



The FBI Oral History Project

An initiative sponsored by
The Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI
and the Former Agents of the FBI Foundation
www.socxfbi.org



INTERVIEW OF

Former Special Agent of the FBI

GABRIELLE BURGER
Years of FBI Service 1982 – 2006

Interviewed on June 11, 2009

By Stanley A. Pimentel

© Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, Inc. 2009

**Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Gabrielle Burger (1982 – 2006)
Interviewed by Stanley A. Pimentel
On June 11, 2009**

Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on July 17, 2009. Final edit with Ms. Burger's corrections made by Sandra Robinette on August 10, 2009.

Stanley A. Pimentel: Today is June 11, 2009. And I'm here with Gabrielle Burger. Miss Burger has read the Copyright Release and Background form and has signed it. And, anyway, Gabe, if you would be so kind as to tell us your early life. Where were you born and raised, and your early schooling?

Gabrielle Burger: I was born in 1950 in Zurich, Switzerland. My parents had fled from Romania to Switzerland and were there in a refugee camp. Then they immigrated to Windsor, Ontario, Canada, when I was one and a half, so late 1951. I grew up in Windsor, Ontario. Went to grade school, high school, and actually went to the University of Windsor, and graduated from there. A little bit late because I was three courses from my degree and went back to school and finished up in 1978, after I was married and had my children.

Pimentel: How many children did you have?

Burger: I have two daughters.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: They're age 36 and 34 now.

Pimentel: You went to college, where?

Burger: University of Windsor.

Pimentel: Oh, okay. That's in Canada.

Burger: Right. In Windsor, Ontario.

Pimentel: And what major [did you] major in up there?

Burger: Social Sciences, Sociology, Psychology.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 2

Pimentel: And when did you move to the States?

Burger: I moved to the States in 1970. Met a boy down in Florida, on spring break, and we decided to get married and move to Indianapolis, and got married.

Pimentel: Oh, okay. And how did you get in the Bureau?

Burger: I remembered reading, in 1972, when the first female Agent got in. It was big news. It was, I think, front page news in *The Indianapolis Star*. And I always thought “wow, wouldn’t that be a neat thing to be an FBI Agent in the Bureau.” But I always thought “well, that would never happen to me.”

But then I met an Agent. I was working as a Probation Officer for Hamilton County Courthouse and, for two Superior Court Judges, and we had a golf classic. There was an FBI Agent there by the name of John Gray. He and I spoke for about an hour and I told him how I felt not challenged by what I was doing. He said, “Well, why don’t you put in for the FBI? If you like doing criminal backgrounds and that, this is the place for you.” So I put in my application and was accepted and got in a Training Class in 1982.

Pimentel: Okay. 1982. When did you start the Training Class?

Burger: My EOD was September 27, 1982.

Pimentel: Okay. So when you got married in Indianapolis and you started working for the Probation Office there ...

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: ... in Indianapolis.

Burger: Uh-huh.

Pimentel: And, at that time, that’s when you met John Gray and talked to him.

Burger: Right. But at that time, I was divorced and had custody of my two daughters.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: And I remember my Agent interview clear as a bell. The three Agents, the very first question they asked me, when I sat down, was could I kill someone? And I said, "If you train me, I'll do it if it means, you know, protecting a fellow Agent or victims." They also asked me what was I going to do with my daughters while I was in sixteen weeks training. And my parents had agreed to come stay with them. And my ex-husband was certainly going to help out too.

Pimentel: Okay. So you, you EOD'd on 9/27/82. And, after training, went to where? First Office.

Burger: Back to Indianapolis. I was in the program where you went back to your original office for six months. And then you were transferred to a small to medium office for eighteen months, which I went to Minneapolis. And then after that, after eighteen months, you were transferred to your Top Ten, as it was known back in those days. And I was transferred to Chicago.

Pimentel: Okay. You got to Chicago when?

Burger: Nineteen eighty-four. December of '84.

Pimentel: So within two years you were First Office, Second Office ...

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: ... and then your Top Ten Office.

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: Any great cases? Any outstanding, or, what I want to say is any historical or major case you worked on in Indianapolis?

Burger: I was on the Bank Robbery Squad in Indianapolis. And it so happened that the way they assigned cases, like each bank robbery, it was just in, you know, Agent order. And he put me last because my Supervisor, at the time, since I was a New Agent, he said, "Let her get the experience." So, when it came my turn, it was the largest bank robbery in Indianapolis history, which, at that time, back in '83, was a hundred and ten thousand.

Pimentel: Hmmm!

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 4

Burger: So I got to work that. And made numerous arrests. And I actually got to work on a drug case in Evansville, Indiana. It wasn't my case. It was Bill Blacketter's case.

But when I was transferred to Minneapolis, [I] got to work in Rapid City, South Dakota, and we actually took down the drug lab in Rapid City. So it was kind of fun to start working on the case in Evansville, Indiana. Then it proceeded on and we got to, you know, finally take down the lab (a spin off case).

