: [00:37:15] Well, just my name. So Paul in Fijian is Vaula or Paula. So being a biblical name, it's pretty common there too. But it, of course, it sounds like Paula, which takes some getting used to, and the Fijian women, you know, would often singsong-y voice if they were calling out to me as I'm walking down the road. They'd say, Paulaaaaa. And so that still rings in my ear.

DAVIES: [00:37:52] I'm getting tingles just hearing that, because that flashed back.

CLARK: [00:37:55] In my mind, yeah. Yeah, such truly friendly people. And I would say it's, you know, my experience was, of course, once they get to know you and you get to know them, it becomes more sort of the more universal

stand out. Some people don't like you, some people do, and you build some connections.

DAVIES: [00:38:20] Nice. So you got on the plane. Where did you fly to?

CLARK: [00:38:23] So I flew. Let's see, where did I end up flying into? Back into, I believe I went flew into Seattle because, while my home of record was still in Montana, my friend who was borrowing my car lived not too far out of Seattle.

DAVIES: [00:38:45] He gave you the car back?

CLARK: [00:38:47] He did. He did. It was mostly in one piece. He did a pretty good job taking care of it.

DAVIES: [00:38:51] Well, that sounds very Fijian too, what's yours is yours and what's yours is mine.

CLARK: [00:38:55] That's exactly right. Ooh, I like your car means I want that car. Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:39:01] Or can I use it? Yeah.

CLARK: [00:39:02] And so, and it was nice. So I actually stayed with him and his folks for about three days. And I was really glad for that because it was kind of a good transition zone. I really appreciate that they opened up their house for me, just because it's, one, I mean, there's just so much jet lag that you can't quite grasp it.

DAVIES: [00:39:28] Yeah, Fiji is on the international dateline, so.

CLARK: [00:39:30] Exactly. So there's changes of days involved.

DAVIES: [00:39:34] Yeah, that's right. You lose a day going back. Or you gained one.

CLARK: [00:39:38] It was kind of as if you flew forever and it only took an hour of clock time.

DAVIES: [00:39:44] You got back the time you lost when going to Fiji.

CLARK: [00:39:46] Exactly, exactly. And then I made my way back to my hometown of Helena, Montana.

DAVIES: [00:39:53] OK, so I want to stay with those first three days. Any culture shock?

CLARK: [00:40:00] I would, I would say there was definitely a little bit. Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:40:04] Such as?

CLARK: [00:40:05] Just the pace of traffic. And a little bit of, say, the availability of everything.

DAVIES: [00:40:16] Like groceries?

CLARK: [00:40:18] Groceries, yeah. I mean, I could go into Sigatoka on a weekly basis and there were supermarkets there. So. So I would say not, not immediately, not too huge. And we just didn't do much in those first three days. And then also, you know, going back to Montana, it's pretty low-key too, small, fairly small town. But it, I would say the culture shock just. Perhaps the shock is when you're realizing all of the things that you didn't think about before, and what it means to be an American and what we value about ourselves and having such a contrasting cultural context to be able to compare with. Of that really communal setting to the much more nuclear family and individual base, so I think that's it. I think it was sort of a protracted culture shock. But I had some built-in time. I think I got home in August and I didn't start with graduate school again. So Peace Corps was embedded in my graduate school.

DAVIES: [00:41:37] At least it wasn't snowing when you got home.

CLARK: [00:41:39] And it wasn't snowing. It was warm weather. Yeah. So there was quite a bit of time to transition. I didn't have to jump back into hustle bustle or big city life or, so I think that subdued it a little bit.

DAVIES: [00:41:59] And what did you do when you got home?

CLARK: [00:42:01] So I knew I was going to go back to graduate school.

DAVIES: [00:42:04] OK.

CLARK: [00:42:04] So I had one more semester left and I needed to write up my professional paper, which I officially did my research in Fiji. For a long time, I was figuring out, OK, what's it going to be? What's it going to be? And a non-governmental organization did a large project all along that district, and in fact, about five NGOs had done work there in the previous five to 10 years.

DAVIES: [00:42:36] What sort of work?

CLARK: [00:42:37] Environmental. Environmental based work. So waste management, coral gardens. So we're right on the coast with a beautiful reef, as you imagine. But a bit of a degraded reef just because there were villages and resorts all along, all along that coast. So trying to revitalize the reef and the fisheries, and some were governance type issues about how to manage, kind of co-manage those resources. And so one needed to have an independent study done to, I think, apply for future funding about their five year project. And what went well, what didn't? Why was that? So I did 20, 25 interviews with Fijians who were involved in the project.

