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

PATRICIA B. RYAN

Interviewed by: Linda Bell
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Q: Today is Tuesday, February 4th, 1992, and I will be interviewing Patty Ryan for the Foreign Service Spouse Oral History Project at her home beginning at 1:00 p.m. My name is Linda Bell.

Patty, let's begin then with your entry into the Foreign Service. When you met Duke, did you know that he was going to take you on a worldwide odyssey or was it all as much a surprise to you as it was to him?

RYAN: Well the latter is the case. We had been married for four years before Duke went into the Foreign Service. It was something that he had thought about it, not long after we were married. It was at a time when the government was cutting back spending on foreign affairs agency people. The McCarthy years in the late 50s had slowed down recruitment and we made the trip together to Washington in perhaps the late 50s. I don't remember the date exactly. He subsequently took the test.

They said at that time that they were not hiring anyone. I think there was very small class intake that year and it took about two and a half years from the time he first thought about it before he took the exam, passed the exam, went through all the processing which altogether at that time took close to a year. So, no, I had no notion.

I had always wanted to travel. I had dreamed of having opportunities to travel that had never eventuated. At that time I was coming from a cultural background in which there was very little that women did do other than nursing and teaching. So the opportunity to be involved to the degree that we were then in the Foreign Service and to work with your husband was very appealing. I had worked at the Art Institute in Chicago for several years when we were first married. It was what a friend of mine used to call a "chocolate-dipping" job. It was not really anything that was very challenging nor did you expect it to be. You just assumed you would work just to fill up time and amuse yourself until you found somebody and got married and had children and stayed home. This was the usual manner in which life would proceed for women in the mid-fifties.

Q: Little did you know. . . . .

RYAN: What was ahead, that's right. (laughter) I have regretted in my life that I did not take career possibilities at all seriously. They were not expected by my family or by my peers particularly. I remember one woman in my class in a small liberal arts college

called The Principia that I attended - we had a graduating class, I think, of one hundred people - and there was one woman who was going on to law school. I remember thinking, "Gee, what a bizarre thing to do. But of course she would, wouldn't she? This particular person." And subsequently regretted that I did not think of it at the time as a possibility for myself. I think that I would have possibly found that very interesting.

Q: Well you caught up.

RYAN: (laughing) Well you never really do, unfortunately. You do other things, but the roads, when you don't take them, they really are closed. For instance, when I finally did law many, many years later - I did do some law in Australia - my memory was shot to the point that I couldn't. . . I mean I did perfectly adequately on the course but I could see that it was not going to really work out at 55 to make a career in international law.

We came to Washington for the six months training.

Q: That was in '61-'62?

RYAN: That's right, it was in October of '61 we came to Washington. Duke was probably close to being the oldest person in the class at that time, the top limit - there was a top limit on age in entering classes for JOTs which was before your 31st birthday and I think Duke was just under that. So we were in a way the "camp counselors" as we have been many times in what was to come. Maybe we were just slow getting started. We enjoyed that period of time very much. Many of the other people in the class were much younger, just out of school, quite fed up with schooling, whereas in our case, we'd been out of school for almost ten years and thought it was wonderful to sit around and have people give us these interesting and stimulating lectures all day long. Whereas many of the younger people were grousing about having to sit there.

Q: Oh my. Quite a contrast to the mid-life career changes that we're seeing now, isn't it?

RYAN: Yes indeed, very much so. I remember many of the young people were so amazed because we, by that time of course, had furniture. (laughter)

Q: Dishes!

RYAN: Dishes. So we did a lot of entertaining of our class people and have kept in touch with many of them over the years. And I attended. We hadn't any children at that point and I found it very interesting and so I attended everything but perhaps a week of classes that were classified, most of which I was told afterwards were materials that had previously been published in the New York Times, but as a spouse I wasn't allowed to go.

Q: But the other courses were all open to the spouses. Were they pretty well represented?

RYAN: Spouses? No. And since married women could not enter the foreign service then,

the spouse was by definition, a wife. Because of the demographics of that particular group, many of the incoming officers were not married. I don't know what proportion, but I would guess more than 50% were not married. Of the ones who were married, many of them were very young people who had had their first child and they couldn't manage to get away. The pay was pretty derisory in those days. My husband took a pay cut when he came in. He'd been making slightly more when he was working for World Book Encyclopedia. Oh no, actually he was working for McLean/Hunter on a magazine of theirs. And I remember we met the then number two man in the USIA at a party early on, and he was saying something about, "oh yes, two for the price of one" to which I added, it looks to me more like two for the price of a half. (laughs) Anyway, we had a good time entertaining the other people in the class and enjoyed that experience very much.

Then Duke got his assignment to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and the language was going to be taught there, so we went almost directly.

Q: Did you take a spouse's course or was there a spouse's course offered at that time?

RYAN: Yes there was. I'm sure I did.

Q: I can remember one that dealt with how to hand your calling cards over and how to set the table.

RYAN: Yes, it seems to me that it was quite good, but I think there was a day with some emphasis on which corner of your card to turn down when you hand-delivered it. Interestingly archaic, but in fact we were kind of at the cusp of the change of those things and the post that we went to was a large, expanding post and they didn't stand much on these ceremonies. It was in the early Kennedy years and he had sent Lincoln Gordon to Brazil, beefed up the AID group there enormously, so we went into a situation in which the embassy had 800 employees. No, I'm sorry, the mission country-wide had 800 employees and the embassy was huge. And this would make it extremely difficult.

We went directly into language training. They separated husbands and their wives for the language training which is I think frequently a good idea in as much as women tend just generally to have, statistically, better skills with language issues.

Q: That's really interesting.

RYAN: And I think it becomes a problem sometimes between couples when they're together and one is going ahead gangbusters and the other is having a harder time with it. Or certainly conceptually it can be vice versa, but it is usually a female characteristic to do well with language. I had had several languages. I'd have some French and some Spanish actually in high school and in college and I'd always been good at it, but in those days in academic training, they didn't concentrate much on making it possible for you to speak the language. You generally just learned it and read it and spoke comparatively little. I remember the story of somebody saying that they had had somebody come in from a French class who had started out reading a French story that started "Danse la

foret." (laughter)

So I found this total immersion thing very grueling. I think most people did. One of the men in my class down there tried to throw himself off the balcony. He had other troubles besides language, but language triggered such stress, he had to be sent back to Washington. And both my husband and I each lost ten pounds which makes me think I should be constantly in language training. What I need now is Chinese! (laughter)

I found it was like being on a submarine with people. We had four of us in a class and there was one wife in there who was of German extraction. She reverted to schoolgirl characteristics and I remember her telling on somebody who had done something wrong. There was one chap who had lifted a bit of his speech - we had to make a little ten-minute talk every week - and we were supposed to write it about anything we wished and then present it in class as an exercise. Well he had cribbed his from the paper and obviously in that case his learning had not progressed any by doing it, but that was his problem, not hers. So she told on him. We always sort of felt that she was kind of sucking up to the teacher.

You ended up in this very kind of hothouse climate with a lot of stress and by the time you finished this course, you either really loved the people you were with or didn't like them at all. I was in a group with three other people and still feel very close to two of them and blessedly not - have never seen again - the other one. (laughter)

Q: One of those classic small-group sociology. . .

RYAN: That's right. You would really get on the pan together. I also found getting used to living abroad very difficult. As I say the Embassy was very large. Because we were in language class, my husband was not in USIA with other people, so people were not even aware in a way that we were in town, that we existed. I think there were a couple of perfunctory contacts with USIA people. We went in together to meet the PAO and I think had a chat with the Deputy PAO. But mostly nobody knew we were there.

Fortunately I had one friend from college whose father had settled in Brazil years before. She was an American. So I had this friend and that was helpful. But I found it very lonely. Being in this new context, I was totally unaware of how to reach out for help or what resources might be out there. So as I say, I found it very lonely. We were in an apartment building and I remember listening to some woman in an apartment above us or somewhere around us where I could hear her just sobbing at night and it was very unsettling. I remember getting out on the balcony and looking up at the stars and thinking, "My God, even the stars are different." (laughter)

And six hours a day in class and by the time you came out, you didn't want to turn on the radio, you didn't want to hear another word of Portuguese at all. And you had to go home and do homework. And coping then with housekeeping in a strange environment. I remember after living in a hotel, thinking this is kind of nice for the first week or so.

Q: (laughing) That's what we all think.

RYAN: That's right. And then we got into an apartment that was rented for us..

Q: Oh you weren't in the hotel for months and months?

RYAN: No, we were fortunate. We found a furnished place. It took a long time for our furniture to get to Brazil, but we found a furnished place.

Q: Was Duke's status at this time JOT?

RYAN: JOT. He was a Junior Officer Trainee. So we rented an apartment that had a beautiful view looking out over Corcovado. The Christ on top of Corcovado was out the back and out the front was the balcony looking out over Guanabara Bay and Sugar Loaf. It was beautiful. You kept feeling like the local tourist board was going to roll it up at night and take it away, it looked so unreal. Like a painted backdrop. It was a beautiful, beautiful spot.

Early on we did have a maid which we found quite soon. That helped because of the difficulties of trying to cope with new measurements. I remember having to struggle with the metric system of how much butter or how much meat or cheese a kilo would be. It took a couple of weeks to get that down and I made some mistakes in the meantime with rather large lumps of some things that I hadn't intended to get.

You could tell that it was a culture in which the maids did all the work because there was no thought at all given to comfort or convenience. The pots on the stove all would fall over if they didn't have something in them or enough in them. The handles were too heavy and they'd fall over. And they also were not insulated so you always had to hold something over your hand before you could touch the pot. These were local things that were there in the apartment, the furnished apartment we were renting. I remember fairly traumatically, maybe after we'd been there for two weeks, I'd decided all this very good restaurant food was wonderful, but you felt after awhile you'd rather have something rather simple and uncomplicated so I decided I'd make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Always get back to the roots! (laughs) I brought home a jar of peanut butter and opened it up and it was writhing with maggots under the cap.

Q: Oh my goodness.

RYAN: I was totally unused to seeing a Third World population where persons with mental problems or major physical problems were all out in the streets begging or just being there. And I found that all very hard to take. I had not quite realized how much America had been shielded -- or how much I, as an American, had been shielded --from some of these realities by the systems we have for either institutionalizing people who have physical or mental problems or fixing them. They had people with hare lips and various kinds of crippling defects that would have been remedied in another society but were not in Brazil. So all in all I found that first several months quite difficult. (pause)

After about six or seven months in Brazil, I had an opportunity to go back to the States. My father was retiring. He was a regional manager of the Federal National Mortgage Association and so they were having people coming out from Washington and having a big to-do for his retirement and they were then going to move to what was to be their retirement home in Aiken, South Carolina. So my parents paid for me to have a trip back to help them move to South Carolina. It was very fortunate that I did so because my father died within four weeks of having retired. So I had had this experience of being with him just before he did die.

Q: But how wonderful in a way.

RYAN: Yes it was, wonderful that I could be there.

Q: You could remember the good experiences with him.

RYAN: Yes, that was good. When I got back I found, which I think is typical of many people dealing with culture shock, is that once you have a little reality check with your own environment, then you can go back to the new country and things seem to be smoother. Then you start to see a little more clearly what it is that is nice about where you are. The fact, for instance, that we had servants, that you have a wonderful climate, on the whole, in Brazil, and that you're living in this very wonderful tropical area with beautiful beaches and having the opportunity to travel to get there.

One thing I didn't mention. On our way down, originally, we had felt that we couldn't really face the thought of getting on an airplane at O'Hare Airport after visiting our parents in Chicago before we went to Brazil and getting off eight hours later in Rio. So we decided to travel in little stages and spent a week, I think it was, of leave in Puerto Rico, where we'd have a culture where they spoke another language but there was a lot of English around -- trying to ease into the Latin American experience. I must say I was somewhat disappointed about going to Latin America because it was an area which had never particularly interested me. I had an aunt who had spent many years in Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo so I felt like I knew something about this. It didn't have an exotic feel to me.

Q: Where would you have rather gone?

RYAN: As with many people, my top choice would have been to go to Europe somewhere, which again isn't particularly exotic, but that was where I had always wished to go. But going from Puerto Rico to get to Rio, we had to stop in Venezuela. There we got a really typical Latin American experience because at that moment it was undergoing an uprising. Ours was the last commercial airplane allowed into the airport at Maiquetia and then we spent maybe four days in Caracas and our plane was one of the first to be allowed out.

While we were there, as often happens with Latin American civil upheaval, most of the

society runs along pretty well with life as usual while this business is going on. In fact the focus of it, Carupano, was outside of Caracas, so they had increased soldiers - I presume they were an increased presence on the street. We were constantly asking directions of police that looked like they were about 16-year olds armed with a machine gun that was always aimed at your navel while you were asking questions. You'd try to move a little sideways away from the barrel of the gun and they'd turn and follow you around because they were talking to you, so the gun would just move as you would go around in a circle by the time you'd asked your question.

Q: What a grim introduction.

RYAN: Yes, we didn't find Venezuela terribly attractive as a culture at the time. But it was certainly an interesting thing to see. I remember we were saying to somebody, "Well now, what is there to see - tourism around here?" in the hotel, and they were saying, "You know, you kind of want to be careful. You wouldn't want to go out on the streets." We were talking about whether there was a university that was interesting to see and they said, "Well no, you don't want to go to the university," because that was as usual the focus of a lot of disaffection. So we had had that little introduction to Latin American politics on our way down to Brazil.

But to get back then to coming back from the States after my visit home, then as I say almost immediately thereafter, my father died and I did not return for that. My mother urged me not to return. It would have been financially difficult, so I did not. She then came down to see us.

Q: Wait a minute. To return to where?

RYAN: To go back for the funeral. When my father died I didn't go back for the funeral because I had just been back in America.

Q: Oh I see. So you weren't literally in the States when he died. You had just seen him in the glory of his retirement.

RYAN: Yes, that's right. I had been back three weeks perhaps and then he died after I was back in Brazil.

Q: So your mother said, "Just stay where you are."

RYAN: That's right. And subsequently many, many years later my mother died also while I was overseas and I think that this, for Foreign Service people, is often a difficult occasion. . . . I mean obviously the death of a parent is difficult to cope with under any circumstances, but I think when it is not really feasible to go back before -- you know, when a parent is ill or dying, and have this opportunity to say "good-bye" -- it is very hard to ever work it through because you don't have any clear understanding of their death and you don't have an opportunity to say "goodbye."

Very shortly after my father's death, however, they had suggested that Duke should go up to Brasilia for some training. They were going to have an Interparliamentary Union meeting up there and they needed some extra hands.

Q: So "they" is USIS?

RYAN: USIS, yes. So the admin officer arranged it so that instead of paying for Duke to fly up there, they allowed for him to drive and as our car had arrived, we were able to drive to Brasilia, so I was able to go at no cost. This was very good because, for one thing, it got us into a totally Portuguese-speaking environment. In Brasilia, outside of the Embassy, just very, very few people spoke English. So it was good for our language development and helped hammer it home that we were able to do this and had to use it.

Q: You were <u>really</u> in a foreign country.

RYAN: That's right. We really had to use it. And this was a period that was very pleasant in a number of ways. At that time the Embassy was a hollow, square building with a wonderful garden in the middle designed by Roberto Burley Marx, who is a well-known garden designer and who still today has much influence in America. It had a very pretty little pond in it and it was a very attractive environment. There were guest rooms on one side of it and a place to eat rather simple meals or for the staff to have lunch, because it was way out in the middle of a field. Most of the people in fact went home for lunch, but they did have this little canteen where you could eat. So we had our meals there and had a very nice, very pleasant room and I spend a lot of time during the day in this garden atrium where you saw people coming and going to have coffee. You felt very connected and had a lot of chance to chat with people.

Q: Can I ask how long it takes to drive between Rio and Brasilia?

RYAN: About a day. Some people do it in a day. It would be a long, hard, I would guess maybe a twelve-hour drive.

Q: So you broke it up some?

RYAN: Yes and the admin officer was very good about arranging things so that there would be as little impact on our pocketbook as possible. He was wonderful. One of the first things Duke had to do was to stop in Belo Horizonte which is about a six or seven hour drive from Rio on the way up to Brasilia where there was a branch post. We stopped there and met for the first time Eleanor Halley, whom we have kept in touch with and still know, and saw last week. She was the branch PAO there and she was having some kind of a function. We got to meet people there. Then Duke had a day or two of observing the mission there as part of his training.

So then we went on to Brasilia. I remember - once you leave Belo Horizonte - the road was very good, very new of course because Brasilia at that time was just a few years old and so the road had just been built. I remember within an hour of leaving Belo Horizonte,

the scene turned very bleak, it's very dry savannah, kind of a rolling land. You would see no one, no town, no village, occasionally, about once every hour, you would see some peasant walking along the road and you would wonder where is he going? From what to what? But occasionally there would be some very little humble dwelling near the road. But there wasn't much evidence of having any kind of agriculture or any human activity except other cars and trucks going to Brasilia and not many of them. So after about four or five hours of this, you kept coming over these low hills and then you'd be able to see out over another long sweep and there'd be nothing and then you'd go over another one and there'd be nothing.

It was the season of the year when there was a lot of burning going on, the agricultural slash-and-burn system which ruins soil. So there would be these great plumes of fire in the distance and these hills that were dun-colored like old elephant hide, a very bleak and sere landscape. So at one point you begin to think this is all a big joke. Bert has just sent us off and this is what they do to the JOTs, it's a form of hazing. So you go and you go and you go and finally, after maybe six or seven hours; I remember thinking this had made it so much better to do it by car than by air because finally you do go over that last hill and there in the distance you see this sparkling white brand-new city on the plain. It is an amazing experience to see that shimmering in the distance.

So we spent six weeks, seven weeks, something of that nature there. It was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which happened while we were out there. There was a man who was the head of the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was a U.S. election year so that most parliamentarians from the United States could not come because it was in October and they were contesting an election. The only Congressmen who were free to come were southern Democrats for whom the primary was indeed the election. They knew that their jobs were secure. Or people who were not going to run.

