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Foreign Service Spouse Series

MURIEL ANN HANSON

*Interviewed By: Jewell Fenzi
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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Monday, July 20, 1987. I am interviewing Muriel Hanson, Mrs. Charles M. Hanson, at her home in Washington, DC.

HANSON: I have not been able to find satisfaction in the Foreign Service, but I happen to have been a social worker and, in being a social worker, it seems I was ideally prepared for it.

Q: The ultimate portable career, wasn't it?

HANSON: Right. Right.

Q: So many of your countries were Third World.

HANSON: Right. Right.

Q: There must have been...you had more than enough to do.

HANSON: It gave a perspective from the cultural standards, because one was naturally interested in those cultures, having had a Minor in college in Psychology.

Q: Oh, did you?

HANSON: Yes.

Q: You were ideally suited for it.

HANSON: I graduated from New York University (NYU) in 1950. Then I worked as a social worker for the Children's Placement Bureau in the City of New York, so I was trained there in the Adoptive Services and in the temporary placement for children, who were in a crisis situation. When my Husband and I married, after three years of that type of experience, I found it just a continuation of my education, a most profound continuation of my education, because then I began learning in a firsthand position the cultures that I had perhaps learned about, read about, and found great, deep satisfaction. But the greatest surprise was my first ocean trip, which was on the Constitution and part of the honeymoon.

Q: Oh, marvelous.

HANSON: My Husband was returning to his post in Zurich. He was a vice consul there, but having been there, he was ready to show me all the points of interest. And so, getting off at Genoa, we drove from Genoa to Zurich, overnighed in Lucerne, Italy, right on Lake Como. We drove through the Gotthard Pass, and I had the experience of throwing snowballs in June. And then we saw the (inaudible) for the first time as they were riding through the mountains of Switzerland as we were approaching Zurich.

Then, of course, we had to find housing once we were in Zurich, so we had to stay in a hotel, because my husband felt that since he had a bride, he had to live in... well, we couldn't live in different accommodations, because now it was accommodations for a family rather than a single person. It took us about two months to really find our place that we wanted. We had a nice, side view of the Lake of Zurich. Only recently, having made the trip to Winterthur in Delaware, I had the opportunity to reminisce about our trip to Winterthur in Switzerland. You know, the Winterthur here was put up by the DuPont family, and it was Bitterman that one of the DuPonts...(tape is interrupted). So that was sort of a renewal up there in Delaware, looking back to Zurich.

I felt also my family background prepared me for this in a most unusual way, because I'm one of nine children, and my Mother always set a table with a tablecloth and a full setting for everybody. Naturally, the children had their jobs, and I think I may have been the table setter, to tell you the truth. So, watching her serve a meal for nine daily gave me confidence that I could entertain. She always had her club meetings. She and Dad belonged to a club, and once a year she lavishly entertained her club according to our economic standards of the time. It was a club of about, I guess, eight couples, and, again, they came to the home and sat down to a lovely meal that she had prepared. They played cards afterwards at individual card tables. So, knowing that she and my Dad enjoyed a nice social life, I was not handicapped. I felt very comfortable. I had natural fears that anyone would have of going into a new situation, but when I would look back, I realized that I got a lot of confidence from my background and from my educational preparation.

Actually, when I got to Zurich, I (asked myself), "What can I do here?" I reached out and served in the American Women's Library in Zurich and met all the American women there. I had a very interesting encounter with a young man who came into the library. He had been one of my classmates at NYU, and he was going to medical school at the University of Zurich. There was a very nice experience there, because I even met one of the relatives of one of the famous composers of Zurich...was it Haydn? I can't recall the name, but anyhow, his line went back to Zurich. And my first daughter was born there, and my mother came for her Baptism. Consul General and Mrs. Donovan were our first consul general, and I still have the wedding gift she gave us, because I had an ideal situation. My husband was very much loved there already. He had already learned Schweizerdeutsch, being gifted in languages. He speaks five different languages and had picked up the local Swiss dialect.

Then, from there, we went on, after going home for home leave, to Calcutta, India, and,

there again, I guess if somebody had given me a ticket, I would have abandoned my daughter and my husband on my first day in Calcutta. (laughs) I would have gone back to America. When I heard those crows and saw people spitting this red stuff on the streets, I thought every- body had tuberculosis. It turned out it was betel nut, and they chewed betel nut in Calcutta. We were there for about two and a half years. We learned the incredible culture, this ancient, ancient culture, to be among Indians who had lived so many, many more years beyond the American experience. I got a real kick when my "ayah" said, "Memsahib, may I have the day off? I want to go to the movies." So, I thought, our American culture had stretched into the Indian culture. I loved the Feast of Diwali, the Time of Lights, and that's when my second child was born in November in Calcutta. They had maybe one or two Bengali uprisings, because in Bengal the people were considered very volatile, but we did not have to experience too much of this. Although I must admit, I was in my car driving one time, and I was in a very heavy crowd near the maidan, trying to get home. I just had to drive very carefully, because if you hit other people, you certainly would have been in hot water. People were banging against the car, but I just kept driving, and I got out of it, and it was all right. But it was sort of a minor incident, and I never gave too much thought to it.

I think my highlight in being in Calcutta was that when, after Mass, I said to Father Fitzgerald, "I have now two young babies. I have an ayah. I have two other people to help. I feel the need to do some volunteer work here." Knowing that I had plenty of time to spend with the children, because I was not a parent that left the children to the help, I participated very much with them, but I felt I had time and reason to serve. And so, he directed me to the Marian Society, to Ann B____ and I called her up. She said, "Oh, yes, my dear, come over and join us. I'm sure you will enjoy what we are doing." When I went to the first meeting, I found out they were dedicated to the new vocation of Mother Teresa.

Q: I was just going to ask you if your social work took you to Mother Teresa.

HANSON: Yes. There, we made sheets out of tarpaulins for S____ which was her home for the abandoned babies. This was just developing in India. Again, the West reaching into the East or into that part of the world, and we both felt we would solicit funds. Now, in Mother Teresa's Charter, eventually, that is forbidden. She never wants funds solicited. She believes that God will give to her organization whatever they need. But, at that time, we made Christmas cards and sold them. I even have them today, some of the original Christmas cards with which we helped raise money. I had the experience of going to C____, the place where the dying and the destitute are taken, people that she picks up from the streets. Even until today, this place is doing the same work, and 50% of those people live again. They are brought back to life. They are in such warmth and genuine service from the missionaries -- Sisters of Charity -- that in one instance, Mother has reported that one person said, "Oh, now I can die peacefully, because I have been loved." The first time they experienced love was at the point of death. So, again, this was a very deep experience for me.

Then, when other Americans came to the post that were interested in this, I was able to

introduce them to the Marian Society. That was back in 1956. I was able to introduce Kitty _____ and Dell Blake, who is now deceased, and it formed a bond. We retained a deep friendship, because of this wonderful meeting in Calcutta in service to Mother Teresa for the dying. We didn't go and serve the dying and the destitute. We were sort of an auxiliary group. We were her first corps. We became the first corps of Mother Teresa. (tape interrupted)

It was Frank Collins that replaced my husband in the job, and Vi Collins, his wife, who really became leading co-worker for Mother Teresa. It was Frank Collins that wrote her resume that alerted the Nobel Peace Prize Committee of this incredible woman. Unfortunately, he died when she received her Nobel Peace Prize, but it was through his efforts (that it was awarded to her). Vi Collins, to this day, who has extraordinary executive talent, has been the national co-worker in America, and she does the profound work for Mother Teresa. I have maintained my liaison with the group here and I've been very grateful for it.

After Calcutta, we came back here to Washington, DC, and we were able to save our money to buy our own home -- our first home -- and so we enjoyed finding that here in Washington. Our third baby was born here in Washington, DC.

But can we go back a little bit in Calcutta? These two Johnny R_____ prints were purchased by me through our contacts, through the Consulate. He allowed me to go to his atelier and select these two. He used to do the UNICEF cards, and I just loved these paintings that are done on woven palm leaf and are of a tempera of orange and green. The prints are mythological milk maidens, so you gain some of the culture through the art. My templetop lamps inside are the ones that we women in Calcutta went to the local brass merchants and asked them to fashion. We feel we influenced the interior decorating field through urging the brass merchants to fashion these templetop lamps. All the women of that time, I'm sure, left Calcutta with raw silk suits and temple lamps -- raw silk suits, lamp shades, furniture. (laughs) I had my first sofa made there out of teak wood and I got a Scandinavian design which they were able to follow fairly well. It was mis-scaled, but I still have that sofa today. It's in my daughter's house. She's using it.

So, there were times when this broad expansive cultural experience there -- I had an experience with furniture design. I had an experience with art. I did a little bit of painting, not as much as I would have like to. I did the work in assisting the poor of Calcutta, so that did not leave me with a sense of devastation. Many people go to areas where there is so much poverty they feel overwhelmed by it, but when you participate in alleviating it in some sort of means, you do not get the overwhelming response. When I look back upon my experience in Calcutta, it is one of great growth and hope for living. I had even figured out that one didn't leave their children with the servants so long, because I found other families that did, and they inevitably came back to accidents and illness and what have you. We suffered none of this. We were very fortunate, because we, more or less, dedicated ourselves to the job and the family. In being person to this in proper proportion, we had found this a very enriching and rewarding experience.

Then, I came to Washington and had culture shock. I told my husband I had one course in Economics, but I could see more of Capitalism being lived out, but the law of diminishing returns was in operation. I could see the people in America did not appreciate everything. I could appreciate the wonderful highways, the restrooms on the highways, the food in nice restaurants we wanted to go to, the transit system -- so important -- and people not appreciating it. Even when I went to church and found air conditioning, I was mortified, because I felt that this money could possibly be helping others. Then, I realized they had to adjust to get the people to church. (laughs) So, the culture shock wore off as I grew into daily responsibility, but then having a third child without having any help -- having had the other two with help -- that was perhaps my greatest shock. (laughs)

And then it was time to go to Trinidad and Tobago. This was a very historical time, because this is when the Federation in the Caribbean was attempting to come together and be united in their strength. But it wasn't to happen. When we went down, Marshall was assigned as the Labor Attaché to the Federation. Ambassador White was the Ambassador who had asked him to join his team. But when we got there, the Federation, having fallen apart, Trinidad and Tobago went on to get their independence. So, we served at the first Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago. Marshall did an outstanding job as the Labor Attaché and had to travel throughout the Caribbean to understand the full impact of the labor situation there.

Q: That Federation was going to be Jamaica, Trinidad, the little eastern Caribbean islands, too...Grenada?

HANSON: Grenada and all of them. I think the problem was the bigger islands felt that they would be drained by the little islands, so they wanted autonomy in themselves. The big factor was, who was really going to be the most important island? They just couldn't get together. One island, Barbados, was the island of the intellectuals with all the educational facilities, where the best educational facilities are located. Most of the people from the different islands would send their children to Barbados for education and preparation to go to England to further their education. This island felt that perhaps it would be submerged and it wasn't willing to give up its autonomy. I think they wanted their basic autonomy and could not really unite as a complete entity. In experiencing Trinidad and Tobago, we had many important dignitaries come to the area. The celebrations brought down important people. We also, at that time, had S____, which was an American Naval Base that had been given to America during World War II, and I think eventually this was negotiated to go back to Trinidad. But we did enjoy the opportunity of getting American things from the Base, living there at that time. Of course, we lived on M_____ Road in Port-of-Spain, so that took us back to the Harry Belafonte songs.

Q: Yes.