DAVIES: [00:43:33] Oh, OK. And that resulted in your paper?

CLARK: [00:43:36] And so then I after that, I did that. I wrote up the report for the NGO. That was probably some of my most professional based work that I did there.

DAVIES: [00:43:49] Dealing with other scientists.

CLARK: [00:43:50] Exactly. And so I still along the way. And then after that, I was figuring, well, what do I, what am I going to do my research on? Should I do eco-tourism or what? And then after a while, time keeps passing and I'm like, you know, I think I've done my research.

DAVIES: [00:44:06] Sounds like you lived it, yeah.

CLARK: [00:44:08] And so I looked back, going back to those, right, I mean, observation, the experience, and then going back to those 20, 25 interviews. I realized, well, that's a good amount of information.

DAVIES: [00:44:19] That's a lot of data, yeah.

CLARK: [00:44:20] And continuing to then expand on what were the challenges that these NGOs, which were, you know, mostly Fijians speaking with Fijians. So what were the challenges? Why did some things not work? Why did most things not work?

DAVIES: [00:44:35] Did you come to any conclusions?

CLARK: [00:44:37] Well, in a professional paper, of course, and you've got to finish with more research is needed. But yeah, I did have about 10.

DAVIES: [00:44:45] Yeah.

CLARK: [00:44:45] And one that that comes to mind, and I think it still applies, is the unreasonable pace of change that's expected in philanthropic giving.

DAVIES: [00:44:59] Tell me more about that.

CLARK: [00:45:01] So the expectation is in two to three years, you're going to have a successful project, right? And in a lot of these projects had governance components to them. So behavioral change, structural change tied to the role of women or the role of youth.

DAVIES: [00:45:21] Yeah, cultural change in a chief environment.

CLARK: [00:45:24] Exactly, exactly. And to think that that's going to happen, if some of the solutions. Like bringing back, for instance, fish wardens, which is a traditional role in a Fijian village setting. So bringing back traditional fish wardens to monitor the lagoon, the lagoon area, I think it's a pretty, I think it's a pretty cool idea, but it's a, they're in the cash economy now.

DAVIES: [00:45:54] Yeah, you've got to play the game.

CLARK: [00:45:56] Right. So seeing that as a voluntary position. Well, those people who would be fish wardens, really, there's probably some pressure on them to go make money. So that was just a challenge. And just so, I would think it, you know, it probably takes 10 years if you're trying to build leadership and technical capacity at the local level. It's just almost impossible to do in two or three years.

DAVIES: [00:46:30] You know, it sounds a lot like what you're doing right now.

CLARK: [00:46:33] It is. It very much, um.

DAVIES: [00:46:38] Tell me more about that.

CLARK: [00:46:39] It very much relates. Yeah. You bet. So my current position is with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

DAVIES: [00:46:49] In Alaska.

CLARK: [00:46:49] In Alaska. So I'm the program manager for the Alaska Region Program. And Alaska region is just that, it's the state of Alaska. And so our role is to help community led outdoor recreation and conservation projects.

DAVIES: [00:47:06] Community led.

CLARK: [00:47:07] Community led.

DAVIES: [00:47:08] Non-governmental.

CLARK: [00:47:08] Right. Right. They can be governed, they can be governmentally led. But it's the key thing is, it's not the National Park Service. It's not, we're not the leaders of it. So it's very much like Peace Corps in the aspect that we're coming in, that kind of coincidentally for two years often, and working with a community group to plan, design, and construct new trails. And we haven't done too much of it, but do like watershed management plan. It's really up to the community, so they apply for our assistance. Instead of getting money, they get our time. So it's a grant.

DAVIES: [00:47:50] That's kind of like Fiji or Peace Corps.

CLARK: [00:47:52] It is very much so, just like Peace Corps where an organization needs to request hosting a Peace Corps volunteer. Same with the RTCA program. We get applications and then we go work with that project champion out in the community, figure out what she or he wants to do. We try to. And I think I'd be such a better Peace Corps volunteer now having this experience.

DAVIES: [00:48:19] Oh, I have to agree with that. But, you know, it is what it is.