And I worked bank robberies in Minneapolis, too. That's where I had my first trial. Had my first case solved, a father and son bank robber team. And caught them, arrested them, got them convicted at their trial. One got eight years and one got six years. Frank Noel was the AUSA (Assistant US Attorney) who prosecuted the case.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: Good. Any other, you worked BRs the whole time you were in ...

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: Minneapolis, then.

Burger: Right. Right.

Pimentel: The BR Squad like in Miami, when I came in, was usually what we called the palace guard, the SACs chosen few that, the cigar smokers, that would be any kidnapping or BR that they would be the ones ...

Burger: Yep.

Pimentel: ... that ...

Burger: Yep. Dick Blay was my SAC. And he ...

Pimentel: That was where? Minneapolis or ...

Burger: Yeah.

Pimentel: ... Indy?

Burger: John McGinley was my SAC in Indianapolis.

Pimentel: Oh yeah.

Burger: Great guy. I had only been there one week and he knew, well, it was only a 55-Agent Field Office at that time. Indianapolis. But he knew everybody's name, how many kids you had, what your situation was. Mr. McGinley had great interpersonal skills.

The very first Friday I was there, the SAC had a meeting every Friday in the bullpen of all the Agents, and I was pretty, you know, green then, didn't know anything. And all of a sudden he said, "Well, we've called you together, not just for the ordinary Bureau thing, but we're celebrating somebody's birthday." And all of a sudden you heard *clink clink* down the hall and here comes a belly dancer. [She] did a belly dance for, can't think of his name, the White Collar Supervisor. Anyway, I said, you know, right then I said "I'm gonna like the FBI!"

Pimentel: That's good. Okay. Then you're in Minneapolis, and then to Chicago?

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: And in Chicago, what did you do?

Burger: As soon as I got there I was assigned to the Public Corruption Squad and got to work on Operation Greylord. And Bill Megary headed that. And it was really, really exciting stuff because they ended up taking down, I want to say thirty-three judges, and bailiffs and numerous people involved, clerks involved in bribery of the court system. So it was really a great case to be working on.

And then we worked on another public corruption case, I can't think of the name of it right now. The SAC right now in either Springfield or Buffalo, Karen Spangenberg, was the undercover female Agent on that case. And he had been involved with the mob, had killed a couple people, and we did kind of round-the-clock witness protection type thing. And we also got to review all transcripts for that case.

Pimentel: Do you know the name of that case?

Burger: I'll have to think of it. It had a code name, too. I may think of it. But if not, I've got my books.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 6

Pimentel: That's okay. Have you, speaking of books, have you written any articles or things like memoirs or anything like that?

Burger: No. I have not, but many people have encouraged me to do that. So, before it's all over and done with, I, I probably will.

Pimentel: Don't forget to think of the Oral History Project ...

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: ...and keep us in mind.

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: I don't know if I explained to you, I think I did over the phone, that all of these are eventually going to end up at the National Law Enforcement Memorial Museum which hasn't been built yet.

Burger: Right. That's exciting.

Pimentel: There's just an agreement between the Society and those folks to use it as a repository for all the law enforcement interviews.

Burger: That's great. So our memories live on.

Pimentel: That's correct.

Burger: I'm excited about that.

Pimentel: And in Chicago?

Burger: Then I went from working Public Corruption to Foreign Counterintelligence, because I'm a Romanian speaker and I was a native speaker. So I worked on the Russian Squad, working Russia and Eastern Europe, everything but Polish and Chinese. So got to work a lot of those kinds of cases. Had some recruitments in place and lots of great stuff that I vowed to never talk about.

Pimentel: Right. That's true. Can't talk about it. Any arrests on that, on, on the FCI side? That you can talk about?

Burger: Actually, yes.

Burger: One of the only arrests I can talk about is, there was a Yugoslav diplomat who, and it was an actual Custom's case because he had money laundered, worked with another accomplice, and was trying to leave the Chicago area and Customs called us in. And gave us a lead on Wednesday afternoon, 3:30, gave us a photo and said, "FBI can you take over? Can you locate him?" So my car partner and I drove out to Palwaukee Airport and found him at a gas station and arrested him and took him into custody. And it was on Peter Jennings, international nightly news, and it was exciting stuff.

Pimentel: Sure.

Burger: When I cuffed him, he said, "What am I under arrest for?" And I said, "I'll tell ya later." And that went on international news.

Pimentel: Oh geeze. (Laughing)

Burger: It was nothing but it just goes to show you when, you know, when the cameras are on you, 'cause all the cameras were on and you know, I didn't, you want to make sure you aren't cuffing him too tight, you're not doing abusive things.

Pimentel: How'd the press find out about it?

Burger: Well, you know the press. They knew before us where he was at.

Pimentel: (Laughing) Incredible.