HANSON: And we enjoyed the Calypso people. We enjoyed the tremendous Carnival. Then again, you look at Carnival and your heart bleeds for the people, because you

realize some of the economy is based on this Carnival. People just live for the whole year and then everything sort of dispensed. But, of course, it does bring tourism to the country. But they needed other things, too, to really educate the people. There was the influence of the slave experience, as we've had very seriously here in America. It's always been my thought that if the Americas could have appreciated their black people as their black pearls...

Q: ... their work force...

HANSON: ...they would have integrated them after the Civil War. They would have been able to understand the black people of the world -- the people of color of the world -- it would have been a natural part of our history. But having divided the society and not integrating their black people, America has suffered from this, because they lost a wealth of knowledge and talent and genius. Not developing it, America is all the poorer for it. Also, the economy is poorer for it, because now you have an economy that has to subsidize an underclass of society that never was integrated. This is nothing but a sociological manifestation of unfair treatment to a people. What do they say among people? You know the goodness of a society by the way it treats its poor? If the poor are properly integrated into the society, racism by color is eliminated. However, even people with PhDs and great knowledge have not had a chance to really get the proper jobs that they should. If this integration had taken place after the Civil War, it wouldn't be a problem today. Perhaps we would even deal better with the rest of the world today if there were a greater brotherliness among all the peoples of the nation. America is a nation of immigrants, a nation of foreigners, everybody is from all over the world, so we are meant to be one world, as we know so well today, in which we are in contact with all aspects of the world via satellite. Undoubtedly, America was meant to be that nation, to be a model as example to the world through the greatest democracy that ever has been. Even today, it is one of the best democracies with our problems. But we do suffer from this terrible, terrible mistake that was made and perpetuated. I think psychologically it was inevitable. Psychologically, people need to feel better than someone else, because they can't look within themselves and face up to their own deficiencies. It's much easier to have a scapegoat out there and say, "Well, I'm better than that, at least," just from the external side. Then, economically, I guess people try to protect themselves jobwise. It is always easier to protect yourself from a visible color rather than from the knowledge of knowing that there is potential there. So, in Trinidad, you had a similar situation and, again, color has always, even among blacks there, been a problem. They would adopt it from the main culture, so you would get a color problem within a race problem. These things become more and more apparent.

Eric Williams' great fight for his country was to really get what he thought his country needed rather than the aid that we thought they needed. This was again a great difficulty at that particular time. Eric Williams, having been a professor at Howard University in Washington, DC, was very much aware of things. He had his own personal problems, so I guess this just built up things for me. It's difficult for American diplomacy from time to time.

Q: He had an American wife whom he divorced, was that it? Was it for political reasons at all?

HANSON: I'm not sure, but I know his passport was lifted so that he couldn't come into the country. Again, this just perpetuated his feelings more and more. We did have the historical experience of a country coming into its own, and we made very good friends there that we maintain today.

So, then, what was the next post? I didn't have an opportunity to do too much volunteer work in Trinidad, and it may have been more that my family was very young. You see, everybody was under the age of eight and help was very difficult in Trinidad.

Q: Oh, even in those days?

HANSON: Oh, it was difficult. I couldn't keep anyone. I finally got down to one person, and we sort of ran the house together. I think I found the reason for help being difficult in the Caribbean, in Curacao. I'll get back to that when we reach Curacao. I found out the reason, but, anyhow, then we came back to the United States after that tour. Then, my husband was assigned to Lagos, Nigeria. He was again the Labor Attaché there. My girls were then older. Mary Ann was six, and Margaret must have been ten, and Ann Marie was twelve. So they went to the American School. But Mary Ann, our youngest, when we reached Nigeria, said, "Mommy, where are the elephants? Aren't they walking down the streets?" (laughs) She had the real American attitude. We lived at the back of a lagoon, and one day, she was looking for the crocodiles there, so she was ready for the African experience via the zoo.

And, in this arena, I found an opportunity to serve, because the Mathews were the ambassadors there -- because the wife is just as much an ambassador as the husband -- and it was Naomi Mathews who was very much interested in the official community. I think we had WOAC, Women of the Official American Community. We met once a month, and it was sort of a meeting to make us aware of our responsibilities as representatives of the American Government and also to share. This would keep us in contact with one another, so that no one should feel a sense of being way out in left field.

Q: I think we should interject here that people just live all over the place in Lagos.

HANSON: Right. It was a very, very big post. It's a Class II post, so naturally, people would be spread out between the islands. It's sort of like New York in that sense, because people live on different islands. We lived on _____ Island, the same as the Ambassador, where the American Residence was.

Q: And the traffic was terrible in those days.

HANSON: Yes, yes. And we had a driver, because we could not have operated without a driver. We had a Volkswagen and a very good driver. He took the children to school daily and he dropped my husband at the office. (tape ends)

It was then, out of WOAC, it was thought (unintelligible) and so, I accepted the job of being Committee Relations Chairperson. I would visit several places where I would visit the homes for abandoned children. I would visit the hospital. It was named for a lady who ran a home for disturbed children. I'm so sorry I can't recall her name, but if I go through the papers, I'll find her name. She was convinced that in every society a portion of the society was suffering from mental aberrations. It was her purpose, being that she had a degree of Psychology from Yale University, to dedicate herself to children in Nigeria and to help the people who had mental disturbances.

Q: Was she Nigerian?

HANSON: No, American. Caucasian American. Beth is her first name -- Beth Torry. I didn't associate her with any Hispanic background (unintelligible), but she had set up three different facilities to assist the mentally disturbed. The hospital in Lagos, I think, liked to deal with the mentally disturbed in their own locale. (unintelligible)...So we gave her clothing that we would collect for the cause. I don't know why, but it seemed that my garage was filled with everybody's things that they might be leaving. It seemed that I must have had a good committee and other people that would help distribute these things to others in Lagos. Then, of course, if there was fund raising, these items that were donated couldn't be (unintelligible), so I used to make monthly reports and monthly visits. I have all the (unintelligible) in a box somewhere. My husband wants desperately to move from our lovely home here to an apartment, because he thinks it's time to go to the next stage of living.

Q: ... the next passage.

HANSON: Yes, the next passage. (Transcriber's note: This portion was mostly personal, and the quality of the tape so poor, I decided it was not necessary to transcribe it.)

So, where were we now? In Nigeria? The war broke out in Nigeria, a very dramatic incident, and our Children were attending school between two _____ on Victoria Island. My husband said to me one day, "Muriel, would you like to go home, because the Embassy has decided that if families wanted to go home and separate, this might be our best bet." Well, it so happened in Nigeria that we had to solve another family problem with my Father-in-Law. My husband was an only child. (tape is interrupted, followed by unintelligible material).

Q: The family could go home, and your Father-in-law...

HANSON: Yes, yes. The other family problem we had to solve was that my Mother-in-law died when we were in Trinidad. When we came back and had an eighteen month tour here in DC, we found that Grandpa really wasn't going to make it on his own. He was in New York, and we were in Washington. We made numerous trips to New York, and we decided that it wasn't going to work. Through a lot of diplomacy (I think my husband would have gotten an award), we convinced Grandpa to come with us.

Q: To Lagos?

HANSON: To Lagos. We were able to share with him a very interesting trip to Lagos. We got on the Independence, of course, across the Atlantic, with the entire family. So, this was a very pleasant experience for him. We went to Italy. We landed in Rome and went to Pompeii. No, the boat must have landed in Naples, because we went to Pompeii - - marvelous experience in Pompeii for all the children. Then we went on up to Rome to get our plane to Lagos. Again, there the culture, the travels. We didn't do any traveling outside of going to and fro of post, but when we went to a post or left a post, we added it to our ticket. That's the way we were able to travel and have these experiences.

But getting back to the war in Lagos. We realized that the first time we were coming home, we would stop by the police and ask for identification. They told us they were in the middle of a civil war. It was a very traumatic experience because everything then changed drastically. We no longer were able to get the things in the shops that had been so available. I think the Embassy had to start importing things for us from the Danish Company in Europe, Peter Justesen. We learned about canned bacon.

Q: Canned butter?

HANSON: Yes, everything. I guess when Marshall came home with the suggestion that I move to go home with the children, I said, "What about the Ambassador's wife, what are they doing?" He said, "She's staying, but it seems the Administrative Officer's wife is going home and a number of the other people are going home." I said, "Well, I don't know what to do. I'll have to sleep on it." And when I woke up the next morning, I had (unintelligible), you know, I don't think that you go home. "Having just arrived, six months ago, to try and take these young folks and your Father by myself," I said, "I need you. I can't do this alone." So we stayed. Our children ended up going to school between _____ on Victoria Island. Mary Ann took ballet; Margaret went high in the Girl Scouts; Mary Ann became a Brownie; they took music lessons. We survived quite well.

We admired Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi because he gave the example of fighting a civil war in which he wanted to keep his country. There never was, at any time, any occasion to celebrate a victory, because it was a war against brothers. So, any victory was drawing the whole country closer together, not a victory over a people, but bringing the people closer together. I'm afraid our American people did not understand what was going on, because it was a traumatic experience, I think, for the Embassy staff, not to mention the Ambassador and his wife. I remember Mrs. Nixon, one time, being pictured with a box of cake mix, sending it to Nigeria.

Q: Was that the Biafra War?

HANSON: Yes, to aid the war.

Q: "Let them eat cake."

HANSON: Well, yes. They didn't understand. This shows you how our people, and people living with them happily, (sometimes reacted). But, of course, in our geography books, I didn't know anything about Africa. It just wasn't important geography, so you wouldn't know the culture of the very rich, gifted people. You would only see them running around with somebody's idea of what an aborigine is. You would not understand that these people in Nigeria really had been drawn together through the colonial system, and together, because Africa is diverse in its culture, forced to live as Europe is. If you can't get the Europeans to try to become a world in one now out of, I guess, reasons of safety, you never will. In years gone by, all the wars were fought over their differences, and so, in Africa, you have the same problem because the tribes are very, very different among themselves. Sort of like the American Indian on this shore, because they have cultures within the cultures. And so, in the colonial people drawing a map and saying, "You tribes live together," was a very unfortunate thing, because the Ibo and the Yoruba peoples are very different people. I learned that they were separated in religious groups by the missionaries, and it seems as if the Anglicans took the Yoruba people and were going to convert them, and the Methodists were going to convert the Middle East people or the Mid-West people, and the Catholics the Ibo people. I believe that's why the Ibo people and the American people have such a close affinity, because they had over fifty or sixty years of training by the Catholic missionaries. There was an identity with Americans. Also they had a work ethic of which they prided themselves and, actually, thought that the government might fall if they withdrew from the Federal Government in Lagos. It turned out that the Federal Government closed ranks and was able to function without the Ibo people. But of course, it was all about oil, and the Ibos obviously thought that they could be their own nation with an oil economy. All the rest of the world was interested in this oil, so naturally they were going to be basically interested in the Ibos from the oil point of view. Unfortunately, the American politicians were interested in the oil, and they'd come over more or less interested in that aspect. Consequently, we did not give the assistance to General Aguiyi-Ironsi that we could have. It seems that everything that was sent to him was of World War I classification, so what did he do? He turned around and went to the Russians. That's what the other people have always done, because we don't recognize these people are aware of needing the same as everybody else in their particular era. This caused ambassadors to go down the drain. I think, two or three ambassadors just couldn't serve in that post. because the politicians did not understand what was really going on there and would not accept it. And, therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria was very angry at the treatment they received, because of this second class treatment. The British did better, because they had their colonial ties and did give them a little better help, but they still didn't get the help that they needed. They did finally win the war.