CLARK: [00:48:22] It's humbling. But I think having that Peace Corps volunteer experience has really helped shape my perspective on how to go in and work with these communities. So we're working with small rural communities in Alaska, um, different tribal communities, one out in St. Paul Island, which is one of the Pribilof Islands in the middle of the Bering Sea.

DAVIES: [00:48:51] Oh boy.

CLARK: [00:48:51] So a number of, right, the kind of flexibility and adaptability and learning. Learning that local context that we all have to do as Peace Corps volunteers, are some of the key competencies to serving in this kind of community planning role.

DAVIES: [00:49:09] Well, I met some of the native Alaskans, but at least everybody speaks English, so you've got a little bit more common ground.

CLARK: [00:49:15] Sure, sure. Although in Fiji, that was mostly the case, although they didn't operate between each other in English for the most part.

DAVIES: [00:49:24] Because English was the national language, right?

CLARK: [00:49:26] Right.

DAVIES: [00:49:26] And the villages maintain their own dialects.

CLARK: [00:49:29] Exactly. So yeah, it was. So yes, it's different there. But in some Alaska Native communities, you know, it's helped me be able to open my eyes and see, OK, what are the structural differences if I'm working in downtown Anchorage versus if I'm working in Togiak in the Bristol Bay area?

DAVIES: [00:49:51] And what would be some of those differences?

CLARK: [00:49:54] Communication and the pace, the kind of expectations.

DAVIES: [00:50:00] Transportation's got to be an issue here.

CLARK: [00:50:03] It's expensive and, I mean, some of our projects are because transportation is a challenge, so most are using four wheelers.

DAVIES: [00:50:13] No dog sleds?

CLARK: [00:50:18] Not as much, no. Snow machines have pretty much taken their place.

DAVIES: [00:50:22] So they've gone modern too.

CLARK: [00:50:24] Yes.

DAVIES: [00:50:25] And they have TV?

CLARK: [00:50:26] Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. And I mean, certainly cell phones. I'm behind the times with some of the younger professionals I'm working with out there. They laugh at my iPhone 5.

DAVIES: [00:50:39] At least not a flip phone.

CLARK: [00:50:41] So, but yeah, there are so many parallels between I feel like trying to be effective as a Peace Corps volunteer and trying to be effective in providing this technical assistance to community groups that are, you know, they have.

DAVIES: [00:51:02] The government officials. Yeah, interesting. So why don't we refresh on the three goals of the Peace Corps? First was to learn about another country while being there, which you pretty well explained that. The second goal is coming back here and sharing what you know about Fiji with other people. How have you done that?

CLARK: [00:51:21] Yeah, good. So part of that was kind of embedded thanks to it being part of my graduate program. So I wrote a, waxed philosophic in my professional paper for a hundred plus pages. But what was, I think, pretty telling for me. So I'll step back. So I also presented to a couple of other college classes and I was a teaching assistant, so I got to. [coughs] Excuse me, sip of water here.

DAVIES: [00:51:52] Yeah, I was wondering too, whether you did any recruiting for the Peace Corps?

CLARK: [00:51:59] Informally, simply. Never in a paid position or on the university campus.

DAVIES: [00:52:08] OK.

CLARK: [00:52:09] No. But I definitely have talked with several people. There's one friend of ours who is in Ecuador now. You know, she certainly came to

that decision on her own, but certainly talked with her quite a bit about my experience and what was challenging and what was amazingly rewarding.

DAVIES: [00:52:31] So on a daily basis, how often might the thought of Fiji even come up? Or daily or how often does it?

CLARK: [00:52:38] How often? I would say it's never too far away. So it's, let's see. I got back in 2007. So it's 12 years, almost exactly 12 years, and it does not seem like that long ago. It was, I think, just such a powerful experience. So it's.

DAVIES: [00:52:59] Like a snapshot in time.

CLARK: [00:53:01] It is. So I think it, it really changed who I am, I guess.

DAVIES: [00:53:09] In what way?

CLARK: [00:53:11] I think around the cultural, about taking it easy, not taking things too seriously, questioning the focus on achievement and productivity that, you know, I was certainly very driven and got good grades and, you know, successfully found jobs and all. And just to be able to step back from that and, right, not judge myself too much or others. And in, you know, I mean, especially in the current times, there's so much talk about different cultures and clashes and tensions. Experiencing the Peace Corps for me, right? Because it was hard to be, I mean, I guess it's the first time where I was mainly prejudged based on the color of my skin.

DAVIES: [00:54:19] Oh. And you were in the minority.

