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PREFACE

He has lived by Teddy Roosevelt's credo "Keep your eye on the stars, but your feet on the ground", doing his best to stay true to himself and the cherished tenets of his father, his grandfather, and his God. He persevered in this determination through years of stunning success in the public sector. Given the opportunity, however, he would deny it all.

William P. Clark has never lived up to his own expectations. His achievements are surpassed only by his humility, a humility based on firm religious beliefs rather than a lack of confidence. Those beliefs took him across the country to an Augustinian seminary in upstate New York when he was a young Stanford student. Within the year, however, it became clear to him that the religious life was not his calling, at least at that time.

Throughout his youth Bill developed indissoluble bonds with the men in the extended Clark clan: Westerners all, soft spoken but tough and quick to act, devout subscribers to TR's speak-softly-and-always-be-prepared philosophy. "Integrity" was never spoken; it was universally assumed.

As the first-born of thirty-one grandchildren, Bill shared a particularly close relationship with his grandfather, Ventura County's most colorful sheriff and, later, the "last of the frontier marshals". It was four-year-old "Billy Boy" who pinned the badge on Shirley Temple's vest as she was "officially" deputized by Marshal Clark. Fifty years later, the two would serve together in the U.S. Department of State: he, as second in command; she, as foreign affairs officer.¹

¹Richard Nixon appointed Shirley Temple Black U.S. Representative to the United Nations in 1969; she served under Gerald Ford as Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana, then as White House Chief of Protocol. After serving as foreign affairs officer with the State Department under Ronald Reagan, she was appointed Ambassador to Czechoslovakia by George H. W. Bush.

As first-born and only son, Bill was his father's top hand, spending many hours in the saddle, herding cattle, roping, branding, on Rancho Chismahoo, Battle Creek Ranch, and Slagger Camp—the lonely life that breeds independence of thought, integrity of being and limited use of the spoken word, if we are to believe in the Code of the West.

The life of the cowhand leaves time to dream. Countering atheistic communism and one day having some land of his own were foremost among Bill's dreams. Both hopes have been achieved—both dreams have been realized. The Soviet empire has been dismantled; Bill has his thousand-acre ranch near Paso Robles, California, where he spends his sunset years with Joan, alongside children and grandchildren, as they rope and brand their cattle, compete in rodeos and play Mozart.

He is still on a quest, his mission in life having devolved to finding the mystical peace of the mythical cowboy hero. The dream of peace fades, however, in the glare of social and moral causes calling out for attention now that he has retired from formal government service. The peaceful serenity of the contemplative may never be his—but he is living as happily-ever-after as his restless soul will allow.

Lest one think these the partial ramblings of a fond “favorite cousin,”² I offer some facts as well as a couple of opinions in addition to my own. Bill Clark was with Ronald Reagan from the beginning—from his first campaign for governor of California through the retirement years. During the most crucial period in the first administration—from 1981 through 1983—when a host of policy directives was conceived and crafted with the intent of defeating the Soviet empire, Clark, next to the President, held the chief role.

Reagan's official biographer, Edmund Morris, lists Clark as a man who made “an art form of taciturnity,” yet “the most impressive advisor” within the White House inner circle, “in fact the only person in the entire two terms who had any kind of spiritual intimacy with the President.”³

As further described by Morris: “Tall, handsome, expressionless, and slow moving in black alligator boots, [Clark] stood out among

² There is no cousin of Bill's who has *not* been designated “favorite”.

³ Edmund Morris, “The Pope and the President”, *Catholic World Report*, November 1999, p. 54.

conservative Washingtonians like the proverbial Stranger come to town, his pinstripe suits too well cut, his gold-rimmed half-moons too thin for Beltway comfort.”⁴ A telling description, it calls to mind the cowboy hero of early western movies, the champion who rides in to the rescue, defeats the bad guys, then rides off into the sunset.