We had the experience of a bomb exploding in...there were five bombs to explode in Lagos, and the one that we experienced was when they were trying to reach General Aguiyi-Ironsi's residence. We lived perhaps a mile from his residence, and I heard this anti-aircraft and didn't quite understand it. I said to my husband, "Is that rain?" And he said, "Yes." And I went to sleep. (laughs) I got up the next morning and I saw these people just milling and milling and I said, "What on earth has happened?" He said,

“Well, a plane tried to attack the residence of General Aguiyi-Ironsi; and they shot the plane, and it landed in the lagoon. The noise you heard last night was anti-aircraft, and the plane was shot down.” It seemed that nobody was killed except the pilot, and we found out that part of the plane had hit the residence of the Ethiopian Ambassador, and he had just left the room. And a piece had fallen into the home of one of the Americans, and the kids had just left that room. And so, it was a time, it was quite a time!

It was quite a time in my husband’s career as well, because he had not received the promotions he felt that he should have received. Fortunately, he came across someone who said, “Charlie, what are you doing only a Labor Attaché? You should have gone higher up by now.” And it turned out that he was the DCM and he sort of went to bat for my husband. Then, what happened was, all they could offer him was something in Vietnam, because they claimed he had never had an administrative assignment. It was just because there was no one there, and you’re cornered if they use you for administrative purposes. You know, you have to be in charge of an office with people that you have to report on before you can get a promotion in certain arenas. So then, they were going to send him to Vietnam, and I said, “Well, my dear, you simply won’t have a family. I just don’t see how you can come see us in Taiwan for eight weeks every now and then with young children and a grandfather, and you off there. I don’t think it’s going to work.”

Well, we went back. and were in between assignments. Evidently, they were able to find an assignment in Monrovia. We got the assignment as a political chief at the Embassy in Monrovia. So this was the changing of the assignment there.

Again, I was able to do a little bit of community work in Monrovia. They didn’t seem to have the need there as much as there was in Lagos, because it was much smaller, but they did have one home... and I’ve got that picture. I used to work in the home up in _____. I have to go back and get some of this down, because when I left, they made a great festival for me and gave me a headdress and this outfit, and it was a very nicely run home for children. And again, the Community Relations Committee was able to give to them things, and I was able to share among my social workers the experience with the people that were running this particular home for children. In Monrovia, there was a much smaller one, run by a woman, and most of these children were children that were half-caste, and it was a problem in the community. So, this lady took care of them.

It was just the opposite down in Uganda. Just the opposite, and that wasn’t the problem in Lagos either. So, maybe the other countries are so much larger than Sierra Leone and Liberia, I think that this might be the cause of it. But the problem was out of wedlock. I did not experience the mixed marriage problem in Liberia. It was the out of wedlock child. In Africa, their system (unintelligible)

Q: The sociological implication of the mixed child out of wedlock...

HANSON: Yes, in Africa, the social system never allows a child not to be accepted, because every child is accepted. But in some instances, if it’s an out of wedlock, mixed

child, I found in Monrovia, a problem. The Africans always have a place for a child, but a mixed child that was outside of the numerous marriage relationship was different from a single relationship. In the community there, one doesn't marry an individual, you marry a family. And so, among the Mohammadans' religion, which very greatly influenced the culture in Africa, the woman is the matriarch and everything flows from her. If she is married and divorced from her husband, that family still has their connection and all the children have their connection through the cross lines, particularly of the mother. And even the king, everything comes through the blood line of the mother.

There was a home in Monrovia that I guess I visited regularly. I did a one-woman job and would report to the American Woman's Club there. They would give a donation from their American Woman's Club Bazaar.

Help was difficult in Monrovia, and I was perhaps more disappointed in the cultural experience of Liberia than I was in Nigeria, because in Monrovia I did not find the depth of culture there. It seems as if the American Liberians, that had been sent to Liberia after slaves had been declared illegal, went and acted just as the whites had treated them. They treated the tribal Africans that way. So, again, that goes back to my theory that you always have to have scapegoats. So, the Amerigo-Liberians seemingly built up a wealth for themselves at the expense of the natives and, in the process, built up an animosity, which culminated in the killing that took place in this Century. They had all the money, and the local people were trying to gain control of their country. It turned out that Tubman, who was the first President, was a native and knew how to deal with the natives and the Amerigo-Liberians, but Tolbert, on the other hand, had become more censored on their own acquisition and had forgotten to provide more wholesomely for the Liberian natives. Now, of course, you see the American imprint over there with the American dollar and the American stamp. You just feel it was benign neglect all along the line, because when you compare it with Puerto Rico...I felt Puerto Rico much more developed compared to Liberia. So, it's been a benign neglect and it had not been, except for the stamps and money that they printed for them, a real education of sharing and developing educationally a people that could truly govern themselves generously and agriculturally to develop their own economy.

So, then it was off to Ghana where Marshall was assigned as Deputy Chief Administrative Counselor for Ghana. There we met a very rich African culture that goes back to the days of the great Ghanaian kings and that occupied a great portion of that part of Africa.

Q: The Ashanti?

HANSON: Ambassador Haskell and his wife were there, and they were great historians in their own right. They were very knowledgeable and loved the people very much and got along beautifully there. When Ambassador Haskell left, Shirley Temple Black was assigned to the Embassy there, and they didn't really know who she was right off the bat, because the name "Black"...

Q: Ambassador Black, yes.

HANSON: Black? They did not know, so they found out who she was shortly, and it happened to have been an assignment when two other female ambassadors were assigned to a country...one from India and one from Holland.

Q: All to Ghana?

HANSON: To Ghana, at that time, yes. And this is a time in which our economy was at a low ebb.

Q: Oil crisis. (tape ends)

HANSON: Yes, my husband felt that she was very willing to learn a role as an ambassador there. She was very busy reading all the reports and she wanted to bring the dimension of the business sector as her ambassadorial contribution. She has a very nice husband, who's business it is to set up fish industries in the Third World, so he found it convenient to have his wife in the Third World, because she could go to other areas where he never had been. He never at any time stepped on any of her territory and respected it at all times and was a very gracious person. But because he had his own interests, he was able to contact different countries and set up some...

Q: Sounds like he was the ideal male dependent spouse. (laughs)

HANSON: Yes, he was a very rich man.

Q: Oh, yes, I know.

HANSON: He came from the Pacific Gas and Electrical Company. He owns that, so he wasn't hurting in the least, but we know, like all rich people, they need a job that they might find interesting as well. She was graciously accepted there, because she did not want to be accepted on her background as a star, but she could not evade it. It was always there. They always wanted her to appear at their different functions, and she was very gracious and did that. So, she got along quite well. I think my husband served her for about one year, because he served a year and a half with Ambassador Haskell. But he also had his time, the interim before, when he was Chargé d'Affaires, and he had an excellent relationship there, because he was in constant communication with the head office of _____ and the people. So, when Ambassador Black came in, he was able to make the proper arrangements to introduce her.

And I think my highlight at that particular time was that I had an excellent staff there. I think that's more to do with your life than anything else, because people will enjoy working in an area there. I had to give a tea party for visitors coming to the country. There were about 38. Then I had a dinner party for the minister, one of the ministers of the government, and a film -- a dinner-film party. No, I had 38 for a tea or a buffet lunch, and then, that night, I had about 15 for dinner, sit down, so I considered that my

highlight.

Then, another highlight was my husband called me up and said he would like to bring home 12 for lunch. I said, "Well, I'm going to consider this a challenge." I happened to be playing bridge with my bridge partners at that time, and I shared this with them. They said, "We ought to be able to get this together. Do you have any chicken in the deep freeze?" "Yes." "Do you have any orange juice concentrate?" I said, "Yes," "Do you have onion soup dry mix?" "Yes." And some "soy sauce?" "Yes." "And some noodles?" "Yes." "So," they said, "we can get this one together. Tell your cook to just boil the chicken and marinate it in ginger, ginger powder, soy sauce, orange juice concentrate, and a package of onion soup, and you will have Chicken L'Orange in about forty-five minutes. And cook up the noodles." I had some string beans, and we made String Beans Almandine, and I had some cookies in the deep freeze -- rich, roll butter cookies. And we made a nice Jell-O dessert. (tape is interrupted)

Q: I'm surprised, because I never felt they were easy to manage.

HANSON: He has the mentality.

Q: That's another negative, I think, about the Service. First of all, I would think that I wasn't here to keep tabs on the stock market and by the time you found out about something in Sierra Leone or Ghana, it had gone or you had lost what the person who was right on top of it.

HANSON: Oh, yes. You didn't have that advantage.

Q: Yes, and none of us... I won't say none of us... there must have been in Washington between, say, 1970 and 1975, those who could see where real estate was going if they were here.

HANSON: Some made a mint.

Q: Of course.

HANSON: Those that stayed in DC, rather than go out to post...

Q: ...and bought at that time...

HANSON: ...made a killing.

Q: Yes.

HANSON: And some deliberately stayed here, because of the financial advantage. Basically, we found it easier if we went to hardship posts and were able to make money on the differential, so that was part of our acceptance of the hardship post. What do they say? Money takes the work out of irk?

Q: Yes, that's your tradeoff.

HANSON: That's right, exactly. As I say, that's how it allowed us to make our down payment for our first home, and because we were naturally compatible financially in what we thought we needed and not spendthrifts, we were able to save and make the first home down payment. However, my husband, having a tremendous gift for mathematics, doing figures in his head, I abdicated my financial share in our financial planning, because I never really had a lot of experience in it. As a social worker, yes, I went out and got my checking account. I went out and got my savings account, but when one went overseas, you didn't have that accessibility, because I, myself, left that to my husband. I had such confidence in his ability to keep all these records, and I guess it was an easy way out. I think we sort of divided the workload. You take care of the finances and you take care of the home and the children, because we knew we wanted to have a family. I think that's how that all began, but I did have a funny feeling when we were in Switzerland and I wasn't getting my paycheck. I did say to him, "Well, you know, I must have some money of my own to which I make no account to you. It must just be my money." And he agreed, so I did have a little bit that I saved. I didn't put it in a bank there or anything. I just sort of saved it, because one wasn't fearful of robberies. Things were very safe in Zurich in those days particularly. I don't know how they are now. And so, I think that's how that got started. Then, about thirty years later, I all of a sudden being back in the States, he's retiring, and I'm finding out about women who have been divorced after serving with their husbands all these years. He marries a bright, young thing, and she gets all the pension, and that wife that served is just out there in the cold.

Q: That has been rectified.

HANSON: Oh, yes, by law. I have been the beneficiary of that witnessing, because I was on the AAFSW Board right here in Washington. Just serving on that Board gave me so much more insight. It was during that time that I went out and got my Chevy Chase Savings and Loan checking account for the first time in our marriage, and a savings account. I had a little savings account at Riggs, but again, he got control of that and was carrying that around. He was monitoring that all the time, because he does the income tax and needs to know all of the family's money. So, it was a frightening experience for me to go into that bank by myself, because I was going to do it by myself and apply for the checking account again and get the savings started. I haven't even gotten to the point where I should take my own credit card from one of the department stores and just be in total control of it and make those bills in my name out of my checking account, because I know that's when you will have greater credit rating when you improve all of these things. Again, I learned by being on the Board of AAFSW, so volunteerism always pays off. You learn every time. And, of course, they were going through the period of where they were trying to help women who had spent so many years in the Foreign Service, having given up the opportunity to work, and take the home skills, the Foreign Service skills, and trade them off for work skills in the marketplace. This was a very important realization for me

You can understand young women who have, say, gotten a Master's Degree in Business Administration or a Law Degree or something, they have very mixed feelings about this. I first witnessed this with a young Foreign Service female officer at our post in Trinidad. She'd just had her first baby and was in a depression, because she had to give up her career. Her husband had his career, and she had no recognition and absolutely very little sympathy. Who was there back in 1961 to sympathize with a young woman who had been a Foreign Service officer and given it up for the career? At that same post, I made friends with Connie Rush, who had also been a Foreign Service officer and given up her career. She had five children and her husband became the Consular Officer there in Trinidad. That was 1962 to about 1965. During the Year of the Woman in 1975, when we were in Ghana, she went back into the Foreign Service and took her husband out as a dependent. I think that I have great admiration for her, and I think now she's resigned because she's about 55 and retired, shall we say. But she did a terrific job between 1975 and 1986. That was the time that she was able to go back into it. These are things that one was not totally conscious of and, in retrospect, you would understand and perhaps provide some negativism along the way. (laughs)

So, where were we during our last interview? What country were we in?

