The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

KRISTIE MILLER

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Monday, June 19, 1989. I am interviewing Kristie Miller at my home in Washington, DC. Kristie was a Foreign Service spouse from 1969 to 1984, when she was divorced. She has a very illustrious family background which I think we could spend hours discussing, but I have made interviewer's notes which have been included in her transcript.

Kristie herself served in Beirut, Dhahran, Caracas, Maputo and New London, Connecticut. She is a teacher, she is also a writer, and during her stay in Maputo she used her writing ability in a series of columns to her father's newspaper in Peru, Illinois. The columns were, I think, an escape hatch for the frustrations which built up in Maputo in a time of severe drought and continual civil unrest. But I will let Kristie tell the story herself.

[My introduction] refers to those columns as the wick, if you will, by which you got rid of some of your Mozambique frustrations.

MILLER: Actually, I did another one way back when which I don't have a copy of but I could probably retrieve, and that is when we arrived in Dhahran. It was the most unmitigated disaster because we had been living out of suitcases in Beirut for six months. As a matter of fact, what had happened was we didn't get a furnished post. It [Beirut} was a kind of bizarre assignment, very few people got this assignment for just the six months. [Usually] you did the whole twenty months where you got reading and writing and everything [Arabic language training], but my husband was still on language probation. And they were going to teach him French and then send him to Dhahran. His father was a very well known, at the time, linguistics professor, and he was known to the linguists at FSI. Bill went to them and said, "Look, it makes no sense for me to learn French just to get off language probation when I am going to Saudi Arabia. Can't you give me something that will get me off language probation in Beirut?" They said, yes, if you get a 2 conversation level you can get off probation and we figure that will take you six months.

I arrived in Beirut, and for some reason they didn't think I was coming. I don't know what they thought I was doing, but anyway, they were shocked to see me. Then I said, "I want to do it, too [study Arabic]." And, typical of the State Department, they said, "Well, you can do it if you are not any better and not any worse [than your husband]. If you are any better you will demoralize him, and if you are any worse you are holding him back." Fortunately, we [my husband and I] turned out to be very equivalent. He had a better accent and I had a better vocabulary. But I was the only woman in the school in 1970 when women's liberation was just getting started. I had so much teasing, mostly from the instructors, though somewhat from the Americans, although I never think teasing is not serious. One instructor, the one who taught us most often, he was about 25, and had grown up during the time the Marines were in Lebanon, and he was very Americanized. All of our instructors were Palestinians and we had all kinds of vocabulary about liberating Palestine, and so I started making little speeches about women's liberation, I could use all the same vocabulary. So one day he said to me, "Do you really believe that women are as smart as men?" I said, "Look, aren't I as least as good as any of the men here, and better than some of them?" And he said, "Yes, but that's beside the point."

I don't know what the criteria were, but I just figured being there on sufferance, I had to fit in. In fact, I even started to have dreams about growing a mustache, because all the

men were growing facial hair because they were bored out of their minds.

Q: But you know language school under the best of circumstances is terribly taxing. What an introduction to the Foreign Service!

MILLER: So, we never got housing allowance because we were not in a regular program. So we house sat. There were security problems in Beirut, so when people went home on home leave, leaving their apartment vacant, we stayed in their apartments. Living out of a suitcase. No question about it. Everything had been sent on to Dhahran. When we got to Dhahran in June, it was 130 and 80 % humidity and there was no air conditioning in our house. Unpacking, which I was dying to do, having not seen my things for six months, was awful, and it was the worst shipment we ever had. Everything was broken. It was just awful. Even our brass bed, you wouldn't think they could break the brass bed, but it was in shards. And I wrote my father a letter that probably scorched the paper. I was just beside myself. Well, I just did it to vent, and he published it. (both laughing) Well, my husband was horrified. I don't have that one, although it's probably in his files somewhere. That was a real wick. I hadn't meant him to, I was just ventilating; he thought it was so funny, you know, chapter and verse. I don't remember all the other things, it just seemed to me everything was terrible at that point. But it was very good to be able to -- I think writing, even if you don't publish it, writing home is a good safety valve.

Q: But what an introduction to the Foreign Service, and what an introduction to Saudi Arabia. What was it like to live there, without being able to go to a restaurant, without being able to drive a car, with no air-conditioning in a 100-degree temperature?

MILLER: Well, we got the air-conditioning fixed, a week later or thereabouts; it was just broken. It was just when I hit the ground, wanted to unpack, I'd sit on a chair and a pool would form around me. Actually, I loved it. It was very funny, because my mother raised Arabian horses, and I'd always had a kind of "thing" about Arabia and the Arabs. We lived here in Washington, and whenever there were visiting Arabs, after they'd seen the mosque, they'd bring them out to see my mother. So somehow I had a very great predisposition toward the Arabs. It was a time when many Americans did not, as you probably recall; I think most of the media were very pro-Jewish at the time. The Six-Day War was not so far in the past. But I really liked it. For one thing, I had a job. Almost all the women who wanted to work could work in the embassy-- we lived in a compound -- or work as I did in the International School. All the oil people would buy horses, which they then couldn't ride because they weren't trained -- the Arabs think it breaks their spirit. So I was able to ride whenever I wanted to, they were only too happy to have me ride their horses. I didn't have a car but I could get on a horse and ride to Riyadh, if I felt like it; there are no fences, that's marvelous.

Q: Were Saudi women riding horses?

MILLER: Oh, no, no.

Q: So you could ride a horse but couldn't drive?

MILLER: Well, for one thing, when I went there I had long hair. The first thing I did was cut it very short. I was 25 and I cross-dressed. Most people, unless they looked at me very closely, weren't 100% sure. Anyway, I was a Westerner so it didn't really count, especially in the eastern province; they're not as strict, the Bedouin really are not as strict as they are in the cities like Jidda and Riyadh. Dhahran then, anyway, was still a village with one paved road. And because I could speak Arabic, I went once a week to the women's social group, the Saudi women's social group, ostensibly to teach them English. And we had wonderful conversations, I felt very privileged. I loved it. Under their robes they had little mini-dresses, and they would talk about how they hated the veil. You couldn't go to restaurants but we would always have sort of compensations, because we had a gourmet club, for example. We'd all -- it was very Somerset Maugham -- we'd wear black tie and have the five course meal and things like that.

Q: You'd have to, in a situation like that.

MILLER: Yes. I feel -- the thing that I felt, and I'd be interested to know if you felt the same way -- it just depended so much on the leadership at the post. Lee Dinsmore was there when we were there. He's since retired, a marvelous man. His wife was absolutely terrific. I would have walked across hot coals for her any day and put up with anything because she was so game and so nice -- never asked you to do something so you couldn't refuse. So it was as a great favor, would you please do whatever needed to be done. And I was in other places where you were told to do things. I think it makes a big difference.

Q: This was right about the time of the '72 directive. Had it happened at that point?

MILLER: No, it hadn't, because we left in '72. I guess it happened while we were there, I don't know what month in '72. We left in June of '72.

Q: It was about that time, though.

MILLER: Yes. When I went, I sort of didn't realize that these things were "optional." But in our next post, in Venezuela, it was very large, very hierarchical, people were very layered in, they were no help to me, either, and that's what I resented. I always felt it should be a two-way street. They wouldn't help me get my work papers, which were very difficult to get, and which I nevertheless got. And then they expected me, although I was teaching all their children in high school, to turn around and cook for the embassy functions. I just refused.

Q: Not only that; you shouldn't have been obligated to.

MILLER: Well, I wasn't obligated, but they spoke as if I were. But since I knew I wasn't -- and Bill was very supportive about that. I just said to them -- well, they had said to me, I was so cross about this, when I asked for somebody to go down and help me at the

Ministry of Labor to get my working papers --

Q: Because how was your Spanish?

MILLER: My Spanish was good, I'd majored in Spanish in college. But after the Arabic, it wouldn't come out.

Q: A trouble we all have.

MILLER: Yes. I could understand everything perfectly well; I had great difficulty the first month in expressing myself. And that, of course, when I had to get my work papers, as a teacher you have a very small window of opportunity, you have to go right in and get your job the minute you hit the post. Which I always found incredibly stressful. So I had to go and get the working papers and it was a catch 22 -- I could have the job if I had the working papers, and I could get the working papers if I had the job.

So I just asked if one of the secretaries would go down with me. And they said, "Well, you don't work for the embassy." So I said (imitating hollow tone of voice) "All right, I'll go get the papers myself." Then when they asked me to cook at their Christmas party, I said, (laughing) "I don't work for the embassy. My husband makes a dynamite meatball, you ask him."

Q: And did he?

MILLER: Oh, well, our cook made them, as she would have made them in any event; I was just making a point. And maybe everybody had not absorbed the directive. (pause) No! (hearty laughs)

Q: Were you teaching, in Venezuela, in the Caracas schools?

MILLER: No, in the International School.

Q: So you needed work papers even to do that.

MILLER: Yes. Because I was paid in local currency. It was -- I didn't always know how the schools were set up, but this one was a very international school and a lot of Caraqueños went there and a lot of other Third Country nationals went there. We were accredited by the Southern Schools Association, in the United States.

Q: Which is important.

MILLER: Yes. A high school degree from there could gain a child admittance to college. It was probably the best job I ever had, except for the job I had in Washington. It was a very, very good job. I had a better job there than Bill did. I had a great time. I always had a great time. I have to say, I mean the Department would sometimes drive me batty. But it

was always "the Department" that I minded. And somehow the other always seemed to be part of what you went in with, you know, and you could accept the difficulties in other cultures. You'd arrived there, not the other way around.

Q: From looking at your curriculum vitae, reading your columns and everything, it seemed to me you had the right spirit for the Foreign Service, you had a great sense of self when you went in, and you could take your portable career with you and you had your writing too. It seemed ideal, somehow.

MILLER: I loved the Foreign Service. It was not the reason my marriage ended. The Foreign Service is a stressful life, and if you have a marriage that is problematic to begin with, it probably contributes to -- but I also feel that I might not have stayed married as long as I did if I hadn't been in the Foreign Service, because I liked it so much.

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

MILLER: And it got worse, too. In the beginning, when he was very junior, we had much more time for each other. And in the last post, it was particularly stressful because we were sure our house was bugged.

Q: That was Maputo?