Burger: Uhm-hmm.

Pimentel: Anything else, any other arrests on the FCI side that you worked there?

Burger: No, because, you know, in those days that's the last thing you want to do. You wanted to get those guys working on your side.

Pimentel: Exactly. So after, how long were you in Chicago?

Burger: I was in Chicago until 1992. I had in that time, I had married another FBI Agent in Chicago, and he got a transfer to a desk at Headquarters. So I was transferred to WFO. And worked FCI at WFO, worked the establishments. Worked for Lenny Friesen, CI-16. And that's where I got into the Relief Program and got to be Primary Relief.

Burger: And that's when I met the folks at OLIA because we co-chaired a big conference. Jim Wong and Ricky Shapiro decided to put this conference on for all the embassies, where we called in the head of the Metropolitan Police, the head of the Park Police, the head of all the various law enforcement agencies, to try to explain to the embassy liaison folks what the jurisdictions were and explain to them who did what in Washington so it wouldn't be so confusing to them.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: So that's when I met Ricky and he talked to me about OLIA and said someday you need to come, get here, so.

Pimentel: Yeah. Ricky was, by then, I think was a Unit, wasn't he the Unit Chief for Foreign Liaison?

Burger: He was.

Pimentel: I thought so. And he replaced Payne. Yes.

Burger: And you were Al Finch's boss. And Al Finch told me to tell you hi.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: He's working on contract at the ...

Pimentel: At Headquarters?

Burger: At the Counterterrorism Watch Center.

Pimentel: Oh, okay. That's good. Old names from the past.

Burger: So then I was, my ex-, he's an ex-husband now, he was transferred, he got a desk in San Diego, so we went out there and that's where I worked Counterterrorism. And, I'll tell you, that was exciting stuff. Worked for Steve Hancock and we actually worked, probably, close associates to the 9-11 hijackers.

Pimentel: Yes. Because somewhere, two of them had been out in the San Diego area.

Burger: Exactly.

Pimentel: You don't remember their names do you?

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 9

Burger: I remember following them into the desert when they did their firearms practice.

Pimentel: Really?

Burger: We were driving cars a hundred miles an hour from San Diego to El Centro and they practiced out in the desert. And the FBI Agent in front of me was driving a Corvette, and his hood flew off.

Pimentel: Ohhh!

Burger: It's lucky we weren't killed.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: Driving at that speed and everything. But, and, you know, watched them all. But, you know, I'm trying to think of the Agent who had that, who was the Case Agent, but he tried to convince the Bureau for a good long time, the importance of that situation and what was going on. But, you know, you were hard pressed to get anything going ... his name was Bob Cellum (?SP).

Pimentel: Exactly.

Burger: ... in those days. That was '94 to '95.

Pimentel: That's come out, I think, in the 9-11 Commission Report.

Burger: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.

Pimentel: We didn't connect the dots.

Burger: Exactly.

Pimentel: So we knew about these guys being here, or at least two of them, and, well possibly, and Mousawi, of course.

Burger: Uhm-hmm.

Pimentel: Because he was taking ...

Burger: Flying lessons.

Pimentel: ... flying lessons.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 10

Burger: Exactly.

Pimentel: And we just didn't connect the dots.

Burger: Right. Well, some connected the dots.

Pimentel: Yeah. Some.

Burger: Their voices were a whisper, you know.

Pimentel: Yeah. Exactly. So they would go, drive all the way out there to do firearms training?

Burger: Yes. And then one of my subjects was living in a business storefront in La Jolla. And I had the guy on, you know, immigration violations and residing in a business location.

Pimentel: You could have picked him up on Immigration violation.

Burger: I talked to Immigration and, plus, you know, you couldn't do that legally.

Pimentel: No.

Burger: You couldn't live in a store, you know, in a business front. And so I talked to Immigration. We were to go in, we were going to talk to him and we were to meet at seven AM and go in. And they went in a half hour before me, didn't ask the right questions and released him.

Pimentel: Geez!

Burger: You know. And what do you do?! I mean, I've worked with Custom Agents that have been great. You know, you have the good, the bad, the ugly ... all during your career.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: So. I, in fact, in Chicago, working with the XXXXX, I had a fantastic informant that I got to turn over to them. It was, it was a sweet deal for everybody. Everybody, it was a win-win. So, you can either take situations, you make 'em win-win or you can ...

Pimentel: **(Unintel)**. What was it, when they went in to the storefront place that he just wouldn't talk, or he wasn't there, or what?

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 11

Burger: He was there and just lied.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: They didn't ask all the questions ...

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: ... I would've asked.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: So. And I had the whole background. They didn't have absolutely everything.

Pimentel: Right. And, of course, we were, you know, we weren't deporting people or arresting people for deportation.

Burger: Right. And they didn't care.

Pimentel: Yes.

Burger: They didn't care.