Q: We seem to have been in Lagos.

HANSON: Lagos. I see.

Q: WOAC, in Lagos.

HANSON: All right, then.

Q: I think we must have been there, because, you know, when I first talked to you, you said you'd like to mention something about Biafra.

HANSON: Yes. We talked about the Biafra War. We were very much concerned how the Embassy very often had a real understanding of the country in which we are serving, but the politicians back at home do not understand and can't accept what is being reported to them. This is very unfortunate, and I think this is what we're witnessing today, very much, because they were not, in Carter's Administration, able to accept the inevitable dangers of bringing the Shah into the country. No doubt, if he had not been brought here, we wouldn't be into a number of problems, but I think it was Kissinger that encouraged that this should be done. So, it's just one of these things that I think the humanitarian side of it and the long-range consequences of the act could not be truly evaluated. If they had been able to listen to their Embassy at that time, they would have been saved a lot of trouble.

Q: You're being too kind. They were able to listen to the Embassy at that time, they just didn't.

HANSON: Or follow through on it, yes. That's what I mean. Of course, that's why we

lost grace in Lagos and Nigeria, because General _____ ultimately had to turn to other sources for better arms to fight the war. Russians were coming in on it, and they were going to fight with better instruments. America wasn't giving them anything that was going to help them get over the war in any time. Plus the fact, they felt that they would be able to win the war. Anyhow, that's sufficient for my knowledge, a political aside of it.

Let's see. Also during that time, I found out about the Association of American Foreign Service Women. I took out my first dues for it, although I had been familiar with it all the way back in 1960 when I went to the first BOOKFAIR they had at the Shoreham, right down off of the Park, off of Calvert St. I went with Dell Blake. She's dead now. Her husband, Ambassador Blake, is now remarried. And they were our favorite couple in India. We had become friends in India, and, again, at hardship posts, you do have a tendency to make your long-lasting friends...

Q: I think so.

HANSON: ...rather than at home where they were more available or a higher standard of living, more conveniences, more diversions. It was Hoove Olson, whose husband was DCM, who introduced it and suggested that we all join AAFSW.

Q: And what was her name again?

HANSON: Hoove Olson.

Q: Hoove Olson.

HANSON: I think she's related to the Hoover family. He became later Ambassador to Nigeria. Also, Marshall and Clint had been in the Mid-Career course together, so they were happy to meet in Lagos again. Now, this was what I was trying to think of... my work as Community Relations Chairperson for the Committee that we had in WOAC. We did a lot of supportive work in the community. The Lagosian women were very much aware of trying to help their women. I guess because I was the Chairperson, I was nominated to be representative to the International Women's Club in Lagos.

I don't know what I did with all the reports. I used to write a report every month, and I could have had a whole envelope of them, but... Then, it was too hot for me to go to our storage locker to go through the photo albums. You know, we were going to try to move, so we moved a lot of things out of the house into the storage locker, so I don't have those things.

Q: So, you have some things there and the rest here?

HANSON: That's right.

Q: Oh, that's always a nuisance.

HANSON: That is what happens. Maybe when the weather cools down, I might be able to get a few things again. The Lagos Club was one among numerous women's clubs that were oriented to benefit the general welfare of the community. I served on the International Woman's Club for three years, and I recall best the running of the club and its fellowship and direct contribution to the community. I think that's when I got interested in their orphanage. I was working with the home for the handicapped children that was sponsored by this club. Then, Beth Torry, she was outside of this, but she was definitely convinced that we had a job to do there. I came across this Reward of Selfless Service: "For the past nine years, an American woman has been devoted to the humanitarian work of aiding Nigerian handicapped children. During the period, she founded two schools dedicated to the education and care of the country's mentally retarded children." I had worked with her and I had written a letter having tabulated what she had accomplished, and it won her recognition in the L_____ Volunteer Award, which seeks to award those quiet Americans who have done the impossible here on earth.

Q: Well, isn't that lovely.

HANSON: Yes. So, she's in here. She didn't get it, but she was honored, and these are the people who got it. This was back in 1969. These are the actual people who got it. We were hoping that she would get funding. I used to go out and visit her in these locations. We would gather clothing for the children, and this was the way that we helped from WOAC.

Q: Through the Woman's Club?

HANSON: Yes. Also, I had an album which is in storage which would have shown how a group run by Nigerians was doing the same thing. Theirs was on a much larger scale and it was out near the University of Lagos. When I left there, evidently they felt that I had helped them, so they put on a big party. I was given traditional dress to put on and everything. . I thought it was a good indication that they had felt that my efforts through WOAC and through the American women in general...that we had done something to help further their cause and help the retarded children and the less fortunate children of their community.

There was one very interesting experience I had. When the International Woman's Club would put on their Christmas parties for the different handicapped and orphaned and less privileged, I saw the first black Santa Claus. (laughs)

Q: Oh! (laughs)

HANSON: I have a picture of that, too. I thought that was wonderful, and, again, this was culture adapting to its people and to their frame of reference. So, the women would raise money in that way...no, this was how they would entertain, and then there would be the big bazaar once or twice a year in which monies would be raised for these different groups in Lagos.

I also met the first Lagosian female gynecologist, who had done all of her training in England, Dr. ____ and she was one of the leaders of the community. It was Norma Nelson Cole who would often come to our home for respite from the trials of her life. It was her son who married _____. She had invited Mary Ann, our youngest, to be the flower girl in the wedding, because we knew the family of the bride, had met the family of the bride, and had enjoyed the friendship of both sides of the family.

There was something we learned about the _____. It's a time when the women at a ceremony dress identically. They all buy one cloth and pay for it and then dress up.

I have a beautiful picture of the women sitting up, and to me, it sounds like when I see... I go to funerals now, and because I'm not a sorority person, I witness other people in sororities. As one of their members dies, there's always a time for the sorority to come and pay tribute to their passing sister, and so they sing their traditional songs and one of them will give a memory testimony to that person. I think that's very beautiful, so I sort of related it to a sorority. (tape interrupted.)

Q: The State Department rites.

HANSON: Here they are receiving their gifts. These two played together. I used to play and... guess what?...we met again in Trinidad and Tobago, and I became her partner, and we played. Here are the girls. And this is Grandpa. (Mrs. Hanson is showing pictures).

Q: Oh, when he was there?

HANSON: Yes. I think this is so important, because Marshall had a very curious problem, because he was the last in the line of his family and he was the sole relative of my Father-in-law. So, we had the terrible problem of trying to resolve how to care for him properly in having to go overseas. And this is the ___ of Lagos.

Q: Oh?

HANSON: He told us something interesting when we were invited to his castle, so to speak, that they had sold their people in slavery and were very sorry that, in instances, they had done that. This is when I first learned the history of some of the slaves coming to the Americas, because all of them were not captured by bandit slave-traders. They were sold in many instances by their own people, but what we have to know is, again, this was the same as selling prisoners-of-war. They were not selling their family people. They were selling people that they had had war with, and in having war, they had gotten these people...

Q: ...captured...

HANSON: ...captured. And then they would sell them. So, you do have to look at it from the different tribal entities and warring factions. This would be the end result. Another lady did tell me that she felt that their love for _____ perhaps allowed them to deal more

in this slave trade, because evidently they were given beautiful bolts of cloth for clothing. Now, my Father-in-law... we had a very wonderful experience, because this is when we truly realized how the society of the Yoruba people and throughout Africa have respect for the elderly. So, this made our job very easy, because we could find a steward who would be quite willing to make sure my Father-in-law's clothes were properly ironed and that his room was kept in order. He enjoyed this. This was something new for him. So, this transition for traveling with us for the next ten years was very much augmented by our Foreign Service circumstances. He himself had been in the labor movement in New York, and so he was able to identify with my husband being the Labor Attaché.

Q: Of course.

HANSON: At some of the meetings, he would go with my husband, and then they would ask old Grandpapa to make a statement. He was 75 at the time and very happy to participate...

Q: Of course.

HANSON: ...and share, so this was a very interesting time in his life. He had a happy ten years...

Q: Oh, I'm sure he did.

HANSON: ...because he died, and, of course, senility was setting in and he had a couple of funny incidents. Then we had some very personal and trying incidents, although it was life being led as it would be anywhere else.

This is the Trueharts. That's when they first came to post. And here we were invited to the family of the labor attaché assistant... you know, in all your offices, you will have a local assistant. Do you know that he has since emigrated to America and we met him in Sears?

Q: Oh, for heaven's sake.

HANSON: A couple of years ago. (laughs) But we think he might wish he were back in Lagos. We're not sure, because life is not quite that ideal as one would picture, not being here full time. Now, this is _____. See how they're all dressed up?

Q: Oh, that's a wonderful picture.

HANSON: Yes. And this is the mother of the groom. And that's Mary Ann. And that's the bride. And this is a great, great social event in Lagos. Isn't she an elegant looking lady?

Q: The most wonderful headdress. Did you learn how to do that?

HANSON: Well, now, I never went in for that. They put it all on me one day and had me looking very nice and...

Q: ...very Nigerian.

HANSON: Yes, very nice. But look at her features.

Q: Very regal.

HANSON: See the structure in the face? There's the bride and groom again. Oh, this is the couple... the groom's parents. That's Mary Ann, my youngest. This is Mother Muriel, way back then.(laughs)

Q: Oh, yes. {laughs} Look at the short...isn't that great?

HANSON: And we played bridge with the Japanese Ambassador. He was a great bridge player, and I did enjoy him. I had my first fascination for the Japanese people and I began realizing that these were people who were real survivors. Because I could never forget the tiny, little, very fragile, little breakable umbrellas that one finds in candy bags and things and know that this was all that was coming from Japan around the 1930s, shall we say, and then they had grown into that big nation. And now look what they're doing!

Q: Look what they're doing now!

HANSON: But I mean, are they doing any different than what we did? Aren't they doing... if it's for themselves, I mean, they're following the capitalist system, the system of looking out for themselves? (laughs) And so, I find that everything goes around, comes around, goes around, (laughs) and now that the world is so small...

Q: It's so interdependent.

HANSON: ... absolutely, totally interdependent. Even when things go up into the air, it goes all the way around. So this is what we certainly found out in Chernobyl, when all those people in Scandinavia were frightened to death at what they were receiving. So, we are totally responsible. Greenpeace is trying its best to do a job to keep us totally alert, but then, I look around this country and see all the deposits of chemicals that are killing our soil and our natural resources, and it's frightening. It's frightening, and, again, this is going back to my Law of Diminishing of Capitalism, because when we do not take care of our own resources, we are allowing, through apathy, money and greed to take over, as long as that individual is not being hurt at that time. I think they call it, in Niagara Falls, they call that... they have a special name...the Love Canal...is in terrible straits. They have so much poison up there.

Q: Even though they have tried to clean it up, haven't they? Somewhat?