MILLER: Yes. It was a very hostile government. So the communication between us got down to about zilch. He hadn't planned, of course, to be chargé. He'd gone as DCM, we thought it was going to be a learning experience for him. And he was catapulted into the top position, then we extended an extra year partly because it was such a good career opportunity for him. And I was not l00% cognizant of what was going on in our marriage -- the fact that it was getting worse and worse. I couldn't quite separate out all the elements, because it was a very difficult post, in an external sense because I had little children and there was no food and no medicines ---

Q: Driving four hours for food -- was that round trip or one way?

MILLER: One way.

Q: That's what I thought. Did you do it in one day?

MILLER: It depended. It was a real toss-up, which was worse. When I went there the kids were two years and three months, and nine months, respectively. So sometimes I would take them with me, which was also a drag; but then we would spend a weekend, and shop the day we were going to come back. And it wasn't so awful. When I didn't take them with me, then I would go and come back in one day. I nursed my baby until she was four because there was no milk. She didn't want to get weaned; and in Africa there wasn't the social pressure to wean her. So I liked to have her with me, at least until she was about two, when she could get along without me, I could get along without her, for a day.

Also, I didn't think the child care was very good. I could never get the African nanny to take care of my children the way I wanted her to. She just couldn't grasp things from my point of view. It wasn't her fault, but I didn't like leaving them there. So it was hard for me to tell whether it was my anxieties about them, the fact that we had these overwhelming representational responsibilities and I still had a baby getting up at five o'clock in the morning --

Q: It sounds like a combination of all of the above, really.

MILLER: Yes. It was very stressful. And I think you can cope with the stress if you've got a good marriage. But if the person you're married to isn't communicating with you, then you just get so lonely it's awful. I don't know... If we'd gotten out of there early and worked on it or something, maybe-

Q: You took your year off after that or before that?

MILLER: Before that. After the second child was born, right after she was born, because all the child-care books said it was very naughty to have them right on top of each other but it was either that or have them in Africa. And I definitely wanted two and I didn't want to have them in Africa. For some reason I make giant babies and I really wanted some good surgery. So they're exactly 18 months apart. We thought that for the sake of the older child, it would be better to have both of us at home. I had been working part-time, ostensibly or at least on the books it was full-time, although I could do some of my work at home, until the second child was born. So he hadn't had me full-time either. I really think it helped. They are absolutely, even if it sounds bragging to say so, they're darling to each other.

Q: I saw them together when we came to your house last Sunday and they were very cute and very curious as we all came in, being a welcoming committee. I thought they were charming children.

MILLER: They're nice to each other, and I feel that that must have helped them -- it must have helped him not be jealous of her when he was really still a baby and shouldn't have had another baby to contend with. It was nice to have that time off -- it was just four months. But we went back because Bill then had some language training or some other kind of training. It was about nine months of less than full-time; I guess he had four months full-time leave, maybe four or five months of half-time before we went to Maputo.

Q: And he didn't feel that the four months off was in any way career-damaging, I take it?

MILLER: No, he didn't, because coming out as Vance's special assistant, he had a lot of contacts and he'd gotten a promotion out of it; he'd worked awfully hard and he knew he was going to get a good job. In fact, while we were up there, it was in September when

assignments are made, and he got the assignment to Maputo and considered that a very good one. We didn't know it was going to be spectacularly good as it turned out for him. And he was very nice about it when I told him that I didn't want to stay married. He said, "If it's the Foreign Service, I'll quit." And I said, "No, it's not, I'm sorry to say." We did some counseling to see if we could somehow get back in the groove. I just think I'd let it go too long. I just wasn't interested in staying married any more and gave up. But I loved the Foreign Service. There's no question about that.

Q: I notice that you developed a close relationship with the communicator's wife in Maputo. That must have been very important at the time, was it, to have someone --

MILLER: No. I exaggerated that in my column. I liked her fine, and she was the most kindred spirit that I had there. Actually, my closest friend there was a man who taught at the College of Petroleum and Minerals. He had a motorcycle, so he could drive me to the horse place. I gentled one horse, which I then let him ride. And we would go riding together. We had a lot intellectually in common. I'm sure a lot of people thought we were having a love affair, which we were not. But he just was a very kindred spirit and we liked very much talking about our work and our books and, in fact, we met up with each other in graduate school -- we went to graduate school together, and we're still very close friends. So he was really my closest friend.

(At this point, they establish that Miller knew him at Dhahran, not Mozambique, and confusion of two of Miller's columns, one mentioning Rudi, a communicator's wife)

MILLER: Nobody ever thought of having any rivalries in Mozambique. In Dhahran, yes we did. But it was much more of a siege mentality in Maputo. I think there were only four women, American women, if you include the Rhodesian bride of our communicator, and she was not U.S.-American. Otherwise there were only three officers and their wives.

Q: So it was really, as you say, a fortress.

MILLER: It was. It was.

Q: I was particularly interested in that little article because I had the same experience running with the moon in Recife. But I got up at 4:30, because in Recife, clock time was an hour and a half off of sun time. I got up one morning and went over to run -- rather, I walked rapidly around the track for an hour every morning -- and as I was crossing the street, I looked up and there was the most luminous, awesome moon I have ever seen in my life. The sky was a pale blue-gray. It was almost frightening, because the moon looked closer than it should have been. And I will never forget that -- that and the full moon in Timbuktu I can see to this day and will always see. I thought it was interesting that you had had a moonlight experience, too.

MILLER: I think that's one the things I liked best about the Foreign Service. We always went -- except for Caracas, which was developed but most of our other posts were less so.

And you can see natural things -- and they're part of your everyday life. It's not like taking a two-week camping vacation. They're woven into your everyday life -- the moon is there, it's not always full, but that's right, it is. And in Maputo, there weren't any light bulbs and lights, so even walking home in the evening it was dark and magical. I liked that very much about it. The mountains behind Caracas are a national park, and we used to hike up there. We had a little group of international business people, mostly, because my husband was an economic officer. There was incredible wild life through there.

Q: You went to Angel Fall? (Miller confirms) We tried to arrange an Angel Fall trip from Trinidad and we couldn't get people to go. We should have come over and joined a group from Caracas.

MILLER: I have to tell you, ours was a lot less than perfect. I went with my best friend [Joanna Sturm, Alice Longworth's granddaughter) from the States, and the first thing that happened, she developed terrible asthma. Fortunately I'd mentioned this to the embassy nurse, who had given us adrenalin to take with us. The guide had been a veterinarian, so he gave her the shot; but I thought she was going to die. He had a ruptured disc and absolutely couldn't move. The other two people in the group were two rather fat American businessmen who'd taken their ten-year-old sons for what was supposed to be a real macho male bonding experience, and they all wanted to tell dirty stories. And every time they'd try, Joanna and I would give them icy stares. We really ruined their trip. (both laughing) Here we were, with the guide paralyzed with his bad disc, and Joanna practically unable to breathe (she dissolves) -- it was really kind of scary.

I think it takes three days going up and one day coming back down. It was beautifully arranged. There were these little stone houses that the guide had made along the way for us to camp out in. And he'd brought lots of delicious food which was cooked every night. It was nice, it was just -- the disc, the asthma, you know. But I think most real adventures are kind of like that, they're not unalloyed, there's always the grit in the sandwich. I didn't want you to think it was perfect adventure. Also, it was very dry. Angel Fall was only a trickle. I think never very big. But it's the height, and there's this incredible plume down at the bottom.

The same friend came to visit me in Maputo and we went up to Zimbabwe and went to Victoria Falls and to a couple of the game parks there.

Q: That's what I liked about the Foreign Service, and obviously you did, too. I think, with you too, those experiences compensated for a lot.

MILLER: Oh, yes, a lot; really. As I said, well, I used to joke about this but it's true, like most jokes: Bill was not the best husband but he was definitely the best traveling companion. And it's hard to find a good traveling companion -- one who is really on your wavelength with everything. And we had so much fun, especially in the early years, traveling to all kinds of out-of-the-way places.

I was very absorbed in my work, which really made up for a lot. He would criticize me for working so hard, but that was how I dealt with the inadequacies, or whatever, in the marriage. I got very involved with all my students. It was also a great way to tap into the community in many places. Because in Caracas we got invitations out in the country to visit some of the students on their estancias, and things like that that we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. I liked that a lot.

Q: Did you ever seek counseling from the State Department? Or you just didn't?

MILLER: No, I didn't. But it's there if you want it, and if you wanted to talk to somebody about that, the woman I wrote about, is going through a really bad patch. She's getting counseling every which way, and her child is and her husband is. She can't say enough nice things about it. It's partly, I think, just my orientation. At the very beginning of my marriage, before we joined the Foreign Service, I had a lot of anxiety. And I thought about having counseling and I discussed it with my father. He talked me out of it. He was from a generation when that meant hours on the couch. He just said, "Your soul will never be your own if you ever go into counseling." And he really talked me out of it. The way I dealt with that, that was the point at which I began teaching. And teaching is a very absorbing career, and I just dealt with it that way. It's a good anodyne -- very hard work. And between the teaching and the demands of the Foreign Service, which are not inconsiderable, I just was very busy all the time. And it wasn't until I had children that I started to slow down, that I really began to feel the unhappiness.

And then in Maputo, what kind of counseling was I going to get? I couldn't get an MD to come look at my children.

Q: I was appalled at the CODEL that came with a doctor, and yet you didn't have access to that doctor.

MILLER: Well, I think if we'd been sick then, we would have. But I was shocked at the idea they couldn't spend a week away from a doctor, and we were supposed to spend months on end without one. (laughing) I thought that was unfair.

Q: But even so, I think if he was there, he should have just looked at the children to make sure they were all right, or looked at you, or have been an ear for any problem -- to me, as a taxpayer, I really --

MILLER: Oh, I was so angry at that! You can tell from the article. I was really incensed by their behavior all the way around. When we came back to Connecticut, I went to the Coast Guard, which was where Bill was stationed, and got counseling there. They referred me to a private doctor and the Department paid the bills and basically we did couples therapy together, too, and it basically just helped us with the separation.

Q: There's value in that, too.

MILLER: Yes, it did help me. But I think that when I was in the Foreign Service, well, I just didn't ever look for it. I think it was probably there. But it's really there now, and I think people are more accustomed to seeking it now.

Q: I think it's part of everyday existence now, isn't it.