Yet the celluloid cowboys never deliberated in the hallowed halls of national power. Bill Clark did, and when he did, he stayed true to form in all ways. One instance: his usual routine, most mornings before Washington awoke, was to lope through Georgetown, past Roosevelt Island and up Capitol Mall astride Amadeus, the magnificent white Lipizzaner stallion, a gift to President Reagan from the Austrians.⁵

His National Park Police riding companions affectionately dubbed the self-effacing fifth generation California rancher “the masked man on the white horse,” conjuring images of knights errant throughout the history of Western Civilization. The Code of Chivalry meets the Code of the American West.

Congratulations to those park police riding companions for correctly assessing the character of the man. Congratulations to Paul Ken-
gor for convincing Bill that his is a story worth the telling. And thank you, Paul, for inviting me to join you in writing this book.

—*Patricia Clark Doerner*

⁴ Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 455.

⁵ Dale Russakoff, “Mornings on Horseback”, *Washington Post*, February 11, 1985, p. B1. Clark admits to frequent temptations to swim his horse to Roosevelt Island during these years, as TR had done before him. What stopped him? For one, he figured he’d probably be arrested; secondly, he didn’t want to arrive at the office in wet clothing.

INTRODUCTION

The Mission

On a spring day in 1988, William P. Clark—known by friends and associates as “The Judge”—taxied into position on the dirt landing strip of his thousand-acre ranch near Paso Robles, the heart of California’s Central Coast wine country. At age fifty-six, he was substantially finished with government service and looking forward to life at the ranch, working cattle, planting olive trees, and developing a vineyard. Both orchard and vineyard would complement a Spanish mission-style chapel—at this point no more than a dream, yet to be designed.

Judge Clark, whose request to be called Bill goes mostly unheeded, had left the Reagan administration three years earlier. He had served Ronald Reagan for more than twenty years, beginning when Reagan ran for governor of California. During his two years as Reagan’s national security advisor, Clark was—next to the President—probably the most powerful man in America, and thus among the most powerful men in the world. Though no longer a regular presence at Reagan’s side, Clark continued to serve his country from the background and to advance causes he had been unable to address during his public life.

On this day, as he prepared his tandem-seat Super Cub for takeoff, his public career was mostly behind him. The night before, Clark had returned from a trip to Europe. He felt jet-lagged, not especially sharp, but his desk at the office in town was piled high with work.

Early into takeoff, the plane got caught in a crosswind. “I knew right away that I was in trouble”, says Clark. “I lost control.” At about sixty miles per hour, the plane veered into a supply building to the right of the runway, missing the above-ground fuel tanks outside the building. Clark slumped unconscious in a mangled mess of smoking

metal. Ribs broken, shoulder separated, skull fractured, and soaked in blood and fuel, he was alive but hardly out of danger.

The engine, simmering hot, was pushed back against his legs, while fuel from the fractured wing tank sprayed onto the unconscious pilot. For some reason, the plane failed to burst into flames. "It should have lit up", Clark says, pausing. "Statistically, it should have lit up—but it didn't."

A briefcase on the seat next to Clark contained a Dictaphone somehow activated in the course of the crash. The audiotape still survives; Clark and his sons have listened to it, but wife Joan refuses. On the recording, listeners can hear the unconscious Clark groaning and calling for help.

Clark's only coherent plea, "God, please help me!" is followed by the sound of ripping metal. Jesús Muñoz, longtime ranch hand and friend, had happened upon the crash and yanked the door from its hinges. Clark's feet were entangled in the two rudder panels, jammed beneath the engine. As Muñoz struggled to pull Clark free, fuel spilled over both men. Finally, pulling with all of his strength, Muñoz tugged Clark from the wreckage.