Pimentel: Nobody cares. Anyway. So then you were in San Diego how long?

Burger: One year.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: And then I got a Grade 14, you know, a Supervisor, Program Manager's job, back at the Office of International Operations.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: And worked for Ricky.

Pimentel: That's right. OLIA.

Burger: OLIA.

Pimentel: Well, they had changed it from OLIA to OIA, yet, didn't they?

Burger: OIA and then LIAS (Liaison, International Affairs Service).

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 12

Pimentel: Yeah. (Laughing)

Burger: And all kinds of names.

Pimentel: Yeah. So you worked for, yeah, I remember working for Ricky Shapiro. When did you come back? Ninety-five, then?

Burger: Ninety-five.

Pimentel: Okay. And you worked for him for how long?

Burger: I stayed there till '98.

Pimentel: Okay. And you had liaison with whom?

Burger: I had the European, Eastern-European countries.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: But even that changed. I also had Middle-East.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: You know, we switched around. It wasn't like it is now. They didn't have separated units, you know.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: I mean, they had the two sides.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: One and Two.

Pimentel: Right. When I was there it was Domestic Liaison and INTERPOL and the Foreign Liaison.

Burger: Right. And one side was Europe and Russia.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: And the other side was, and, did we have, we didn't have China then. The other side was South America and the Pacific Rim countries.

Pimentel: Ohh, that's right.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 13

Burger: We had, yeah, in the Pacific Rim. They had South America and Pacific Rim and we had the Europe.

Pimentel: That's right. Yeah. So, anything exciting while you were there in that Unit?

Burger: Well, that was the time when I got to work on an Initiative. It was called Southeastern European Cooperative Initiative; and affectionately known as SECI. And I got to work directly with State Department Ambassador Richard Schifter. And I was going, that was at the time Mike diPreto, Alan Ringgold ...

Pimentel: diPreto, yeah.

Burger: ... and the Director assigned me to work with Ambassador Schifter. So I was going over to Romania where we were convincing eleven countries to form an international organization to combat cross-border crime. So I was in on the ground, you know, from ground up and actually got to decide right where it was going to be. And put the floor plan in and got every, you know, the countries to sign this agreement. It was, it was very exciting.

Pimentel: There was another Agent that worked in that, with Ambassador Schifter. Wasn't there?

Burger: Another Agent?

Pimentel: Yeah. Or former Agent? No?

Burger: Not at the beginning.

Pimentel: Oh, okay. Maybe not.

Burger: Not at the beginning. It was later.

Pimentel: Yeah. Okay.

Burger: Yeah. Yeah. Later. And then, then I got a desk in Oakland. I got the OC-Drug Desk in Oakland, out of San Francisco, in '98. I was there a year and then they decided to open Romania, Bucharest. And so I was selected to open the Bucharest Office. And that's when Julianne Slifco had left Vienna.

Pimentel: Yes. How was working OC-Drugs in Oakland?

Burger: Great.

Pimentel: Was it?

Burger: I still tell people, being a Field Supervisor, nobody should skip that.

Pimentel: Yes.

Burger: That step. It's so exciting and I had a great squad. But the trouble was, the average tenure on the squad was three and a half years experience in the Bureau.

Pimentel: Geez.

Burger: Yeah. I had never worked drugs in my career. But I think what you get is I was so intent to learn about drugs and that, you know, and I thought they should be doing some of the basic things. But some of them are too, you know, they thought they were too sophisticated for that. And so I got to show them firsthand that sometimes you have to get back to grassroots.

Because we'd had two of the cousins of Areano Felix in San Francisco and they were supposedly supposed to be at school there. And the guys kept telling me "oh, we need a dirty call, we need a dirty call." And I said, "Well, let's find out if they're even going to classes or what's going on with their apartment." My secretary and I actually went to the apartment to see if they were there and talk to the neighbors, my agents were kind of, you know, they were afraid to talk to people. It was kind of like the FCI syndrome; like talk around it but don't... So we went and the neighbor said, "They moved in the middle of the night."

Pimentel: Geez.

Burger: They'd had numerous parties and what happened is, one of his lieutenants got shot and Areano Felix, he called everybody back to Mexico. And had we done something, you know, got something going on those guys, I think we, you know, might have had some input to their activities.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: You know.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 15

Burger: You never know.

Pimentel: You never know. Exactly.

Burger: It's the fish that got away.

Pimentel: Right. Anything else in Oakland?

Burger: No. Worked for Bruce Gebhardt, a year. As soon as I got there, we were inspected, you know, and I'd only been there twenty-four hours and had to do a 200-page Interrogatory. And I hadn't been there long enough to know what the squad had been doing.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: But all a learning process, which is good.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: I had ended up doing two inspections. Did one for Chicago and one for, and I don't know if they counted it two to this day, Singapore and Bangkok.

Pimentel: Uhm-hmm.

Burger: That was fun.