MILLER: And I think that's great, because it's now used like a Band-Aid. People will just have a problem, and they'll go and discuss that problem, they don't get into Analysis, it's more oriented toward problem-solving. My friend -- they have really deep-seated problems, so they're having very heavy-duty therapy. And she had some problems a long time ago, also, but they were crisis proportions. I mean, she really had a terrible time and she was brought back and given counseling, which helped her enormously. And so it was always available; and she did that 18 years ago. I knew about that because we were both back here in Washington in '72. She'd been medevaced for her medical problems. I was here with Bill, and I was working at USIA and got her a job there while she was here. We worked together. I was very much aware that it was there but I didn't --

Q: Your father's influence probably had something to do with it.

MILLER: Oh I'm sure it did, and I always felt it was my fault, too, you know. I think that part of (she assumes a mocking tone) the socialization of women is that we feel we have to solve the problems. (laughing) There's "something wrong with us," there isn't something wrong somewhere else. And I just kept thinking, "If I work harder, it'll all work out."

Q: That would be terribly frustrating, if you were working harder and harder and harder and seemed to be spinning your wheels.

MILLER: Well, I don't know. (pause) I just didn't have any more -- it's like using capital in the bank: I'd used it all up. I just didn't have what it would take to stay in the marriage and work all the problems out. I also was not a bit convinced that they could ever be worked out, at our ages. I think the trouble with a lot of men in the State Department is, the things that make them good officers often make them poor husbands. And Bill is a great FSO, he's now ambassador to Mauritania, at a young age; and he's very good. But it's those same qualities of being totally imperturbable, totally unreachable (she laughs) and editing what he says very carefully that make him effective; and make him very ineffective as a husband. Because he just can't -- and I'm sure it would be hard to have that kind of split in your personality.

Q: This is why I thought it might be a little difficult for me to interview you, because, as you've said, you had a successful husband, you had a "portable" career, you had a variety of interests, you had the darling children who were with you. I really scratched my head and said, "You know, this looks like someone who had everything going for her." And it was obvious that the thing that took you away from the Foreign Service was your relationship with your husband. It had to be.

MILLER: Oh, yes.

Q: And to me it seemed such a shame, because it seemed to me that you were just a terrific Foreign Service wife. You had all the right spirit and attitudes and everything. But, as you said, it just wasn't meant to be.

MILLER: Yes.

Q: The purpose of these tapes is not to pry into what it was that didn't work between you, because that doesn't work.

MILLER: Not interesting to other people.

Q: Oh, I think some people would feed on it but we're not going to let them. I suppose it is germane to the Project, in a way; and we probably could do a tape some day with someone, that that was the only thing we wanted to talk to them about, and put a big red seal on it and say "this won't be unveiled for ten years," or something like that. But you have too many other things to tell me. And one of the things you mentioned at your house the other evening was that you have other divorced Foreign Service wives coming to you looking for guidance, sort of.

MILLER: Yes. I have two very close friends who are in the middle of divorces at the moment. I don't know if it's guidance or if it's just --

Q: Support.

MILLER: Yes. Being able to ventilate to somebody who understands -- I mean, one of the things I found -- I didn't know anyone at the time, probably because I was up in New London where I didn't know a soul -- but I just didn't have anyone to discuss it with who could understand; to even ventilate to. And none of my friends in Washington did. They kind of had this attitude that -- and obviously during the marriage I didn't discuss what I felt were the problems, I didn't think that was anyone's business and it would have been damaging. And everybody was so mad at me for getting a divorce! (laughing)

Q: That's not fair! Were they mad at your husband?

MILLER: No. The one thing he said was, "Don't ever tell anyone that I asked for this." He didn't want the divorce.

Q: No, but he had to be part of the cause -- I guess that's what I meant. Did anyone ever look and say, "Hey, what's Bill not doing to hold up his end?"

MILLER: Not really. I just shook everybody's world view, because they thought we were so happy. And the fact that we weren't, threatened them all somehow. I don't know what it

was, I still don't know what it was. But anyway, I moved to New York from New London instead of coming back here, for the first two years. I just couldn't handle that animosity -- oh, that's too strong a word; rather, criticism. But I find with my two friends -- and really you can't do it overseas so it makes sense, that if you've got problems, you come back here and then you start looking at it.

Q: I do have to ask you one question here. Do you have an independent income that enabled you to leave him and go to New York?

MILLER: Yes. I'm sure that makes a big difference. On the other hand, my attorney told me that I could easily have claimed alimony because of the fact that Bill had, through our travels, deprived me of the kind of career that would have been able to build up retirement and equity and so forth and so on. I refused to ask for alimony. So, while I did have an independent income, if I hadn't had, I'm sure I could have claimed alimony. All he pays is child support. Of the two friends that I have, one of them has a very small independent income, and the other one is part of a tandem couple and she's just working, continuing her job. I'm sure that -- I expect that some people stay in their marriages -- I mean, this is true elsewhere so I expect it's also true in the Foreign Service -- out of economic necessity.

Q: And the like of the glamor, of the attention when you get into the position where you really are sought after because of your husband's career. And I think some people will stay in an unhappy marriage for that.

MILLER: Oh God, that seems so backward to me-- I hated it, that he even had a "position," the representational responsibilities drove me crazy.

Q: But some people, you see, find their sense of self in that. But you didn't need that.

MILLER: I really disliked that intensely. I really like a private life and I need a lot alone time, and I hated that life that we had to lead in Maputo because it just seemed so, for one thing, going out to dinner every night in a country where there was so much starvation -- not that the dinners were lavish, but there was something very peculiar about that. I mean, it was a little bit, you know, let-them-eat-cake. I realized that there was a real reason for doing it, because you couldn't get information. And as I put in one of my columns, you know, Bill said he could meet ten different people at one dinner, yet it would take him all day to round up those people and find out what they knew so he could write a telegram. So for him they were important, but for me they were very dull. I saw the same people continuously, I generally had to talk to the wives, many of whom I had very little in common with; language problems, every other kind of thing -- plus I was just exhausted all the time.

Q: I remember that from the Tropics, too. I only have to get out my 1963 engagement book in Freetown, look through it, and this great sense of weariness, to this day 26 years later, descends.

MILLER: You think it was because of the Tropics?

Q: I think that has something to do with it. Some people just do better in the Tropics than others do.

MILLER: I do well in the Tropics. I think for me it was because I still had a nursing baby. And we didn't really have enough food. And she got up very early. It was very hard to sleep late. I've never been the type that could take a nap. And it just seemed like a lot -- it could have been the heat, too. But in Saudi Arabia it was just as hot -- hotter, even -- and I had lots of energy there. But Bill was a minor functionary and we could please ourselves about when we went out and entertained and whatnot. That made a big difference.

Q: One pattern that is developing in these interviews that I find interesting is that people do say they have more fun as F-junior officer. Whether that is the newness of the Service, or the lack of responsibility, or a combination of the two.

MILLER: Also, they generally don't have children there. Even though I only had one post with children, I was a teacher and saw other people's relationships to their children. And I think you have so much anxiety about your children -- not just their health, but as they get older about their educational and emotional development, which is difficult in the Foreign Service.

Now, one of these women, of the two that I've mentioned, whom I think it would be interesting for you to interview, because her father was an FSO, too. She and I were talking about it a great deal, because she was married about as long as I was. She's just divorcing now and she married a couple of years later, but it's been about the same time. She doesn't have children. But there are some parallels in our experience, we've discovered, and one of them is that I whereas I wasn't brought up in a Foreign Service family, I was brought up by a sort of "derived" politician's family. And there were some of the same expectations, like keeping a stiff upper lip, and never showing your emotions in public, and not really showing them a whole lot anyway; stuff like this. And we were talking about how hard that it is when you've gotten to the point where you really need some help in admitting that you can't do it by yourself. I have a feeling there's a lot of that in the Foreign Service -- that you're really expected to be on display and to subvert your own needs a great deal. Which is all right, too; up to a point. I do think that when you're younger and have no children, and you can travel a lot -- the trouble is, my mother-in-law was saying to me when we separated, "Well, I think one of the problems that you had was that you two didn't spend enough time together." But it's awfully hard when your husband has a big job and you go out four nights a week and there are people in your house all the time--servants-- and you haven't anyone reliable to leave your children with.

Q: And he went in to the office on Saturdays and Sundays in Maputo, I'm sure.

MILLER: Yes. Or we would spend time with the children. You see, the thing is that at

that point, time you might have spent with each other, the father feels he has to spend with the children, because they need him and he's aware of the fact that they get a little short-changed. So there's just not enough of the man to go around. I don't know... that's just my experience, but I think that probably that would contribute to a lot of people --

Q: And of course that's not exclusive to the Foreign Service either.

MILLER: Absolutely not.

Q: In the corporate world, where men commute into New York from Westchester and wherever. But it's exaggerated when you're in Maputo.

MILLER: It is, because you don't have a support system. I mean, there were three American women there in the embassy, after the Political Section left, none of whom was really close to me. And one thing that I found hard there -- even though I'd been a schoolteacher, it's all different when you're raising your own children, and I didn't know if I was doing it right because I was doing it differently from the way everybody else was doing it. All the Europeans raise their children very differently from the Americans. They toilet-train them differently. Their manners are different. They have a whole different agenda. And I felt all the time there was something wrong with me; I felt insecure. On the one hand, I felt I was doing it the right way, the "American way."

Q: But there was no one there to reinforce it.

MILLER: Nobody! The Africans, of course, all did it totally differently. So that was another sense of insecurity, because I think that new mothers do need a support system, too.

Q: Oh, most definitely.

MILLER: And we tried very much. My lifesaver there was -- we had a mothers' group that met a couple of times a week. They weren't exclusively in the diplomatic community, they were in the Western contingent; we were just mothers of children who were the same ages. We really helped each other a lot. It was a kind of pioneer mentality. We helped each other with material things. If somebody had something, she shared it with everybody. If you had eggs, you shared it with everybody. One woman who was a pre-school teacher had a pre-school and I paid her with English lessons. Very much in the barter system. That was very nice but it wasn't quite the same because I never felt truly intimate with any of these women, there was always a cultural difference.

Q: Have you read the two articles in the May <u>New Yorker</u> about Mozambique? (Miller says she's been reading them, that the first was "magnificent," she's now in the second one.) How much of that affected you? It sounds terrible.