We had Strom Thurmond. He was old then. And then a man named Robertson from Virginia. And this made a very interesting experience for both of us because there were a lot of social events having these people from Congress there which gave us an opportunity to meet them and to talk to them. I remember Strom Thurmond pushing back at the dinner table and turning to Duke who was a JOT, and had been in the country for a total of five months, maybe, most of it in language school, and saying, "Well now if you were us in Congress, where would you cut aid to Brazil?" (laughs) And Duke's diplomacy won through because he said, "Well I'm not sure exactly where I'd cut. I'd certainly be able to tell you where I would not cut." And then proceeded to do that, which I think was all of the things that we were doing then.

It was an interesting experience close up. They were trying to take some kind of a position. I remember at some press conference they were talking about how giving Brazil aid is like pouring water into a leaky bucket, which infuriated the Brazilians and then there was a lot of backpedaling about what they meant to say. One of the most interesting things was that during the Cuban Missile Crisis itself, as it was brewing, somebody, as is the way in the Third World, had managed to do something which had knocked out communications. I think there were no telephone lines open to Rio - they had accidently

cut the cable. The only source of information from the outside was short-wave and local radio. Duke's job every day was to take the news off the local news and translate it into English and provide a written resume of updated news for these congressmen who were understandably just going crazy. Many of them worked for the Foreign Relation Committee in the Senate. This was the biggest post-war political event and international crisis and here they are in Brazil. One man said "Here I am in the middle of this God-forsaken countryside at a conference which is by definition inconsequential while the most important thing in the world that has happened in years is going on." And they were really just going crazy over their isolation.

But fortunately it was over fairly quickly and they were all deciding whether they would go or stay. Plane service was not such that you could hop on a plane the next day. There were just a couple of planes a week going to the States from Brasilia that they could have taken. But anyway the crisis passed successfully, blessedly for all of us, and they were able to finish the conference and go home as planned.

And then we went back to Rio not long after that. We at that point got our own apartment. Duke did the training tour in Rio and after about a year in Brazil, they then asked Duke if he would like to go to Brasilia. Our experience had been so positive while we were there. It has a wonderful climate and, because the Embassy is smaller, you got to know people much better. I made friends at that time, both American and foreign, that I have kept my whole life. So we went back looking forward to it. It's not often that you actually get to see where you are going beforehand.

We knew giving up Rio - Rio is a much more sophisticated world-class city ..., but where we were at that time on the pecking order, Brasilia was much more interesting because it was a small group of maybe twenty people and everyone was asked to everything. If the President had a party for de Gaulle, you were asked to the reception. You weren't asked to dinner. The Ambassador would come up and go to the dinner. But we went to the reception for de Gaulle, we went to a reception for the then Shah of Iran, the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg. Groups that came through, for instance cultural groups that came to Brazil, would make at least a stop in Brasilia because it was the capital, so it had the advantages of a small town with some of the advantages of a bigger community. We had Czechoslovakian string quartets and Hungarian trios and they would only give one concert, but that was very nice. As I said, the climate was wonderful.

Q: How large was the local population?

RYAN: I think at that time it was under a quarter of a million there and of that a substantial portion were in an outlying community that was called (Free City) which was free in the sense that it was outside the government city of Brasilia. Brasilia had many rules about building design, so people put up kind of shanty-towns outside the city and people who came down to build the city, the laborers, would live there.

In Brazil at that time, the population was made up principally of diplomats, people at the university - there was a university in Brasilia - civil servants. Many of the ministries,

including the Foreign Affairs Ministry, were resisting the move from Rio. I think they managed to stay in Rio for another four years after this. The military ministries were up there in force and they were the only ones they had .

The buildings in Brasilia were designed by Oscar Niemeyer, who was a student of Le Corbusier. Here you are out in this climate which has six months absolutely without a drop of rain guaranteed. You can plan a picnic anytime from the beginning to the end of it. But Niemeyer designed these buildings, a sub-category of Bauhaus modern, without balconies, which he felt would spoil the lines. Yet, you could have been outside almost all of the year if you'd had some sort of shelter.

It was a wonderful climate, never very cold. In the hot season, it was overcast enough so that the sun was never very strong. It was extremely dry, so you didn't perspire, but you had to drink a lot. At the end of the day sometimes I would count up what I had had to drink during the day -- a gallon of Coca-Cola, four glasses of iced tea.

I was never very sporty, but a lot of people played a lot of tennis there and it was perfect for outdoor activity. It was then classified as a hardship post so they put in a swimming pool which became a focus for the American families and the children as there was very little to do in a recreational way around Brasilia. There was a lake and a couple of people had bought sail boats.

Q: There was a lake!

RYAN: It was artificially created by dams. We had one friend there who was such a believer in Brasilia that he joined the Brasilia Yacht Club before there <u>was</u> a lake! It was a very real question whether Brasilia was going to be able to take hold. Nobody in the world loves their city - except possibly Parisians - like people from Rio love Rio. People who have millions and who could live anywhere in the world they want, always come back and touch down in Rio once a year. They just adore it. And so there was a very real thought that they would not be able to get people from Rio to go to Brasilia and stay. The joke at the time was that there were two things that were good about Brasilia. One was the climate and the other was the ticket back to Rio.

It had a lot of the drawbacks as a planned community because it was planned without real reference to that community. It was planned by people who felt <u>they</u> knew what was best for people. And I think now people would have better sense. You would ask for the input of the end-users of the product before they would do it. It was a plan, that on the surface, made sense. They had apartments around an elementary school and there would be one little area of everyday shops, and then there was one big street for the larger shops for other things, such as furniture.

The Brazilians were never ones to just follow along the way somebody told them they should. So the shops were supposed to work one way. Everybody turned them around and made them work back to front instead. There was a real drawback, I think, in having all of the employees, for example in the embassy or Bank of Brazil, living together in the

same “super-quadros” or super-squares. Disagreements and personal antipathies would travel from work to home, from home back to work, so that things that happened with children at home would impact on people’s work if they were at the Embassy. They spent a lot of time working out problems that were arising because of the living arrangements.

Q: So did that mean that the American community was in a compound?

RYAN: Right. It was not a compound in the sense that there was a wall, but there were three buildings in which we had to live. It was really not . . . .

Q: Just like the French lived with the French and the Germans. . . .

RYAN: And right across the road from us was another big complex that was nothing but the Bank of Brazil employees. And why anybody ever thought this necessary. . . There was a certain degree of necessity and it was neat, but human beings are anything but neat is the problem. So at this point it was really a necessity because there were only a very small number of buildings.

The American government clearly had to buy a couple of buildings and have people live in them. There really was no option of your being able to go and rent somewhere to live.

We had the good fortune, after we’d been there a year or so, to have the military overthrew the elected president, Joao Goulart, whom the Embassy felt and the Brazilian military felt was too left-leaning. So they ran him out in a typically Brazilian way, in the sense that there was practically no bloodshed involved. And as the two armies marched, one loyal to the president and one loyal to the military, they met, the one from Rio and the other from Sao Paulo, in the valley. There, the two commanders - both generals who had been classmates or good friends - said, “Well Jerome, how many people do you have?” And he said, “I have ten thousand.” And he said, “Well I’m sorry to say I have twelve thousand.” That decided the situation. “What can I do? We’re outnumbered.”

I think there were perhaps four deaths. Somebody who was stopped at a roadblock and didn’t hear or understand the soldier’s command to stop and kept coming. The guy was probably a 16-year old with a gun who was nervous and thought he was going to be run down and so shot the driver. And I think something was dropped on somebody’s head from up in a building. I remember as an enduring image. President Goulart had a wife who was a beautiful woman. About a week after they had fled - he was from the southern part of Brazil and they had gone over the border into Uruguay - there was a picture of Jango, as he was called Jango, and his wife at a kitchen table with a big pot of rice in the middle of it and a couple spoons. It was such a wonderful image of how are the mighty fallen. The wheel of fortune going round and round.

I remember at this time coming out of a movie and we could tell there was something going on as we were driving home. . . .

The first thing they did in Brasilia was lay out a very complete road system, with

wonderful eight-lane highways with few cars on them. It was laid out in an airplane design, like a bird with two wings, and then kind of a body where you had the ministerial buildings and the President's Palace. I've always been interested in architecture, and the buildings were beautifully contoured objects, however most of the architecture was not ideal for the climate. The ministry buildings were Bauhaus glass wall, glass curtain buildings, and they caught full sun in the morning and then caught full sun on the other side in the afternoon. It was a place where electricity for air conditioning was constantly being interrupted. It always managed to be just a half an hour before you had eight people coming for dinner, then you'd have to try to get your dinner ready by candlelight.

Officials had installed plastic Venetian blinds in the ministry buildings and the wind was so strong - there was a lot of wind, Brasilia being on a high plateau - that they would snap and many of the ministry buildings would have this snaggle-toothed look, except typically, the military ones. A, probably because they worried about it more, and B, they had the funds to replace them; but you'd see these very handsome buildings that marched down the plain in serried ranks, but then they would be spoiled by these old snaggle-toothed plastic window treatments.

Q: Go back to what happened when you came out of the movie.

RYAN: Oh yes. So we were driving down one of these axis of the city and were aware of some action and the police were obviously out and the military out and we saw people running and thought we heard some shots. So I said, "We'd better go back and look and see what's happening." So we drove back and drove through it again. The students from the university were having a demonstration that had somewhat gotten out of hand. I don't believe anybody was hurt. I think the police shot over their heads. Subsequently, I can't remember whether this was just before or just after the revolution, I remember there being tanks on the streets and having a rather tense time wondering what was going to happen.

And I remember after it was all over, I thought, I'd better call my mother because she may be hearing about these things. So I called Mum, who was a very easy-going, phlegmatic person, and said, "I just thought I'd call and let you know that I was all right. I didn't want you to worry about it." She said, "Oh no, I hadn't worried about you at all." (laughs)

And I said, slightly indignantly, "Well you didn't! I mean there were tanks in the street."

Q: Had she heard?

RYAN: Yes, but you know how you do in America. On some little distant article down on page 35 of the Times there's something about there being some kind of a ruckus in Brazil and maybe for a day it would be on the front page if they changed their president. I mean not like at the top of the front page. (laughs) I think she was aware that something was going on, but at that time she had visited us in Brazil and had stayed for a number of months and did have the picture that Brazil's governmental ruckuses were always fairly

pacific.

I remember the story we heard, perhaps apocryphal, about the President who had created the city of Brasilia, Kubitschek. The military were always very suspicious of his political beliefs. So at one point there was an uprising by some in the Air Force and after they had managed to talk them out of it, to tell them it wasn't really a very good idea and that they were hopelessly outnumbered and they wanted to forget it. He got this man who had lead this little rebellion in an outpost and, typical of Brazil as opposed to other Latin American countries, instead of shooting him on the spot, sent a plane for him. The rebel balked; "I'm not going on that plane. You're trying to kill me. That's a terrible plane." So they sent another plane that was better, brought him back and then the President took him up to Brasilia and said, "This is this vision I have of this wonderful new capital of the new Brazil and I will need the help of all Brazilians and I need you." And so that was the way they deal with rebels in Brazil. As you can see, Brazilians are much more humane. They have lots of inhumanities of omissions, but very much humanity in punishment.

Q: Was this true because they were in the same social class?

RYAN: No, as a matter of fact, as my recollection of this particular story goes, the man who had lead this uprising was a very low-ranking non-commissioned officer, he was a sergeant or something perhaps. (overlapping voices) As I say, this was a story I have from somebody and I'm sure it's fifteenth hand anyhow. I think the central thrust of the story is right, that there was a rebellion, there was no particular punishment. They docked his pay or broke him to corporal or something, but it was nothing very horrendous, for mutiny anyway.

Q: What year was Brasilia built? When was it made the official capital?

RYAN: I can't remember. We were there for one of its anniversaries and that was . . . So before we came, we were there for two years, it was sometime in the late fifties. I can't remember whether we were there for the fifth birthday or the tenth birthday of the city. But I guess maybe it was the tenth birthday of breaking the ground for the capital, because it would have taken a while.

But we were there in the early days. We were what they called "candangos" which is the Brazilian word for pioneers, which I interestingly enough confused one time with another word, "camundongo," which means mouse. So I said once, "Yes, we're real camundongos." (laughter) But I really did get my Portuguese in good shape and I remember thinking when we were sent down there where we were going to have Portuguese training, "God, Brazil! Portuguese! Who in the world ever wants to learn Portuguese!" And amazingly enough in the years since then, I have had I don't know how many opportunities to use Portuguese wherever I've gone and had the very exotic benefit of it providing me with an entree to people to help in the house from the Brazilian or Portuguese communities in places as different as Canberra and Cambridge. I had to fake my Portuguese for Spanish sometimes, like with my maid in Norway. Also it always has the advantage that my husband and I can talk to each other in public without much fear of

anyone understanding what we're saying. The Portuguese themselves call their language international code. (laughs)

Q: When I came into the Foreign Service it was a much sought-after language, because one figured that you could go anywhere. Well you could go literally all around the world. Macao and the Canary Islands or the Azores, and Portugal itself. And Mozambique was not so bad in the old days.

RYAN: Because of the revolution, many of the people who were considered by the government to be leftist, had to either leave the country, or in the case of some people at the university, they felt that it was more prudent to be out of the military's way. Several of the professors at the university, which was considered a hotbed of communism -which generally meant they were in favor of slum clearance -went back to other jobs in Rio where they were a little less noticeable.

As a result of this, a landscape designer, who had built a house on the other side of the lake about a twenty-minute drive from Brasilia, wanted to leave town. An acquaintance of ours, an architect, knew this man wanted to rent the house and return to Rio because he was under suspicion and thought he better get out of Brasilia.

So this Wilson Reis Neto asked us if we would be interested. There were two houses on the property. We agreed to rent one of them on the shore with a swimming pool next to it. Brasilia was a post with furnished quarters so we didn't have any of our own furniture. For this house we had to make do with things we got in the local market. In fact, we never even had a bed for it because it was so close to the city. But we went out to entertain out there.

Interestingly enough, it was a beautiful spot and the owner had made a tiny island and had planted papyrus in front of it as a focal point as you looked toward these beautiful, monumental buildings in Brasilia on the other side of the lake. We'd go there every weekend and frequently entertained there. It pointed up a cultural difference between Americans and Brazilians that within the first five minutes that the first couple arrived, they would sit on this beautiful veranda looking out over this beautiful view and invariably the wife would say, "Don't you feel nervous over here?" And the fact that we were out so far away made them uneasy. The Brazilians <u>love</u> company and they <u>love</u> being with people. When they go to the beach at the Copacabana, they're all cheek by jowl. So our idea of getting away from it all is very different from theirs. I would say, "No, who could hurt you out here? Nobody knows it's here."

It was out on a road on which you never saw anybody coming or going. There was almost nothing built out there. There was a dam that had created the lake. And they would always feel better once more guests had arrived and there were more people around. It was an interesting cultural difference. We enjoyed getting away and the isolation and the quiet. It was beautiful, just lovely. And it cost a pittance.

When we first went to Brasilia, we had kept our apartment in Rio because at that time

airfares were very cheap and the inflation was such that within a couple of months, what we were paying for our apartment in Rio was just nothing. It cost us $50.00 a month by the time we left. But then because of it being a humid climate, it became impossible to maintain because things got mildewed. We had an American, a USIA secretary, living in it for a while. Eventually we had to close it up and sent the furniture back and it had to go into storage all the way back up to Washington because they couldn't store it because of the humidity. Everything would have been ruined. The apartments in Brasilia were furnished.

I found living in Brasilia very pleasant. We got to know many people, diplomats from other countries. We met at that time an English couple, with whom we have stayed in England. When we were living in England, we saw them constantly and they were one of our very best friends at that time. We met them there in Brasilia. As I say, we had opportunities beyond the rank that Duke had to meet interesting people because you had a small-town atmosphere, but the people that were there were not small-town people. They were the diplomats, the Supreme Court, a judge who was head of what was equivalent to our Supreme Court. We had a picture of his that he had given us.

There were a lot of people who were deputies in Congress and, in fact, one of the people we met then we subsequently went to visit when he was the governor up in the north - in one of the most poverty-stricken states in the north. He was José Sarney, who then was just the last president of Brazil.

Q: How long did you stay in Brasilia?

RYAN: We were only in Brasilia for two years because it was a hardship post and a year in Rio. I remember sitting out on this patio that I have described and there was this group of wives who had come through on a special trip, sightseeing trip, and they were <u>real</u> Americans from the Embassy in Rio. And so I was chatting with them and they were saying what was it like in Brasilia and I said, "Well it's really wonderful. We love it and it's considered a hardship post but of course it's nothing like, oh say, Tegucigalpa." And a woman chimed in in the back and said, "You're speaking of the capital of my country." And I thought, "Of course, me and my big mouth." And she said, "Well actually, it is pretty bad." (laughter) But we found a lot of good friends there and enjoyed watching - because you all were put in together. It was interesting to watch the interplay of all these disparate personalities. And it did get you to know well people that you might not have otherwise chosen to spend your time with. That's always a very enriching experience I think. So we thoroughly enjoyed that.

At the end of the time, as Duke was getting ready to be transferred, they offered him PAO maybe, I don't remember what, in Georgetown, Guyana. Dave Wen, the PAO in Rio, said, "Well, Duke, I don't know about you, but I've always understood that that was surrounded by the Anus Mountains." And Duke said, "Yes I believe that's exactly what it's like there." And he said, "Now I wonder if you would instead like to come back to Rio and be Radio Officer." And Duke said, "Well, let me think about it. Yes, I'd like to do that." (laughter) So we opted for the bright lights again rather than for the more

adventurous experience in Georgetown, and I can't say I wish I had gone.