Pimentel: Well, you told me you went to Romania in ...?

Burger: Opened the office in '99, late '99, well, December 31st, '99. So actually 2000.

Pimentel: One-man office?

Burger: No, actually two. I had an ALAT (Assistant Legal Attaché).

Pimentel: Oh.

Burger: And an OA (Office Assistant).

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: And my first ALAT was actually Andy Bingaman, who is now deceased. Died at 43 of cancer. Sad.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 16

Pimentel: Sad, yes. Yes. And anything major occurred in Romania? Did you have a road trip, first of all?

Burger: What do you mean road trip?

Pimentel: Did you have anything else besides Romania?

Burger: Moldova.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: Lots of exciting things. Romania is fifth on the charts for cyber crime. Worst, you know, they fluctuated between, I think, third and fifth, and we actually got to work with the Romanian Police, in that Sean Henry, who is now AD in Cyber Crime, came out and gave the Romanians a plan to fight cyber crime.

Pimentel: Hmmm!

Burger: Sean Henry (now AD) and Brad Scheaf (now resigned) came over in 2002 and I had them meet with everybody from the Senators on down to the PD, different agencies, even the Intelligence Service. They left us with an eight-point memorandum of what the Romanians needed to do to help combat cyber crime in their country. The Romanians followed it to a tee, opened up their files to us, and we worked side-by-side on cases; brought people over from the field office. One of the biggest cases we had – [which] the Director mentioned, you know, frequently - was the South Pole servers, where the ...

Pimentel: South Pole?

Burger: South Pole server where the Romanian subject had hacked into the South Pole server, you know, where there's a scientific establishment there ...

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: ... and we got to show them how to flip, you know, the bad guy.

Burger: And also another big case worked a parental kidnapping. Where the Ambassador of Yemen, in Romania, had kidnapped his daughter from his ex-wife who had custody. He had married a U.S. citizen; they'd had a child, they got divorced, she brought the child over to Yemen, and he kept her. So when he was assigned over to Bucharest as the Ambassador, the wife came back and she snatched her from the school yard. And so we worked two weeks getting the mother and child back to the U.S.

Burger: All the Arab nations met one night. So the Ambassador, the U.S. Ambassador in Romania, was, he was in fear of my life, his life, everybody, he said, "I don't want to know where you've got her hidden!" You know.

Pimentel: Yeah. **(Unintel)** just checking to see that it wasn't hidden...

Burger: And, it ended successfully. The mother took the child. I don't know that those are win-win situations, you know.

Pimentel: I don't think they ever are.

Burger: Yeah, but the daughter said, after it was all over, she said, "I hope I grow up to be an FBI Agent. This has been the most exciting thing." And worked with an attorney there who helped the family and convinced her to become a prosecutor to work for the system. So it was good.

Pimentel: Sure.

Burger: Good work. Returned a painting back to New York. It was valued at two million dollars, and the Romanians returned it. It was stolen in 1987; a New York case. Lots of great cases. And they let us, you know, just come into their offices and work side-by-side. So, it wasn't a matter of just liaison ...

Pimentel: Right. Right.

Burger: ... it was working together. And actually put through, I was there four years, put 16 police officers through the NA, FBI National Academy. And they are now, the ones that are retired, are helping me with my PI business.

Pimentel: Hmmm!

Burger: I give them leads for Romania and they ...

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 18

Pimentel: They cover them.

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: That's one nice thing about being, having been in the Legat circuit. If you maintain contacts ...

Burger: Uhm-hmm.

Pimentel: ... you know, keep those contacts, they come in handy when you're working something after you've retired.

Burger: Ohhh, and I'll be going to the NA Retrainer. It's being hosted in Bucharest, October 3rd to the 7th. So I'll be going.

Pimentel: Were you involved with the school in Budapest?

Burger: No. I wasn't. What I did in Romania was I organized a reunion of all the Romanians who attended ILEA. And I organized the very first, and consequently, three reunions of the Budapest, the students, and introduced them to the FBINA grads, to get a more cohesive group, and brought in the Romanian executives to meet these guys so that they understood what they had, you know, their resources were right under foot.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: And ended up where the Romanian Police executives then started using the FBINA and ILEA experience. They put it on the matrix for promotion, for the officers.

Pimentel: Uhm-hmm.

Burger: It was great.

Pimentel: Any other thing in Romania?

Burger: On a personal note, when my parents fled there, and just before my mother died - and I hounded my parents, I was an only child, I thought, but I hounded them all my life and said, "Why didn't you give me a brother or sister?" My mum, just before she died, told me she had been married before in Romania; had had a son, and left him with the father. And so the Chief of Organized Crime, when I was assigned there as Legat, helped me find my brother.

Pimentel: Ohhh! That was nice!

Burger: So we were reunited. We met in 2002. He was eighteen years older than me and didn't know, he thought our mother was dead, and so he was shocked to meet, you know, me for the first time.