MILLER: RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance) was still running around when

we were there. I don't know how much of this you want -- if you want a great long history lesson, I've got a good story --

Q: Well, there you were in the midst of it. Yes, why not?

MILLER: You have to have a little background to understand the one really horrendous thing -- oh, it wasn't really horrendous but after we'd been there about a year, the ANC, the black African group from South Africa, was living on the outskirts of Maputo, in Matola. One night the South African army simply marched across the border -- and you know Maputo is right down there next to South Africa -- they just strolled across the border, walked into Matola, and killed all the ANC; cut off their ears. The Mozambicans were shocked. This would have been in late January or February of 1981. They felt as though they'd been caught with their pants down; and they had. They looked around to find somebody to blame this on.

Meanwhile, the Cubans were very embarrassed because they'd had that Mariel boat lift to the U.S., when hundreds of Cubans left to enter the U.S. So they were embarrassed, their pants were down. So they tried to suborn one of our Political officers who was bilingual in Spanish. He said, "No." They said, "Well, if you don't, we'll tell everybody you're CIA and that everybody in the Political Section is CIA." He said, "Go ahead, tell them. I can't." At first they offered him money, he turned it down, etc. -- all this appeared in the New York Times, I'm not disclosing any unpublished news.

They did. They went to the Maputo Government, and there was suddenly a great crackdown. They closed the borders so no one could leave the country, they rounded up all the Americans who weren't in the embassy and put them in jail. They gave the Political Section, which was half of our embassy, 48 hours to leave. The same day, my three-year-old son developed pneumonia. So my husband was running around town trying to get the Americans out of jail, trying to help the Political Section shred their documents because we didn't know what else was going to happen. And I was running around town trying to find a doctor that would talk to me -- nobody wanted to even speak to the Americans at this point because anyone who'd associated with us was in jail.

Finally all that got sorted out. The Political Section left, the border reopened, I found a doctor; I already had the penicillin, so I just mixed it up and gave it to the child. Life more or less returned to normal. We were giving a dinner party one night. The border had been closed again, the Mozambicans were still very unhappy. And during the dinner party my husband vanished. I looked all over the house, finally found him in a peculiar place like the pantry, and said, "What in the world are you doing here?" He replied, "We just got a bomb threat. A woman on the phone said she's going to blow the house sky-high."

Q: Just before the dinner party!

MILLER: I said, "Don't you think (laughing) you should share this with our guests?" He said, "No, I don't think so. I'd say, 'Carry on.'" "Very good for you to make that decision,"

I said, "I really think you've got to let them make the decision, if they want to. You can't assume that this is a crackpot." I said, "If they want to stay, I'll be happy to feed them dinner but I think if they want to leave, we ought to offer them that option. I, for one, want to get the children out of the house."

They did, in fact. The party all decamped to another ambassador's house and I took the children over to the Communicator's apartment. It just so happened that our South African, our Johannesburg Security man was in Maputo doing a routine check; maybe it was kind of post-Political Section's departure, a check of the embassy's security. He'd been trapped because of the border closing. So he came over, searched the house, and everybody decided it was a disgruntled left-wing English person who was mad at us, believing us to have been collaborating with the South Africans in the Matola massacre. So she'd decided unilaterally to give us a little problem.

There were days when we were told not to go to South Africa because RENAMO was coming down. We went to Gorongosa, the game park, and took the children. I said to my husband, "I've heard rumors that RENAMO is in this area." He said, "Oh, no, our intelligence tells us they're nowhere around here." So we had a wonderful time. The next week RENAMO came in and torched the camp. (she laughs) They'd been right there the whole time. It was never like it was there, but they were always in the background. And that is the time when the worst of the drought hit. We had to import food not only for ourselves and our dinner parties but I imported tons of maize for the workers. Finally the embassy truck was commandeered and used to bring it in by the truckload because the Mozambicans were on such short rations.

We had a night watchman. I mostly felt pretty secure. But again, it's having the children that makes it worse. I don't mind getting sick, or even being in a house with a bomb in it; but it's different if you have a little baby...

Q: That must have been quite a post, really. I've never lived where there was actual shortage of food. I've lived on islands where food was very expensive and imported and in tins and --

MILLER: In Saudi Arabia it was like that.

Q: -- but not to be able to get it, I would find that frightening, really.

MILLER: Well, we could always get it.

Q: And everyone you knew could get it too, right?

MILLER: Yes, and the people who worked for me got it because I gave it to them. I paid them, basically, in food most of the time. And clothes and things like that. It was never like it was in the bush, because we never went out into the bush, we very rarely went out into the bush. But, on the other hand, I didn't know a Mozambican family that hadn't lost

a child, apart from the high Party officials. I had to go to a funeral of a child who was the same age as my daughter. I just embarrassed myself enormously -- I barely knew the child, he'd been over once to play with my daughter -- but I just wept uncontrollably throughout because it was so awful -

Q: I would think the Africans probably understood that perfectly.

MILLER: I hope so.

Q: Because they must have been doing the same thing.

MILLER: Oh, yes, they were all weeping copiously. But it was an open-casket funeral, it was so awful. And they were dying of measles, these children, because they were undernourished. That particular child, though, died of malaria.

The other thing that happened wasn't political, but my daughter became very ill. That time the border happened to be open, so I tore down to South Africa. My husband didn't feel he could stay with me. He felt he had to go back to the embassy, so he just left me. I didn't know what she had, I thought she would die. She was about 18 months old. She had a raging fever and she was just blotto. And the doctor didn't really know what she had. There was a meningitis epidemic, and a typhoid epidemic. So for a while he was checking out these various things. What she actually had was a urinary tract infection, but he was having to determine that in a child who wasn't toilet-trained but he had to get a clean urine sample.

Finally they figured it out but she was on a drip in an oxygen tent. I was in the oxygen tent with her because I thought she'd go bananas if she were left in there alone. I was there for a whole week, thinking she was going to die; I thought she was miserably sick. Actually I'd tried to wean her before that, and then when I had to spend a week with her in the hospital, we both just gave up. (both laugh) Much easier just to go back again! I didn't dare give her anything there, because the ward was full of children with meningitis, I didn't know what to give her.

Q: Isn't that a terribly communicative disease?

MILLER: I believe it is.

Q: She wasn't even isolated.

MILLER: Because they didn't know she didn't have it. This was in a little town just over the border in South Africa, so it wasn't like being in Johannesburg -- it was what John Buchan calls "a one-horse dorp." Everybody spoke Afrikaans, it was very unnerving. They'd all have lengthy debates about my child and come in and say, "Ach! Shame." I told them how good I thought the food was. They fed us about five times a day. And someone would say, "It's clear to see you're from Mozambique if you think this food is good."

(hearty laughter)

Q: (laughing) I think that was in one of your columns.

MILLER: It was pretty funny. I did, too, it was wonderful. They were very spoiled, those South Africans.

Q: The only place you've been that I've been is Venezuela, and I only went to Caracas from Curaçao as a tourist. How was it living there, with the slums on the hills above you so that you could never forget them?

MILLER: Actually I forgot them all the time. For one thing, we were on the other side. The slums are kind of at the ends of the city and we were sort of in the middle, here, and you couldn't see them from our house. Now, I sort of had to drive through them to get to the school. We lived fairly close to the embassy. But -- I don't know... Maybe because they just didn't seem as miserable. They all seemed --

Q: Poverty is relative.

MILLER: Yes. I guess so. I mean, I hadn't been to Maputo then, so I didn't really have that. But Saudi Arabia, at least in the eastern province when I was there, people did not have a very high standard of living for the most part either. It's probably callous of me but it didn't bother me at all in Caracas. We were there from 1973 to 1975, between two Washington assignments.

Q: We've talked mostly about Mozambique because that was your most difficult post. I find that I'm constantly talking about Sierra Leone, which was the post my husband and I found most difficult, that I liked the least, yet it's the one we talk about the most because that's where your most outrageous experiences were.

MILLER: I think, also, there's the feeling that you want to be recognized for what you did there, which was (laughing) to survive. But it's no accomplishment to survive in Caracas, Caracas is a pleasure. Beirut was a pleasure. Dhahran was not really a hardship because -- oh yes, there were, as you say it was like living on an island: the food was not the greatest, and you couldn't drive the car; on the other hand, there was no place to drive to. It wasn't a big deal. Also, I was in Maputo longer than I was in any of the other posts. Except when we were here in Washington when Bill was working for Secretary Vance.

Q: Did you feel, then, that you really got no recognition for what you did in Maputo? No official recognition?

MILLER: No, it isn't that. Of course one doesn't get any official recognition.

Q: Would it have made any difference if you had?

MILLER: There are a couple of things that made me really cross about the "official" Washington. I have a chip on my shoulder, I have to say, because of the fact that I scored very high on the Foreign Service exam and I was never inducted.

Q: Did you take the orals?

MILLER: I took the orals and they told me my grade was "improved" thereby. And I know it was a lot higher than my husband's, he just squeaked by.

Q: But did you ever take it again?

MILLER: No. I was disgusted. I figured it was really -- you see, this was at the very beginning of the tandem couple thing. I was working for USIA as a contract hire at the time, and all the men in my office one by one took me aside -- I'm sure they weren't in cahoots, they all just independently did this -- and told me it would ruin my husband's career if I became part of a tandem couple.

Q: This was when you were in Washington at what time?

MILLER: 1972. Right at the time of the directive. And it was right when tandem couples started. And I was working for USIA. As a matter of fact, I wanted to be in USIA, I didn't want to be in State. And I thought it would work out just fine that way and then I wouldn't have to scrounge for a job every time I hit the ground; because I found that very stressful.

Q: Oh, heavens yes, every two years. You have no network, you're just starting from ground zero every time.

MILLER: Yes. And I think there's an expectation, although I was not really adamant about resisting it, that the wife is supposed to do all the moving-in chores. I mean, now that my husband has obviously adapted perfectly well to doing it without a wife, it makes me wonder why couldn't he have taken whatever time out he obviously is taking now to have helped me when I had to all of the pay-pack-and-follow routine? So that always irritated me, because I was also always looking for a job in the midst of --

Q: Trying to get settled while he went off to the office, with interpreters when he needed them. (she laughs)

MILLER: Right. All his file cabinets in place, and a job all waiting for him. When I went to Caracas, USIA wanted me to work there again because I'd been working in Washington. So I went to the man, who was to my way of thinking an elderly man, and he said, "We really want you, we really need you here." And in Caracas I was really in fat city, because I wrote an article for the Caracas Daily Journal. They offered me a job, the school had offered me a job, and now USIA was offering me a job. I felt like I was in fat city.