Clark remained unconscious for an hour-and-a-half before waking in the intensive care unit at a hospital forty-five minutes from the scene. While his sons watched, he cautiously moved his legs and feet, rotated his fingers and arms, and winced at the sharp pain in his shoulder and head. He offered thanks to God that he had survived, that he had been alone on the flight, and then he made a decision: He would no longer delay building the chapel. That brush with death, said Clark, was "a little wake-up call in my life. . . . God's wake-up call."¹

"Look," he says, "I'm no Saint Paul, but the incident helped me decide to go ahead and build the chapel." Within a few years, the chapel, financed solely by Clark, was completed on top of a grassy hill at the entrance to his ranch. Incorporating a surplus ceiling and stone remnants from the William Randolph Hearst collection at nearby San Simeon and containing sacred art collected by Bill and Joan from fourteenth- to seventeenth-century European monasteries, the chapel hosts a number of religious services and cultural events throughout the year. "Chapel Hill", as it is known locally, is open to those of all

¹Clark, "Alumni Spotlight/Q&A", *Vista Magazine*, p. 19.

faiths and is the pride of the local community, to which Clark has donated it.

Clark has come full circle. He started life as a young man on a California ranch, and now closes it as a man in his seventies on a California ranch, where he proudly struggles with the progression of Parkinson's disease. "God gave Parkinson's to such saints as John Paul II and my father," he said, "and now he has gotten around to the sinners, such as myself."

These sunset years are a time for reflecting on the past, as well as for accepting what lies ahead. Though not without some regrets, Judge Clark may be allowed a proper amount of satisfaction in his public record. During the Sacramento years, Clark was appointed Governor Reagan's chief of staff at a time of scandal and crisis and helped to right the ship of state. When he thought his work done, he decided it was time to return to his ranch. The Governor then named him superior court judge, later elevated him to the court of appeal and, finally, appointed him justice of the California Supreme Court. After Reagan ascended to the presidency, he requested that Clark go with him to Washington, where Clark became his deputy secretary of state, then national security advisor and, lastly, secretary of the interior.

Official Reagan biographer Edmund Morris dubbed Clark the "most impressive" advisor in the Reagan White House and "the most important and influential person in the first administration". An August 1983 *Time* magazine cover story entitled "The Man with the President's Ear", informed the public that next to Reagan, Clark was the "most powerful man in the White House", so close to Reagan, and so loyal to and trusted by the President, that White House staff called him Uncle Bill.²

"He was always there when my Dad needed him", says the former President's oldest son, Michael. "He was very important to my dad's career. And their relationship was more than political; they were good friends."³

President Reagan himself told the press that Clark was "one of my most trusted and valued advisers."⁴ Again, "no one has given me more

² Maureen Dowd, "The Man with the President's Ear", *Time*, August 8, 1983.

³ Interview with Michael Reagan, May 9, 2005.

⁴ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks Announcing the Appointment of Robert C. McFarlane as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs", *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan*, October 17, 1983, p. 1471.

faithful service above and beyond the call of duty.”⁵ When Reagan had a tough task, he called upon Clark, his troubleshooter, his right-hand man.⁶ As photographs illustrate, Bill Clark was often literally at Reagan's right side, and always trying to fulfill the adage that he coined, “Let Reagan be Reagan.” No one was more inclined to let Reagan act on his instincts.

Nowhere was this more true than in determining policy in regard to the Soviet Union. During two critical years as Reagan's national security advisor, Clark helped lay the groundwork for the administration's remarkable effort to undermine Soviet communism and win the Cold War. Another cover story at the time, in the *New York Times Magazine*, noted that Clark was not only “the most influential foreign-policy figure in the Reagan administration”, but also “the president's chief instrument” in confronting Soviet influence in the world. The two of them, often alone, met to discuss some of the boldest and most successful actions of the entire Cold War. As the *New York Times'* White House correspondent reported, colleagues observed Clark returning from his private meetings with Reagan and prepared themselves for the “important decisions” to come.⁷

Roger W. Robinson, Jr., a senior staff member at Clark's National Security Council, stated categorically: “More than any others, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clark won the Cold War. Period.”⁸ Thomas C. Reed,

⁵ Reagan wrote this to Clark in a February 8, 1985 letter on White House letterhead.

