WOMEN IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

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Caroline Clendening Laise	1966-1973	Ambassador to Nepal
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Phyllis E. Oakley	1960-1963	Wife of Foreign Service Officer
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Judy C. Bryson

USAID

Management Internship Program (1966)

BRYSON: … When I was a senior I learned of the Management Internship Program that required you to take the Civil Service entrance exam. You then had to take the management internship option that required an oral examination. In that particular year, 1966, USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] took in a very large class of management interns. There were sixty people in that class. Half of the people were women, which was also very unusual. The various agencies and the State Department were beginning to feel the effects of the Equal Opportunity Act that was passed in 1963. The federal government was to be charged with laws to see to it that there was equal opportunity for women as well as men in employment. Although they were charged with administering these laws, the federal government's own house was not in order. So they were making a very concentrated effort to recruit women to work for USAID and the State Department, specifically.

Early Years in USAID

One thing I would like to say before I go into describing my time in Ghana is the situation of women in USAID at that time. They had brought in thirty women in this class of management interns in 1966, and I think as high a number in the class of 1967. This was beginning to redress the balance between men and women a little bit. There was a huge divide between the new women who were being brought in. I joined at something like GS [pay level], and the women who had been working for USAID for a period -- At that time we had the Biographic Register that was published and you could look up different people and see what had happened to them and the track they had taken. You would find these women who were in their mid-thirties or older, who were essentially at the same level as those who had just joined. If you went back and looked in the bio register you would see that these older women actually had academic backgrounds just as good as ours — that they had graduated from Brown University with a major in economics, etc. — but had come to the State Department or USAID as secretaries. That was the only position at which women could get hired. They had clawed their way up step by step through administrative assistant, etc., to finally, after ten or twelve years, reach the program position. They had had to start at very low levels of government service to get there. Then all of a sudden there is this influx of young women in their mid-twenties who were coming in at the same or even higher level than they had. They did not like us very much. They really had a lot of scars of the battles they had come through.

But even with that, most of the time it was a very male environment. At almost all meetings that you went to there might be one other woman, if it was a small meeting of ten people or so. Being a woman in the State Department in the professional category was in its infancy at that time. So it really was something that you had to be conscious of, had to be very careful. I always felt that I

didn't blame those women for finding us a threatening group, as we hadn't paid our USAID dues to get where we were.

Q: Was this mostly civil service or both?

BRYSON: What I am talking about at the moment is the few years I spent in Washington. There were far fewer professional women overseas in the Foreign Service. The image of the Ghana Mission of the person they were going to get as a Food for Peace officer was a man in his late thirties who was going to be well aware of ports and harbors, etc. To find that they were getting a young woman was not to be expected at all. Today when you hear young women say they are not feminists, they don't really realize all the steps women had to go through as recently as the 1960s to hold a professional position.

Q: Were there any special efforts of your group of women to try to change the system at all or press for it, or were each one of you trying to survive in your own situation?

BRYSON: The group of us who joined hung around together quite a bit. We always noticed that we were rather a colorful lot. If you went into the State Department cafeteria, which was a huge room, there were almost all men in sober suits. The older women had survived by looking like the men by wearing very sober suits. But we would have more colorful outfits and definitely stood out.

Resignation from USAID (1976)

Q: Were there other aspects of your eight years in Ghana?

BRYSON: I think the reason I ended up spending such a long time in Ghana is an interesting aspect, and it also is illustrative of the way personnel policy within the agency has changed over time. When I started in USAID, women who married basically had to resign or at least had to ask for permission to marry. The process of asking permission to marry consisted of simultaneously putting in your request for permission and your resignation, so if they decided not to give you permission to marry and remain in the service, they accepted your resignation. So it was obviously a major step to think about asking to marry because you didn't know what was going to happen.

The other thing, which automatically happened to women in the Foreign Service, was that the assumption was you were no longer available for worldwide assignment. There was a special category within the Foreign Service that was called “Foreign Service reserve resident.” You actually remained with your class and were paneled and promoted along with everyone else within your grade, but you didn't get certain benefits. If you weren't available for worldwide assignment, you didn't get home leave, you didn't get differential, and you didn't get a residence. Though I received medical services from the American embassy and when I had children they received medical services, my husband did not. This was a difference from the female spouses of Foreign Service officers. Men were not required to become resident staff, and obviously their spouses were not treated in this way.