So I finally got my trip to Europe because at that time we were finally able to afford - oh I think we paid a very small amount of money extra because we had a round-trip ticket - Brazil-U.S.-return - that we were able to go to England, Italy and France and back to the United States where we arrived in New York just in time for the famous blackout. I was in the basement of Macy's. That was the '67 blackout in New York City. Duke and I were shopping separately and he was coming back to the hotel on the bus. He was talking to somebody and they said, "Will the phones work?" And Duke said, "Oh yes, usually when this happens, the phone works," from his deep experience in the Third World. One of the other people on the bus turned around and said, "What do you mean - usually - when this happens!" We were quite used to blackouts. We thought that the United States had finally caught up with Brazil. A sign of what we came to know as creeping underdevelopment was coming to the United States.

So then we went back to Rio. (interruption) We had a little house, in s very pleasant area of Rio. Based on the fact that we had liked Brasilia, an opening came up in Belém, up on the equator north of Brazil. The Branch PAO there was due to be taken out and at the same time, inspectors were coming. So they decided it would be nice if Duke went up and held the fort in Belém. So this was another possibility for us to see a part of Brazil that we would not otherwise certainly have spent money to see, this great distance.

Flying from Rio to Belém would be like Seattle to Miami, maybe, about as long as you can go in the United States. So we were up there for about seven weeks preparing for this inspection that was coming up. And while we were there, we had the opportunity to go up the river to Manaus, which is an old collapsed rubber-boom capital in Brazil that had at one time had great wealth. They built an opera house in which Pavlova danced and it was a big venue. The opera house is still there, although closed down. At that time they were starting to try to refurbish it a little. It had fallen into disrepair inasmuch as people, such as Pavlova, were no longer stopping in Manaus. One of the things that I particularly remember about Manaus, besides the opera house, were the vultures. There were vultures all over the streets and they would just barely hop out of your way.

Q: What were they on?

RYAN: I don't think they were on anything except picking up scraps. They were the city's garbage disposal system. One morning we were having breakfast out on top of a quite modern hotel they had there. They had a rooftop place where you could eat. And while I was sitting there, this vulture feather came spiraling down and landed on my plate. I remember someone saying to me, "Gee, if you'd been an ancient Roman, you wouldn't have dared with an omen like that even stirred out of the hotel that day!"

And another wildlife situation we had while we were in Belém - that was in Manaus - but when we were in Belém, I remember being in another very nice modern hotel that had just been opened in Belém. It being a small community of non-Brazilians there, you kind of got to know anybody who was in town for any unusual reason. And there was an

engineer from Westinghouse who had just been sent down to do something about some generators in Belém. So he had joined us for dinner one night in the hotel where he was staying as well as we.

After dinner we were served coffee - a wonderful little demitasse of coffee - and I take sugar in my coffee. So I was sitting there taking small ants out of the sugar with my fingers. And this engineer watched me in horrified fascination, looked up and said, "Doesn't that bother you?" And I said, "Yes, it bothers me, and that's why I take them out." So life in the Third World gets you very accustomed to dealing with wildlife in different ways.

In Brasilia and in the interior of Brazil they had huge flying cockroaches that were two-and-a-half inches. They were almost like birds and you couldn't even contemplate stepping on one because they were so big. But they were around and gave you unpleasant surprises from time to time.

Another thing while I was there. I was at the Consulate which we were allowed to live in after the Consul had left and had not yet been replaced, and I saw a little hole in one of the government tables and noticed the hole because suddenly a little beige pellet had popped out of it. And so I looked at that for a moment, looked in the hole, and so I, using my fingernail, pushed it back into the hole. There was a sort of a long pause and then some little tiny antenna came up and felt the size of the hole and checked that it was the right size for the pellet and pushed it back out. So I'd push it down, it would push it out, I'd push it down, and so this is how one could spend your time in the tropics from time to time.

That was all a very interesting experience. The inspection in whose honor Duke was there had a problem in that there was nobody to inspect the inspectors. One of the inspectors who came down was a very pleasant, affable gentleman. The other one was affable and pleasant except that he drank too much and when he drank too much, he wasn't very affable. He had polished off the end of a large pitcher of martinis which the Bi-national Center grantee had provided for us before dinner. We were all going to a hotel for dinner. And then on the way they wanted to stop and see these souvenir shops, and this chap made loud and embarrassing remarks about how bad things in this particular souvenir shop were in the hearing of the English-speaking owner of the shop, so we kind of hauled him out of there and then got to the hotel where he was then very, very loud and obnoxious with the waiter who wouldn't provide him with a turtle dish that is famed in that part of the country.

Q: Proverbial "Ugly American."

RYAN: Very ugly American and I was very conscious of the fact, and that he was twenty years older than I and also a good many grades superior to my husband. But I felt it was incumbent on me to try to get him to behave himself. (laughs) So that made a difficult situation.

So then we returned to Rio and we had just settled into a house in Rio before we went on this TDY, and we allowed as how we had thought Belém was very interesting but we did not think - thank you - that we wanted to go up there and live for two years. Six weeks was just about the right amount of time to see the area. We'd gone out and seen the Amazon and seen where the Rio Negro comes into it. There's a point in which they take you out in a small boat where the two rivers, the Rio Negro, the Black River, joins the Amazon, and it's as though you had a river full of Coca Cola joining a river full of cafe au lait.

The Rio Negro is black, as the name implies, with some kind of suspended particulate matter - vegetable matter from the leaves and things - but it's not opaque, it's very clear, but black. And the Amazon itself is very muddy and, as I say, the color of milk and coffee. And these two streams join each other and for several miles south of the juncture, you have a line right down the river of the two waters before they intermingle and all become the muddy Amazon-color.

I think it was probably on the same boat trip, it was a little outboard on a large launch of some kind, that at one point the motor died and two of the people who were in it went over the side - it was very shallow at that point as I recall. They were able to stand up in it up to chest level. Some kind of vegetable matter had fouled the propellers and they had stopped. So we said, "Are there piranha?" And they smiled and said, "Oh yes!" and worked very slowly without apparent concern to free the propellers.

The Brazilians have, which shows up especially in their driving, a very strong sense of fatalism which assumes that if something bad is going to happen to you, nothing you can do can avert that. So the piranhas, I presume, were in the same category as acts of God that you can't avoid just by staying out of the river. (laughs)

And they drive this way, too. Most of the highways at that time in Brazil were two-lane, so one was constantly driving along and being faced by a Volkswagen that was trying to tear around a slow truck and was out in your lane coming straight at you, and you'd have to jam on the brakes and let it go by. And fortunately, every time that we were there that that happened, it worked. We had enough time to stop before they hit us. There were stories that didn't end so happily.

Q: Now where was the Palace of Lions?

RYAN: That's right. Before we went back up to Rio, a friend of ours, who was a deputy at the Congress, had run as governor of the state of Maranhao, one of the neighboring states of Belém. He had just been inaugurated, so we flew over to see him. They had us staying in this palace that had been built at probably the turn-of-the-century. It was kind of a Beaux Arts building that had run down completely. It was very derelict. It looked like something out of Truman Capote.

There were long, tall, silk curtains at all the windows that were torn and filled with water stains where the windows had been left open and the rains had come in, and the

wallpaper was peeling literally off of the grand rooms, the walls of the grand parlors, the reception rooms. We had a bedroom that was perfectly all right and we had a sergeant, who was seconded to sit outside our door and make sure that nothing happened to us and that we had everything we needed. We had to go out and tell him every time we brushed our teeth or flushed the toilet and used up all the water in the cistern. He had to go somewhere and turn on the tap and fill it back up again. So we were in frequent communication with him.

The situation of the Palace of Lions was out on a promontory between the confluence of two small rivers that then went on out into a delta and to the ocean, and would have small fleets of small boats that would be fishing out there. You could see them well from up on that promontory. And again, the garden was derelict.

Q: Were you the only ones staying?

RYAN: Yes. They had someone in the kitchen who would provide us with biscuits and coffee in the morning and maybe some food.

It's an interesting old town with tiled front facades on the late 19th century houses that had withstood the humidity of the tropical areas of Brazil. Although they're not in wonderful shape. They were not when we were there. This is now many years ago. I think that's probably plenty about our trek to the north.

We came back to Rio. In this time I had not been able to work. I had worked a little bit in Brasilia teaching English as a second language, which I had not mentioned. I didn't, at that time, think of it as being an option. Nobody was encouraged, certainly, to work. I don't remember in Brasilia more than a couple of the wives working as secretaries for the Embassy and I had always assiduously avoided learning to type adequately enough to be a secretary which I had never fancied as an occupation.

So I did work in the Thomas Jefferson House, as it was called, where they taught English, and that was all right. It was again nothing that I found very appealing. It seems to me to be quite hard work. You feel at the end of an hour of English as a second language teaching, especially with any kind of a group. . . . The TEFL language classes would typically be fairly good-sized, fifteen or twenty people, all of them with different levels of English. I had one children's class and young people, adolescents, and one class of people with quite a mixed variety of abilities, and I always felt like I had been carrying people on my back for about an hour once class was over.

Then back in Rio, we did some volunteer work at one point. We did things to raise money at the embassy. The embassies would have a function annually to raise money for a local charity, an orphanage. In Brasilia, the senior wife there had gotten us all mobilized to sew for an orphanage and I always felt it was bad enough to be an orphan in Brazil without having to wear anything I'd sewn. Sewing has never been my forte_, but I always enjoyed going along to these meetings that they had with the Embassy wives. There was some grumbling, but I rather enjoyed the contact with people and so I think if I had gone

to a Third World country as an older person, I would have had a very different view.

I was quite horrified at the poverty that I saw and the idea of kind of mucking in and doing something about it - I was so repelled by it that I couldn't have, at that point in my life, coped with the thought of going and doing something useful. It rather embarrasses me today to say that, but that was the way it struck me then. As I said, I think if I had had a Third World post later in my life, I would have felt quite differently about. . . . I regretted that I didn't have a chance to do anything more there that was useful.

After we returned to Rio - at this point Duke and I had been married for nine years and I had not gotten pregnant. For a year or so, I had been thinking it probably was just as well in the Foreign Service leading this life, it was possibly better that we didn't have children because people have so many problems with education and their children's health and just having babies overseas. But I thought all things considered, it was just as well we don't have any children. And I think when I finally had that thought, that pulled the trigger and I instantly got pregnant. As long as I didn't want to get pregnant any more, it worked!

So I had a reasonably trouble-free pregnancy, but the facilities for having children in Rio consisted of a hospital that had a lot of reasonably advanced equipment in it, but the standards of cleanliness and sterility, and the high incidence of infection possibilities rather militated against that. So there was another hospital. It was a small clinic run by German Lutheran nuns which was meticulously taken care of. However, it didn't have any very complicated equipment, so if you ran into any complications in a delivery, you'd have to be moved mid-labor, I guess, mid-contraction, to another facility to have anything unusual taken care of.

In any event, my delivery didn't present any medical difficulties. My husband, against all his previously expressed inclinations which had been not to be present at the delivery of our son, did in fact, by the time I was ready to deliver, he was enough in the spirit of the thing, that they put him in a white coat and took him down there. The Scottish doctor I had said that he had had one father who had insisted on being in the delivery room and who had fainted over his wife's abdomen while on the table. Duke said, "Well I don't know, I've never fainted before, but if I do faint, I'll just be over here in the corner and you just carry on and don't worry about me." So he didn't faint and when William was born, they cleaned him up and powdered him and, because I was not conscious, they plopped him into Duke's arms and said, "Here, you had better get used to it." (laughs)

Then my mother was down there for an extended period of time while I was pregnant. At this point I was 35 and I always said I wasn't worried about having a baby at 35 so much as I was worried about having a two-year old when I was 37. (laughter) But at least when I was 37 and had a two-year old, I was still in Brazil with a nanny, so having a child in the Third World has its compensations. I had a woman in the house who had been with us in Brasilia - a woman named Terezinha whom we still stay in touch with. I had gotten her in Brasilia and she worked for us for about a year and a half there and then came down to Rio, when we returned to Rio.

Then she came down and her boy friend came down and they got married and had a wedding. We had a party at our house for them. Duke gave her away. It was what they call a "godfather and godmother," the terms used as if it were a christening; sponsored, in effect. So she also had a baby. I think her baby - Sue, I believe - was born just a little after my baby. They were not very far apart.

So I had thought that certainly having one servant - I had also inherited with this house a very delightful woman who came in once a week and the economic situation was such that it didn't cost very much money and you couldn't say you didn't want her, because she needed the work. So she kind of came in and did little odds and ends of things. Then we had the housekeeper's husband and her little girl, and the now three of us, and my mother who was a frequent visitor, when she had her first and only grandchild. And then we got a nanny for William because Terezinha did need the help when she had her own child.

Q: Did she and her own child live with you?

RYAN: Yes in a very small one-room . . . .

Q: So there was some interaction between William and her son or daughter?

RYAN: She had a little girl.

Q: So the two babies could become toddlers together.

RYAN: It's ridiculous that I can't remember whether Suely was born - I think she was born somewhat before William. It was interesting because William's nanny had been arranged by my maid. It was a friend from Brasilia, also, and I had sort of faintly known her, but I didn't really know her very well. But as is often the way in these situations, they had arranged it kind of between them.

The nanny had been working for another American in Brasilia and had to wait until they left when William was about six weeks old and then came down and helped us take care of William. Subsequently, she came to Washington with us and is now, after having been born and raised in a mud hut in the interior of Brazil, is now a homeowner in Bethesda with two American children and a Portuguese husband and drives a car and is a real example of the American dream. They worked hard and bought their own home. She worked for William Safire, as a matter of fact, for a couple of years after she left us. She was just here with her two daughters at Christmas time.

We always felt like we ought to line our staff up outside and review the troops. We had a very pleasant little house, but it was by no means enormous and we were on a little dead-end street, so the street area was used by people who would roll their babies up and down, as we were close to parks, but we didn't have any garden. We had a little, maybe 20 by 15, patio in the interior of the house. The maids' quarters were sort of in the back

and came in through the kitchen. We had three bedrooms and a dressing room and a bathroom upstairs and a half-bath on the first floor.

As I say it was very pleasant, but it wasn't huge and then Terezinha's mother would come periodically to visit, too. So we were pushing at the seams. The nanny slept in the same room with William and then we had another guest room we used. Then we had another kind of a room - what they called a winter garden - that had a tile floor. It was halfway up the steps, sort of halfway going up to the second floor. So somebody would occasionally sleep there who was visiting over. Terezinha and her husband and the baby were in this room and bath in the back. I'm surprised we weren't shut down by the Housing Authority. (laughs)

Q: Although there were probably many households much worse.

RYAN: We then returned to Washington when William was two. I found one of the most marked things was that at this point we discovered we had completely missed the '60s. We came back in '69. We had been in Brazil with one brief home leave - we'd been in Aiken visiting my mother and in Chicago on the trip we had taken between Brasilia and Rio - that was about '65. Between '65 and '69 there'd been an enormous change in American society. The Free Speech Movement had started in '64, I gather, and by '69 in a way, it was kind of winding down. The War was . . . . Being in Brazil where there was not much. . . . The President had made some efforts to get the Brazilians involved and they said, "Gee, no thanks, we don't think so."

Q: Involved in the Vietnam War?

RYAN: In Vietnam. You know, sort of world support for it. You know we had Australians there and New Zealanders. And they wanted to try to get as many. . . . I don't know. The Brazilians maybe sent a detachment. I think they didn't. I think they didn't send anything. And they said, "Gee, we thought this was an unfortunate thing for Americans to be wound up in and too bad you got yourself kind of in this situation, but actually we don't feel it was much our problem." (laughs) So we had very little news about it in Brazil.

One kept in touch frequently . . . Well in Brasilia the "New York Times" would come down on the Pan Am flight which left New York on Sunday night and one "New York Times" would show up at the Embassy. It was very much in demand for people to try to get to read that. So we had really very little sense. . . We'd read "Time Magazine" and we'd think, "They did what? They're doing <u>what</u> in America?"

Q: Tanks in the streets?

RYAN: Yes, exactly. Gosh, there really is a ruckus going on. But it was very distant, it was distant thunder, and we were really very unaware. So we came back to see American society extremely altered and felt, as I think one usually does after an extended period overseas in any kind of context, whether it's Foreign Service or business or academic,

that you feel very un-American when you go home. You don't recognize the America that you see. You realize that you are really very out of touch with American concerns. You discover that most of America is very out of touch with anything in the world outside its borders, that their interest in anything happening abroad is minimal.

The typical thing that I think we've all had happen to us is people say, "Oh you were in Brazil. Isn't that interesting! You must tell me about it." And then you go on and discuss some domestic concern. And you usually say, "Oh well, it was very interesting," and that's about as much as people want to know.

So then we were back for about a year and a half in Washington and my husband got an opportunity to go and do an academic year. He had his choice of being able to go to Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, which would have meant just getting on a bus and going to class in the morning, or going up to Harvard. We had a very good friend from Brasilia who was now taking an extended leave of absence, who was at Harvard at the Dean of Admissions Office, he said that he really thought that even though we were settled in the house we had bought in Washington and had only been in it for a year or so, that really having the experience in Cambridge was well worth doing. And it was appealing, although another move was certainly not appealing, with William at that time being four, but we did decide that that would be best, not least because Duke could get a master's degree after a year there. Harvard would give him a master's degree at the Kennedy School where you got credit for being a mid-level government person.

So we went up there. And I remember my feeling of the way the city was transformed. We had gone up to look for a place to live and so much of Cambridge, up towards the MIT side, is a very ugly working-class area of unattractive clapboard houses. And I remember while looking at all this and thinking, "this certainly is an ugly environment." We were faced then with the choice of whether we wanted to live close in or out in the suburbs in some pretty place like Lexington where some people in our situation lived. But we opted to have something smaller for the same price and close into Cambridge, so that I could participate to a degree. Otherwise it would be just a commuting experience for Duke and I would be living in the suburbs. I must say I never regretted it. We had not lived in any - it was a little two-bedroom apartment, perfectly all right. Like a little machine for living, very compact, everything was compact and perfectly adequate. The best of it was that I could take William to a very good nursery school in the morning and then I would hurry on back to Harvard Yard and steal two classes every morning.