But there was a police officer that went with me to meet him for the first time, and his family. And they, he, the police officer said "don't you know who your sister is?" And he said, "Well, she's from America and she's come to meet me." And he said, "No! She's the FBI Legal Attaché since 2000. She's been here two years." And he looked at me and he said, "And it took you two years to find me?!"

Pimentel: (Laughing)

Burger: So it was kind of cute.

Pimentel: That is.

Burger: And we've been close ever since.

Pimentel: And so you were four years in Romania and then you came back, where, to Headquarters?

Burger: Yes. I will mention one more thing about Romania.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: And that was that SECI program that I worked on. It became an organization institution and they did great work in human trafficking.

Pimentel: Uhm-hmm.

Burger: So we helped, even as the Legat Office, in getting, making sure that FBI had presence. Ambassador Schifter turned the three million dollar budget in appropriation money to us. And so we've had somebody there and we still have somebody there. We've got Danny Harrell there right now. And the human trafficking, they had take-downs and we were very successful in, you know, the arrests and that there.

Pimentel: How do you, SECI ...?

Burger: Southeast European Cooperative Initiative. SECI.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 20

Pimentel: Alright. And after that?

Burger: Then I went back to Headquarters and worked in OIO and EDSP.

Pimentel: What's that?

Burger: That was the Executive, I wonder, Executive Development Program.

Pimentel: Oh, EDI?

Burger: No. EDSP, not EDI. It's SAMU now. It's the Development, Career Development.

So I worked there and actually got the EC that was signed off on, giving perks to Legats and ALATS. If you've been a Legat in a Priority Two country, or Three, you get more consideration when you apply for another position. And Legats that were coming out of their offices, and they were in for jobs, then I kind of had a heads-up and was able to work with the AD of OIO to make sure they received adequate consideration in career development for their experience ...

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: ... to make sure they got some great job placements.

Pimentel: Right. Yeah.

Burger: Instead of just looking out for themselves and hanging out there.

Pimentel: Well, a lot of times ...

Burger: And I wish they'd kept that up.

Pimentel: They haven't kept it up?

Burger: I don't think so.

Pimentel: Because we, of course, tried to integrate when I was in OLIA, back in the late '80s and early '90s, '90, '91, trying to integrate the Legats into the regular Bureau system. And it was a ...

Burger: Exactly. There was a time when you would get Headquarters credit ...

Pimentel: Right.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 21

Burger: ... and Supervisor Field credit if you'd been a Legat.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: But then they still frowned on the fact that you were working overseas. It wasn't really widely accepted that if you were a Legat that you had field experience.

Pimentel: Exactly.

Burger: And out of sight, out of mind.

Pimentel: Right. Exactly. It was one of these things where it wasn't in the career path of somebody who would eventually become an SAC.

Burger: Exactly.

Pimentel: That's the way it's always been thought of. And I think it still is that way.

Burger: Although we did have a champion, Bill Esposito, who was supposed to be an ALAT in Italy, Rome, Italy.

Pimentel: Yes.

Burger: And then, instead, took an ASAC job. But he still valued the system.

Pimentel: Yes.

Burger: So we had our different champion.

Pimentel: There were a few folks.

Burger: Right. Alan Ringgold.

Pimentel: Right.

Burger: And the Director. Director Freeh.

Pimentel: Yes. He was.

Burger: And he made two visits over to Romania while I was there.

Pimentel: And he met all the chiefs of police and the head of intelligence and all that?

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 22

Burger: Exactly. He's the one, deciding after his visit to open the office and visited Romania days before he left the Bureau for good.

Pimentel: Hmmm!

Burger: He was in Bucharest. That was the last trip he made.

Pimentel: Yeah, I could never get him to come to Mexico.

Burger: I know.

Pimentel: I don't know what it was.

Burger: Isn't that funny?

Pimentel: Yeah. Anyway. So, how long were you in OLIA, there?

Burger: I retired in '96.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: So I got there in '95 and retired in '96. April, the end of April ... I mean, sorry, 2006.

Pimentel: Two thousand and six.

Burger: The end of April in 2006.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: So May 1, whatever you want to call it.

Pimentel: Okay. Okay. And you entered?

Burger: 9/ 27/82. Just short of 24 years.

Pimentel: That's not even three years ago.

Burger: Uh-huh.

Pimentel: Does it seem like it?

Burger: Uhhmm, some days no. It's gone by fast.

But I've kept very busy. I worked for a year for General Dynamics on Sentinel. So that put me back in the culture and that was fun. And I've had a PI business since the day I retired. Giving the Romanians, you know, that Eastern-European work, and then started three and a half months ago at Security Acquisitions at FBI Headquarters.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: Reviewing the firms for the procurements.

Pimentel: And that's at ...

Burger: And that's interesting.

Pimentel: ... FBI Headquarters, right?