So I said to him, "I'll take the job at USIA if you make me an officer." Because I was all set: I'd had my security check, everything; I just hadn't been paneled. "If you get me paneled," I said. And he said, "Why do you want to do that? Your husband has a perfectly good job. Why do you need one?" (both laughed) I just felt that their attitude was so --

Q: And you didn't persist?

MILLER: Oh, yes, I did. I didn't take the job. I said, "I guess you're just too old to understand ambition." I'm sure it didn't improve my chances but it sure felt good at the time. (both laugh heartily) So I had a good job at the school. And I didn't particularly want to work in the library at USIS unless it was going to lead somewhere; I didn't want to just have a contract job again. I hadn't really enjoyed working at USIA in Washington that much, although I thought if I had some future and could go on and become an officer and progress through the ranks, that would be worth it. But Caracas was a big post, and if I'd had a job there, it would have been a very junior one.

So I wasn't really tempted to take it unless I was going to get paneled. No: I wasn't going to put myself through that again. It's very anxiety-producing to take the job and go for the orals and everything. You're on tenterhooks. I thought, "Why should I put myself through all that again if they're never going to hire me?" I was just sure it was a case of sexism.

Q: One of our Project members has taken the Foreign Service exam five times and she is on the Register. To explain, maybe this is a new system now. It's not enough to pass the written and the orals; then you have to get on a Register, or maybe that's the equivalent of being paneled, I don't know.

MILLER: Being paneled basically meant that you were inducted, you were brought in.

Q: Well, on the Register, you're there waiting for a job.

MILLER: They told me I had a two-year window. That during that time if there was a job -- et cetera et cetera. I guess being on the Register is about the same thing. (Fenzi agrees) It's just that I found that emotionally very draining, to go through all that. And I knew I could teach. So, our next job was here in Washington and of course I had never had any trouble getting a job in Washington. My motivation for doing it was smaller after that.

Anyway, I've always had a tiny chip on my shoulder about the Foreign Service sort of bureaucracy, as an entity, not individual people. But when we were out there one time, we were returning from home leave. Because of the rule that you must take an American carrier across the ocean, we had to have two overnight trips -- one overnight to London or somewhere in Europe, another overnight to South Africa; then a transfer and on to Mozambique. And since Bill was up to his ears in troubles there, he could get very little time off and I wanted to bring the children home to see their grandparents. I had to do that alone, and they were both two and three years old, some ghastly thing. So I petitioned, because of the hardship, to be able to take the direct South African airlines flight directly

from New York to South Africa, which was overnight. They turned me down. I arrived at post, after two nights en route with two tiny children to find a videotape from USIS which read: "Coping with stress overseas." I said, "I can cope with the goddam stress overseas, it's YOU PEOPLE I can't cope with!" (both laugh)

I'd be surprised if a lot of people don't feel that way.

Q: If it's any consolation, when we were in Recife, Brazil, there were no American carriers in and out of Recife. In those days, we had to fly over 1,000 miles down to Rio to get Pan Am. So we flew over 1,000 miles down to get Pan Am to fly another 1,000 miles up over Recife to go on to Miami. Or New York, or wherever. Ridiculous! Absolutely ridiculous. Now, of course, you can leave Recife on Varig Air or Cruzeiro or one of the other Brazilian airlines. They allow that now. It was costing the U.S. Government to pay for an additional 3,000 miles of flight -- equivalent to crossing the United States for heavens sakes --

MILLER: Of course.

Q: So I sympathize with you.

MILLER: As I say, I'm sure everybody has a story like that.

Q: But it makes a difference when you're with two small children.

MILLER: It does. And again: I don't mind their putting me through that stress, but to subject my children to that, I thought was pretty ghastly. I just felt -- you know, Christ, we're out here without anything. They could bend the rule for me just once. I have already put up with so much here that -- they maybe can't do anything about the food, and maybe can't do anything about the medicine, although I wondered about that. But what would it cost them to give me a waiver? Zilch. Save them money, you know? So the bureaucracy would -- but I'm sure everybody has bureaucracy stories.

Q: Oh, I'm sure they all have. The one thing I noticed was missing when I sent you the biographical sheet -- it had just been reprinted for us and in formatting it for laser printers, two things were left off. One was your parents -- I know your father is Peter Miller and he's the publisher of the Peru, Illinois News-Tribune. Is that right?

MILLER: They call it now the Daily News-Tribune. It's a joint town and they get very upset if you omit one of them LaSalle-Peru.

Q: Now, you seem to be such a protective mother. I have just reread some of my old letters when my children were that age, and I was also pretty protective. Was your mother always at home?

MILLER: She was kind of both, and I think I'm a protective mother because she was

maybe less of one. She raises horses, so she was always at home but she was always very busy. My parents are divorced and her name is Bazy Tankersley.

Q: Is Bazy a family name?

MILLER: No. She had her mother's name, Ruth, and then they said, "What are you going to call herself?" and she tried to say "Baby." But her real name is Ruth McCormick Tankersley, my grandmother's name being Ruth McCormick. Bazy now lives in Tucson. When I was growing up, she lived here in Washington, so I mostly grew up here.

Q: And your father is obviously in Peru, Illinois.

MILLER: Right.

Q: The other thing that was omitted on the form was your schooling. If you could begin with secondary school --

MILLER: Holton-Arms here in Washington. Then I got a B.A. at Brown University in '66 and an M.A.T. in '77 at Georgetown. That was very useful because when I went to Maputo -- and they didn't want me to teach in the schools there: this is a country with 90% illiteracy -- they didn't want a licensed teacher to teach because of my political associations. So I just set up shop as an English teacher, or as one of my British colleagues said, "You're not teaching English, you're teaching American!" Then one of the Africans said, "Oh, tribalismo." And if you read that article in the recent New Yorker magazine, the author pointed out that one of the things that, all the propaganda that Mozambique has been against tribalism. You know, you must overcome the tribalism to forge a nation. So they've been indoctrinated, and she could quickly recognize this. When I quoted to her the Englishwoman's criticism of me, the Mozambican said, "Oh, tribalism!"

Q: The other thing that was terribly interesting about that New Yorker article was the fact that people didn't realize, that the one family that the author interviewed, didn't realize that they'd lived in Mozambique and there was nothing beyond their tribal boundaries that meant anything to them. And that society had been shattered by this terrible civil war. Awful, awful.

MILLER: I found that very easy to understand, because even in the city, where people were obviously much more sophisticated, their level of sophistication was still incredible. I mean, the nanny that we had for the children kept begging me to take her back with us to the States, which she obviously thought was Nirvana. And I kept saying, "You wouldn't like it." And I certainly didn't want to employ her further, because she was far from my ideal. But I said, "You'd be miserable." What really brought it home to me, is, we had a VCR there that belonged to the embassy, to USIA. In fact, we did a lot of our representational stuff by having movies; there were no movies in Maputo, or they were Indian or something.

Q: Oh, boy! (laughing) We had those in Freetown, too.

MILLER: So if you had wanted to attract just anybody that you wanted to talk to -- we even got the Chinese over with "Gone With the Wind." (both laugh) We would have movies, everyone would come to your house. There was another very important woman who was dubious about associating with my husband but her English husband couldn't resist our Benny Hill tapes, and they came. (laughter again) So we were always using this as our big lure. My father was making us tapes, too, so we had those in addition to the USIA ones. In fact, he made us hundreds.

Oh, and we had the news also; we would get news clips and whatnot. We had one on Africa that showed the big termite mounds. And somehow they'd gotten into the big mounds and were taking pictures of the termites. I showed it to the nanny, thinking she would find it so interesting. Afterwards I said (assuming bated breath tones) to the nanny, “How did you like it?” She said, "Oh, it's just fascinating, but I didn't realize they're so big." [on the screen] (laughter) And I thought, "Oooh, she would have a hard time in America."

Q: Did you ever see the film "The Gods Must Be Crazy," where the man looks in the telescope and says, "How do those people get in there?"

MILLER: Yes! Exactly the same -- By the way, I hated that movie. I thought it was a put down of the African nationalists.

Q: I kept wondering who had done it. See, I didn't know until the end. I kept wondering, "Who did this movie?"

MILLER: Well, you see I believed that the black African countries that were being ridiculed were Mozambique and Angola, you know, because they have this sort of paramilitary -- they all run around in their fatigues from the Frelimo days, and all of this kind of stuff. Although I have to admit I think he lampoons the South Africans too. He was pretty close to evenhanded. But I saw it very soon after coming back and I think my perspective was not very good; I was still kind of --what is the bad word in the State Dept. when you become over-identified with your client-state? It's "clientism" or something. I think I was still suffering from that a little bit.

Q: I think understandably, because if you lived there for that many years and didn't feel that way, you'd have been living in a vacuum.

MILLER: Yes, probably. It's funny, because even though they were very anti-American, we never took it personally. And Bill did a lot in helping to change the climate there. He bludgeoned the Reagan White House into giving them aid when that was not really their intention. Gradually -- he had a very good relationship with Samora Machel, [the President, once a former nurse, later a guerilla commander], who was a very charismatic

and interesting man.

Q: Years ago we met [the one who was assassinated] Eduardo Mondlane.

MILLER: Really?

Q: Yes. He was here -- it must have been in 1962, when we were going to Sierra Leone and we had an area studies course at FSI, and he spoke to us. He was here I think teaching at Syracuse.

MILLER: What was he like?

Q: He was so sensational that you thought, "Well, Mozambique is one country that isn't going to have any trouble if they have a man like this." Of course, he had been sent out, and we thought that somehow he would find his way back. He was terrific.

MILLER: I knew his widow quite well, in Maputo; she's white, an American from Indiana or some place. (she laughs) The first time I met her, we were sitting next to each other at dinner and she said something coy like, "I hope you don't mind sitting next to a woman." I said, "Not at all, I'm so interested to meet you. It's very nice to hear somebody who comes from home and who sounds like 'the folks back home'." And she said in her delicious flat Indiana accent, [Note: New Yorker article says she was teenager when she met Mondlane in Downers Grove, Illinois] "Oh, do I have an American accent?" (hearty laughs) I said, Janet, what kind of accent did you suppose you had!