Q: Oh. Could you just audit them?

RYAN: If I had audited them, I would have had to have paid. As it was, I just went in and sat down. And of course because of my age at that point - I was close to 40, I guess - people weren't about to think there was anything strange about it. But as a matter of fact, I remember Ed Reischauer - I was taking what they called Rice Paddies I and II which was John Fairbanks on China, and then the spring term was with Ed Reischauer on Japan. They were always very full, but William at one point got the mumps, and had to stay home. So Duke had run into Ed Reischauer, whom we knew slightly, and he said,

"Well where's Patty? I haven't seen her in class."

Q: Fully knowing that you weren't. . . .

RYAN: I don't think he even thought about it. But anyway. So I had some wonderful . . . I listened to a class of Lawrence Wylie's on French culture. He said, "This is not about literature, music and architecture. That's 'culchuh.' This is the French culture - "how people lived in their homes and families as an anthropologist looks at it." So within two weeks of arriving at Cambridge, I no longer was even aware that the surroundings were dismal and ugly. I would get so caught up with the "Harvard as the center of the universe" with so many interesting and vital people around. It was an interesting time. Harvard was having a little lag and the anti-war movement was just kind of hitting there as an afterthought.

Q: Why was it so late?

RYAN: Well this was the time of the Christmas bombings in Cambodia. This was '71, '72. There were still things going on there and Nixon had been saying he was going to get us out and continued incursions into Cambodia. So it was a time of a lot of student ferment and an interesting time to be there. We had had some friends who lived in Boston so we had some contacts at the university and Duke met people and I met people through William's nursery school, and so it was a time that was very interesting.

Q: It sounds like a time of intellectual ferment.

RYAN: And it was very intellectually interesting experience for me and I had had this seven years of being in Brazil and two years of being in Washington with a small child and I really had lost track of how much I enjoyed things like this. I had gotten back in touch with my intellectual interests. So that was a wonderful opportunity.

After the year there, Duke got an assignment to Norway and we had a very wonderful trip going through . . . We had planned a hop, skip and a jump all around parts of Europe we hadn't been to, but in fact we went to Ireland and spent the entire - I guess it was about four weeks - driving around in Ireland because it was wonderful with a then five-year old. You can do these farm breakfast things and so we would go around and not know where we were going to spend the night. We explored almost every goat track in the southern part of Ireland. We had Ireland almost to ourselves because it was at a time when things were fairly bad up in the north, in the Belfast area, which of course was very distant from anything where we were involved in. We were in Southern Ireland. But it kept the tourists scared off and so there was nobody there.

Q: This was in the summertime I take it.

RYAN: This was in the summer, in July.

Q: Was this a coming home for Patricia Burns who was born on St. Patrick's Day?

RYAN: No, but it was for Henry Ryan. Yes, I'm born on St. Patrick's Day, but if we have any Irish background, which we may very well in my family, I don't know anything about it.

Q: I assume you were named Patricia. . . .

RYAN: I was named Patricia because I was born on St. Patrick's Day. Because my maiden name was Burns.

Q: And you're married to a Ryan, so there's a karma there.

RYAN: I don't think I have any particular atavistic feelings about Ireland. I enjoyed it very much. I think that as far as ethnic background, most of the things I know about were from my grandmother's family, and my grandmother lived with us from the time I was two until she died when I was in my thirties, so she was a strong influence on my life. I think the connections were mostly English, so I think I had more of a sense of homecoming when I went to England, than I did to Ireland. But it was a wonderful thing to go around with a small child. We kept thinking, "Well we'll stay another week." The things we had planned for ourselves - we could see, with a five-year old, that we would be looking at Rembrandts in Amsterdam, and William would be saying, "How much longer do we have to stay here? Can we go to the tower now?"

But one of the things that did happen with William was that everyplace we went there were the ruins of the castles that Cromwell destroyed all over Ireland. We would be telling William, "This is where they poured out the boiling oil," and "They kept the people in the dungeon down here," and so forth, which was casting a long shadow when we got to Norway. Shortly after we'd arrived in Norway, they were opening an autumn art exhibition and the King was going to be at the opening, so we said, "William, would you like to go see the King?" (laughter) And he turned pale and said, "The K-k-king?" And we said, "No, this king does not put people in dungeons or pour boiling oil over on them. Not to worry." And we went indeed and there was the modern monarchy represented in a very pleasant-looking, unexceptional-looking chap who looks very much like a banker in his Homburg. We kept saying to William, "There's the King." And he said, "Where?" "There, there, right there." "Where?" No crown, no scepter, no robes.

Norway was a particularly difficult post for me at this point. While we had been at Cambridge, my mother had had an operation for breast cancer and they discovered she was diabetic and she had a good many other rather serious health problems. The doctor said it would be all right for her to come to Norway. She came with us to Norway, or rather met us after we had done our Irish trip. So our housing was limited by the fact that we needed to have a place that didn't have stairs for my mother to navigate. So we got an apartment, which, from the standpoint of a five-year old, was not ideal. We had tried to find something that was more of a house that would have maybe a room and a bathroom downstairs on the first floor, but there just wasn't any available.

So very shortly after - I was in Norwegian language class there, they had one for wives. They went along at an absolute snail's pace because one of the wives traveled a lot so they kept holding up waiting for her to come back. The other wife was a woman who had no ability in languages at all and had to go over and over and over the simplest things. After about three weeks in "Lesson One" I had, by that time, realized that in fact in Norway everyone between the ages of 14 and at that time maybe 58, spoke excellent English.

Q: In Oslo.

RYAN: In Oslo. We were out trying to look for a place for our first skiing experience, going up someplace in the country, maybe a two-hour drive from Oslo, and became lost. And I saw this little light out in the middle of a field and we went up this snowy driveway and I found my way through the snow and knocked on the door, all the time trying to formulate in my rather infant Norwegian what I would say. I thought I had a satisfactory sentence worked out. So the door opened, out in the middle of the nowhere, and I stammered out my sentence and he said in perfect English, "Oh you've passed it. It's two miles back on the left." (laughs)

It was very hard to learn Norwegian in a context where we were trying to flounder around and use our Norwegian, but they can switch instantly. Very shortly after we got there, say a couple of months after we were settled in our apartment, my mother fell and broke her hip and was hospitalized. And they're of course in Norway very good with broken bones - they see a lot of them - especially geriatric cases with broken bones. But this in combination with the other problems that she had, I nearly went crazy because everybody was looking at the whole body. There was one who was looking at the diabetes and somebody else who was looking at the broken legs, and also then being in Norway where there's no help, there was the problem of nursing. There were various problems with her condition that made it very difficult to have her be at home without nursing care. So we managed after some difficulty to find a place in a nursing home in South Carolina, where she had lived, and I went back with her on a rather nightmarish flight, having to change planes many times when she was invalided. It was very harrowing for all of us.

Q: I recall that was just after Christmas, too.

RYAN: Yes, it must have been early in '73, I guess. Because you weren't there then, when Mother took ill.

Q: Did she die when you were in Norway?

RYAN: She died then. I went back. But the year before I had had to take her back. So William and I stayed in South Carolina for six weeks. Fortunately, William was, at that point, I guess, in kindergarten, so schooling wasn't a problem. I was an only child and there wasn't anybody else. This again in the Foreign Service is difficult because I'm it. And we had several relatives of my father's who lived in South Carolina - Aiken - with my mother. So we stayed while she kind of got settled in and it was clear that all was not

well. She slept most of the time and was pretty well opting out at that point. The combined disc problems, medical problems that she had were such that she was very distressed that she couldn't go back to her own home. There didn't seem to be any way that could be . . . .

Q: So you were really divided because Duke was in Oslo with an ailing mother in South Carolina. William was being shuffled between the two.

RYAN: He was with me the first time. I had my choice of going back and trying to stay for an extended period of time in the States with my mother, and that just didn't seem like a plausible option at that point.

One of the things I noticed particularly in Norway - this was after the '72 Directive which had come out during that time which said that wives were no longer considered on the husband's efficiency reports and that work could not be required of non-employees; it is of course de facto required, but it cannot be expected - when we first arrived in Norway, the Ambassador was a married man whose wife had never accompanied him to post, never visited or came out and they were in all effects, in all excepting family matters, really separated. In fact they subsequently did divorce some years later. The DCM was a fairly recently divorced man. The Admin Officer was a divorced man. For the first year or so we were there, this was the situation.

Then the DCM who was a very fine officer, was replaced by another man who had a very active wife who was very involved with the community and cared about how people were and was always ready to lend a hand. Three days after they hit Oslo, they had a big picnic at their home for the Embassy employees and their children, or at least the Americans. I don't think they at this point had the whole Embassy. They may have done. But it was a huge mob of people and kids and dogs and everybody.

They were looking for hot dogs after they had just barely opened their suitcases and it demonstrated very vividly to me how different an embassy community is, when it is run by employees who, while they are unexceptionally nice people, still don't usually think about the well-being of the community in the way that the women tend to think about it, who are more concerned about it. The male employees tend to be more laissez faire and don't want to get involved or know the problems. (laughs) Well at least not have it brought to their attention. So it was a very vivid demonstration to me of how effective and what a real difference it can make in the life of an Embassy by having wives at a senior level who do want to make the community work better. Kind of track things and monitor things so that you know if somebody's having a problem with their child or they're sick, or they have sick parents or whatever it is. Then you feel like there's some support there.

Q: So when the Directive came about, you were in a bad position to evaluate it from the Post because there were so few wives. How did you feel about it?

RYAN: Well the '72 Directive came out actually while we were in Cambridge, at

Harvard. I had never paid very much attention up until this time. The zeitgeist in the Embassy in Rio was pretty much old school. If you suggested that anything was less than perfect, this was not encouraged and you always were made to feel very uncomfortable if you said anything that implied that all is not just absolute perfection. And so I thought, "Oh well. I guess you just keep this information to yourself."

So when we ultimately came back to Washington - I can't remember when the first Forum report came out. I think it must have been in '76 and I must have been in Cambridge, England, because after Norway, my husband dropped out of the Foreign Service for three years on leave without pay and we had a wonderful time in Cambridge, England, while he did a Ph.D. in history. We had at this point a number of good friends in England and people they put us on to at Cambridge. Then through my son's school we got to meet some more people whom we liked and other students - seeing graduate students there. That was a thoroughly wonderful experience for all of us.

My son really enjoyed it. In Norway, he was in a Defense Department School and the teacher he had just before we went to Cambridge was a woman who had pushed herself way beyond her capacities and was very tightly strung and so she could lash out at the kids in a way that made them very frightened. William, I think, had always been on the whole a rather good boy as children go, but he saw his friends being zapped from on high with this teacher and it really got him very anxious and upset.

I, of course, was not in very good shape myself. I had the situation with my mother that worried me and it was a time of great stress all the way around. Duke had an alcoholic assistant and his secretary we used to call "Bismarck." (laughs) And we found the first Ambassador there a not very congenial one, so he was not terribly happy for the first year or so. So it was a time of some difficulty.

So I remember when we first arrived in Cambridge, England, and had gotten settled in this little apartment that we had there in a large house that had been done up into small flats for graduate students, and William would almost run out into the street because he could talk to people. They didn't teach them much Norwegian in class in the Defense Department School. He could count, he had the numbers and very little else. So his contacts - you know of just being able to talk to anybody he met - were limited. While the Norwegian kids would learn English by say 14, at 5 or 6, of course, or 7 or 8, they didn't speak English. So in England he really just ran out into the street and started to talk to people.

Q: He found himself.

RYAN: Yes. People that speak English. Isn't that wonderful!

Q: A variety of English.

RYAN: Yes. A wide variety of accents. So that was a marvelous interlude. In fact we all thoroughly enjoyed it. After that three years was up, the government was rather

nonplussed to discover they'd given Duke three years of leave without pay, in-as-much as ordinarily people took it for a maximum of a year. There was a long silence from Washington. We couldn't get any information about Duke's next assignment. We thought it was silly to buy a ticket to go back to Washington because we would be paying, of course, because it was our nickel, when his next assignment might be Denmark or something. So we waited and waited and waited and there were efforts made by the Embassy in London to try and find out. And very much at the last minute they finally said we should go back to Washington and have a Washington assignment. So we did.

Q: Were your household effects left in Oslo in storage during that period?

RYAN: Yes, we had a friend who stored them for us in her attic. In fact it wasn't hers. She had a friend who had an empty attic. So she volunteered him to keep our furniture for us in return for a small consideration because she was so horrified when we happened to mention to her that we had gotten an estimate of what storing our things in Oslo was going to cost. She said, "Oh you can't pay that." So anyway, that was taken care of. And we just took a small amount of stuff with us to Cambridge. Then again, it seemed silly to ship the furniture home and pay to have it stored in America and ship it out again to some other post, so we thought we'd rather keep it in Oslo.

So we came back to Washington and had a good deal of difficulty getting into our home. We had it rented. In fact we did not want to go back to that house. Real estate prices had gone up so dramatically, that it seemed better to . . . . One of our Foreign Service friends had recommended that we buy another house if we could instead of selling the one we had rented. And so that's what we ultimately were able to do. But it took us quite a long time to get settled and it was a difficult time for William, too, to make that adjustment because we were three or four months, I guess, between the time we arrived in Washington and lived in a furnished apartment and then moved into a furnished house, and it went on and on.

Q: I can't remember whether William was in a public school.

RYAN: No, he was in a private. He was in the Washington International School when we came back.

Q: Okay, and then he changed.

RYAN: He went later to Edmund Burke.

Q: After you did get settled, then, in Washington in the District, you became active in AAFSW.

RYAN: Yes, I had this friend named Linda Bell, who was editor or the AAFSW Newsletter and she said she wanted me to go to the Foreign Service Institute and take a course that was being offered there on returning home and write something for the newsletter about it. So I did that, and was very taken with the new kinds of classes that

were being given. If this was any example of what they were doing, there was this great center for families and spouses, and so I wrote something. And then shortly thereafter Sally Pitts, who was then the head of the Forum Committee. . . .

I'm not sure when it was that I read the "Forum Report." I have a recollection of having read it, maybe in Norway. There was this questionnaire about it that had come across my scope. So I discovered at that point that many of the things that I thought were uniquely problems to me, in fact, were things that many people were thinking about and many people were becoming vocal about and it was very validating to discover that these things that I thought were just problems for me were in fact legitimate problems that lots of people encountered. I think that one of the major things is the way in which being in the Foreign Service makes it very easy for you to just kind of slide through life on a very pleasant kind of level where lots of things are done for you. You don't have to cope with a lot of boring details like getting your own driver's license or getting your furniture through customs or dealing with real life.

Q: Dealing with the natives.

RYAN: That's right. Or just awkward situations that you're very protected from, which I don't really suggest you shouldn't be, because it would be very difficult to land in a country like Brazil and get your household things through customs. I mean there's a whole cultural way of dealing with their people - people have to be paid to do things, you know, paid under the table - to perform their jobs. You wouldn't have a clue how to get through this maze. But it does have an effect of making you feel less and less able to cope, I think. You're not tested much in many ways.

I think that this sort of thing happens to women anyway. After years of making peanut butter sandwiches, you sort of accept that you probably can't do anything but make peanut butter sandwiches in life. This was something that I discovered later.

I remember going to a Congressional Hearing on Women in Midlife and the wife of one of the representatives, who was at that point running a very successful women's program at George Washington University - Charlotte Conable, Barber Conable's wife - was explaining to the members of Congress who were listening to this hearing that she had been home taking care of children for many years and she saw a little ad in the paper, something about helping to write a resume and get back into the work force if you wanted to. And she cut it out. And she said she put it in a drawer and it took her two years to get the courage up to dial the number. You could see the stupefaction on the faces of these men who knew her to be an extremely intelligent, competent woman and being at home all these years had just zapped her - withered her confidence in her ability to do things because I think that, for many people being at home with children. . . . Some people thrive on it, but I think a good many women with education find that they're not receiving much feedback from their environment that validates them; unless you have a very strong sense of parenting as being a validating experience, and it certainly can be for many people. But I think for all other people nobody ever says, "Mom, gee, that was a hell of a meat loaf we had tonight." They go, "Blah! This again! I don't want to eat that."

Q: It's kind of eroding to the self-esteem.

RYAN: That's right. And there's very little to build your sense of yourself. So I found that over the years my feeling of any belief in any kinds of abilities I might have had were very diminished indeed. So the next couple of years was a series of steps in which people would say, "Why don't you do this?" and I'd say, "Oh I couldn't possibly do that." And then I'd be talked into it and do it. You know, maybe all right, maybe not so great, but at least I did it. And so this situation I mentioned with Sally Pitts - she had talked to me about working with her on the Forum group. And one of our first things was to get the Board of the Association of American Foreign Service Women to register as a lobbying entity. I had not been a member of the AAFSW. I had paid very little, if any, attention to it. Up until this point I think, until certainly the middle '70's, the way any family issues had been dealt with in the Foreign Service on the whole was by getting the ear of the wife of someone who was important and persuading them that something should be changed. They in turn would persuade their husband that something should be changed and it frequently was changed. A system that had its imperfections, but it worked to a degree.

But it was clear that more attention was needed and it more and more became acceptable for women to say that there were things that they, as women, needed. It was all right to need things even though you were "only" a woman, that you had legitimate needs and you could assert those needs without being thought to be self-centered and unpatriotic and backsliding and whatever. A younger generation was coming along that were not trained to be totally self-abnegating.

It was necessary to do some preparation of these Board members for whom the idea of saying, "We're going to lobby for ourselves," would have made their hair stand on end. Even at that point, in 1979, I guess it was, if you said to women at that point, "Well, we want to have some power," they would say, "Power! No!" (laughs) I had a male friend who used to say, "Sex is to the Puritan like power is to the liberal."