Burger: Well, it's across the street. But, yeah, it's considered ...

Pimentel: That's for the FBI?

Burger: Yes. Exactly.

Pimentel: Okay. And, and you're trying to sell your house?

Burger: Yes, sell my house. I have five grandchildren. I have four out in Boston and one in Indianapolis. And the one in Boston, he's an attorney, and going through the Greek Orthodox Seminary, to become a priest. Working as a lawyer, at the same time, for his company. He's lucky they're letting him do that.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: Remote. So, I feel very lucky. Lucky. Lucky.

Pimentel: Okay. I have a couple of questions here that they've asked me to ask of the female Agents.

Burger: Okay.

Pimentel: How they found the training? What areas they had to work at? And how they felt they were accepted there at the Academy? And your overall experience at Quantico.

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 24

Burger: Overall experience at Quantico was great. In fact, Deb Rosel and I are the organizers; we've had three reunions, our class, 82-11.

Pimentel: It's okay. We've got a couple, a few more minutes.

Burger: Okay. I've organized, we're a very tight class, still to this day.

Pimentel: Your class?

Burger: Yes. My FBI class.

Pimentel: Oh, okay.

Burger: And our first reunion was down at Quantico, at ten years. And we had a 24th reunion at Orlando, Florida. And 25th in St. Lucia, where Sue Chainer has a place.

Pimentel: Oh yes. Sue Chainer has retired, hasn't she?

Burger: She has.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: Sue and Dave Chainer have retired.

Pimentel: They're living where, out in California?

Burger: He has a condo in Miami, they have a condo in Miami and a villa in St. Lucia. They just recently divorced, though.

Pimentel: Oh. After all those years?

Burger: After all those years.

Pimentel: And, about your offices. How were you accepted in the offices that you went to?

Burger: I had a great career. I can say that, in fact, they actually looked out for me; divorced female with two children. During the year, if there was night shift work to be done, the guys would pitch in. And then in the summer when my husband had the kids for the summer, I would take their spots, if they had complaint duty or whatever, it worked great.

Pimentel: So you were accepted, no, no problem.

Burger: Very accepted.

Pimentel: Okay. And, oh, when you went to your first office, how many female Agents were there? Do you recall?

Burger: There were five.

Pimentel: Five in Indianapolis.

Burger: No. Indianapolis, there was only three.

Pimentel: Three, okay.

Burger: Three.

Pimentel: Minneapolis? Five?

Burger: Five.

Pimentel: And then Chicago ...

Burger: Chicago ...

Pimentel: ... I know they had a ...

Burger: ... 50!

Pimentel: Fifty!

Burger: Fifty! When I left there were 50.

Pimentel: (Whistles) Holy smoke. They'd really been pumping them through the Academy.

Burger: Right.

Pimentel: Okay. Did you ever feel that you had to work harder at being accepted as a competent Agent?

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: Okay. You did feel that way?

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: In what way? Or can you explain that?

Burger: Uhm, just that old perception that you're the weaker sex. So, you just had to prove that in an arrest situation you could hold your own. If you were wired, you know, wiring subjects, or whatever you had to do you had to make sure you got out there. You didn't hang back. And that you did what you needed to do.

Pimentel: Okay.

Burger: Or else.

Pimentel: So, yeah. But, harassment or anything. Did you ever experience that?

Burger: No. I heard of harassment cases. But it didn't happen to me.

Pimentel: Well, that's good. That's good.

Burger: And if it even slightly happened to me, I knew how to deflect it.

Pimentel: Yeah. Well, by the time you came in, there had been about almost ten years of experience of females having integrated into the all-male society.

Burger: Well, I can give you, I can give you a specific example of maybe that difference, that female-male difference.

In Chicago, I decided that I wanted to try out for the SWAT Team. And, historically, there had never been a woman try out for the SWAT Team. Up until that point, it was only a handshake and a nod, an acceptance by the active SWAT Team of who came on board. So when I wanted to come on board with the SWAT Team, then they had to change the procedure. Which was fine, they made it a very open and fair procedure, where anyone that wanted to be on the team tried out. You were graded on the specific situations. There were six different situations that you had to go through. And the top seven candidates were selected.

Pimentel: Oh.

Burger: Made it on the team. And I was okay with that. As long as it still wasn't the buddy system.

Pimentel: That sounds good.

Burger: And I didn't make the team. Because there was seven male Agents that were better qualified than I was.

Pimentel: Yeah. Okay. Have they integrated the SWAT Teams? Do you know? Now?

Burger: Many, many years later I think there was a female that did make it on to the team.

Pimentel: Okay. Okay, you already pointed out a significant first for you and that was setting up Legat in Romania.

Burger: Yes.

Pimentel: Right. Okay. And I'm sure you felt good about that. Did you not?

Burger: Definitely.

Pimentel: Plus it involved being promoted. Right?

Burger: Yes. Grade 15.