Q: Where did she meet him?

MILLER: I've read but I don't remember -- in graduate school somewhere. She went to him -- I think he was speaking, and I think she kind of flung herself at him a little bit.

Q: Understandably. He was a charming, delicious man, he really was.

MILLER: I knew their son quite well, and he came back to the States and I knew him in New York, one of the few people I did know there. He was also full of charm, looked a great deal like his father, but had a very troubled identity, as you might suppose.

Q: Where was Mondlane assassinated? In Mozambique?

MILLER: No. In Dar es Salaam, I believe. It was before independence. They were living there -- I think that article mentions that Janet had a school for the Frelimo children who were there because they didn't dare go into Mozambique -- they would all have been assassinated immediately. And I think he got a letter bomb.

Q: I haven't read that far, I've only read part of the first one.

MILLER: He really is a brilliant writer, I thought. The first one I liked even better than the second one, which I haven't finished yet. It's much more historical, without the little vignettes and things that I thought were so interesting.

Q: I'm going to put them in your file.

MILLER: Oh, great. Because he does talk about some of the stuff that was going on. Especially, I think, in the second section, he talks about the history; and some of the stuff he talks about was in the early 80s, when we were there. We saw a lot of Janet when we were both living there. She's writing a biography of Eduardo [Mondlane].

Q: Time and time again you've said that your former husband, who obviously is a good Foreign Service Officer if he's an ambassador in Mauritania now -- he must be around 50, isn't he?

MILLER: Yes, I think he's 48.

Q: I want to ask you what qualities made him--not a desirable husband--but what qualities made him a good FSO in your eyes? Because these are some of the qualities that made him be not such a desirable husband. So we'll put it in the positive instead of in the negative.

MILLER: Yes. He's very even-tempered. Or if he's not, he really keeps his sangfroid. For example, when the Political Section was expelled. Now, I don't know what I would have expected but what I heard from many other people was praise about his sangfroid under those conditions. He didn't lose his temper. He kept negotiating with the Mozambicans throughout. This would be the situation and we would deal with it. He was very optimistic. It was not permissible to have things not be good. They are by definition good. And I think that's a very good quality in a leader at a post. But I do think that, especially now that he's an ambassador, and if he continues as an ambassador, he's going to have to develop a little bit better safety valve for the negative emotions which always do exist. You can't always talk them out of it.

Q: Within himself?

MILLER: No, I'm talking about other people. Because I think however he has figured out his life, he's figured out how he's going to handle it. And he seems to handle it, I don't know how, but he handles it. He's very fit, he does a lot of athletics, maybe that's how he handles his stress. And he sleeps a lot.

Q: Even with the stress, he can just sleep?

MILLER: The only time in his life he didn't sleep was when we were getting a divorce. And it just drove him nuts.

Q: Well, that didn't fit into the scheme of his life, that everything was always there.

MILLER: Yes, I'm sure.

Q: And optimistic and positive.

MILLER: Yes, I guess so. And somehow that was too close to home. I mean, when all of the countries around, the country you're in is going crazy, you're always a little removed from it and you kind of deal with it on the surface in a very external way. But he is -- he's very upbeat. He learns languages well. He's very good at --

Q: But you were better at that.

MILLER: No, I wasn't better, I was better in a different way. But he's very good at accents and he sounds very good. I was a little better at vocabulary acquisition, and that's why they kept us together. If I'd been better, they (laughing) would have thrown me out.

Q: I think that's incredible.

MILLER: I'm glad you do. Because I did, too. And sometimes I wondered whether I was (trails off in laughter) --

Q: What it meant was that they would have had to create a class just for you --

MILLER: Oh, no, they wouldn't have --

Q: What they should have done is create a class just for you if you were better, but they weren't about to do it.

MILLER: They had created a class for him, because he didn't fit into anybody else's -- everybody else was doing 20 months and they were doing reading and writing, which we were not. They'd already created a class for him, and I don't know what they would have done for me. Although I must say they were very good when we went to Mozambique because they offered me an opportunity to go to the spouse's class at 7:30 a.m. and I said flatly, "I can't, I have a nursing baby and that's when she eats." So they said, "Fine. We'll give you money for a baby sitter. We'll give you money for" -- they found another school that used the FSI method and they said, "You just go as much as you want to." Here, in Washington. I think by and large they are very good about --

Q: I think some of that's gone by the way now, with the cutbacks. And that's the one place --

MILLER: That's too bad because I think that's vitally important. Because if the spouse can communicate, she can participate much more. And she's less isolated.

[Something apparently not recorded, evidently discussion of the effect of divorce and his subsequent separation for long periods of time from the children.]

Q: Do the children spend some time with him?

MILLER: Yes. And the State Department is good about that. They pay for them to take a trip once a year out to post, and Bill usually manages to get back a couple of times a year, including a long time in the summer. So they usually see him a fair amount. He was here all last year doing a senior seminar and living here in Washington. We have joint custody -- against the advice of both our lawyers we thought that would be better. And it may be that some time they will go out and spend some time living with him the year round. But I didn't think they were quite ready for that yet.

Q: Why did the attorneys advise against joint custody? Either you were supposed to have them or he was supposed to have them?

MILLER: They thought I should have them. At least my lawyer did. It's because so many people abuse it. They said, "Well, if you have joint custody, he can take them out of the country" -- you know, in effect kidnap them. And I said, "Well, you know, I may not want to live with this man but I still have tremendous respect for this man. And I know him awfully well. And I am just quite sure he is not going to abuse this. And if he does, I'll go back to court; but he's not. So we can work this out. I mean, he's a very good negotiator. He's had to have had one of the most amiable divorces, even though he was angry. And I was able to see what he's like when he's negotiating when he's angry. And he is very good at it. Doesn't lose his temper. He manages to keep the agenda in mind, he does not get his ego involved. And he's just very even-tempered and he knows what he wants when he's negotiating. I mean, the way he worked the Reagan -- I was really amazed when he came back at a time when we were supporting the people in Angola against the Cubans, and everybody was saying that RENAMO was anti-Communist, and it was really set up for the Reagan administration to turn that down, [request for aid], it seemed to me. And he went in and --

Q: I was surprised when I read that -- that things had gone to Mozambique at that particular time.

MILLER: And he goes out and he meets people. He has no "side" whatsoever. He sits out on the desert on the sand and he drinks tea with the guys. He's very relaxed. He was in the Peace Corps in Brazil. Not far from Recife, I believe.

Q: In Espirito Santo?

MILLER: Yes, that's where he was in the Peace Corps. I think he was trying to establish an orphanage and I think he distributed food. We weren't married then. He'd failed the Foreign Service exam the first go-round and as a consolation prize he joined the Peace Corps. Then he took the exam again when he came out of the Peace Corps, but then he

was drafted. It was 1965.

Q: (mid-sentence) and you said you had the support system here in the United States, you had the job, and you have an identity of your own.

MILLER: Yes.

Q: Did you not have that identity in Maputo, then?

MILLER: Not to the same degree. He was the Chargé d'Affaires, which made him the big cheese. And I taught English but it was, you know, kind of a little Mary Poppins kind of role. I had some fascinating jobs -- in fact the Political Section wanted to put me on the payroll because I was working at the (Red) Chinese embassy as an English teacher. I just set myself up. I said, "I'm the American Language Institute here" -- I've forgotten exactly the name I used. But I just started going around to these dull parties, which were so boring and where I had nothing else to do. And I would start recruiting students. And everyone wanted to learn English because it really is the Diplomatic language. So I had someone in the Italian embassy and the French embassy and the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and in the Chinese embassy -- I had 35 students, including the ambassador there, it was really a big deal. I had Hungarians, a Pole, a Swede, a Dutch woman. As a matter of fact, eventually I had to start getting some of the mothers from my Mothers Group to become teachers. And I imported a lot of books and said to these women, "You don't have to know how to do it. Follow the book." Because I had more work than I could handle. Eventually the Mozambicans unbent to the point where they allowed me to teach the highest party members in the women's group -- the women who were the ranking Communist Party members; because they were presumably incorruptible. So that was a lot of fun. But anyway, it was still, as I say, a kind of Mary Poppins role.

Q: Did they pay you?

MILLER: Oh, yes, everybody paid me. In fact, Bill insisted I get hard currency from the Chinese. (laughter) Some paid me in hard currency, some paid me in the local currency. Some paid me in kind, like the Dutch pre-school teacher.

Q: "School Without Walls" here in Washington -- was that paid?

MILLER: Oh, yes, that's the DC Public Schools. I started as a volunteer, then they hired me.

Q: I noticed in the bio you wrote: "self-employed teacher at other Diplomatic missions."

MILLER: I never knew anyone else who did that, and maybe you couldn't do it everywhere else.

Q: I think that's a terrific idea. Except for the Communist Party women, you were

working within the diplomatic community --

MILLER: Yes. So no one would have cared. And I don't think they paid me, I don't even remember whether they paid me or not, the Party members. If they did, it was a pittance; I think maybe they gave me a present or something afterwards.

Q: But that was something you'd do anyway.

MILLER: Oh, of course. That could be a wonderful contact.

Q: They could be the most valuable students you had.

MILLER: They weren't really, but they could have been. It turned out they weren't particularly -- except that they were very nice and I felt very bad because several of them who were my students lost husbands -- they were the high-ranking people -- when Machel's plane went down. I'd gotten very fond of them.

But there was one thing... I did feel like the junior member of the group. In fact, about the only time when Bill seriously let me down was when we were getting ready to leave. And you know it is when you're getting ready to leave -- everybody in the world has going-away parties for you. We'd been to other people's going-away parties. And I said to him, "You know, it always makes me cross because in a place like this, the wives really have to put up with a lot and they don't get much recognition. They certainly get no official recognition. And they're not the ones who get the promotions out of enduring a place like this."

Q: You're talking about the wives at the American mission?

MILLER: Any mission, any mission. I don't the Italians or anybody else, I mean I think they're all in the same boat basically. It's interesting: I had talked to a lot of woman about what it was like being a spouse in another country's mission, too, and the differences between various ones and whatnot.