It was clear that if the legitimate needs and interests of women and children were going to be served, that those interests had to be asserted. People had to know what was needed. Even in a marriage, one often assumes that a partner knows what we want and need. It takes some training to be able to come right out and say what it is that is bothering you. We tend to operate a lot on expecting mind reading, and I think to a degree women had done that in the Foreign Service up to that point. It seemed either that their needs were not legitimate and were selfish, or that anybody should know that they would need this, that or the other thing.

Q: Wasn't another consideration during this time the Foreign Service Act?

RYAN: Well shortly after we got the Board of AAFSW eased into saying we were going to - unthinkable word - lobby, we had to put a heavy emphasis on doing things for children. It's all right to make efforts and do things for children. You don't want to do it

for "yourself," but you do it for your children. That was always an acceptable stance in AAFSW. And in fact most of the impetus of AAFSW up to that time had been a raising money book fair to give scholarships to Foreign Service children, which was an admirable thing to be doing. But I found a generation of young people who were perhaps fifteen years younger than I who were trained to have careers and expected to have careers and were coming in as spouses in the Foreign Service. They found this older culture there, and it was not meeting the needs of the '70s. There were increasing needs financially for two people to work. There was an increased recognition of the fact that many women need to have the choice to work. That staying home, being a full-time mother, is not for everybody.

Q: Or being a full-time caterer. As you said, "Two for one."

RYAN: That's right. Or "Two for the price of a half." So not long after I had been asked to work on the Forum Committee, the chairwoman was leaving. She entered the Foreign Service herself as one of a tandem couple and she was then no longer able to do the Forum work and so they asked me if I would take it on. And I said, "Oh no, I couldn't do that!" (laughs) I didn't think I could manage it.

And it was interesting because when I came back to Washington, I realized there was a whole new way of expressing yourself. You had to learn a new vocabulary, a whole new "flavor of the moment," phrases, a whole new language. Fortunately, learning a language is nothing that I find too difficult. Sally Pitts was a very good teacher. So I did in fact become Forum Chair.

Shortly after this, we discovered that Congress was going to re-write the legislation that authorized the operations of the Foreign Service. Major changes had been made to the Civil Service - so they decided of course they'd have to change the Foreign Service, too.

A proposal had come out from the State Department and had been kited and everybody had hysterics about it. AFSA had hysterics about it, the Foreign Service secretaries had hysterics about it, AAFSW was upset about it. So then they had to pull it all apart, and while it was in pieces all over the garage floor, it was obviously the time for AAFSW to work on making some changes that we recognized as being important for women.

One of the things that had happened during the decade of the '70s in addition to the '72 Directive, was the institution of no-fault divorce. This had had the unintended effect of creating a situation in which women, after marriages of many years, no longer had any leverage to prevent an unwanted divorce or to protect herself in any way from the financial affects of that. It used to be that in the old days, if a husband of twenty-five or thirty years wanted to marry his secretary, he had to provide his former spouse with enough of a comfortable living, at least an adequate living to buy her out. Now with no-fault divorce, that no longer existed and it was sufficient for a person after many years of marriage to say, "Well honey, I'm gone. There's this really wonderful secretary and she really understands me." And this was the story we were hearing over and over again by women who felt that they had spent many years not only in a marriage, but in a career,

and they had thought - they really bought into the fact - that it was two for the price of one and they discovered that when old John went off with a friend of his daughter's, a twenty-two year old, that the State Department didn't even want to know the "old wife's" name anymore.

I remember one woman saying she'd gone into the Legal Department to discuss what was going on, and the first thing they said to her was, "Well your husband's leaving you? Well, let me have your diplomatic passport back, please, right now." And that was as far as the State Department . . . . And that was quite appropriate, though heartless. I don't fault the State Department in that. What I fault is the fact that the expectation had been raised. In fact, we did have some kind of a quasi-formal role in what went on overseas and we all knew that we had spent many hours doing things that we wouldn't necessarily have done had our husbands not had the jobs that they had.

In my own personal case, I was extremely lucky in that my husband usually did cultural work. The people we were called on to get to know and interact with who were fascinating people and for me it was a wonderful opportunity to do this. And I was also from the generation, as I had said earlier, where my options were really somewhat limited, but I didn't know that. They were in fact limited. I would have found it very hard to go into medical school, for instance, at that point. They all said, "Well you're just going to get pregnant and drop out so we're not going to give a perfectly good place in medical school to just a woman," in those days.

But nobody was prepared for the fact that suddenly at 45, 50, 55, these women would find themselves out on the sidewalk with maybe half a house as their lifetime economic equity. And also what had happened in the very baroque American way we have of approaching any kind of national problem which is to fix every little band-aid here and there, and everywhere, instead of having national approaches to things such as healthcare, we also have - I don't know - I've been told something like thirty different kinds of government pensions alone, and Social Security provided and had provided for a good many years an old-age benefit for the former spouse of someone who had earned Social Security if married ten years. It is possible to have three wives of then years each who, upon his retirement, would each receive a very small stipend, but it would be something to protect them in those years typically in which they might have been having children and been unable to participate in the work force. But spouses of Civil and Foreign Service were not covered by Social Security up to the early 80s, though now new workers hired since the mid-80s are covered.

Q: Also we have about fifty different divorce laws, don't we?

RYAN: That's right. And Foreign Service wives had several problems. One, that wives who were separating from their husbands would come back from overseas and they would be go back to a home state, go back to Idaho. Well Idaho has no idea that a Foreign Service wife does anything but sit around doing her nails. So the judge would not expect that there would be anything special. One wife said somebody had said to her one time, "Oh, but you've had such an interesting life!" And you can appreciate the fact that

you've had an interesting life, but it's not going to pay for your groceries tomorrow.

So there was this lacuna in pension law that provides nothing for Foreign Service spouses who divorce. In fact, one of the principle supporters of our efforts to get pension equity for the Foreign Service was indeed the DCM I had in Norway years before who had divorced his wife but was very concerned that, should he die, she would not have his survivor benefit. There was no way he could make her eligible other than to stay married to her - for her to be able to have his survivor benefit for her old age. And given that men generally marry women younger than they, and women generally live longer, statistically women are widows for almost seven years, so there has to be something there for them to live on.

This, as I say in an anecdotal way, was becoming more and more apparent to everybody in AAFSW. Almost everybody knew somebody who had been caught in this situation. I had among my own very good friends seen this played out to my horror and realized that the kind of myth that one had that divorced wives took their husbands to the cleaners and took every cent they had, was something that might happen among a very small, wealthy elite when a divorce lawyer had a good chance of getting paid very well if he represented a wife. But for the average middle-class person to get a divorce, the wife would typically have few resources of her own to pay a divorce lawyer.

It is, unfortunately, still in our system, unlike many other advanced industrial countries, which have taken family law out of the adversarial court arena where who wins is the person with the best knight, and if you can't afford to buy yourself a good knight to represent you in the tournament, you're going to lose. And it was typically the women who didn't have the resources and they would be left with almost nothing. It was also not only an institutional bias, it was problem with the women themselves who assumed that their fathers had taken care of them and the government had done a lot of taking care of them in the Foreign Service and that of course the courts would take of them. They recognized see that they had worked hard to be good wives all their lives and that they'd been mothers and that they'd done good things and that therefore the outcome for them would be good. And they discovered, too late, that this wasn't the way the system worked. That these things were not counted as having any weight in a law court.

Q: Even though they were precluded from having employment.

RYAN: I think that many women and their lawyers did not really play this card very hard. I think this is something that we worked up and at the same time no-fault divorce was having the dreadful effects all around the country and during this period people were coming up with the construct that there was a monetary value attached to mothering and housekeeping and so forth, that had to be accounted for in an equitable division of property. That even though money was <u>not</u> paid for these services - of cooking and cleaning and chauffeuring - that they had a monetary value, and if you had to pay for their services, they would have cost you something. So these ideas were all happening together.

While we had started out making a case for the fact that women did so much overseas, it soon became apparent that our best strategy was to say, well whatever the wife did overseas, even if she didn't do a thing that was useful to the U.S. government overseas, the fact is that, by the very situation of her being there, it absolutely precluded any opportunity that any woman would have to create any pension or benefits for herself on her own. If you could work, it was part-time. It was in this post and not in that post, it was in pesos and kroner and sometimes people were paid poorly for things that they would do simply because they were a teacher and they got maybe $2,000 a year to do it, but they wanted to be doing something. Or many people volunteered and did things. But you knew that whatever the situation was, the only thing that you knew for sure was that they couldn't have gotten a pension for themselves.

They had no real viable alternative. You could say that somebody chose to be a wife and they chose to stay at home with their children and so forth. And at least in the Foreign Service, you could say that even if you didn't choose to do things, there wasn't any alternative.

Q: If you were going to stay with your husband and follow him to his post. The only alternative was to not follow him to his post at which point it was the same result.

RYAN: That's right. People would just have gotten a divorce at a different point and of course they'd have been better off; I mean the wives would have been, in many cases, because they'd have been younger and better able to create new careers for themselves and possibly with some pension or benefits.

So we began to go around and meet with people in Congress and I remember I ran into - with Marcia Curran who was working on the spouse employee issue which she knew right well - and she and I went in to see Senator Charles Percy of Illinois's staff, a chap named Scott Cohen. And we were discussing this and I remember - I don't know what we were talking about. I just had been back in the United States for maybe a few months and I was all, sort of doing it, off the top of my head and I thought, "Do I know what I'm talking about?" And a lot of these ideas had only been partially formulated.

But Senator Percy had always been a very good person on women's issues and conscious of women's issues, and Scott was very receptive and listened to us very politely and with every evidence of interest and, ultimately after a year of lobbying and everything, we got it through. It was really Percy's doing that it got through and I thought, we could have almost gone "home" after that! That's what really made the difference. We did all of the struggling and pushing and shoving and passing out of information. We had then networked with a variety of other women's groups - the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), and we got a lot of ideas and guidance.

Q: And from the military, too, because they had an impressive. . . .

RYAN: No, we worked with them afterwards. We helped them more than the other way around because they had problems that came up after the Foreign Service Act that they

were able to use our expertise. So we did go around and on a volunteer basis had several people who went around with me and met with staffers. Pat Schroeder - the jurisdiction of this particular issue was such that it was a joint Foreign Affairs Committee in the House and the Post Office and Civil Service Committee did this together to have a degree of conformity between the Civil Service and the Foreign Service. Fortunately, Pat Schroeder, on the Civil Service and Post Office Committee, had been working on this problem of women and divorce and the lack of pension protection for several years and had tried a bill about two years before which, because it would have affected Congress by affecting the Civil Service pensions; she said she'd been looked at like a skunk at a garden party. . . .

Q: This was her own backyard, in other words.

RYAN: Exactly. Well Congress doesn't mind doing things that affect other people, but they're not too anxious to enact something that might put their own pensions in any kind of jeopardy. So she hadn't gotten far with that, but she had had hearings and elicited interest from a number of women's groups.

I think women's groups up to that time had typically focused on the issues that younger women were facing - better pay for women in what were specifically women-dominated sectors of the economy. But this in fact was an issue of older women who didn't think of themselves as feminists by any means, but who would suddenly, when you started talking about their worries about how they were going to take care of themselves in their old age, really perked up their ears suddenly. They were not very interested in better child care. They came at it from the standpoint that the mothers ought to stay home and take care of their children.

But it had a broad appeal and we had gotten some help from President Carter at this time and he had Sarah Weddington as his Special Advisor to the President on Women's Affairs. In her office was Edith Fierst, who subsequently helped us a good deal, but they were not able to help us officially because OMB - the Office of Budget and Management - didn't like this idea. The specific department of the OMB, headed by a very formidable woman, I think found the idea of these Foreign Service wives, who had been leading this fancy life swanning around the world and now wanted some kind of recognition and pay for this, very antithetical. She thought the idea was really terrible. So we didn't have the support within the Executive branch.

The State Department itself ... Lesley Dorman was president at this time of AAFSW and she had very good connections with Mrs. Vance - Cyrus Vance was then Secretary of State. And he was sympathetic to these issues. The Undersecretary for Management, Ben Read, was also willing to be convinced.

I guess partly I had two things that worked in my favor. I had seen my own grandmother in a situation, where she hadn't been divorced, but she had been widowed in her late 50's, and my grandfather, who had been in real estate, had left her a small annuity and the affects of inflation on a fixed-income annuity was such that by the end of her life, nearly

90, it was pathetic. It bought her candy bars. She'd had to live with my parents. Obviously it was lucky that she had a daughter and son-in-law who would let her live with them. But in fact my father died two years after my grandmother, so he and my mother had almost no life without a mother-in-law present and while I think in their younger years they'd been very congenial, things got tense and grumpy between them by the end.

I had been sensitized to the fragility of women's economic situations in a way that I didn't particularly realize or articulate, but I had seen how it worked out on the ground in a very vivid way, that was very real, and I understood it as a very gut issue - the way that having nothing as an older woman disempowers you and how awful that is. Someone said, "Well your grandmother lived to be 88. You must have been pretty good to her." And they were, indeed. But it was a very difficult situation and it cost them all in an emotional way. So I was aware of this.

I had also had one of my best friends in the Foreign Service - the husband was leaving her and I saw the turmoil and upset that created and realized how very fragile and how very vulnerable women in the Foreign Service were in this economic sense. They were proved pretty hardy in many respects, but being in this particular kind of life made you especially vulnerable economically. So it was an issue that I cared a lot about and I noted over the years that the AAFSW had been an all-volunteer organization. There were many things that such an organization could do, but it depends pretty much upon finding someone who is interested in doing any given project. If you go ahead and do whatever it is that somebody wants, whether it's to do a cookbook or whatever it is, those things get done and other things which are equally meritorious don't get done.

So, as I say, I was in a particular situation where I was very aware of this problem. And having lived in Europe and a country like Norway where the social net is very broadly cast and the people would not be allowed to live in terrible penury in their old age, for example, regardless of how they have worked or not worked or whatever - whether they have been mothers or workers or whatever they have done, they would not have to eat dog food in their old age which is something that you couldn't have been sure if you were in the Foreign Service.

I began to get these divorced wives together to find out what their specific problems and their approaches and have them help each other. There is another peculiarity in the Foreign Service which is that not only did women come back from overseas to go to jurisdictions where the Foreign Service life was little known or understood, we also had many foreign wives who would be divorced while living in the United States who had very little understanding even if they were well-educated, of what the American legal system would provide. So women from European countries who would assume that they would be treated in the same equitable way that they would in an advanced industrial country in Europe, who then discovered that, no. In effect, they said, "No, kid, you're on your own. Go out and get a job," which at 45 is easier said than done. Any professional qualifications you might have had in past years are very out of date. The interim work that you might have done, its worth is rated as valueless by our society.

Q: And there's often children that you're supporting or mostly supporting.

RYAN: That's right. And there would be kids to get through college. There were a number of cases in which children were Down's Syndrome. One child was blind, one child was deaf. There were a variety of things that obviously put a strain on their marriage in any case and there were just horrendous cases. One woman had had a small legacy from her parents and then one of her children at 19 fell ill with cancer and died. It took all of that legacy to get that child through the illness and die. Her former husband, a medical doctor who had worked in a foreign affairs agency, gave them no financial health.

So it very clearly needed some kind of attention. And we had very good allies. I mentioned Pat Schroeder, and an assistance, who unfortunately died of leukemia while I was overseas in Australia, was very stalwart. She was wonderful because she was very quiet and had a very soft little voice but she was a real tiger in how to work things and understood how the system worked. She was very helpful to us about telling us who was on what committees and who on the committee had what background and how they stood on women's issues generally. Some, for instance, might be good on women's issues generally, but one like William Ford in the House of Representatives had been a participant in a very nasty divorce in which his wife had in fact left him for an admiral who was triple-dipping so he was not very sympathetic to the idea that women, when they were divorced, did badly, because he had a very visceral reaction to what he had experienced, which was understandable. He was a reasonably important person on the Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

We also then had a situation with Edward Derwinski who - let me back up a little bit. I had written testimony for the president of AAFSW and myself to give at hearings which were going to be held on the Foreign Service Act. We were asked to participate in discussing various family and spouse issues. We testified both in front of the House and the Senate on these subjects. In trying to talk to the members of the Committee - the Chairman of the Committee was Dante Fascell, who is now chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee but who was then chair of International Operations Sub-Committee. And Dante Fascell had been around for a long time and he knew where all the bodies were buried. He was wonderful to watch. I found it just a fascinating experience because I went to most of the hearings when anyone was speaking, and he was always able to listen to the testimony and he'd say, "Well now I'm just a country lawyer and maybe I don't understand, but it seems to me that what you are saying is. . . ." And then he went on unerringly for their weak spot in their argument.

So he was clearly uneasy with this idea that we'd come up with - the pension sharing. This was the kind of things that has been done in Europe for years and has never, to my knowledge, been done institutionally in the United States. Pensions in most divorce cases at that point were just not regarded as divisible property at all. They weren't even taken into consideration. If women were given alimony, it would be expected that the alimony would be paid out of a pension, perhaps, once the husband had retired. However, only a

very small percentage of women in fact are awarded alimony, and of those who are awarded it, only an ever smaller percentage ever get it.

It is the same with child support. Rather a larger number were awarded child support, but only a very small fraction ever receive anything. I think now as a result of legislation that began then, in this time when all of us were working on these issues, they now are doing more things to take things out of the father's pay, checking on their income tax and so forth to make sure that they're locating fathers who are not supporting their children.

As I say, when it came to the vote in this committee, Fascell was obviously uneasy about it. We tried to talk to Derwinski, but he always avoided us. I tried to run him down in the hall one time before the hearing and I said, "You're not going to shoot us in the foot are you?" Derwinski is a very unattractive and coarse individual whom, I must say, I did not admire, unlike the other person who was wonderful on the minority side.