HANSON: Now I must admit, I'm not aware to what degree they have been successful in

cleaning it up because the people in that area suffer from higher degrees of cancer.. Just as you find it out in the Midwest where they've had some other... what would you call it... nuclear testing and things like that? They bury all that stuff, and the frightening thing is that they make landfills and they stuff that type of material into landfills, and somebody comes and builds a whole set of homes on top of it later on. It's a very serious problem. So these are the things that we have to be really aware of.

So, getting back to Lagos, I guess we finished some of it. Maybe we'll come back to it sometime.

Q: Then, where did you go after Nigeria?

HANSON: Before I go back there, I just wanted to show you these pictures. We go back to Lagos to our friendships made through contacts in Calcutta. Now, this is Ann Blakeley, who was the President of the British Women who were dedicated to Mother Teresa. And this is Vi Collins, the wife of Frank Collins who replaced my husband as the Consular Officer at the Consulate General in Calcutta. And this is Margaret Jaffe, whose husband was the USIS second person, and we've maintained the friendship until today, because it was all very special. Here, we're sort of drawn together, because Ann was making a visit and we were drawn together by Mother Teresa. And here's Mother Teresa. We're in the home of Vi Collins. She's a great, great lady. Her son, Tim, is now a Foreign Service officer... Vi's youngest son, out of about five children, is the only one in the Foreign Service, and he has had many assignments with the Secretary of State Shultz, as a young person, you know, assigned to his...

Q: ...as an aide?

HANSON: ...an aide, yes. So, this is Ann Marie. This morning we had a brunch here, and that was over at Vi's house. Here is Father D_____ who said Mass here for us. I think it's important how relationships were formed in countries where we had hardship. They were deep relationships. And D_____ Lake was part of this, but they were out. They were on assignment. Where would they have been at that time? He was Ambassador. Maybe they were in Iceland. He was probably Ambassador to Iceland, so they wouldn't be here for that reason. So, that's what I came across in the attic.

Now, you said we want to go back to the next country?

Q: We never did finish going through your career, so if you wanted to go from Lagos to where?

HANSON: We went through the War. We were assigned to Vietnam and that didn't work out, because after a family discussion, we did not think it would be in the best interests for our survival. So, we were able to get a new assignment to Liberia, and upon returning to Liberia... that had been Marshall's first post...

Q: Oh, that's right. He was going back again.

HANSON: Yes, yes. So that was 1970 to about... We went the summer of 1972, left the summer of 1972 from Monrovia, Liberia, and went on home leave. We left Lagos, August 1970, on home leave and arrived in Monrovia, November 1970. Some interesting things happened, because my husband, who took the Foreign Service exam in 1948, was able, was proficient in Spanish, and when they gave him his Spanish exam, they gave it to him in Spanish for him to translate to English. It turned out that it was one of the speeches of Roosevelt, so when my husband orally translated it, he even simulated the Roosevelt voice.

Q: Oh, marvelous.

HANSON: And he got a real kick out of that. He did pass quite well, but then someone who was assigned this said, "Weil, you know, there were only three countries that we can send you to, because he was black. They didn't mention the fact that he was black, but if you could only be sent to Monrovia, to P_____, and some of the little posts somewhere, I cannot remember... We were not married at the time, so he accepted it, because what are you to do as a black when they come up and tell you something like that? He thought surely he would be assigned to a Spanish-speaking post, but as it turned out they never used this....(tape ends) talent. Never used it. And he went into the career totally prepared for getting an "A" on it.

Q: Was he one of the first black Foreign Service officers? There haven't been too many.

HANSON: There weren't too many. There was one other who graduated from Amherst who was proficient in French, and Marshall can give you his name. But also he was at Monrovia. That's where Marshall met him. You see, they placed all the blacks right there in Monrovia, so this was the tragedy, again, of taking to a very high, intellectual plane of prejudice, outrageous prejudice, of this country. This is one of the great tragedies of this country, just as I imagine wiping out the American Indians certainly would have taught them how to do land conservation and all kinds of preservation, we wouldn't be suffering from some of those things that we suffer from now.

Because...who knows? Maybe an American Indian who had been properly integrated into the American society would have been that voice on that committee or on that board who would have been the dissenting one to prevent the terrible desolation of all those lands to chemical disposals and what have you.

But, anyhow, when Marshall returned to Liberia as Political Chief, he found very many of the people that he had known back in 1948 in the Liberian Government, and so, as Political Chief, he had a competency that when the Inspectors came to his report, it read like a crystal ball. Everything that he predicted evidentially took place, because he had to make his predictions. And the Inspector General came along after all of these things took place. He (Marshall) could see coming down the pike, because he had had the previous experience there and had had the comparative input. He could write it up and anticipate what was going to happen.

So, in Liberia, I was very disappointed, shall we say, culturally compared to what I had experienced in Nigeria, because Nigeria... the culture of the Yoruba people and of their evil people and of their Midwestern people was very rich. You had at least three or four universities in Nigeria. Now, we all know that Nigeria is the largest of sub-Sahara black nations. There is no nation bigger than Nigeria, so Liberia is very small compared to it. I don't know what the population is, but I guess it's like a postage stamp on an envelope compared to Nigeria.

Q: Good analogy.

HANSON: Yes. But what disappointed me was that they had had this longtime association with America, and I just couldn't find any real influence there, except the post office...post box really...which was red, white and blue, and the dollars. But I found that the Amerigo-Liberians had, more or less, done the same thing to the Liberians that the Americans had done to them or they had witnessed. So I felt I didn't culturally experience the richness that the other societies offered, because for some reason the tribal societies of Liberia didn't seem to have the same development as the tribes of the Nigerians. I guess we all know that the Yoruba people are a very rich, intellectual background that goes back many, many generations, where in Liberia they sort of had a... I didn't witness that or maybe it was my own lack of interest that didn't allow me to penetrate it.

Q: Well, I think so. I don't think the tribal background was as important in Liberia. What was important was to have been brought to those shores or have had your ancestors brought back to those shores, deposited, and you were right there in Monrovia in a position to move up in circles.

HANSON: That's the big uprising within the country, because they did not go and allow the other tribes to have a "say".

Q: Right.

HANSON: They sort of kept it a small, little enclave among those Liberians right there in Monrovia, among the Amerigo-Liberians, and this was the extent of helping the country to go forward. I guess it was again our money that causes corruption, because these people lined their pockets and didn't allow it to filter down. But then you find this in every country.

Q: No trickle down.

HANSON: Yes, no trickle down. It doesn't happen in any country. It's just humanly impossible, because, undoubtedly, power is gathered. It wants to maintain itself and it's not going to be wrestled away without a big fight.

Q: Of course.

HANSON: I think we've witnessed this on a smaller scale. Now we're witnessing it on a worldwide scale, so these things make you a little reflective and realize that, hey, you're just a little cog in history. Sometimes you feel like a little bird just watching.

Q: ...watching it all happen.

HANSON:...and just as fragile. (laughs)

Q: But did you feel that it was easier for you to really get involved in the Nigerian, the Ghanaian, and the Liberian society than it was for some of your white colleagues, because you really had more of an entrée there than we did?

HANSON: I'll tell you, one of my...some of my help looked at me as white. I was not African. It goes back to the same idea of my concept of the black American woman marrying an African and not making a success of it. If you don't speak the same language, you don't have the same culture, you don't have the same values, you're not accepted.

Q: You're not a part of it.

HANSON: No. Now, I think the one reason my husband found it more acceptable in Liberia, maybe even as Labor Attaché in Ghana, he did not take a racial prejudice toward the people with him. There's a difference. We are Americans through and through. We have been brought up as Americans. We identify with the American dream, so when we go over, the difference will be that we don't have racial prejudices. Now, there are some people that don't have racial prejudices, but they don't know about it, because maybe they've never had it tested. There are some Americans that have had no contact with whites whatsoever, only through the accident of where they were born, the location. Of course, there are some pockets in America where maybe the only contact is for a black to come in your house and clean up your house. I don't know what percentage of blacks that are well educated, that have money, that have traveled.

I must say, I've enjoyed the (Lena) Horne (book). The Hornes are an American family, and it shows how this family was able to grow after slavery from Atlanta where perhaps people, who had less opportunities, who may have more or less been field hands or something and had no opportunity for education whatsoever, maybe clung together and were more isolated than others who have had some education and who continue to persist in getting education. She talks about the black American bourgeoisie, and this was a little group within the big black group that had much more mobility. And why? They looked more like the whites than the others.

So, we all know from a psychological point of view that you're drawn to those who are more similar to you than to those who are more different. This is what we're dealing with all the time as we come in contact with more people around the world. I was so grateful to hear on WETA this famous biologist talking about the races. He made the statement

that the races of people... the five races... are very, very similar. There's very little difference between the five races, but they all have these incredible differences within the races. Every race has the same differences. I think this is what Beth Torry was trying to say in Nigeria. I don't care what group of people come together, there's going to be a certain percentage that are going to be mentally disturbed, because in the breakdown of the human being, there's no perfection, and so there is going to be, percentage-wise, these differences. This biologist was saying you find these incredible differences within the racial structure, not between the racial structure.

Q: That's interesting.

HANSON: Yes. So I have witnessed this very much. When the black American goes across to represent America, he is going to represent America, because the black American that you have representing you is your very educated one. He is not your household servant. And any household servant that comes into your home, more or less, should not be better than the person he is serving, because he has not had the opportunities that the person that he is serving has had. It's only if the person he's serving has come into a degenerate type of existence, because of overindulgence, that will compromise their talents. Then, of course, the servant will be better than they, if it's a hardworking person, hoping to improve his state of being.

But like my daughter, who is learning to be a nursing home administrator after having received her master's in Gerontology at the University of South California, is learning to deal with people who will come and take a job as dishwasher or cleaner or maintenance in the running of a home. You do not have the selectivity of people who are well motivated. These are your less advantaged people, emotionally and economically, and they present very serious problems. But, unfortunately, America for a long time depicted the whole black race as being that way, and this is very tragic, because those people, who have not had any real experience with the vast differences within the black people, clump them into one picture. Those are doing a very great disservice to themselves as well as to the black people, because blackness... what is blackness? Are you a black person because you have one drop of black blood? Who got that idea? Again, this goes back to when after the Civil War they wanted the slaves, the former slaves, to be totally aside from competing in the American dream. Then they made this into law, and when this was made into law, it wasn't reversed until the 1960s. And then what happened? Edgar Hoover spent all of his time trying to figure out what Martin Luther King... where his attendant Achilles was, rather than what the man was trying to do on the whole. I wonder if anyone found out what Hoover's attendant Achilles happened to be, you see. But that man had incredible power and so he influenced many, many people. This has been going on for a long time in American history to America's detriment, really. It's just one of those things.

Q: But when your husband went back again to Liberia, after many years, that must have been easier. (tape ends).

That time, Alberto Henricus had just died, and so there were no parties.

HANSON: That was May's husband then.

Q: H_____ 's husband.

HANSON: H_____ 's husband, oh, I see.

Q: He had just died, so all social...

HANSON: Oh, Alberto died when we were there, didn't he?

Q: No, he died in 1982 or so. 1983, we went to the country.

HANSON: Oh, yes, Alberto...now I remember.

Q: So.. there was no social...

HANSON: And M_____, had he died by the time you had gotten there?

Q: I don't remember.

HANSON: You remember the M_____?

Q: Yes, O_____ had died while...

HANSON: She had died while we were there.

Q: He had died.

HANSON: But she has since died.

Q: Oh, has she?

HANSON: Yes. She has since died.

Q: I didn't realize that. M_____ had died, had he?

HANSON: Yes. It seems that Frank's been gone at least.....

Q: had aged when we saw him the last time.

HANSON: He must have. Is a young person still with him? Or has he got another one? Did he ever get married? She used to have headaches all the time.