CLARK: [00:54:21] And I was very much in the minority. And so, you know, after a hundred years of colonization and the post-colonial construct still being strong of the white guy coming in and having all the ideas and having all the money and being in a tourist area. So for those who didn't know I was there, you know, would assume I was a tourist, which makes sense.

DAVIES: [00:54:46] Or a local European.

CLARK: [00:54:47] Right, right. An I wasn't there for too long in the scheme of things, right? Two years, it feels long to us, but it's a blink of an eye for the folks who are going to live there their whole lives. So, you know, I just think that's something that everyone needs to experience. I really think it would be valuable, because you come to an understanding of, OK, well, here's why they feel that way. Here's some ways that they're right, and there's a lot of ways where they're not right because they don't. They don't know who I am.

DAVIES: [00:55:26] Yeah.

CLARK: [00:55:27] And just that colonial construct. So the expectation that, well, this guy's got lots of money and, it was tough to work through. I struggled with that because I was, you know, perhaps because I studied the culture a lot being in graduate school before going.

DAVIES: [00:55:46] Well, since you've been back, have you gotten any letters from people there or requests for aid or assistance or money or?

CLARK: [00:55:54] I got a, I got a love letter. And if you can remember, you don't know anyone's name, like in general. There's a few people, but you're not often, people aren't calling you. They're not saying, hey Jack, hey Paul. And so like, I don't know who the woman is, but I did get a love letter. And then on a much sadder note, I got two messages, some emails, that two of the guys I work closest with died in their mid-forties.

DAVIES: [00:56:26] Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. These were Fijians?

CLARK: [00:56:27] Fijians, yeah. So the teacher that I was really close with and my Fijian side counterpart, both died. So that's been, that's, yeah, that's been tough.

DAVIES: [00:56:44] Where did you meet your wife?

CLARK: [00:56:45] Meet my wife? Well, that was here in Alaska.

DAVIES: [00:56:47] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [00:56:48] So moved up to Alaska in 2008 as a presidential management fellow. So a federal government program as a way to recruit people finishing up a graduate degree of some sort. And I worked for the Forest Service from 2008 to 2015. And in 2010, through mutual friends, we were introduced.

DAVIES: [00:57:11] Nice.

CLARK: [00:57:11] And yeah, late 2010, then got married in 2012.

DAVIES: [00:57:17] And you have children?

CLARK: [00:57:18] We have two children, age six and three.

DAVIES: [00:57:23] Wow.

CLARK: [00:57:24] So yeah, quite a, in a sense a quick change for me. I tell you.

DAVIES: [00:57:27] Well, that's culture shock.

CLARK: [00:57:29] That is. That is culture shock.

DAVIES: [00:57:32] What have you taught the kids about Fiji?

CLARK: [00:57:34] Oh, you know.

DAVIES: [00:57:36] Do they sit on the floor and eat out of bowls?

CLARK: [00:57:39] Well, they'll definitely have no problem eating with their hands, sitting cross-legged with me on the ground.

DAVIES: [00:57:47] Would you let them drink kava?

CLARK: [00:57:50] You bet.

DAVIES: [00:57:50] Yeah?

CLARK: [00:57:51] Yeah.

DAVIES: [00:57:51] Even at this age?

CLARK: [00:57:52] Sure. Yeah, sure. They're not going to drink too much of it because we'll say it's an acquired taste, I guess. And I think maybe you don't even acquire it. You just, you put up with it.

DAVIES: [00:58:02] Yeah, it tastes pretty bad.

CLARK: [00:58:04] And you drink a lot of it. But I taught him a little [speaks Fijian].

DAVIES: [00:58:08] OK. That's got to be cute.

CLARK: [00:58:11] It is, and you can see they're sponges, their pronunciation, right? I'd love to go immerse them in it, and they'd have a great time running around with the.

DAVIES: [00:58:20] Think you'll ever take them to Fiji?

CLARK: [00:58:22] I do. I do.

DAVIES: [00:58:23] Wouldn't that be great. Don't wait too long.

CLARK: [00:58:28] Well, it's true. Just, uh.

DAVIES: [00:58:30] Before they turn into teenagers. I'm sorry.

CLARK: [00:58:34] If, especially if we go, my wife actually got a master's degree in New Zealand, so she's got friends in New Zealand and Australia, so we could make a big South Pacific expedition. And I would definitely love to spend some time, but I do want them to be a little older to really have a sense of the experience.