John Buchanan of Alabama had been a minister before he was a representative in Congress and he had traveled a good deal and he was an extremely attractive man physically and extremely pleasant. The rumor had it that he on occasion had been propositioned when he was abroad by Foreign Service wives (laughs) because he was very attractive. And being a minister, he quite understood that one of the main problems Foreign Service wives faced in many places was they didn't have enough to occupy themselves. (laughs) So he had for several years past been very supportive of efforts to do things to improve the possibilities for women to work at post. So he was thoroughly on our side. And Fascell, as I said, was uneasy with it.

Finally, Pat Schroeder came up with a quite brilliant way of dealing with one of the problems which was that instead of saying that the pension would be divided by law, she suggested that we would create a presumption that the pension should be divided and that the court could change that. In other words, a man who was in the Foreign Service could say, "Listen, my wife didn't help me. She got drunk at every party and embarrassed me and I'd have been ambassador if I hadn't been married to this woman," and the court could set aside the presumption of a right to the pension if a good case could be made for it.

Q: Or if the wife hadn't gone out to post.

RYAN: Or if she in fact never went to post. She stayed home. She had a career. She has her own pension. Whatever the circumstances. It made at least clearly a possibility that another case could be made for this. And that helped enormously.

But still what Derwinski and some other people appeared to favor was something that they were working toward and, which they now have in the Civil Service, which was to say that simply, Congress would give the court the legal right to give a former spouse a survivor benefit and part of the pension. Up until that time, if a court had said once your husband dies, you will receive the survivor benefit, that had no standing because there was no Congressional authorization to pay such a person as a non-spouse. They could not

do it. The Executive therefore could not comply with such a court order. And so Congress was willing to make this a legal possibility, which would already have been something.

But we felt strongly that, in the case of Foreign Service wives, because of this situation we've mentioned, that they would go back often to their home jurisdictions - they'd go back to Washington state or New Mexico or someplace where the judges wouldn't know, the lawyers wouldn't know, wouldn't even know to ask for the pension. That there are many states that even today are very reluctant to do anything about pension benefits. And of course, as more and more women participate longer and longer in the work force, it's clearly going to be something that's less and less important as time goes on. But certainly for this transition where women typically had spent a good deal of the time out of the work force, they were not able to provide for themselves adequately for their old age if they were divorced.

So when the vote came, that is indeed in the House what prevailed - a proposal that they would make it legally possible to comply with the court order. So this was a setback. And at the same time we were working in the Senate side, Senator Pell was the ranking Democrat on the sub-committee at that time. Of course he is now the chair of the full Foreign Relations Committee, but at that time he was on the relevant sub-committee - I've forgotten the term. There's a strange grouping. It's changed now and it was something like "Oceanography and Foreign Service" or some such. (laughs)

Q: It says overseas, so. . . .

RYAN: Anyway. He, of course, is a man with a patrician background who had served very briefly in the Foreign Service and felt that he understood it quite well. His wife, I understand, is heir to the A & P fortune, so the idea of a woman being left destitute is nothing he has any strong sense of. (laughs)

Q: Never occurred to him.

RYAN: So he met with us and was slightly acerbic with his being pestered by this pesky bunch of women over this issue. However his aides were wonderful. One of his aides, Gerry Christianson, had been himself in the Foreign Service and was extremely supportive. So he assured us that he thought the Senator could made to see the light.

Then we had a hearing in the Senate and testified there about our proposal and sure enough, when it came out of the Senate, we got the approach we wanted which was the presumption of an entitlement to a share of the pension. The other issues, dealing with the legal authorization for the establishment of the Family Liaison Office, on miscellaneous issues regarding spouse employment, making it possible to have functional training for spouses. The law had been that the government could not train anybody but government employees, and as non-government employees, it had necessitated some fancy footwork to make it alright for the government to do any kind of spouse training at the Overseas Briefing Center or wherever. In fact in one brief period in the '60s, it was stopped

because somebody said, “Listen, you can’t teach non-employees anything.”

Q: I didn’t realize that.

RYAN: Yes. So there was an authorization problem there. AFSA was not very supportive. One of their vice presidents of the State Standing Committee was a youngish man, who was not married, and the idea of some putative future wife taking part of his pension did not appeal to him at all, and they didn’t come to the party at all on this. But fortunately they were too busy looking after their own higher priorities so they didn’t fight it very hard. We had a number of meetings with them and they were willing to go along on some things. The spouse employment issues made them uneasy, especially the secretaries, who felt this would be taking away employment opportunities for secretaries to advance.

But then the moment came for a House/Senate conference. Each body had passed its own version of the Foreign Service Act and so they needed a conference to harmonize the two versions into one law. So this was really the countdown at the O.K. Corral. We had a very small conference room, about as big as a normal good-sized dining room, say. And there were people squashed in from AAFSW and from AFSA and the State Department’s Management Bureau.

I must also say that another person who was very helpful in all this was Bob Hull in the Retirement Section who had written a lot of this legislation on retirement issues and was able to help us work out the language. There were later a lot of things that had to be fixed up that none of us really had been able to think through - all of the bizarre situations that can arise when human beings put their ingenuity and their minds to circumvent regulations. He was very helpful.

So anyway we’re all squashed in this room while they go through all of the sections which differed in the bill. On one side of the table were the members of the Senate who had shown up, and it’s not everybody by a long shot. There were Senator Percy and then Senator Paul Tsongas and I can’t remember who else, a couple of other senators there. And then on the House side, we had Dante Fascell, Pat Schroeder and this William Ford who was the one who had the unfortunate and the very unpleasant divorce himself. We saw him as a “black hat.” And one other, I can’t remember.

But they went back and forth through all of the issues and ironed out all of the different approaches and the different problems and they kept putting off the pension issue and we sat there getting more and more on edge and sitting on the edge of our chairs to see what was going to happen. And finally, the very last thing. “Okay, let’s put this one on the table. This is a tough one.” And Paul Tsongas batted the ball over first off and gave the real party line description of our preferred approach. Then the House came back with the rationale for their approach.

So Senator Percy, who people had thought of as not the <u>absolutely</u> most intelligent man who ever came along -probably nobody would ever say he was stupid or anything, but - it

was at this point that I realized he had terrific political instincts. At one point in the proceedings, they'd gone back and forth and everybody laid out their views, he pushed a little note across the table to Pat Schroeder which apparently said something to the effect of, "Let's go for a vote. I think we've got it." And so she moved that they should vote on it. Well, it turned out that Bill Ford had somebody's proxy and so he thought he was going to be able to beat on the House side with the vote and the vote was - I don't remember any longer the exact numbers, but it was very close. With the proxy that they had, it was like four to five, or something like that, on the House side to support the Senate position and therefore our position.

So I think that was one of the most exciting moments ever in my life to see this all come together and hanging by a thread. And I thought, "Gee, if you had just made that call on Scott Cohen in Percy's office and let Pat Schroeder do her thing, which was wonderful and very powerful and persuasive, and we could have done it all instead of this entire year's work.

In the process of doing this, we had done a couple of mailings and we didn't have a lot of money for this effort. In fact, virtually none, I think. So we didn't want to mail the letters to everybody in Congress about it, because that would be postage to 600 people.

And so we had determined that what we had to do was get a group together and go around and deliver them individually, which was a major logistic effort which I never felt was really my forte_ in doing something of this sort. It's the kind of thing Lesley Dorman does very well, but not I. We had gotten people from, I think, the Association of American University Women and people from the Women's Equity Action League. One of the Foreign Service wives worked for the United Methodist political arm up there on the Hill and she had gotten us some help from them. So we had gotten these packets of information put together and passed out to people in the House and Senate.

When there are very technical elements, such as this Foreign Service Act, Congress tends to go along with whatever the relevant committees say. They will intervene if there is something that affects their locality strongly - then they will jump in - but on the whole, the collegial system works to the degree there that people - especially if they know it is somebody like Dante Fascell, who people respected and knew he knew the minutiae of this thing. If he put his chop on it, that was good enough for them. So that when the bill came to the floor for the full vote, it was already a done deal. The groundwork really had to be done at the committee level.

It was a fascinating insight into the way our government works. It showed that a very small group of people can make a major impact. I was tremendously impressed with people in Congress. There were a few less competent than others, but the people were clearly very intelligent, extremely hard-working. They typically had seven-day weeks and fourteen hour days. There isn't a whole lot of time off in that business. I mean if you're not in Washington, you're back home in the hustings working full-time, and the time you can just take your family off and go skiing in the mountains - maybe you get two days off a year and another day off at Christmas.

Q: It's Linda Bell and it's Wednesday, March 4, 1992, and I'm off to tape the last tape with Patty Ryan which will replace the addendum which she taped by herself which was lost.

RYAN: After these activities on the Hill, as the Forum Chairman, Lesley Dorman who had been chairman for four or five years and was increasingly anxious to change her responsibility. . . .

Q: You mean chairman of the Forum Committee?

RYAN: No, president of AAFSW. She had been looking for people periodically to replace her but no one would undertake it. After an initial resistance and feeling I would not be up to it, I finally agreed to do it. At the same time the Board changed the Board year in such a way that one term in fact was about fifteen months. The organization had been very busy before my term. It had been a time of great ferment and much activity so that the time I was president was a rather slower time. The FLO had been established. We had gotten the Pension Act through Congress. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 had changed the way the Foreign Service was being administered and set up. So these next few months were a time of consolidation for the organization. All of the usual activities continued: the housing office, the book fair and so on. Very busy activities for many people. But there were not so many extra activities.

Q: That was the year you were president?

RYAN: The year I was president, yes.

Q: What year was that, Patty, do you recall?

RYAN: I can't remember exactly. I finished in May of '82, I guess it was. So I began in January of '81 and went through May of '82 because they were trying to change the board year and were trying to do it from May to May instead of . . . . They were going to start it in January but then I think they decided it was not a good idea. That it was better to have a new board start in the fall. During this time I was active still in the pension area. In the Retirement Section, they were writing the regulations that had to be polished and commented on by individuals and agencies. The Act provided the rough outlines of what would be done, but left a lot of nitty-gritty to be worked out.

I worked with Bob Hull who was retired from State but had been called back for this purpose and he was wonderfully helpful and receptive to our ideas. We talked over many different scenarios. Inevitably, once the plan was enacted, regulations had been promulgated and the Act went into effect. Within the next couple of years, several totally unforeseen gruesome circumstances arose. For example, we had not put in anything. . . . Your pension at that time was based on the government matching funds to equal an amount employees withheld from salary. In a number of cases, where there was a family break-up, the employee had simply resigned or transferred to the Civil Service and his

contribution to the plan was, according to the regs, returned to him. Then there was no pension to be payable.

Q: So he could do that?

RYAN: In the initial thing. We had not covered that. So I say there were all kinds of possible actions that people could take that would affect this in ways that no one ever anticipated. This was particularly interesting to me to see that, in fact, this is the way most legislation evolves, because it isn't until you have a law enacted that you begin to see all of the possible problems that can come from a piece of legislation. So one sees that the legal set-up of America is really organic. It's not an all-seeing and all-knowing group of decision makers who produce laws to help other people. It is a process of many, many people and organizations putting in in-put here and there, and pushing and shoving, with different interests being brought to bear, which produces something that is far from perfect, but there isn't going to be any "perfect."

Q: And then the courts go after one area that may be a little vulnerable and then it has to be redefined.

RYAN: Yes. I had one employee who was incensed by this act and that he would be impacted. He was planning on getting divorced, but had not yet gotten divorced, and so he was going to be caught by the provisions of the Act. He was trying to get a group together to fight the Act as abrogation of a contractual agreement between the government and its employees and he was talking about taking it to court. We were reasonably sure that we were on solid grounds because the courts had in the past held that the Federal pension system is created by Congress to enhance the good running of the government, but that it is not sort of a contract with the employee which can never be changed. That Congress can change it if they figure that some change is more beneficial for the government.

So this employee had tried to get a group together and I don't think he was ever terribly successful. I'm sure he had a couple of people who worked with him. And I remember waking up one time in the middle of the night sort of bolt upright and I thought, "Oh my God, we really have to face that this will go to the Supreme Court at some time. So we've really got to start working on that." In fact, that has never eventuated.

During my tenure, the Board I had was a very competent Board. Lesley Dorman who had been with AAFSW for yonks continued on as Program Chairman. She was very helpful though mindful of the fact that she had been president and that anytime she would give me any suggestions, would always come on with, "I realize I shouldn't interfere and I don't want you to feel, but my feeling is that you might want to consider. . . ." (laughs)

Q: Well it was important that she have the historical background.

RYAN: Exactly. It's a floating crap game and if you don't have people coming board after board - I can say that now because I've been on about four boards or five - and

everybody comes in with the same good idea and it's the same good idea they had twelve years ago and it was a good idea then and it's a good idea now, but it's not going to work probably for a variety of reasons. They have always thought of some way of setting up some kind of neighborhood welcome.

Q: I remember that idea from my days.

RYAN: That's right. And that's just coming up now on the present board. They're still talking about, wouldn't it be nice - if. Well, yes, it would be nice if. But in a time when more and more spouses are working and people have to choose their volunteer time very carefully and are prioritizing what they have time to do, you need someone who will really spend a substantial amount of time in setting up such a system, bird-dogging and arranging it. And it has been tried and the perennial bête noire of the AAFSW is the problem of getting the word out to the people who need to know it. And there apparently is no such thing as I understand it, at least in the State Department, of a place where you can go and say - I mean even if you were from FLO or a government employee, much less an outside group - "Who is coming home in June from post? Or from home leave or from whatever kind of an assignment. Who was coming back to Washington?" That does not appear to exist as a document. Maybe if you went to each bureau and said, "Is somebody coming home?" You might better talk to the travel people or the transportation people who know that their household goods were coming back to Washington.

Q: Right. I was going to say that would probably be a good beginning. But then so much of that is handled privately now.

RYAN: Yes, but somewhere. But I mean even FLO has had difficulty trying to get this information and to let them know that this welcome service is going to be available and that they would be able to come and that it would all work out. It ended up with someone having a coffee and one or two people came. But it is a continuing complaint, that you and I heard at FSI just this year in the training course that people still feel the lack of something to help them settle in Washington.

I think there's a certain ambiguity because I think many people come back and say, "Oh, it's going to be so wonderful to be back home and my children can do all of these American things and I'll be re-integrated with Americans. I want just to get away from this Foreign Service background." So they turn their back on that and that certainly is understandable.

On the other hand, there is the very real phenomenon that you come back to Washington and you're nearly as foreign as you are at an overseas post, except you have the language. You have changed, the country has changed since you left, and you no longer have the same ideas you did when you left, and the country isn't doing the same things. You often just don't know people. You've moved perhaps to a new neighborhood. So there's an initial period of loneliness. And I think we all - I know I certainly do - tend to romanticize how wonderful life is in America when we are abroad. We conveniently forget, as we do in childbirth, the way things are. You find that things that used to work

don’t work and there are new things now that you don’t know how to use.

Q: Well, and you can’t run away from that sense of being just a bit of a foreigner, because if somebody says, “Oh you just moved in. Where’d you come from?” And you say, “Oh, well, Bangladesh.” And they say, “Oh well, huh?” (laughs) And right away, there you are with it out in the open.

RYAN: It’s something that’s too strange for people to deal with. But I think it would be ideal if there were some . . . . My feeling is ultimately instead of AAFSW - AAFSW might have a role - but that it would be the best of all worlds if you had a desk or an officer in the FLO who was specifically enjoined to take care of helping people settle into Washington.

Then there is the whole issue of AAFSW as an entity because all the younger people who are the spouses of active Foreign Service personnel come to the Washington area, and they live for a couple of years and then they leave. And the real backbone of the organization as a volunteer organization is, of course, the retired people. And for them, it serves a very good function of providing them with an opportunity to see friends, to make new friends, to keep in touch with their Foreign Service life that they probably enjoyed.

However, they are not subject to the same difficulties that younger people are experiencing in the service and are not necessarily responsive to changing times that require new initiatives and new solutions to emerging problems. When, for instance, people my age went into the Foreign Service, it was a very good option for my generation because in a way, I was more involved with my husband’s work than I had been, for example, in suburban Chicago. His work overseas was interesting and I found the issues interesting and of course the people you meet were rewarding on the whole and the chance to live abroad. And my options at that time were much more limited than the young woman’s today; a young woman today, who has been trained to be a lawyer, has spent many years working on a career or at whatever. A third of our membership has been educated beyond the B.A. or B.S. level, so they have a great deal of time and effort and their parents’ money into educating them. They expect that they are going to have use of these expensively and dearly bought skills in the workplace because that’s what young women do today. They expect that a woman is perhaps going to take a few years out for childbearing and early childhood child-rearing, but that they will spend most of their lives working. In earlier times, for the middle class - and perhaps the Foreign Service was then typically slightly above middle-class - the women were not really expected to work. They might, but it was more of an anomaly.

I thought it was really very strange, for example, when one of my neighbors across the street when I was growing up was the Dean of Women at the high school I went to. I can’t remember exactly what, but there were things about my mother’s and my grandmother’s attitudes about her working. It was an unusual thing that had to be explained. There was something strange about it just because of her family background. I believe she was Scandinavian and in those families, the women often expected to work.

It was beginning to change a bit by the time I was out of college in ‘52, but it was more usual that you worked for a couple of years until you had children and then maybe later on you might go back and do some kind of job, something small. But there was no sense of a career other than to be supportive of your family and have children raised and give your husband the support that he needed to make it possible for him to go out and earn the living that would keep the family afloat financially. You would keep the family afloat emotionally, as it were. It used to be that being a homemaker used to entail enormous contributions of time and effort from women, even if they weren’t economically necessary. Obviously if women made bread and did all kinds of things for the food preparation, that would be a very important contribution to the partnership. There were also these kinds of situations where children were ill a lot and if you had three or four children, you could probably expect to spend a good part of your life taking care of sick children. Sitting up overnight with them and they were really concrete, important . . . .