⁶ Floyd Brown, who is West Coast director of the Young America's Foundation, which owns and manages the Reagan Ranch, notes that next to Nancy Reagan, Clark was Reagan's “single closest friend and confidant—and everyone knows that! . . . Whenever the president had a tough job, look who got it—Bill Clark.” Peter Dailey, a Reagan-appointed U.S. Ambassador to Ireland who has known Clark since high school, agrees: “Whenever the going got tough, Reagan always wanted Bill Clark around.” Interviews with Floyd Brown, October 5, 2005, and with Peter Dailey, January 17, 2006.

⁷ The article stated: “Colleagues observe Mr. Clark ambling back from his private meetings with Mr. Reagan and wonder what important decisions are coming that might catch them by surprise.” Steven R. Weisman, “The Influence of William Clark”, *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 1983.

⁸ Interview with Roger Robinson, June 6 and 8 and July 7, 2005. Robinson adds: “That's not to say that Cap Weinberger, Bill Casey, Ed Meese, Jeane Kirkpatrick and others were not major, integral players. . . . There were many who were crucial to this huge enterprise. But at the end of the day you really had to rely on Bill to carry the water with the president. The extraordinary relationship and implicit trust between these two men was the force multiplier that implemented strategy a secret multipronged that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire. No question about it.” Interviews with Roger Robinson, June 6 and 8, 2005.

another NSC staff member, agrees that Clark was “utterly essential” to the strategy to prevail over the USSR. He says that Clark “put the pieces in place to bring the Cold War to a conclusion. . . . Clark was absolutely key to that.”⁹ Norman A. Bailey, yet another NSC staffer, went so far as to say that America “owes a very great debt” to Clark, who “did more than any other individual to help the President change the course of history and put an end to an empire that was, indeed, ‘the embodiment of evil.’”¹⁰ Ronald Reagan himself told Clark at the height of the Cold War: “All of us owe you a great debt. . . . Thanks for being there, as you always are.”¹¹

And yet, the indispensable Clark became the forgotten man—as Edmund Morris recorded, “so private, quiet, and unflamboyant that he’s now largely forgotten.”¹² He was forgotten in part because he never promoted himself. Said former Secretary of Defense and long-time Reagan aid Caspar Weinberger: “He was one of the most influential people in Washington, enormously important to Reagan’s goals and success, as governor and then as president, but you’d never hear that from Bill or even know it in the way he acted.”¹³

Reagan biographer Lou Cannon also remarked on Clark’s self-effacing nature. “[Clark] did more for Reagan . . . while calling less attention to himself than anyone else I know.”¹⁴ In its 50th anniversary issue, *National Review* listed Clark among a select group of leading “unsung conservatives”, while emphasizing that Clark was “the most significant Reagan ally not to have written a memoir”.¹⁵

What is the reason Clark has neglected to record his accomplishments for posterity? Clark is the prototypical man of the West who one day saddled his horse and drifted off into the sunset, exiting Washington with no fanfare and no one watching.

⁹Interview with Tom Reed, April 6, 2005.

¹⁰Norman A. Bailey, *The Strategic Plan That Won the Cold War: National Security Decision Directive 75* (McLean, VA: The Potomac Foundation, 1999), p. i.

¹¹This November 7, 1983 statement from Reagan on White House letterhead is held by Clark in his files.

¹²Edmund Morris interviewed by *The American Enterprise*, November/December 1999.

¹³Interview with Cap Weinberger, April 14, 2005.

¹⁴Cannon quoted in: “Unsung Conservatives: Fifteen Who Made a Difference”, *National Review*, December 19, 2005, p. 33.

¹⁵“Unsung Conservatives: Fifteen Who Made a Difference”, *National Review*, December 19, 2005, p. 33.

As he had no interest in promoting himself, Clark's contributions have not been fully reported. Many of his actions in the 1980s have remained secret, particularly his Cold War communications with Pope John Paul II and his meetings with Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, Saddam Hussein, and others.

Bill Clark and his mission have gone unheralded, which was the way he wanted it. At long last, this is the story.