DAVIES: [00:58:57] To appreciate what they're experiencing. Yeah.

CLARK: [00:59:00] Right, right.

DAVIES: [00:59:00] Teenagers might just tune it out and sit there and watch TV the whole time.

CLARK: [00:59:04] Exactly. Or be like, this is lame, and then only appreciate it. You know, it's going to depend on the person. My older son is extremely social. I've met a lot of interesting and new people at the airport.

DAVIES: [00:59:16] And so they've met Fijians?

CLARK: [00:59:18] No, no. Just anyone. No, I don't think.

DAVIES: [00:59:22] Is there a large Fijian community here?

CLARK: [00:59:25] Not to my knowledge. There's a large Samoan population here and how that got started, I'm not sure, but that especially in the Anchorage area, that Samoan population is pretty substantial.

DAVIES: [00:59:39] Yeah, I recall that a lot of the Fijians immigrated to Vancouver rather than Seattle, apparently it was easier to get into Canada.

CLARK: [00:59:46] Vancouver? OK. When I was in Fiji, Sacramento seemed to be the most common landing spot.

DAVIES: [00:59:54] I believe that too. I'm from Sacramento and, yeah, we've hosted a lot of immigrants.

CLARK: [01:00:00] That's most people would say, oh yes, I have a cousin in Sacramento. Yes, Sacramento, California. And so, yeah, have not. Have not met a Fijian, well, since being in Alaska.

DAVIES: [01:00:21] Oh, OK. Might be a little cold for their blood up here. Too cold for me.

CLARK: [01:00:26] Well, it could, but Samoa is a pretty similar climate and, you know, they managed. I think it's, I think just with that, I feel like with the

communal nature of the culture and similar with someone in Tonga. Probably if a few get settled, it's more likely that more family members and broader kinship groups will come in. So, yeah, Anchorage is, doesn't seem to have been a destination yet for.

DAVIES: [01:00:55] Yeah. Well, now that you mentioned it, I've met all kinds of Fijians, Fijians and Fiji Indians. A lot of them drive bus at the airport and so on. And their English is very good and they're very, very friendly people.

CLARK: [01:01:07] They sure are.

DAVIES: [01:01:07] That's why they call them the friendly islands.

CLARK: [01:01:09] Although I think my, because they are so friendly, friendly up front, that I felt like it was a true sign of respect and to where my language skills had gotten when they said, hmm, you're Fijian skills aren't very good.

DAVIES: [01:01:25] Really, they'd actually say that?

CLARK: [01:01:26] They said it, and I felt like, wow, that was the best compliment you could give me!

DAVIES: [01:01:32] Really?

CLARK: [01:01:32] Instead of [speaks Fijian], right? Oh, you're so, you're so smart. You're so smart in the Fijian language because you said *bula*. To where they said like, hmm, that sounds, what?

DAVIES: [01:01:43] I remember them saying one time, oh, you speak the good pidgin Fijian?

CLARK: [01:01:48] Right.

DAVIES: [01:01:49] Very broken.

CLARK: [01:01:50] And that's where you knew. That's where you knew that you had made it to level two, at least.

DAVIES: [01:01:55] Yeah. But that's what endeared them to us or vice versa.

CLARK: [01:01:58] Right.

DAVIES: [01:01:59] Wow. Well, what an experience you had many years after I was there. So we talked about how you got into the Peace Corps, what you did there, and what you're doing now. Anything else you'd like to add?

CLARK: [01:02:10] Oh, no, it's so fun. I'm glad I had a little advance notice that I would be talking about it just because it's, as I say, it's like the language is rusty. But I do think about it a lot, and I stay in touch with a core group of volunteers on a very regular basis.

DAVIES: [01:02:36] How many volunteers are around here?

CLARK: [01:02:38] Oh, not in this area, just via Facebook, via text messaging. So some of my cohort. There is an RPCV group here in Anchorage.

DAVIES: [01:02:50] Oh, OK.

CLARK: [01:02:50] That seems to be pretty active.

DAVIES: [01:02:52] Oh, that's nice. Yeah. Well, we're going to have a Peace Corps Fiji reunion in Sacramento one day, and you're more than welcome to join us.

CLARK: [01:02:58] I would love to.

DAVIES: [01:02:59] Well, Paul, it's been very nice talking with you. Thank you, and good luck to you.

CLARK: [01:03:02] You as well, Jack. Thank you.

DAVIES: [01:03:04] All right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]