Q: Shared roles.

RYAN: Yes, and that that role was recognizably important. And I think that as labor saving devices have come along, that the things that women can be seen by everybody to be doing as important have shrunk and shrunk and shrunk. Of course as women have increasingly shared in the education that the men have received, it seems to me that we did go through probably a twenty or thirty year period in which women were educated in all respects like men. Except that when they got out of college. . . .

Q: There was only one avenue.

RYAN: That’s right. And I remember reading an article by Pearl Buck sometime in the late ‘40s talking about America’s “medieval” women. It said that in China, women are educated for the role that they’re going to have in their life and that in America, women are educated for a role they’re not going to have in life.

Q: It’s a good point.

RYAN: Of course as time has gone on, it has changed and obviously there’s an absurd waste of resources to have women be educated to do all kinds of things they’re quite capable of doing and then not have avenues for them to pursue. So in my lifetime I’ve seen an enormous change in what young women expect for themselves and what society is perfectly willing to grant them. Whether or not there is a glass ceiling that is hard to get through, that probably will yield in time as well as women being seen as being perfectly capable of fulfilling any kind of role that men can do that doesn’t involve heavy lifting. And even sometimes when it does!

Q: I think we’ll see a breakdown on the political sphere before we do on the corporate sphere.

RYAN: We’ve already had one woman nominated as vice president. And we’ve had a lot of women governors and we’ve women mayors.

Q: Predominately, it's still a male scene.

RYAN: That's right, but it's certainly much less of a male scene. It would have been a real anomaly to have seen a woman mayor thirty years ago, as recently as that. So that's changed.

But anyway, to get back to the AAFSW having to confront new situations, which people in the earlier years of the Foreign Service simply did not have as conditions for them to confront. I think to a degree some of the older people have seen the efforts to change things as somehow a repudiation of their lives. They suspect that the younger women feel that the older women were patsies to do the things that they did, whereas they saw those activities as very worthwhile and important contributions. And in fact, they're both right. The women did make important contributions and the women were patsies because they didn't say, "This is a worthwhile contribution I'm making, and the government doesn't get worthwhile contributions unless it pays for it, just like every other business."

It's almost like being a minister's wife where you do it not entirely because you want to advance your husband's career. There have been women I have known who have been very much estranged from their husbands, in fact, and would not necessarily have done the things they did if it were only to advance their husband's career, but rather because they felt they were Americans, they were overseas, they have these responsibilities to America to do certain things and obviously, minimally, to behave well, but to do all kinds of activities either in the local country that reflect well on America, as well as reflecting well on you, as a person.

And things that the government needs done, as when VIPs come, somebody has to bring them together with prominent persons from the host country. Many people have done these kinds of things, even though they would not necessarily if their husband had worked for General Motors gone all out to entertain for their husband's business without really feeling personally supportive of him. I think that in the great majority of cases, wives are supportive of their husband's career and supportive of America and its aims being furthered overseas.

But it has given the AAFSW a certain Janus face configuration, looking back and looking forward. But it should be big enough to be able to do whatever needs to be done. I think in the '70s when the Forum Report was being written and older women were being confronted by the rebellion of younger women against acceptance of things that they had long accepted - maybe not liked, but certainly taken as the way the world was - found it very threatening. The young women were very vociferous. There was a lot of sound and fury that went on has abated now. Occasionally you will still see it in the newsletter - some member who is 75 or 80 saying they're really quite unable to understand what the new world is and that's not surprising. It's what will happen with age. I think you become increasingly a stranger to your time.

At 60, I'm already occasionally beginning to feel this. That there are things so changed in

society that I can't even imagine what it is like to be a person of 25. Their life experience is so different. I notice when I read the "Washington Post", there are whole sections, pages of the "Post" that deal with current popular music, concerts, and groups. I'd be more comfortable reading a newspaper in Africa somewhere about what was going on there. I'd pick it up quicker. This is something that just doesn't personally interest me in any way. "Doonesbury" occasionally will go on and on about pop music and I have no idea what they're talking about.

Q: Then you know you're out of touch. (laughs)

RYAN: It's not only the out of touch in coming back to America, but it's generational.

Q: Oh, that's what I meant.

RYAN: I know my son, for instance, when he was maybe 17 or 18, he would define his friends by the kind of music they liked. "Well we don't have a lot in common." "Well, what do you mean you don't have a lot in common?" "Well he likes Heavy Metal and I like something else."

Q: My daughter still does that. She looks at a person's record collection as we would have looked at a book collection.

RYAN: While I can certainly understand that to a degree if somebody was really crazy about one. . . . I mean I can't imagine that I would decide on whether I was interested in spending time with a person by what kind of music they listen to. I mean I might take it as a gross indicator if every time I went into the house they were listening to country and western. Unlike the President, I would probably wish I were somewhere else.

Q: We have certainly made assumptions about people by their libraries. I think music is a short-cut to the same answer.

RYAN: I think it hard to believe that if you looked at somebody's bookcase and it was filled with Mein Kampf and white race and anti-Semitic literature, that I would know that I wanted not to have much to do with that person. I can't imagine, however if there were other less extreme divergences, that you would think, "Well that's a person I'm not interested in knowing because he believes in products of the Heritage Foundation or Free Enterprise" - all these names. (laughs) They all sort of sound like different formulations of the same thing.

Q: Is it your opinion that the older Foreign Service looks at the new Foreign Service and says, "Well they're not tough. They want too many comforts."

RYAN: Maybe a little of that. I would imagine certainly that if I had gone out in the '30s when things were much less comfortable for Americans in foreign countries in many ways, they may have been more comfortable in others, because if you were in the Foreign Service, you probably had money. You took with you what you needed. What I see more

is the inability of older people to understand why a young woman wouldn't want to entertain in foreign countries, want to have her own career and wouldn't be willing to sublimate her own career for her husband's. And I think it's the same incomprehension that I have looking at the record collection.

I think they do feel people are being spoiled and there's a lot of whining. But the more it's a repudiation of what they did, the more it's a gut reaction to that. To say that you went ahead and did what you were expected to do and you were dumb to do it, that's the unspoken message that I think the older women are getting from what the younger women are trying to do. I think I'm in a generation with a foot in each camp. I'm old enough to understand what the older people felt, but I'm young enough to understand the younger women. I felt all the same needs, which were not going to be met without a whole lot of kicking against the pricks that I could have done but didn't do. I could have done something else than I did, whereas for somebody possibly ten years older, it was really nearly impossible. You could have kicked against the pricks all you wanted and nothing would have happened. And I think we saw it in the Foreign Service. There was a lot of cramping of personalities. By the time women were older, they were embittered because of the lack of scope that their own lives had given them to be active.

I remember Aristotle has some wonderful thing that I always wish I could remember about "Happiness is the optimum exercise of your faculties in an environment which makes this possible." And that of course has been a struggle for women. There have been so many women through history who have had abilities that their setting gave them no ability to exercise. I've seen lots of women in the Foreign Service that could have done marvelous things but they were just in the wrong generation at the wrong time and . . . .

Q: Maybe the wrong place at the wrong time.

RYAN: And the wrong place at the wrong time. And as a result, I think, they often had problems with alcohol. Of course people today have problems with alcohol, even if they are working. All of these things can't be laid at any one door.

Well, anyway, to get back to AAFSW, one of the other things that I did when I was president, was I felt that I had seen in working with Congress, that Congress is indeed very responsive. It's a numbers game and when those letters pile up as we all see them do from the NRA and produce this vast pile of mail in the mail room, the congressmen are pretty scared about saying that "I don't think that we ought to have every home with a handgun" and so they all changed their tune. Obviously the Foreign Service is never going to have the constituency that amounts to anything in voting terms. There are just too few.

But I did feel that it was important that AAFSW speak for or be able to say that they speak for as high a percentage of the Foreign Service as possible. So increasing membership was a priority. I spent a good deal of the time also trying to push through difficulties with the privacy act. We were never able to get any list to see who was married and who wasn't. We ended up with a group of people going to the foreign affairs

agencies and physically taking materials to each office and saying, "How many Foreign Service people are there here? Are there four? Are they all married?" And they'd say, "Well Joe is and Sam isn't and Mary is." "All right. Here are three. Would you be so kind as to give them this?" That was a very hand-crafted, inefficient, but there seemed to be no other way to do it.

Q: Was this trying to reach them in terms of . . .

RYAN: Just to reach their spouses. Just to get word to them about AAFSW. We find over and over again that Foreign Service spouses are disadvantaged by lack of information. Many husbands don't bring the information home. There are many husbands, such as my own, for whom these personnel issues are the last thing in the world he's interested in. He couldn't care less about his insurance and his health insurance. I mean basically he wants to know that everything's alright. But the nitty gritty of the insurance I always have taken care of.

Also often you receive information at a time when it's not needed. We all get such an informational overload that you've got to keep getting information to people over and over and over again because different people are going to have different times when they need that information. They didn't need it six months ago. They need it today. They didn't need it five years ago when it was given to them. So getting information out was another thing that I worked on.

We also had a financial committee. One of the vice presidents did a survey of various ways to handle the association's funds. We started a relationship with a new bank which would maximize interest from all our funds which had been held often either in low or no-interest bearing accounts. This was a new system that would keep everything that was coming in, even if it was earmarked for future earning, earning money all the time it was in the account. The accounts would be swept daily and everything earned from the moment it arrived. So that was useful.

I believe I was president when the hostages were released in January of '81. The wives of the hostages had had some problems in coming up against some regulations that just didn't work at all well. For instance, wives don't have access to their household effects without the husbands' permission. There were also problems if a wife had no Power of Attorney; who gets paid and how do you get your money and. . . .

Q: And the fact that these people were not dead, they were still legally ready to sign for themselves. It would have been easier - well not easier - but it would have been legally easier if they were dead.

RYAN: The regulations didn't account for a prolonged period of captivity of Foreign Service people. So a number of issues had arisen as being really problematic and then as a result of the things I'd done with the divorced spouses, a lot of these things dovetailed. There were things a wife was not able to do. We had a wife, for instance, whose husband was to take her to Australia, she thought, their next post. A few days before they were to

go, he got hold of the passports and tickets and took them away and told her that he was going alone, that she wouldn't be coming, and that he wanted a divorce. She couldn't get access to the household effects. The children had no winter clothing as they were in storage, because she thought they were going too . . . .

So these kinds of situations are horrendous for the people involved. You can understand that there's a need for the government to have certain kinds of protection, but on the other hand, these strange things do occur. Of course it is very important that the spouses themselves be informed and be prepared for some emergencies that might arise. I had asked Jean German, whom I had known in Oslo, if she could work on this and she got a group of volunteers together, some from the AAFSW, some not, and they worked for a number of months in producing a wonderful handbook that we called, "What Do I Do Now?" I heard they changed the name to something that was . . . . I think that they felt that that was too negative. Sort of a "What do we do now!?" (laughs) But they did manage to get the Department to pay for this to be printed under the aegis of the Overseas Briefing Center. So that then became the basis of the Regulations, Allowance and Finance in a Foreign Service Context, which was something I felt very pleased about.

As I was coming to the end of my tenure, I was asked to continue as president of AAFSW, but it was reasonably clear that my husband would be transferred before the end of that year. He was due to go out the end of that August. So I declined. I did say that I would consider being chairman of the Forum Committee as long as I was here if they wanted and didn't have anybody else to do it, which they didn't.

So after some going back and forth about various options for assignment, suddenly there was the unexpected transfer of the Cultural Officer in Canberra, and so USIA just said to my husband, "You, there. Now." (laughs) This was the first time I had been left entirely with the - you know - sell the car. . .

Q: Pay, pack and follow. . . .

RYAN: Yes. So this was one of the few times in my experience with the government that "hurry and get here" really made any sense. Usually in the Foreign Service, they were always saying "Hurry" when there is little real need to do so, but in this case, indeed, there were a number of family problems going on at the post where people had . . . Somebody's family had a marriage in the States, somebody else was getting a divorce. A third person at the post in USIA had been pulled out. So they really were desperate for somebody to be there.

Therefore my son and I went about two weeks after my husband. And that was nice because he'd arrived and moved into the house and unpacked our airfreight which had gotten there. William and I had a little stop in Hawaii and visited some good friends of ours (my interviewer, Linda Bell) who were on their way home from New Zealand on home leave. We met mid-Pacific and had a lovely visit. Then we got to Canberra. The DCM's wife was a woman who had worked with me on the board at AAFSW a couple of years before, so that was a nice continuity.

Q: Now hang on. She wasn't there yet.

RYAN: Mary Lyne.

Q: Oh Mary Lyne. I was thinking of Jeanie Teare. Jeanie Teare came later, but she also had been on . . .

RYAN: She hadn't been on the Board, but I had known her in Washington too. And we also discovered that an Australian from Sydney we had known in England when Duke was doing his Ph.D., was also in Canberra. Another friend, an American married to a Cambridge don, was having a six-month stay at the university in Canberra. So we arrived with several contacts there, which was indeed wonderful.

It was a period that was a little difficult for our son because when we got there, it was the end of the school year in Australia. The new school year did not begin for ten weeks and many people from the embassy had gone home on leave, so there were not many young people around. William has always been pretty adaptable, but I think he was a little restive during that period. We had one of those typical Foreign Service educational situations where you really don't understand the educational system you're getting into.

Q: Because it's a local system. It's not any hybrid school.

RYAN: It was the local Australian schools in our case. He had done very well in the previous spring in his PSAT. We discovered when we got there that high school stopped at tenth grade and William had done about two and a half months of tenth grade at that point. So we talked to the local school and concluded that he could jump in February to the eleventh grade directly. Conceptually this was a good idea. We felt that what this would mean was that instead of going to one school starting in February and then the following December going to yet another school, we'd put him in that other school right then. We think he's bright enough to do the work.

Well, he was bright enough, but the problem was, he wasn't old enough. Because the last two years of high school in Australia are much more like a junior college. Not college preparatory, just like college. They say "two months from now, you're going to have a book report," and that's the end of it. Nobody says, "Have you decided on your topic? Let me see your outline. Let me look at your cards that you've done." None of that. It was just, "Oh you don't have it done? Oh well, tough."

Q: That's a third of your grade.

RYAN: That's right. And then also for instance, "Well I guess he doesn't like mathematics very much. Well, all right, so don't take mathematics." So for two years William didn't have any mathematics and that left him with one year of mathematics in the ninth grade. That made getting into an American college problematic since you were supposed to have four years of this and three years of that. And he hadn't had four years

or three years of anything and he was out one year.

So he went on to ANU (Australian National University) in Australia where they understood the system that he'd come from. But it would have been better I can see now if he had gone to the very good private school there. I think he'd have done very well, but once he had this one year of not doing too well - I mean he did alright - he had Cs and Bs, but it wasn't anything like what he should have been doing. He was enjoying himself a lot. He kept saying, "You know it's important to get to know the Australians. I consider that a very important part of my education. So "I don't go to French, I sit in the Common Room where I have learned to smoke and get to know the Australians."

Q: And play music as I recall.

RYAN: Well not in school, they couldn't.

Q: No, but there was a group that he was actually playing with for a while, wasn't he?

RYAN: No, he always would have thought that would be a good idea, but he didn't actually ever play. He got together with friends and they would talk about it, but not do much else.

Q: I know they were into synthesized music.

RYAN: Oh yes. By the time he was in university, he did have a synthesizer that he bought with some money that he had made, but that was several years later. He was a senior at ANU.

The Embassy in Canberra was interesting, almost a throwback to early embassy days in the sixties. Half of the post there was military as there was a large military exchange program. The military wives were still very much in the mold of the Foreign Service wife of the sixties. The wives of attaches did staggering amounts of entertaining, just staggering. And of course in Australia there isn't much help. It is quite expensive and we would maybe have a waiter come in and help, but wives would spend a great deal of time peeling shrimp for the 18 people coming to dinner that night - and never mind the ones coming two days from now. But they seemed mostly to feel good about doing that and they were always wonderful about doing community things. We had Christmas parties and all kinds of events for children and all of the Embassy staff, American and Australian.

When I first got to Canberra, as a result of the work I had done with the lobbying, I found law quite interesting and so I was talking to someone about this, and she said, "the head of the Australian Foreign Office Wives is a law professor at the Australian National University. So she and I got together, and she put me onto a course that was offered for non-law graduates in international law. If you had a law degree, you took the course in one year. If you didn't, you took the course over two years.

So I did that and found it very stimulating, I think, just on a purely self-respect level. I had gotten recognition for the work I'd done in Washington which was very satisfying. People would call me from other women's organizations and say, "I understand you know a lot about something or other." That was a new experience for me and I liked that. Then you go overseas, and it's back to being Mrs. Q. So I must say I really did enjoy people saying, "Oh, you're Duke Ryan's wife. What are you doing?" And I'd say, "Well, I'm doing a course in international law at the university." I got a lot more favorable reaction from that than if I'd said, "I'm a dependent" or a "housewife" or whatever.

So that was its principle role. It kept me out of the old fashioned embassy aspect of it, which also brought with it such things as money-raising by having bake sales. I was always able to say, "I would love to be able to bake for you, but I have an exam coming up and I just can't do it." I wouldn't have enjoyed baking, which I never did enjoy. Well, I probably did have an exam coming up, but it was useful to get me out of doing the kinds of things that I really didn't like to do and would not have wanted to insult people by saying so.

Q: Plus, it must have brought you an entirely different community and acquaintances that you would never have had otherwise.

RYAN: Yes, that was very nice because this international law course was attended not only by Australians - graduates who were interested in going into international law - but by people from many countries in the Commonwealth. There was one Burmese, a man from the Embassy of New Guinea, a Canadian, several Brits, four Americans. Then the Australian Government made it possible for a number of people to enroll who worked in ministries, where it might be useful in their work. They tended to be somewhat older. It was not a particularly young group. Most all of them were over 25, but on the other hand, that was a number that I would otherwise not have been in touch with.