Q: I don't think she wanted to marry him. I think he calls her Jackie Divali now, but she wants to be able to walk away from it. She never has.

HANSON: She's crazy then, at this point.

Q: But you see, she really had nothing when she came to him.

HANSON: She's acquired some now?

Q: Well, some of that Spanish water property is hers.

HANSON: I see.

Q: Oh, yes, she's...

HANSON: ...done well?

Q: I don't know how well.

HANSON: She did it through him.

Q: Yes. I don't think that she had anything when...

HANSON: Well, that's possible, but the fact would be that if he built up something while you were there...

Q: Yes, he had settled with his first wife.

HANSON: Yes.

Q: Did you know her?

HANSON: No, I never knew her.

Q: She was French. She was my great friend, and she was the one who helped me get that cookbook written. She and I did that together.

HANSON: Oh, good, good, good. That was the other thing... the Foreign Service cookbooks. I even brought a cookbook from Nigeria. I think that also marks your experience...

Q: Of course, it does.

HANSON: ...because it documents them.

Q: You know, Radcliffe College is collecting cookbooks from American women.

HANSON: Really? Isn't that wonderful?

Q: Yes.

HANSON: That's a very good idea.

Q: And I would think the collection would be just fabulous; too.

HANSON: I think this is one of the best cookbooks that I've ever participated in. I didn't really contribute to this one.

Q: Which one is this now?

HANSON: It's done by the American members of the French Ladies Homes and Garden in Nigeria. This was mostly done by the business women, and they were incredible. They could take butter and give you the equivalent.

Q: Oh, yes.

HANSON: They would do all kinds of things... How to: open a coconut; make your own yogurt; (make) your sour cream; buy shrimp. They did all kinds of things to help you adjust to being away from home... general tips for...

Q: ...what you needed for right there.

HANSON: ...and everywhere else. I find this the best cookbook. I just love it. It's just something that I really go back to and it's very well put together.

Q: How was your life in Curacao? Was your social life like ours... mostly the Sephardic Jewish Community?

HANSON: Right. Right. A limited (group) of whatever Americans were there, and it was small. We did make good friends with the Wongs. You remember Kit Wong? Lynn and Kit Wong?

Q: I don't know.

HANSON: They owned an import business, and I had the pleasure of entertaining the last year, I guess it was, eleven of them. I thought I had done a "coup", because when you can have a family of eleven Taiwanese come to your house of all ages and enjoy your West African chicken... and it was so good that all the kids washed up the dishes.

Q: Marvelous!

HANSON: It was wonderful, I tell you. It was really terrific.

Q: The mingling of cultures.

HANSON: Right. Now that, I felt, was a tremendous accomplishment, because the young people were going to school... one of them was at the University of Wisconsin. Another was somewhere else. One youngster had even come from New Zealand and was traveling. They all had met here in Washington... Maybe they were doing other types of traveling, but one stop was here and sharing with us, and it was really great.

But that came out of Curacao, because, you see, Curacao is a place of great mixtures. (unintelligible) It's almost a language of its own for its people, and not any other island can claim that, you see. The historical understanding that was there was incredible, because their help is unbelievable, help that you cannot really cope with very well. You begin to understand it in the background of these people, because you find out that this is the first place where the slaves landed. They have a history of slavery coming into the Western Hemisphere through these gates in Curacao. So the slaves became so reticent over the years, that if you got help, they usually came from the other islands. They were not Curacaoan labor.

Q: Ours was from N___.

HANSON: That's right. So, Ellen worked for us. Then we had somebody from the Dominican Republic, but I had a little sort of trouble on the ladies, so she didn't stay with us the full time. And so, who did we eventually get? It seems that Ellen was our main stay. People would come and go. Anyhow, we managed. It didn't turn out to be a disaster. One lady told us, "yes, I couldn't get over going to other homes in which the help would come in with hair rollers in their hair and serve us." (laughs) So, this showed how they would put up with things to try and...

Q: ...to keep their help?

HANSON: Yes, to keep their help, you see, because this was, you know, you want to get the other things done. Let them have the rollers in their hair.

Q: Also, a lot of those people had had their servants for a while and they were afraid of losing them.

HANSON: Every time you lose a servant, there's a possibility of losing other things from your home, because you no longer know where honesty begins and ends. So you have to have tradeoffs for things that you consider the most important. That would only stand to reason for the people that have to live there and would not be moving on. Of course, when the Bicentennial came around, Marshall had to participate in that, and they centered it in St. Eustatius. St. Eustatius, we found to be the most backward of the islands. Interestingly enough, the people that did anything would move on to other things and would never go back to St. Eustatius. So only that which was left in St. Eustatius were really the least educated and talented...yes, the least. But we did learn the great, glorious history of St. Eustatius in that it had been a thriving commercial port. I have to get that straight, because when I was up in Delaware, looking at one of the houses that DuPont

has...mansions... each room talks about a certain aspect of the history in American living. The early 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries are very different. So, on the wall in one of them, you see Cornwallis surrendering to George Washington. Interestingly enough, George Washington does not want to accept Cornwallis' sword, because they're French. Well... it turned out... Marshall, can you help me with my history here a little bit, please? I'm trying to remember the circumstances at St. Eustatius in which the frigate, an American ship at war with England, stopped at St. Eustatius. I guess it was a frigate. It saluted St. Eustatius, and St. Eustatius saluted it back, and the British were insulted.

MR. HANSON: As far as I can remember, the story went that the American frigate, Andrea Doria, was sailing in the area, and the Dutch Government on the Island of St. Eustatius.. which was flourishing. For reasons of his own or for reasons that are not clear to me, (the Governor of St. Eustatius) decided he would salute the ship of the United States then at war, in the Revolutionary War with England. When they fired a volley, which I think was less than sovereign states get... it's thirteen, and they fired eleven...and he returned the volley.

Q: Was that the first recognition of an American?

MR. HANSON: That's what they claimed. Actually, something in the basement, one of those plaques or something (might explain it). Well, somehow or other, before it got back to England, it seemed that the only thing that occupied the British Sovereign's mind for the next couple of years was that. So, they decided to punish the Island of St. Eustatius, and I think they sent a very bad, nasty note... there should be a note, you know. The note is attached to a piece of wood in French code. By having Admiral R____, I guess it was, who was in the neighborhood... and some stories say that he was on his way to relieve General Cornwallis... I don't know if that's correct...anyway, he deviated, went into St. Eustatius, which was flourishing... had trees and so forth, warehouses on the side... and they pulverized that Island so badly that even now it's just a dust heap.

Q: It never recovered?

MR. HANSON: It never recovered. Then, he took off for wherever he went and, of course, the story that I heard... you'd have to check the dates and so on... was that delayed him for backing up Cornwallis in Virginia, which naturally led to Cornwallis' surrender and hastened the American independence. That's the story.

HANSON: Okay. Thanks. But anyhow, that was part of it. We also saw letters that Benjamin Franklin had to send through St. Eustatius to get them to America, because there was a total blockade. So there you had all of this going on. And then, of course, Aruba wanted to help celebrate during the 1776 event, so they invited Marshall over as the Consul General and had built, in ice, a beautiful statue of an eagle, an American Indian, just celebrating, and the flags flying, and...

Q: Where was all that?

HANSON: In Aruba.

Q: But what...?

HANSON: It was done by the Aruba Government, and we figured that Aruba was trying to break away from Curacao, so we just didn't understand. Also, the Director of the oil establishment over there... what was that called? Can you remember? Largo? The Director was leaving, so they were honoring him at that time, but they took us over there and set us up in the Princess Suite of the Americana Hotel and really treated us very royally. Then there was this big dinner and this was to celebrate the Bicentennial of the American people. It was a very nice thing. It was so wonderful to be in Roosevelt House, because Roosevelt House is the only property in the Foreign Service that belongs to the American people. This was given by the Curacaoan people to America for protecting them during World War II.

H_____ will even tell you about the time she and another one were on the last boat that came into Curacao protecting them from the Nazis. So there's a lot of history there. A lot of history.

Q: We found that that was the one post where people came to us and invited us, before we invited them. Norma M_____ was the first person to invite us to dinner. We had just come from Morocco where every invitation was an uphill battle because of the cultural difference. Guido was number two, the Economic Officer, and we just.. I don't know... everything was... We were just taken right in by that community!

HANSON: We always had an Open House the day after Christmas with Marion. Christmas Day was a very private day, but the day after Christmas, which we had been doing for many years, we had an Open House for the community. I would build the gingerbread house, bake cookies, and have a whole cookie scene. I'd even have trees made out of popcorn, leaves, snow, little cookie children. Then, of course, Marshall made magnificent eggnog, and we served beautiful eggnog and pastries. I had some pastrami sandwiches which we would make, and Chinese rolls. Of course, there was always a nice punch to go with the eggnog, and people carne. We would always invite children as well. There were families there. And this was something that I'd been doing since Nigerian days. People enjoyed this immensely for a lot of people together and for us inclusive of our relationship with them. I think the Curacaoan people really loved the people that represented America in Roosevelt House. Of course, it was nice to have that picture of Roosevelt in the den. That was a very special den. And now, they have a swimming pool there.

Q: So, that's just ideal.

HANSON: I think that almost has to be like a protection... that there's water there in case of a fire or something.

Q: That's how they got it built?

HANSON: In Trinidad, that's how they got the swimming pool built, as well as up on Flagstaff _____, but these things were important, because, how on earth, if you don't have a well of water to help you out on an island like that, (can you put out a fire)? It's a problem.

Q: As you said earlier, I'm sure that the dignity that you restored to that residence meant a lot to those people there, because on numerous occasions I had people say to me, "Look, I don't want to go to Roosevelt House and go to a cocktail (party) where I meet my pedicurist, my cosmetic salesgirl, my masseuse, and the used-car salesman... not that there's anything wrong with used-car salesmen... but that society did not go up to the American Consul General's Residence to meet with tradespeople, let's face it.

HANSON: And they were the ones who had been responsible for getting that residence. They were the generous ones.

Q: Yes. They had a vested interest in it, in a way.

HANSON: Let me just say, I think the date was November 16, 1776 when that phase was celebrated. Of course, it was 1976 that that was commemorated. And, secondly, the Dutch Government issued a gold coin with the Andrea Doria on one side and the Queen, somebody or other; on the other side, done by Centennial coin people. We have a few of them, but they are at the State Department.

Q: They are gold?

HANSON: Yes, gold.

Q: Wonder if Guido knows that. Are you a numismatist? I hope you got a lot from the Ashanti Kingdom.

HANSON: We may have gotten some gold dust. (laughs) Now, in Accra there was this 88 year old lady that came back. and started a school, preschool for children, and she's featured in the United States Information Service magazine that they put out in Accra. But we used to raise money for her, and that would help her out a little bit. We didn't support her facility, but we contributed to it. So, she was another person who was quite a legend.

Q: One thing we haven't talked about was what you did for AAFSW. You've got them getting money out into the community, because up to that time...

HANSON: Oh, yes. This is something. Did you ever see the AAFSW newsletter with myself featured on it? Trley featured me in one issue.

Q: Oh, yes, I did.

HANSON: If you need that, I have it somewhere.

Q: Well, yes, I would like that. We should put a copy of that in, yes, indeed. In fact, I may not even have that copy anymore.

HANSON: You probably wouldn't.

Q: It was overseas, and at the end of each post, I toss things out, like old issues of the AAFSW News.

HANSON: No, you can't carry them around forever.

Q: Right. (laughs)

HANSON: I'll go down and see if I can locate one of those. Here's a Community Relations Report. This gives you an idea of what I was working with. This is the latest. That's the last report I wrote. And I've worked with all of these different organizations.