Pimentel: To Grade 15. And opening a new office, that's quite an experience.

Burger: It's a major experience. Everything you'd ever done in the Bureau from fixing a copier machine to taking out the trash, came into play.

Pimentel: Yeah.

Burger: To sitting with a President and being able to, you know, discuss matters of importance with Ambassadors, to having no furniture. Using boxes for a desk and trying to get the office going.

Pimentel: Been there, done that. Any other experiences in your career that you would like to talk about?

Burger: Just that, you know, I mentioned I have two daughters. So they grew up with the Bureau. One of my daughters, you know, they worked summer employment with the Bureau and one went through the Honors Intern Program. One daughter spoke at my retirement. I think the FBI experience benefited them too. They moved, we moved eight different times, and they are such mature, well-educated women. And I'm so proud of them and I think it's also, you know, the result of what their background was with my career.

Pimentel: Because of your career. That's correct. So overall you would say you had a great career in the FBI.

Burger: Great career! That's why I'm still here on contract!

Gabrielle Burger

June 11, 2009

Page 28

Pimentel: And the contract is for how long?

Burger: Two thousand hour contract. I had one blemish on my career too.

Pimentel: Oh.

Burger: Got to go through the, you know, OPR system. So I think we've got, you know, we've got all the right systems in place. So, you know, I can still say, even with that, it was a great career.

My parents, my daughters – Julie Kavas and Tanya McCool – helped me all the way. The FBI family was good to me.

Pimentel: Yeah. Well. I think with that we've, I think we've covered everything. I appreciate you sitting down with me to give your story for the Oral History Project.

Burger: Thank you.

Pimentel: And what will happen is you will get a copy of the transcript ...

Burger: Okay.

Pimentel: ... in the next couple of weeks ...

Burger: Okay.

Pimentel: ... from Sandy Robinette. And you can look at it. You can add, delete, whatever.

Burger: Oh, okay.

Pimentel: And, send it back to her. And then she will do the final copy, or kind of a final copy. Send it to Headquarters so they can look at it and make sure that there's no secrets in there. And then you'll get it back, eventually, in a bound copy. And then the original and the tape will eventually end up at the Law Enforcement Officers Museum, uhh, Memorial Museum, as part of the Oral History Project.

Burger: Great.

Pimentel: On behalf of the Society Oral History Project, thank you very kindly.

Burger: Thank you!

INDEX
Gabrielle Burger
Interviewed on
June 11, 2009

A

B

Bingaman, Andy, 15
Blackketter, Bill, 4
Blay, Dick, 4

Burger, Gabrielle,

Assignments,

Bucharest, Romania, Legat, 13, 15,
16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 27; addition
of Moldova, 16
Chicago IL, 3, 5, 6, 7, 25
Indianapolis IN, 3, 4, 5, 25
Minneapolis MN, 3, 4, 25
San Diego CA, 8, 9, 10, 11
San Francisco CA, Oakland RA, OC
desk, 13, 14, 15
Washington D.C. Headquarters,
11, 12, 13, 14, 19
Washington Field Office (WFO), 7,
8

Early life & education, 1, 2

Entered FBI, 2, 3

Attitudes toward women during career, 2, 3
24, 25, 26, 27, 28

Retirement, 17, 18, 22, 23, 27, 28

C

Cellum, Bob (SP?), 9

Copyright release, 1

Counterterrorism, 8, 9, 10, 11

Cyber Crime cases, 16

D

diPretoro, Mike, 13

E

Esposito, Bill, 21

Executive Development Program, 20

F

FBI National Academy, 17

Felix, Areano, 14

Finch, Al, 8

Foreign Counter Intelligence (FCI), 6, 7

Freeh, Louis, Director of the FBI, 21

Friesen, Larry, 7

G

Gray, John, 2

H

Hancock, Steve, 8

Harrell, Danny, 19

Henry, Sean, 16

Human trafficking cases, 19

I

Immigration & Customs Service, 10

Informants, 10

J

K

Ambassador from Yemen to Romania
daughter, 17

L

Liaison, International Affairs Service
(LIAS), 11

M

McGinley, John, 4, 5

Megary, Bill, 5

N

Noel, Frank, 4

O

Office of International Operations (OIO),
11, 12, 13
Office of International Affairs (OLIA), 8,
11, 20, 21, 22
Operation Greylord, public corruption case,
5

P

Pimentel, Stanley A., interviewer, 1

Q

R

Ringgold, Alan, 11, 21
Rosel, Deb, 23

S

Scheaf, Brad, 16
Schifter, Ambassador Richard, 13, 19
Shapiro, Ricky, 8, 12
Slifco, Julianne, 13
Southeastern European Cooperative
Initiative (SECI), 13, 19
South Pole servers case, 16
Spangenburg, Karen, 5

T

U

Undercover, 5

V

W

Wong, Jim, 8

X

Y

Z