There was one wonderful Canadian young woman who was a super-achiever who constantly arranged social things. About every six weeks there would be an event where everybody met at somebody's house with a food contribution. That gave me a look into a different part of society. And these were people from all around the world. I saw a lot of skepticism about the U.S. as a superpower. America was regarded by many of these young people, who were by no means crazy radicals but instead part of the legal establishment and who just took it as read that after the Vietnam experience, America, while not as bad as Russia, was not to be trusted. It's a very suspect entity that has a lot of power and will use it ruthlessly to get what it wants.

If I'd written a thesis, I'd have gotten a master's degree. At that point I had enjoyed doing it, but I realized that pursuing this was not going to be either something that I would find terribly congenial personally because while parts of the research I did enjoy, parts of it, where you are spending a whole lot of time by yourself working on some of it. . . .

Q: Very detailed, too.

RYAN: Yes, but I don't mind the details so much as I do the isolation. If you're going to do this kind of work, you're going to be isolated. You meet people a little bit. They say, "I have this problem," and then you spend the next six weeks solving the problem in the library and writing it up. So we had home leave coming up and I thought there really wasn't much point in my getting a master's degree, to put myself through this, so I desisted at that point and was awarded a post graduate diploma in international law.

When I was on home leave, the OBC asked me to write the Cross-Cultural Report on Australia for them, for which I got a small amount of money. Having lived in Great Britain for three years and, at this point, having lived in Australia for two, it was a very interesting exercise because the country is such a blend of America and England.

Then also - I guess before we went on home leave - I heard about a course for a suicide hotline. In Washington I had been aware of how useful these listening skills would be because I was working often with these divorced spouses that . . . I was grappling with the problem of how you deal with people in emotional difficulty and I had never had the time or the focus to take the good hotline training I had heard about in Washington. There was a terrific four-month long program in Canberra called Life Line. Basically it was a self-awareness training with the group. We started out with about four different groups of ten or twelve people each. They all shrank down to about four to six by the end. The people either couldn't cope with what they were being pushed to discover about themselves, or they just felt they weren't interested in pursuing it.

Q: Now this is a crisis hotline or a suicide hotline?

RYAN: This was a suicide hotline, but it's for all kinds of crisis situations. I found that training probably the most useful in understanding myself and dealing with life myself and I wish I had done it when I was thirty-five instead of fifty-five!

Q: So in a way, it's like getting therapy.

RYAN: That's right. It was like group therapy. At various times I had had therapy and never found it more than minimally helpful. And this, just in these few sessions, broke all kinds of log jams as far as . . . I'm not saying that I now have no problems, but I gained all kinds of insights. And I sometimes felt that in the other therapeutic situation of one-on-one you sometimes don't get the same insight that you get when you are in a group, and other people are bringing energy and their own experience, and it's much more validating. . .

Q: Besides, a therapist often doesn't really tell you how to look at yourself the way a group does. Sometimes a group will call your bluff in a way that a therapist won't. It's a little less disciplined.

RYAN: Yes. I had one spate of therapy that was extremely non-interventionist.

Q: Stream-of-consciousness? . . .

RYAN: Exactly. I was kind of sliding around and I can't say that, other than the fact that there was somebody there to listen and that I could talk to and that it was sort of non-judgmental, but I found I got almost no insight out of that experience.

Q: Directionless. I called mine my "paid listener."

RYAN: And then another time I had somebody who was much more directive and who would intervene and say, "Well what about this? But why do you feel that? Does this mean that?" And that was helpful. But this hotline course was much, much more helpful. If they give you the training then you're obligated to staff the telephone for a few hours every two weeks for two years. I had told them at the beginning that I probably wouldn't be here for two full years, but they accepted that. I made many really good friends there, too.

Q: Was that under the Samaritan's auspices? The Good Samaritans. They were very active in Zimbabwe.

RYAN: Oh were they? I think it's a Commonwealth . . . .

Q: That's what I wondered.

RYAN: Yes. And the people who did the training, it was just really an excellent group in Canberra. So I felt very lucky.

Q: And that prepared you to be the "half-CLO."

RYAN: That's right. (laughter)

I think it helped a bit when we had people coming to Australia as newcomers that I had done the Cultural Guide. I had become more and more aware of what it is that people found difficult about Australia. You know the problem with Australia is that it looks just like America. So you think, "Oh it's all the same." Then you were getting these signals that just didn't fit and didn't make any sense. Most people found that they coped with it after a time, but I think it is helpful to say, "Well look, the real sign of friendship here is that they insult you." What they say about each other - the closer the friend, the worse they'll rubbish them in public. You never say a good word, or at least very reluctantly. I think this is partly class. It's possibly not an upper-class Australian thing. But they're not at all prone to assume you are a superior person because you're head of a section or you're a retired ambassador or whatever. "Don't please try to pretend that you're any better than I am, thank you."

Q: You have to tie your shoes, too.

RYAN: That's right. It's very egalitarian. We think of ourselves as very egalitarian, but there it's much, much, much more. They assume that if you've gotten somewhere it's

probably because you knew somebody. (laughs) Also a little bit of luck and good management, but not necessarily that you've worked so hard that you deserve your superior position. We in America assume that people have earned a certain amount of deference when they get to a certain position. An Australian will often insult you just to see how you're going to react to it. If you react in a very uptight, insulted way, then you're really fair game. Then they really think you're no good.

Q: I remember in New Zealand they had an expression about taking the heads off the tall poppies.

RYAN: Yes, the tall poppies. Which is interesting because in Norway they do that and . . . .(pause)

Q: All right. Had a little digression there.

RYAN: Then after I finished with the suicide hotline training, we went on home leave. Typical Foreign Service child story: we were trying to decide where to go on home leave because Pan Am had this deal where you could go to Europe via America and return to Australia for a price that was absolutely the same as going to Washington and back. So we decided to do that for home leave. We would go to the United States and then go to one of five different destinations that you could choose in Europe. And we'd have some annual leave there and then come back again to the United States and do more home leave. We were trying to decide where to go to. One of the places was Paris. So Duke and I said, "Well, gee, I don't know if I want to go to Paris again." William, at seventeen, drew himself up and said, "Well, I'm seventeen and I've never been to Paris!" And we said, "Well, goodness, don't let the social authorities know about this or they may take you away from us for maltreating you."

When I came back from home leave then, the person who was the Community Liaison Officer coordinator, was leaving and I applied for that and shared the job with another Foreign Service wife. We each worked two days. We had to work much more than we were paid for, but it was very satisfying work. And with people coming in as newcomers, because of having done the Cultural Guide, I think I was able to tell people what they would find that was different even though it seemed like such a recognizable situation, so they'd be a little bit more prepared for the things that they would encounter.

Many of the military, too, found it very unsettling to be in a country - some of them had not been abroad, but some of them had been abroad to places where they didn't speak the language so they read the "Stars and Stripes" or the "International Herald Tribune" and listened to American television and radio through the Armed Services Network so they didn't really hear any of the things in the local country about the view of America. So it was quite a shock for them to turn on the television and be able to hear it in English and find this continual USA-bashing. They were quite capable in Australia of criticizing America for doing something on one day and the next day criticizing them bitterly for doing just the opposite. It was frequently a case of "You're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't."

I did that for a little less than a year. Duke had been planning to retire but the date kept shifting around. Finally he'd arranged to go to St. Anthony's at Oxford for a term there and then a year in Cambridge at Clare Hall. To get there at the beginning of the term, we left in 1986. I left very reluctantly because I loved the CLO job, which I could have kept for another couple of months. Further, we were leaving our only child behind! William had concluded that he'd be going to university in Australia. We had arranged, with some difficulty, that he could be accepted there. So he was to stay and we were to leave. William said he was the only kid he knew whose parents ran away from home. (laughs)

Q: Where did William stay during those years? Were there dormitories?

RYAN: There were, but he and his girl friend lived together. His girl friend, who is now his wife, started out living in a little house with another couple and that broke down under social and personal difficulties. People weren't getting along. The two women ended up with daggers drawn. They then moved to a variety of smaller apartments and then I think settled in for about a year and a half in an apartment quite near the university. So we went off to Oxford . . .

Q: So you went to Oxford before you went to Cambridge. For how long?

RYAN: For one term.

Q: For one term. Which is how long?

RYAN: From first of October until Christmas time.

Q: So you lived in Oxford and then you moved to Cambridge.

RYAN: In between, however, we went around the world at Christmas. At the end of that time our Oxford, we flew back from the U.K. to the United States where Duke went to a historical association meeting in Chicago, where his family lives. Two birds with one stone. We stopped and saw friends out in California and then went back to Australia. We visited with William and stayed there for about a month. The PAO had gone on home leave and invited us to stay in their home.

Then we flew back to England on Air Malaysia, which was one of the cheapest fares going. We spent about ten days in Malaysia which we had never visited. Went to Penang and Kuala Lumpur and went to Malacca, which had been a Portuguese town and was interesting to us because of our time in Brazil. It had been built up by the Portuguese who were early traders. All the time we were in Australia, because of having to use American carriers, we always had to come back to the United States over the Pacific where there isn't anything to visit much. I mean once you've been to Tahiti and New Zealand. . . .

Mostly the things you'd like to have a chance to see are the other way and you never could work out a way to do that on a U.S. carrier on government travel orders. So this

was the only time we were able to go out that way, as we were paying. I kept saying, sitting in the swimming pool in Penang, "Now Duke, remind me why it is that we are going back to England in February."

During our time in Oxford, I had found it very painful to leave William behind. During those high school years when children are getting more and more independent, they spend less time at home, just to leave their dirty clothes. It still was very painful to be on the other side of the world and be worried about what was happening and whether things were alright.

But there was one family of particularly good friends that we knew from our days in Brasilia - who we had known over the years - and the children kind of grew up together. They now lived just outside Oxford. In addition, a number of people we'd known when we were in Cambridge the first time had ended up living in Oxford, as well as some people we had known in the Foreign Service, two British Council people.

The college was reasonably friendly. And the young people were wonderful. It was an all graduate-level college with students from all over the world who were doing Ph.D.s or master's degrees at St. Anthony's, a college that specializes in international affairs. They were all doing very interesting projects. We had lunch and dinner at the college and then we'd go to the common room afterwards and talk to the young people. There were always a variety. In fact there was one young man turned up there who had been in the international law course with me, if you can believe the coincidence. From all the way around the world.

Q: And what was Duke doing?

RYAN: He was just doing independent research. I think it was largely just an excuse to get back there. He could have done the research just about equally well anywhere, but he put together a plausible sounding proposal to do some research in Great Britain. St. Anthony's bought it to the extent of a term and Clare Hall at Cambridge bought it too and said he could come for a year, so Duke said, "Well let's go to Clare Hall," and I said, "Well, why don't we do both?" which is what we did. We had a grand time in Oxford, which is somewhat more cosmopolitan. I always maintain that Cambridge has always been a Puritan stronghold since the 17th century. I mean the King, after all in the Civil War, went to Oxford with his court when he had to leave London. So that has always been more connected with the establishment and government and Cambridge has been the dis-establishment . . .

Q: And an intellectual ferment.

RYAN: Well, and a different kind of intellectual ferment. You had a kind of intellectual ferment in Oxford, but it is a more worldly kind. There is more interest in religion and mathematics at Cambridge, which are slightly more bloodless, than at Oxford with its good living and interest in fine wine. It's no accident, I think, that Oxford had wonderful rail connections to London and a marvelous road to London fully fifteen or twenty years

before Cambridge did. People who were graduated in PPE, (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) then go on to become the government down the pike. There were plenty of Cambridgians in the establishment, but it slightly weighted toward the Oxford side. So anyway, we had a ball in Oxford.

Then we did the trip around the world. We ended up traveling more in the two years after we got out of the Foreign Service even than we did in the Foreign Service.

Then we went back to Cambridge and that was pleasant because we had a lot of friends from our three years there, but they were all busy doing their own things and so it was less fun for me. We didn't have a car. We rode our bikes over to the college every day and had a big noon meal, so I got out of the kitchen. I had to put together some light meal for supper. There it tended to be a focus at lunchtime, as people came in for lunch at Clare Hall, but not mainly for dinner. The food was much better at St. Anthony's, which is typical of the differences between Oxford and Cambridge. They don't want to think about food at Cambridge. However, the master of the house was very pleasant and he and his wife we enjoyed very much, as we did many of the visiting scholars.

But I did get quite restive there. While the first couple of months in Oxford was rather like a long vacation and party, in Cambridge I began to have this feeling, rather unexpected, that Duke was retired and that a lot, obviously, of the work that I'd done over the last ten years had been bound up with being tangentially part of the Foreign Service. And then being in the AAFSW and all and the nitty-gritty of the regulations and so forth. So suddenly that connection is cut and everyone else around me was beetling around very busily in their lives and I had a very strong sense in Cambridge of being marginalized. I had the vision of a roaring river going by with me washed up on the shore. And while that may be something that you're ready for - a very contemplative, quiet look at things - if you're 75 or 80, at 55, I was unprepared for how uneasy that made me feel. So I was anxious to get back to the U.S.

Duke would have liked to have retired to the U.K.as far as that was concerned, because he would have had this connection with Clare Hall, which he could have kept and lived in Cambridge; the connection being that you could go there for meals and you could use the name wherever you work so that you have an academic connection. And he has really felt the lack of other kinds of collegial connection in his work since he's been back here these past three years in Washington. He has a similar connection as a "visiting scholar" at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, but that is a very much different set-up. It's much more like an office. People come in and they teach class or have seminars or they do their work and they're in the office for a certain time, but there's not the collegiality that there is in Britain where you get together with your fellow scholars and discuss. I think when he's gone in to call on people and discuss things, they've been very forthcoming and pleasant, but the tone is quite different.

I think because he is a person who is very disciplined and able to crank out work and enjoy his writing, he was unprepared for the degree to which he has found it lonely, especially once I began selling real estate. I had fancied that I would be able to be home a

lot during the week and maybe out in the evenings and on the weekends. Well it turns out that if you do it at all, you do it weekends and all week, too, and maybe we tried to have Thursdays be a day off, but it always seemed that there was something that came up on Thursdays about every second or third time that meant one or the other of us couldn't do anything. So that has been an unexpected problem.

Duke for many years was anxious to get out of the Foreign Service especially since he had had the time in Cambridge where he worked on his own agenda for three years. It's like the old story of the woman who didn't know she'd married a drunk until one night he came home sober. He realized how much he disliked having his time taken up by doing things that someone else thought was important rather than acting on his own priorities. So he has been very relieved to be out of the Service, unlike many employees who feel quite lost.

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Written Addendum September 1992

Issues related to alcohol have been of interest to me throughout my time associated the Foreign Service, perhaps because of my family history as teetotalers. When Duke came into the Service, my expectation was that we would be immersed in a bibulous environment - the cookie pusher as martini pusher. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that because most "social" occasions had, at least, a partial work-related object, so most officers tended to be moderate drinkers, if not light imbibers.

There were, naturally, some individuals who had problems with alcohol. Earlier, any such person would have been afraid to reveal alcoholic problems regarding themselves or a spouse because of an adverse possible reaction for the employee's career. So I have been pleased to note the change in the Department's handling of such issues.

In the mid-70s, a friend - the spouse of a USIA officer who was under 40 - died of alcohol-related disease. I was angry at the Agency (USIA) for not intervening. At that time, they were beginning to deal with the problem of substance abuse in MED more sensibly, allowing - nay, encouraging - intervention, treatment, and return to work for employees. But word of the attitude and the resources available were not, in my view, being publicized adequately. On one occasion, I remonstrated some USIA personnel officer about the lack of adequate dissemination of the resources available and that after successful treatment there was no blemish on the career of the employee. His reaction, which angered me especially upon reflection, was "We can't do that or everyone will assume that the organization is filled with alcoholics."

I was delighted therefore when further years brought a change in that attitude, and one hopes there are fewer preventable tragedies related to substance abuse. The wasteful aspect of having individuals working and living at such a low level of pleasure and efficiency as when encumbered by problems which are treatable has always been upsetting.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Henry Butterfield Ryan
Spouse's Position: FS Information Officer, USIA - Press Attaché, Cultural Affairs Officer

Spouse Entered Service: 1961 Left Service: 1986
You Entered Service: Same Left Service:

Status: Spouse of Retired FSIO

Posts:

10/61-4/62	Washington, DC, Junior Officer training (6 mos.)
4/62-7/63	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
7/63-9/65	Brasilia, Brazil
12/65-7/69	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
11/69-9/71	Washington, DC
9/71-6/72	Cambridge, MA (Harvard University)
7/72-9/75	Oslo, Norway
9/75-10/78	Leave without pay at Cambridge University, UK
10/78-12/82	Washington, DC
12/82-9/86	Canberra, Australia

Place/Date of birth: Detroit, Michigan - March 17, 1931

Maiden Name: Patricia Burns

Parents (Name, Profession):
Kenneth Milstead Burns - Banker, civil servant
Mary Wilson Burns - Housewife

Schools (Prep, University):
Principia College, BA, 1952
Northwestern University, graduate year in English
Australian National University, post graduate diploma, International Law

Profession: Foreign Service wife; Teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL); Civil Servant, Community Liaison Officer (CLO); Museum Education Coordinator, Art Institute of Chicago; Real Estate sales (current)

Date/Place of Marriage: Chicago, Ill., November 28, 1957

Children:
William Warrington Ryan, b. June 4, 1967, in Rio

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:
At Post: Teacher, ESL, Brazil (paid); CLO, Australia (paid); Contracted to write report on Australian Culture for Overseas Briefing Center (paid); Variety of volunteer fund raising efforts in Brazil

In Washington, DC: Volunteer - Lobbyist for Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW); AAFSW Forum Chair; AAFSW President: Real Estate sales (paid)

Honors (Scholastic, FS): High school, college scholastic societies; commendation from Ambassador on work as CLO in Australia

End of interview