Q: Organizations: the House of Ruth, Martha's Table, Big Sisters of Washington, Mother Dear's Community Center.

HANSON: Now, if you want me to get copies of these I will xerox them. I can get a copy for you, because this goes back... the work goes back to when I first went on the Board. So, maybe some of it is in a report, you see, so it will be in this one where I didn't get it out on this.

Q: Would you like this put in your transcript?

HANSON: All right, but what I would like to do with that is get a xeroxed copy, because what happened is, I passed the files onto the next Community Relations person. All the other ones I have are with her. What I do now is work with youngsters, since 1981 when Lesley Dorman was President. She said, "Muriel, will you go out and see what you could do for this?" This was the Presidential Classroom in which they give onsite instructions to young Americans across the country, who are sent here on scholarship by Rotary, the league of some somebody and what have you. It gives them an enrichment in how the Federal Government works. So it seems that Presidential Classroom does that, and Closeup does that, and so I have been doing this. When I went off, I had gotten up to 46 youngsters that I had helped over a period of time to have that experience, from Spingarn High School, mostly Eastern High School, and Coolidge. Now, as the time went on, I limited it down to Eastern High School, giving them the first preference, because I worked with the Women's Auxiliary of the Eastern Branch Boys and Girls Club, which is an outgrowth from AAFSW's concern during the sixties. The City was in an uproar, and the women were very concerned that diplomats from other countries would see a nation's capital in such an uproar. They wanted to feel that they were doing something, showing some concern, and so out of that developed the Auxiliary. That is where they give a very good donation. I think they give \$8000 now to that Auxiliary, because that

Auxiliary has a scholarship financial assistance committee, where they select from people who are college material, college-bound, but are financially in need. So that is very good. I served on that Board, and I think they have been successful in helping young people become aware of what the Federal Government is doing.

Also, Closeup was another one. I found Closeup was a little cheaper, and it seemed that they had been working with the DC public schools. I always would request that the young people would write. I had such a difficult time trying to get them to write to the AAFSW to let the AAFSW know they knew where that money was coming from...

Q: ...to thank them.

HANSON: ...to thank them, yes. I have my files full of nice letters. So often they would put Mrs. Hanson on it, because Mrs. Hanson would be...

Q: ...close to them. They know you.

HANSON: I was the contact person.

Q: Of course.

HANSON: I used to get a little embarrassed, because they somehow wouldn't always catch on to the fact that it was this Association of... I think that's a big mouthful... people can't always say it. Here, somebody even got this confused with the Women's Auxiliary. See, they knew I was working on all those boards, and it all began to mesh together.

Q: Do you know what I would do if I were you? I would just take a sampling. I would just xerox a sampling, because you want to keep these. But for the transcript that we put in the Association for Diplomatic Studies Archives I would think that you would just xerox a sampling... two or three of these... and maybe xerox your last report that you did for AAFSW and maybe your first report to show the progress during your years, and by all means, a copy of the article of the AAFSW News. And then, see when I get your transcript back to you, then you can decide what you want to put into it and everything that you don't mind parting with. Some people don't want to part with their photographs. Sometimes, if you have duplicates... I think if you could give us one of flowers, because that was obviously such a large part of your time abroad or...

HANSON: It was one of my delights. I learned photography and flowers, because in India I learned how to arrange flowers.

Q: Did you do all those arrangements?

HANSON: Yes, yes. I learned to do these arrangements, and it was a real pleasure for me. And so, what were you saying about these pictures now?

Q: Well, you see, it would be nice to have one or two pictures of flowers, because that

was very important to you when you were abroad, but you may have one that you want to keep for yourself. Are there some that you wouldn't mind parting with?

HANSON: Well, you know, the interesting thing is, I have... what do you call it? If I ever get around to it, I have negatives and, if I could look through my things, I just might be able to find flowers and have them developed. It would be something easy enough to do.

Q: You see, what the next step of this is, first of all, the woman who does our transcribing. I send the tapes to her and she types them out. Then I send them back to you, and you put in your corrections. Then they go back to her again, and she gives you a clean copy. (tape ends)

HANSON: Back to thinking a little more about the culture of the African in general. You know, the tribal chief is the person that is responsible for all the people. You are always giving to the chief something... this is called "dash", and "dash" was a way of getting a lot of things done. Sometimes, the Puritan American would think, "Oh, this is terrible," being totally unaware of the kind of "dash" we had back here, you see. And it was when anytime these new people would come into office, they always would have...

A_____’s wife was able to become the owner of a Mercedes Benz business. This was tragic. Now where was the money coming from and where was it going? It seems like every time somebody gets to the head of it, they take the money and flee, and this was the tragedy in trying to bring the type of government that would be more modern and Western in on a people who perhaps weren't ready for it. I don't know. What would they have evolved into by their own choices? Ghana, again, was a country that through colonialism had been brought together, but they did not have as many different tribes as Nigeria had, different strong tribes... real animosities between the northern Nigerian and the Ibo and the Yoruba. The Ashanti people were a very gifted people and a very rich people. And we know the R_____ of Ghana, before Ghana became a nation, was already a very rich land. The Kingdom of Ghana in the annals go back to almost Timbuktu, when they had books and writing and learning and all of this from the Mohammanan people. So I think that we have the collision of the Western high-tech society coming in on a continent that wants some of this technology, but they can't quite handle it. I mean sociologically speaking, people can't handle technology the way technology expands. It's an impossibility, so the Africans suffer from the same things, maybe in a different way and maybe in a greater way, because they were less prepared for it than we in the Western world. They say nobody knew except the scientists what was going to happen when they let that genie of the atomic explosion out of the bottle. They knew they weren't going to be able to get it back into the bottle. So, this is what we are dealing with right now.

Wednesday, I'm going to look at something on television, because they're talking on WETA... they are doing a whole program on the nuclear threat. When you get one little shot here and one little shot there, and the shots get bigger and bigger and bigger, what do you get, but an escalation? This is the thing that always disturbed me about our President when he came in talking about limited nuclear war. I mean, he comes off with things

which seem to me to be off the wall. Even his daughter wouldn't get married in the White House, because she didn't agree with what he was saying. But then, he immediately turns around and says, "Oh, sorry, I should have said or I should have done that," and people don't have any memory. They don't know where they're coming from. And so, these things are so frightening in the sense that they tell you if you don't learn from history, you are doomed to repeat it... and we are sitting around watching history repeat itself:

I'm very prayerful these days. I'm very prayerful, because I had had a devotion to our Lady of Fatima since I was twelve years old. The devotion hasn't been intense. It was an awareness there. Even attempted to do the devotions as prescribed by my teacher at the age of twelve. And then, having been in Europe, in crossing through Europe for a number of years, I said to myself, "Why haven't I been to Fatima?" So there I was, leaving Ghana, and I said to my husband, "I can't understand it. I have never been to Fatima." We did a lot of tours in Spain and we saw a lot of beautiful shrines there and we did them at home, but Fatima should have been more important. I named one child Ann Marie, named after Mary; I named another Margaret Ann... Ann is my middle name and that's the name of the Mother of Mary; and finally, the youngest, Mary Ann, the real name that I had intended for the first one to have. So, I've always had this devotion. I said, "I'd like to get a ticket routed back home in which I have to pick up Ann Marie in Segovia (because it was during her junior year abroad), and then we can go on to Portugal, and then from Portugal go on to the States," because that was our way of doing whatever sightseeing we could do. So, Ann Marie met me in Madrid. We stayed in the hotel that night and got a flight out to Lisbon. We got a lovely hotel in Lisbon, and I looked all around and I said, "I just want to go to Lisbon. Everybody's going to be talking about Fatima." I get there and they said, "Fatima, Fatima? What's Fatima?" So, they said, "The best you can do is get on a tour that will take you, and you just have a visit there." And that's the way I got to Fatima. It turned out that we were in a civil war, and I had nerve enough to go to a country that had a civil war, just like these people that go traveling around! I don't go to Europe anymore. They can go. I've had it. (laughs)

Q: You've been.

HANSON: I've been. We went on a bus. We went on a lovely tour of Lisbon and of the countryside of Portugal, of the history of Portugal. It is truly a very old country, well preserved, and we got to Fatima. Then, we were only allowed to stay fifteen minutes, because they said a raid had been made on the munitions reserves and they were searching every vehicle on the road. So, it took us twelve hours to get back from Fatima when it should have taken us four!

Q: Oh, dear!

HANSON: It was a matter of physical needs...food...everything. It just happened we ate everything up as well. But, coming back, it was five minutes by five minutes in intense exhaust from all the other cars, because every car was being examined by a gunned policeman. Then, we got back to the hotel and we were ready to leave the next day, so I said, "Wait a minute. Am I glad we're getting out!" We got in our taxi the next morning

to get our TWA flight out, and our taxi nearly had an accident. Somebody nearly hit us. We got to the airport and we got on our TWA flight and we said, "Whew! we really feel like we're home now!" And we were in the air 45 minutes when the Captain comes over the loudspeaker and says, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a problem. We have to try and make a forced landing. You will see the petrol being jettisoned out of the plane. I want you to take all of your... anything sharp... take your shoes off, put your heads down, and be ready for an emergency landing." I said, my goodness." So the man in front of me said, "My God, this is the first time I'm being evacuated off of a plane." "So," I said to myself, "If he reads the reports, it might be the last time!" When you keep seeing this petrol going out from the plane and you don't see any landing spot, I said, "Now where are we going to land?" She (the stewardess) said, "We will land in the Azores." We put down in the Azores, and we had to go through the chutes. Did you see that Air Afrique plane that was terrorized in Geneva over the weekend? Did you see the people going out the chutes? That's how we went out. And I did that back in 1975.

So, we got out of the plane. We had a full loaded plane, and many of them were senior citizens. And interestingly, they had been making a pilgrimage to Lourdes and had come to Portugal and maybe were not allowed to go to Fatima because of the problems there, so they were on their way home. When I went down the chute, this Japanese-American stood there and stopped me, because when you go down a chute, if you don't stay in the seated position, your head's going to hit the tarmac and you can get an injury. So, he saw me coming, and I had fallen back and my head was going to hit the tarmac, and he stopped it. Then I said, "Thanks", so then I stood there and I helped these senior citizens so that they wouldn't have an incident. Our shoes were in the plane, and my daughter said, "Mother, what are you doing standing at the plane?" And I said, "Well, these people are coming down and they might have an injury." So, I guess we were toward the end, so I finished up the people that came off, and she said, "Come on, get away from the plane. They told us to get away from the plane." So, we ran over to the bus, and it was loaded. We had all the senior citizens go on the bus, so the rest of us, who were younger, walked to the hanger where we were supposed to go. Out of the blue, the people did very well. One lady got hysterical. Nobody was injured, which was remarkable. Nobody had a heart attack, which was remarkable out of that age group, and it turned out that they sent down a team from _____ to dismantle a bomb. What it turned out it was, they had been told that a bomb had been placed on the plane and that it would go off in 45 minutes. We had to get out and we had to get away. Then, the dismantling team came and went through it.. and there wasn't anything. So we went through the exercise. For all of us, we didn't know the difference. So, we had the experience of being on a terrorized plane. My daughter was waiting for us and kept calling at Kennedy, because we were to go on to Boston and stay with her. She said the plane hasn't landed and TWA wouldn't tell her what the problem was. She just knew... they kept telling her the plane was delayed.. And then, eventually, I think, they told her the plane would be in at such and such a time tomorrow, because the personnel on the plane could no longer have a trans-Atlantic flight. They had gone over their hours to be on board.