So I said to Bill, "It always makes me mad at these going-away parties that there are many toasts to the husband and they always say "and his wonderful, gracious wife blah, blah, blah" but she never acknowledges the toasts and it's clear that she's tacked on at the end. So he said, "All right. We're going to be different. When they get up and they make a toast to the two of us, we'll take turns responding. You can respond at the first one, it's going to be at the British embassy." And I was just thrilled. I thought, "He really understands how hard this is for me and how much it would mean to me to have some real recognition of what my role has been here." And in due course, he whispered to me, "Don't do it, I don't think you should do it. It won't be the right thing to do." I was so upset that he then changed his mind and let me do it. But it was only (laughing) because he could see that I was going to explode at the fact that he was backing out of this.

Q: And how was the reaction?

MILLER: Startled! They were startled.

Q: But you were leaving post.

MILLER: And so what? I mean, we'd already done various things that were unconventional -- the fact that I was teaching was unconventional; the fact that we were Americans also made us very bizarre -- we were the targets of the official governments who hired -- there were already plenty of "bizarre" things about us. And that's another thing about the Foreign Service, that it tends to reward conventionality. And especially, the older and more senior you get, the more conventional you're expected to be. I think the wives generally retain a more unconventional outlook and sometimes that causes friction.

Q: (as both laugh) Very true. Was there any competition and your husband, really, for recognition? Our husbands obviously always had the upper hand, because they were the officer and the embassy official, but was there any friction?

MILLER: I think there's the kind of competition of the little plant growing out from under a shady tree. You're just trying to get a little sun. And in many places, for example, that was only the case, really, in Maputo. The year that I worked at USIA was very different for me because in spite of the lip service we pay to the importance of education, teachers are really quite lowly citizens. And I was astonished. Here in Washington, I had this really trivial job in USIA, I thought; and I felt it wasn't one-tenth as demanding as teaching school -- intellectually, emotionally, in terms of energy, anything; yet, when I would attend cocktail parties people would be much more respectful. "Oh! You work for USIA." I thought that was interesting. But I really liked teaching, and especially after I decided to give up on the Foreign Service I really got kind of rededicated to teaching. I thought, "Well, the heck with this 'women's lib' thing, if I believe something's really important and exciting for me, even if it doesn't have the status of these other things, I'm really committed to it. If they don't have the wit to recognize it, too bad for them."

Q: That was a growth experience for you, then, sure.

MILLER: Very much so. And so I loved teaching, and as long as I was teaching in a school, then I didn't really feel that I needed to compete, because in my heart of hearts I really thought that what I was doing was every bit as interesting and important -- sometimes more interesting maybe even more important (she laughs) than what he was doing.

So I didn't ever have a problem with that until we went to Mozambique, where I wasn't allowed to teach officially. Being a private tutor is not really quite the same, and in fact that was how I started my teaching career. I hadn't meant to be a teacher, originally, and I started out doing tutoring. Then I got my credentials to go on and teach. So I sort of

thought, "Well, my goodness, I've put in 15 years and I'm right back where I started." So in Maputo, it was more of an issue because I didn't have an institution behind me. I called myself "The American Language Institute" but I knew that it was just a front and that it was pretty small potatoes. Even though I got recognition as the Chargé's wife, that didn't mean a lot to me, because it wasn't mine. And also because ultimately everybody knew that I was just an adjunct.

I was pleased when they brought in the pension business. I thought that was very good, and in fact when I would balk at some of my duties in Maputo, Bill would say, "Well, you're just earning your pension, so --" And it really helped, honestly, to feel that I was plugged into the system.

Q: So that was a form of recognition.

MILLER: It was. That meant a lot to me. It meant a lot to me in my divorce degree. I think it's important even if you don't get divorced and you know that you have that security, that somehow somebody is recognizing you with money, which in America is the only way that it really counts.

Q: Unfortunately it is. Are you aware of how long and hard those women fought --

MILLER: I sure am, and how they sailed on Mary Anne Dubs' situation. I thought that was wonderful! They were so good to have that all in place when the opportunity came up to really coast in; I thought that was terrific.

Q: Barbara Colby, I think, had a lot to do with it too, because she had the entrée to Capitol Hill. I've tried to interview her, I think she's away now. She's been reluctant. Do you know her by any chance?

MILLER: No, I don't.

Q: I'll keep trying, I do have another entrée to her that has nothing to do with the Foreign Service.

MILLER: I would think that would be a great story, because that was one of the real achievements for -- and I've never really used the Family Liaison, I don't know how it works in practice but I think it's a good idea.

Q: That was a fight, too. We have that on tape from Lesley Dorman, absolutely dynamic -- British-born but American -- I always think of her as a ship under full sail, cutting her way through the choppy seas. She dealt with most skillfully with the people at State and got that office set up. When the 1972 directive really shattered the relationship of the spouse with the Service, it left a vacuum. And slowly, and slowly, embassies now do what we used to do for each other. The State Department truly, I think, shot itself in the foot when it let the directive go through as it did. There are some women who are still

perfectly willing -- I sat with one at lunch the other day and she's younger than you are, and she said she is perfectly content to be an adjunct and to be a Foreign Service wife.

MILLER: That's great! I have no problem with people like that either.

Q: Nor do I, but the State Department _____

MILLER: That's too bad.

Q: And they make life difficult for people like you, and it would have been for me when I was younger and was going all through trying to maintain my identity in some way. I did it by writing cookbooks -- I published two cookbooks.

MILLER: I must introduce you to my mother-in-law, she writes cookbooks. Her name is Dorian Leigh Parker. In the 1950s, she was a model, Dorian Leigh, the Revlon "Fire and Ice" girl. She's now a cookbook writer, writes for Gourmet magazine a lot. She brought out a book on pancakes last year on her own hook.

Q: But I'm not really a cook. (Miller laughs) What I was, was a desperate wife who went to cocktail parties and dinner parties where women and men were separated -- not so much in Curaçao, there it was more needing something to do on an island, but in Brazil it was night after night after night to sit and listen to accounts of the plastic surgery that they went to Rio for, the domestics -- I mean, it was so oppressive that I started carrying my little notebook to dinner parties and getting the recipes.

MILLER: I think most people really need to do that -- need to have some --

Q: You need to have something extra. (Discussion about Dorian Leigh Parker now being resident in Washington) I'd like to meet her. She'd be interested in someone who wrote a cookbook out of desperation. (laughing)

MILLER: I'm sure she would. (Interviewer takes notes on name of KM's present husband and some related background to second marriage)

Q: Now we're getting into your here and now. Are you doing anything other now than writing?

MILLER: No. I write the column every week now that I'm back. Once I got on regular mail service, almost five years ago, I started writing every week.

Q: And what are you writing about now -- just anything that happens in Washington?

MILLER: Pretty much, although as you could see from some of the articles, sometimes when something is in the news from a place where I was -- for example, Venezuela had the riots so I wrote a Venezuela article; last week I wrote about the Chinese because of

the Chinese phenomenon. A terrible event happened in Maputo -- not while I was there -- in the Red Chinese embassy, where I had taught. The Chinese were all cooped up in one building. They were all so civilized and wonderful -- they would all stand up when I entered the room. I had a lectern with a little pot of jasmine tea for teaching, the ambassador would stand up and bow when I came in; I've never been so spoiled in my life. I was just enchanted. The ambassador would help the gardener; they were terribly egalitarian. I tried to split them up just by ability and they wouldn't even let me do that. We were going to be so egalitarian and wonderful. They all lived in the Chinese complex. Of course, there was a tacit understanding we would not discuss politics. What they wanted to discuss was their children, because they're sent overseas without their children, who are kept back in China with the grandparents for schooling, and they are sent overseas for long, three- or four-year stretches. And they all live in the same apartment complex. They miss their children terrifically. And they would all talk about their children, and I would always be practically near tears, drinking the tea to keep the lump in my throat from getting out of control.

Then, one night, one of these people ran amok. He shot five people in the embassy. So they were all sent home immediately for "reeducation" or something like that. I never saw any of them again.

Q: Are their children brought out periodically?

MILLER: No. I don't think they go home very often.

Q: Oh, that would be dreadful -- to be in a compound like that all together -- You were probably a delivering angel to them with those lessons.

MILLER: I don't know. It was very funny. One day I was doing kinship terms. Since my parents are divorced, I have one of practically everything -- step-this, step-that. And I said, "This is my family tree." And one of them came up to me afterwards and said, "You were joking, right?" I said, "No." (she laughs) I was quite close to one of the women -- she'd gotten me the job -- and I asked her, "Why did they ask that?" And she said, "Well, because in China that would be such shame, it would be shaming to have had a divorce." And that was only eight years ago.

Somehow it was the same thing -- in Tiananmen Square, [in June 1989] everybody seemed so docile and well-behaved. Then all of a sudden the tanks come roaring in. Somehow it seems to be evocative of the explosion that had taken place in the Chinese embassy in Maputo. So when something like that comes up, I write about it. About once a month I will write an article about my overseas experience.

Q: Now, explain to me the ability of the Chinese government to come on TV and say it [suppression of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations] never happened.

MILLER: I don't know. I just think that's hysterical. It's real Alice-in-Wonderland stuff.

(They discuss inclinations to visit China, though not right now.)

Q: Places I would like to go keep falling -- I've no desire to go to Beirut now; I'd like to visit Cape Town before it blows up.

MILLER: I wrote a couple of articles about South Africa when there were riots there a couple of years ago. Later, in the Persian Gulf, and Iran -- all places that are blowing up. So I keep doing that. And I'm writing a book about my grandmother.

Q: I think we've pretty well covered everything -- nurse, teacher, writer or artist; and tandem

MILLER: -part of a tandem couple. Then it's very hard to work overseas if you're not one of those things. But one of the things that I thought was the strangest -- maybe this has changed, it might be something you've learned in talking with tandem couples -- but when all those men were advising me not to go in because it would ruin my career, I said to them, "Don't you think that my wishes already inform my husband's decisions?" I said, "For example, he was offered the DCM slot in Angola in 1971. Since he'd only been in the Service three years, it would have been a feather in his cap, to be DCM even in Angola. And I said, 'I can't go to Angola so soon after being in Saudi Arabia. There's no work for me to do, it's a hardship post, I'd have to learn the language.' We'd already been offered the job in Venezuela. I knew Spanish, I knew I'd have a lot of job opportunities there. So I prevailed on him to take the Venezuela job for me. What's the matter with you guys? Don't you do the same things for your wife?" If they didn't then, they sure do now.