Q: By that time, it was probably true. (laughs)

HANSON: Yes, yes. By the time they came down to dismantle, to find out whether there was a bomb on the plane and dismantle it, their working hours had exceeded their statutes for that day. So we slept in a room with four people. They had a miniature hotel that they had to house all of these people. They only had fast foods, so you had a hamburger and you had a soft drink of some sort, either for dinner or for breakfast, and I guess... I don't know what they did for the food on the plane. They must have sent out somewhere for stuff. I don't know what happened, but once we got on the plane, I guess we had a meal in flight. But that was my experience of coming in contact with terrorism.

Then, when we got home, we had a slight crisis in the family. I really didn't want to go overseas anymore. We had served ten solid years overseas. I began to see the effect it was taking on the children. They had no one in their vicinity to really help them strategize their academics. We found that the colleges.. Margaret was at Brandeis, a very bright child. And Marshall had talked with one of the advisors there. · “Oh, we don't tell the children what to do. We let them take anything. We don't encourage them to do anything.” And he felt very, very disappointed, because he felt that this was a very promising young person and that if she had any kind of guidance, she would “Perform very well. And Ann Marie was out in Delaware at Ohio Wesleyan, and again, the same thing had happened. There was not the system to... they were not in schools now. I think if we'd known about Brown University, we'd found youngsters that went to Brown at that time who had very good guidance. I don't know whether it's peers. I don't know what it was., but the kids that came through that experience, did well. And being overseas, we did not have the same selective capacity. I also think it was a tremendous change in times. When we grew up, we didn't have the selection of schools. We went to the school that was nearest according to your economic means and according to your academic abilities. That way, Marshall went to City College, and I went to NYU. This time, we all of a sudden find out we can send our kids to any school in the universe...any school in the country. We can send them to... and that became a problem. Then, how do you involve a kid to know what school they want to go to? We didn't have the American experience to go around to college campuses and all that sort of thing. So, I didn't want to go overseas anymore, and he did. He felt his career was very important at that point. I felt they weren't going to do anything, because from the way... knowing his talents and knowing how he had been treated... there was nobody that really was very interested in seeing that he got any push. So I was disenchanted with the Foreign Service for what I had seen they had done to him. He also had a bad break. The one person who was going to do something for him... guess who?... Nat Davis... had gotten into a bad situation from the Allende situation, so his...

Q: His mentor...his ability to do anything.

HANSON: Yes. His mentor's ability had been zapped, because of his experience down in Chile. So, Marshall was to go to South Africa as the Consul General again. I wasn't for it. I really said, “That's for the birds.” And my interest was, basically, I wasn't going to be that far away from the children. I just didn't think I could take it anymore. So, I came back here, and he came back and somehow someone got wind that I would be interested to go to Curacao, because that was his other thing. So, they put him on the map to go to

Curacao, and the next thing he knew, he was assigned to Curacao. He was a little angry.

It caused a little problem in our relationship, but at least I felt we were on this side of the ocean. I knew he wouldn't, didn't want to stay in DC, and I figured, well, I had to go overseas one more time if this marriage was going to continue. (laughs) And so, we went down to Curacao, and it turned out to be a fantastic assignment, because it was the Bicentennial. We participated in such historical events that it was just wonderful. We found out that when... first of all, do you know who we followed? We went into a residence that was ramshackled. So we had a job to put that in order. (Transcriber omitted discussion of photographs)

They were very happy to have a family there, because the Curacaoan took great pride in Roosevelt House, and the family that occupied it. So we brought that dignity back to the Roosevelt House.

Q: Which was sadly lacking.

HANSON: Yes, yes.

MR. HANSON: They had that poor old... what's his name?

Q: Oh, he's retired and he's gone back to his wife and may be in Phoenix. So, after all those years and years and years...

HANSON: ...of being away, yes.

Q: I don't know who wouldn't divorce who, but the last I heard was that they were back together.

HANSON: They had lived (unintelligible)

Q: I guess.

HANSON: It turned out that I had to go see Mary Ann. I chose to go see Mary Ann at Northfield, Mount Herman, for her Homecoming Week, so I was late coming down to Curacao. So everybody was wonderful, because Marshall's wife was going to come. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) They said, "Oh, no, not another one!"

HANSON: Yes, I'm telling you, I was getting phone calls in New England, "When are you getting down here?" (laughs) I thought the man was madly in love with me!"

Q: (laughs) That too.

HANSON: Then, when I learned about the other man, it was funny. Was that the time I

received a lot of flowers? I don't know. I had all kinds of flowers, all kinds of bouquets, magnificent flowers on my arrival.

Q: That's a Dutch custom. When you first arrive and you invite people for the first time, you get just hordes of flowers. So, maybe... I don't remember that from Curacao, but maybe it was.

HANSON: I, being a flower-lover, was very much impressed, so I started keeping a flower book. Even my flowers on my veranda in Ghana. We chose to live in a different residence. We lived on Rangoon Avenue, because Grandpa could not live in the official DCM Residence. There was a spiral staircase. Now, I had flowers. I had Laura _____ show me how to get somebody to make these pots. so I had 22 pots all around my veranda with a different flower. And I had a purple flower that was magnificent. Then I grew the Wax Rose and B_____, and this is it blooming, and all of this was growing in my garden. See, here are some of the flowers that were picked. I always had flowers in my house.

Q: From your garden?

HANSON: From those posts, always. And there's another arrangement.

Q: Yes.

HANSON: And I even... now that Anthurium was growing somewhere and these little roses, and that's the Porcelain Lily, I guess, that is just fantastic. I had that at my entrance. Now, this is the national flower of Trinidad and Tobago.

Q: Oh, yes.

HANSON: That grew in my garden.

Q: What's the name of it?

HANSON: H_____. And that grows in... that was growing in my garden. Here's a Hibiscus, and the H_____, and the Wood Rose I spread all over Accra, because nobody recognized the beauty of this, so I had it growing over the back of my veranda. It goes through two generations in a period of growth. This is called the Bride's Tears. And look. I visited with this friend in California and found a black Bird of Paradise.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

HANSON: That's a black Bird of Paradise.

Q: I didn't know they existed.

HANSON: And I saw it up in Delaware in Longwood Gardens, and this is a typical one.

Q: I've never seen a black one.

HANSON: So, they were amazed when they saw that up at Longwood Gardens. And that's unusual. Of course, that's all done in a hot house. I taught my bearer, my steward, to always arrange flowers for me from the garden on the table and then, of course, the Bougainvillea was there at all times. Then, I also grew African violets. I really enjoyed the flower growing. Now, this is in the Residence. These are some of the flowers I set up in the Residence before Shirley Temple Black arrived.

Q: Took them from your garden?

HANSON: Yes. Now, these are some of the flowers that were sent to me when I arrived in Curacao.

Q: And what a lovely thing to do!

HANSON: Look at that, doesn't that look like a peacock?

Q: Peacock, yes. Kind of a welcoming thing?

HANSON: What I would do is make an arrangement of pictures of flowers that just meant too much to me. Look how big that African violet is.!

Q: Huge, yes.

HANSON: I had really grown that one. So that was the extent of my flowers.

Q: So, you arrived in Curacao amid all these blossoms. We had a nice garden there, too.

HANSON: Oh, you know, Curacao is an ecological revelation, because Curacao is the one island in the Caribbean that doesn't get enough rain. It's dry, arid.

Q: Of course, you have to irrigate.

HANSON: Yes, and so, it's so dry that although it has the third largest port for oil passing through, transferring what have you, and the Shell Refinery in our time, they had to install a salination plant, because in the processing of oil, you need distilled water. So they were able to provide for the Island the most magnificent water. It was totally soft.

Q: And that's why the Amstel beer was so good there, too.

HANSON: Yes. So, and then the D___ tree is again the hearty tree that manages to survive in a dry atmosphere, because... what do they say, that the early people cut down all of the mahogany forest to build houses and to send it back to Europe? And then the goats came in and they ate up all the vegetation. Goats are really detrimental to growth of

land preservation, and so it caused an imbalance of the clouds that come down to get the moisture from the rain forest to take up and eventually bring back more rain. So, to me, sociologically speaking, you see the manifestation there, because I took a course in ecology when I was in school, and seeing this lived out was just beautiful and also very important to know how fragile we are here on Earth if we don't take care of it. They were talking in class about the ecology of the city and what happens to that, and then I saw what happens in the ecology of the land when it is not properly taken care of. What we had was, in the past anyhow, from the Mississippi, of course, people chopped down all the trees, and the trees weren't able to keep the land in place. So, Mississippi would overflow its waters.

Q: You'll be happy to know that they've gotten control of the goats. The last time we were there, the goats were no longer running around the countryside devastating everything.

HANSON: Good.

Q: They've got them under control now.

HANSON: Well, that's good, that's good. When were you there last?

Q: A few years ago.. probably about the Christmas of 1982 or '83. It must have been the Christmas of '82.

HANSON: I think we were about January of 1979, we were there.

Q: No, Christmas of 1984, it was.

HANSON: So, who was still there?

Q: Well, we went over for Christmas and I had had the flu, and Guido got the flu there. We stayed with R _____.

HANSON: Oh, yes, Oh, yes.

Q: He had built a guest room up on the second floor and he had a jacuzzi, and we really... I'm trying to think who we did see. He didn't have a Christmas party. What did we do? Well, I didn't feel... I was tired and had a fever when I got there, but we went anyway, and we really didn't see many people that time. But the time before, I went over by myself for some reason... oh, I know, I came down from Miami to Trinidad via Curacao. Guido went on ahead, because he had to get there.

HANSON: Oh, that was nice.

Q: And there again, I went to Rotary. I sat at a table. We had left in 1976, and this would have been 1982.

HANSON: You left in 1975, because we got there in 1975.

Q: We left in 1973. I went back about ten years later. And I was taken to Rotary, and I sat at the Rotary table and I met everybody at the table.

HANSON: Really? (end of tape)

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Charles Marshall

Spouse entered Ser: 1948

Spouse left Service: 1979

Status: Spouse of retired Minister Counselor, Consul General

Posts:

1948-1950	Monrovia, Liberia
1950-1955	Zurich, Switzerland
1956-1958	Calcutta, India
1958-1961	Washington, DC
1961-1964	Trinidad
1964-1966	Washington, DC
1966-1970	Lagos, Nigeria
1970-1972	Monrovia, Liberia
1972-1975	Accra, Ghana
1975-1977	Curacao
1977-1979	Washington, D.C.

Date and Place of Birth: November 22, 1926, New York City

Maiden Name: Thomas

Parents: Ruth Hall and Maceo A Thomas, Cornell U. 1922, Realtor

Schools: Evander Childs High School, New York University, Washington Square College

Date and Place of Marriage: June 7, 1953, New York City

Profession: Social Worker

Children: Three daughters,

Ann Marie Hanson, Director of Physical Therapy, Stoddard Nursing Home

Margaret Hanson-Muse, MBA, Sprint Corporation

Mary Ann Hanson, MSG (Gerontology)

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:

A At Post:

American Woman's Club Library, Zurich, Switzerland

Marian Society, Calcutta, 1956-1958

Community Relations Chairperson, Lagos, WOAC, 1967-1970

Monrovia, AWC, 1970-1972

Honorary President, AWC, Accra, 1972-1975

B. In Washington, DC:

League of Women Voters, 1964-1966

AAFSW, Community Relations Chairperson, 1979-1986

Docent, Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, 1979-

AAFSW Liaison to Women's Auxiliary Eastern Branch Boys and Girls Club.

1979-1986; Member, 1987

AAFSW Administrator for inner city high school (10 students), 10 scholarships,
to the Presidential Classroom All Total, and Closeup Foundation, 1979-

End of interview