So, when people say, well, tandem couples can't work because it's too hard on somebody's relationship, on somebody's career, I don't agree. I mean, I had a lot of friends later in the 70s who wanted to stay home. They were persuading their husband to get Stateside jobs so that they could pursue their careers or whatever.

Q: Then what happened when the -- I think it's eight years, when that period is up, the husband has to go overseas -- did they go with him?

MILLER: I don't know, because by that point I was out of the Foreign Service and wasn't keeping track of them. The only person I know who's elected to stay home and not follow her husband is at my husband's current post in Mauritania, and she has breast cancer and wanted to stay her for medical reasons. No, I didn't know anyone who just stayed home, although I knew people who threatened to. They might have, or maybe their marriage just came apart or -- I don't know.

It's true that it's a real conundrum, what to do with these -- especially in this day and age, people like the woman you talked about who are happy to be an adjunct. There is so much social pressure against it. I feel social pressure staying at home and writing, because in my community, in our elementary school, 70% of the mothers have full-time jobs outside the home. So, naturally, the rest of us (she laughs) are always being hit by the PTA to do

the stuff that gets done at the school --

Q: Reverse social pressure, in a way.

MILLER: Yes, it is. I mean, I feel a little embarrassed not to have a full-time job. So I think that a woman who decides to become an adjunct has to face a lot of social pressure, you know, to have a job or to have a career identify of her own, no matter what her own wants are.

Q: The other day at the Women's Democratic Club here -- you know, you just go in and sit at a table, and you may find someone absolutely fascinating at your left or you may not -- and the other day I sat across from a woman named Nancy Harris, who had been with population control in Nairobi for nine years. She said, "I think the only solution" -- I have observed Foreign Service people for nine years and I'm going to interview her as someone outside looking in; I never thought I'd have the opportunity to do that, because I was thinking only in terms of foreigners. Even if I interviewed a foreigner about his or her perception of America today because of the actions of a Foreign Service wife, that wouldn't tell me what the foreigner in 1920 thought of Mrs. John Campbell White. So I had a dilemma as to how to get some outside input. And here at this lunch she fell into my lap.

She said, "I think, after observing for nine years, the only solution is to pay the wife a salary --"

MILLER: Yes!

Q: -- and give the wife a job description --

MILLER: Yes!

Q: -- it's the only way to go.

MILLER: Absolutely. And many other countries' foreign services do that. But I've got one other wrinkle to suggest: it ought to be optional.

Q: Oh, yes.

MILLER: If you're going to devote yourself full-time to that, you may do that and I suppose you'd have to get interviewed or something, you know, hired.

Q: I wondered about that. There are so many people, still, trying to get into the Foreign Service that if they would just screen the wife, too, and see what her expectations are --

MILLER: Yes, but you'd have discrimination suits.

Q: That's why they have to give her a job description, she has to be -- but then if she didn't pass, and they didn't take her husband because she didn't pass, what would that do (laughing) to their relationship?

MILLER: It is difficult, but I agree. I think that somebody who's in charge of that kind of proposed legislation, in FLO or wherever they do it, ought to interview some of the foreign diplomats here and find out which countries do that, because I know that they do; and find out how they get around all these issues.

Q: Let me ask you one thing on tape, and then I'll turn it off because you've just given me an idea. Say it was an option, and say you opted not to take that; and you went to Maputo and your husband was chargé and you still had 20,000 people to entertain in five years, what would you do?

MILLER: I'd probably reconsider. Say, "Hell's bells, if I'm doing it anyway, I want to get paid."

Q: But I would think for the State Department to not have an administrative nightmare, they'd have to say, (laughing) "Either you're going to do it or you aren't."

MILLER: Well, maybe you wouldn't decide until you got there. Maybe you'd have a grace period of three months, a breaking-in period or something to make up your mind. I don't think that's an insurmountable problem.

Q: And then see also, as we're saying that the Foreign Service is really more fun when you're younger, your responsibilities change as you move up -- could you come in without that responsibility, and then move over later on?

MILLER: Oh, sure, I would think you'd be able to do it post to post, because whether you had children or had other job opportunities would determine the desirability. I mean, your husband changes posts each time.

Q: And he'd almost have to be brought in without you having -- I mean, it's not fair to him because you might flunk and cause him not to go into the Service which he wanted to do more than anything more than anything else in the world.

MILLER: I don't think you could do that --

Q: I don't think so either. So it would have to be a delayed thing --

MILLER: But I do think that then, when you got in, there would have to be some kind of evaluation. Now, one thing we've never touched on which I think is a serious issue for everybody but maybe in a special way for spouses, is the problem in the State Department of alcohol. I see it from the wife's perspective as a problem that many of the officers have. But there are also women who drink and have problems with alcohol abuse, because of

the boredom and one thing and another. Well, clearly if they've got a problem, I guess they'd be brought back whether they were functioning as a paid representative or not; it wouldn't make any difference. The fact is, they are the representative whether they're paid or not. So, however you function with them now it's going to be how you function then. It's just that you're going to pay them, and probably have a training course and probably have some specific duties spelled out. Maybe the ambassador or the chief of mission defines the duties at any particular post.

Q: In the 1930s the young wives were looked over to see if they were suitable. And I've been told, and I don't know if there's any way I can document this or not, I was told by one of the interviewees that -- I remember asking her at the time, "Okay: they evaluated you but they weren't paying you, and they weren't hiring you, what difference did your evaluation make?" "Oh," she said, "he put a little mark beside my husband's name and it would impinge on his probable assignment."

MILLER: Yes, I've heard that, too. But you know that's also true in the corporate world.

Q: Oh, I'm sure.

MILLER: A man will not be promoted if his wife cannot do the representational responsibilities -- which are huge. They're making contacts among other corporate leaders, instead. But as a member of the board of the Tribune, I have heard names of people being considered for promotion and rejected because their wives were too tacky or too educated -- not even anything that I consider serious, like alcoholism.

Q: Did you actually see alcohol abuse in your posts?

MILLER: Oh, sure.

Q: Was anyone evacuated from Maputo because of that?

MILLER: No, not so much in Maputo. My friend, her family was evacuated because both her husband and her daughter, aged 15, are doing alcohol abuse programs. She says they're very good about doing it. She said the problem is -- and I agree with this wholeheartedly -- the problem is that you have to do so much entertaining that the temptation to drink too much is there.

Q: Of course. And alcohol overseas is cheap.

MILLER: Yes. And there's just a huge amount of pressure to do it. I made up my mind in Maputo simply not to drink, I simply went on the wagon. I said, "It's too difficult not to cross over the line." I made myself a rule, "if there are more than six people in the room, I'm not going to drink alcohol. If I'm with intimate people, I'll have a glass of something."

But what happens is that the people drink more and more, their tolerance increases, the

earmark of alcohol abuse. And then when some stress triggers it – she said it was because of the cutbacks two years ago, that they cut back severely on budgets, reduced the staff, and everybody was working much harder than they'd been working in the past --

Q: I've heard that, too.

MILLER: -- and she said her husband just went haywire, just haywire. She said, "You know, it's just penny-wise and pound-foolish. Now they're spending thousands of dollars trying to rehabilitate the family. If they'd just sent two more people into the Consular Section two years ago, it wouldn't have happened." If you want to hear chapter and verse on that subject, (laughing) I'll give her your name.

Q: Do you think she'd talk to us?

MILLER: I know she would. I told her about this project and I asked her, and she said, "Oh yes." She wants to talk. Her name is Ruth Kotula. She lives out in Burke, Virginia. I'll call you to give you her phone number.

Q: I think there are some cases where individuals will say they really want to talk with us, get it off their chest, and then might change their mind.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: T.L. Hawkins, son of Dorian Leigh Parker, former Revlon model, author of cookbooks, most recently one on pancakes. He is the nephew of "Suzy," the New York gossip columnist.

Spouse: William Twaddell (married 1966-1984)

Spouse Entered Service: 1969
Your affiliation with Service: 1969 Left Service: 1984

Status: Divorced spouse

Spouse's Position: Chief of Mission

Posts (Spouse's positions):
Sept.-Dec. 1969 Washington, DC - Orientation
Jan.-June 1970 Beirut, Lebanon - Arabic Language Training (short course)

1970-1972 Dhahran, Saudi Arabia -Consular officer
1972-1973 Washington, DC -Economic/commercial training (Spouse)
USIA education program research (Interviewee, contract, also passed Foreign Service exam)
1973-1975 Caracas, Venezuela - Economic/commercial officer
1975-1976 Washington, DC - I-R
1976-1977 Washington, DC - Transition Team, President Carter
1977-1980 Washington, DC - Special Assistant, Secretary Vance
1980-1983 Maputo, Mozambique - DCM
1980-1983 Maputo, Mozambique - Chargé d'affaires
1983-1984 New London, Connecticut - Coast Guard Academy instructor (separated February 1984, divorced December 1984)

Place/Date of birth: Chicago, Illinois - December 9, 1944

Maiden Name: Kristie Miller

Parents:
Peter Miller, Publisher, La Salle/Peru, Illinois Dally News-Tribune
Ruth "Bazy" Tankersley, Arabian horse breeder, Tucson, Arizona

Schools:
Holton Arms, Washington, DC
Brown University, BA, 1966
Georgetown, MAT, 1977

Profession: Teacher; Author, biography of grandmother Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Political Life

Date/Place of Marriage: Washington, DC, June 1966

Children:
William Sanderson (Sandy) Twaddell, December 1977
Ellen Johnson Twaddell, June 1979

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:

At Post:
* Beirut: FSI (unpaid, free language training, full time)
* Dhahran: 3rd grade teacher, Dhahran Academy (paid)
* Caracas: 3rd Grade & high school English teacher, Colegio Internacional de Caracas (paid)
* Maputo: President American Language Association (paid), about 1 year USIS representative instructor, self-employed at other diplomatic missions (paid)
* New London: Instructor, University of New Haven (paid). Edited a book on bilingual education

In Washington, DC:
* High School Teacher, Gaithersburg High, 1969 (paid)
* MAT candidate, Georgetown University, 1975-1976 (unpaid)
* High School Teacher, School Without Walls, 1976-1979 (paid)
* Board Member, Chicago Tribune Company, 1981-Present (compensated)

End of interview