I decided to marry early in 1970. This was just after this policy of being allowed to become resident staff had come into place. But I still had to request permission to marry and because my husband was a British citizen he had to have a security clearance, etc. The mission, who was very supportive of my getting all of the clearances and being allowed to marry, was not moving to replace me. This process started in January; I was getting married in June. We finally got down to the point that all the invitations had been printed and I was getting married in two weeks and still had not received any advice as to whether it was all right for me to get married. It was a very difficult thing for the mission because they didn't know whether the individual who was responsible for one of the important programs in the mission would be stopping two weeks after that. Actually, the administrative officer called me the morning of the day I was getting married and told me that the cable had finally come in saying it was okay. So it was really quite a cliffhanger. This then meant that I stayed in Ghana and continued to work in Ghana.

In 1974, USAID changed the policy and said that they would restore me to full officer status and give me back differential to the time when I got married, but I would have to return to the United States so my husband could become an American citizen. By that time I had one child. I decided not to accept the offer but they allowed me to stay as a Foreign Service reserve resident. That meant that when we came to the point where my husband was going to be leaving Ghana, where he had been working for a British trading company, and returning back to England, we had the decision about what to do — whether he would stop or I would stop or whatever. At that point I was having a second child and really didn't feel I wanted to become the principal breadwinner in the family, so I resigned from USAID.

Anne O. Cary

Entering the Foreign Service (1974)

CARY: … The whole thing took less than an hour. They then sent me out and called me back a couple of minutes later and said, "Congratulations, go down and get fingerprinted." They actually did offer me a place in the March class, but I couldn't leave the CAB that quickly. When they did my security interview, my application had "Urgent" stamped on it. It was just about the time when they had to bring in more women and I am convinced they didn't have very many female economists.

Q: Well, I am sure they wanted more women, but also being an economist and having been overseas and made these connections made you a prime candidate.

CARY: I think it was a good thing to move rapidly. It is something, as I saw when my husband entered the Foreign Service … they wait so long before offering a position. Most people have to make other decisions in the time it took [the State Department] to process an applicant. So I thought the speed that they can move when they want to was a good thing. For somebody who was just getting started, it worked very well. It was rapid enough. They pushed through everything very quickly. It was clear that their numbers had to be improved.

Q: I was on the board about that time and we were looking for more women and minorities. So you started when?

CARY: In June 1974.

Q: Can you describe and characterize a bit about your A-100 course [Foreign Service orientation]?

CARY: Yes. We were the 113th class.

Q: I was class 1.

CARY: Oh, really?

Q: I mean, they started other numbering later on, but I think you were of that continual.

CARY: There were forty or so FSOs [Foreign Service officers]. I was the youngest. In fact, at that point it was the fiftieth anniversary of the Rogers Act and I was the youngest FSO. So I was in *State Magazine* as the youngest FSO.

Q: The Rogers Act being the act which created the Foreign Service in 1924.

CARY: There were about eight women. One had been in before but had been forced to resign when she got married and had been reinstated, a consular officer. One was a former Playboy bunny; she had done that while in school to make money. There were some ex-Peace Corps volunteers. It was a fairly diverse group, an older group with more and more people over thirty because the age limit had been dropped. We had a couple of people in their forties. Most people were not married. The A-100 class lasted for a six-week period.
…

Q: At the beginning, were you picking up any sexist vibes? This is the time when the culture is beginning to change as far as women in the Foreign Service and all this, but it was still pretty early on.

CARY: There was definitely an attitude. Because I was so young I don't think it bothered me as much as it would had I been older. But I was so much younger than everybody else around that when people condescended, I interpreted it to mean, "Of course, I'm the new person on the block," and that was fine with me.

Q: You would go for the coffee or something?

CARY: Right, I will fix your coffee. I can remember a Christian Science Monitor journalist walking into the office and looking at me and saying, "I like my coffee with two sugars." So I got up and got the coffee and went and sat down. He realized when I sat down at the table that I wasn't a secretary. It was also a time when secretaries had a lot of problems with female officers because it is a difficult situation. A lot of these were the old-time Foreign Service secretaries,

many who had college degrees and just simply weren't given the opportunity to become officers, and “here comes this young kid who is an officer telling me how to do this job I've been doing for twenty years.” There was a lot of tension. Most of the men I found to be pretty paternalistic, which didn't bother me much. And people were, "Oh, oh! You can do that. Isn't that amazing?" But because there weren't that many females around, people would remember me and to me that was an advantage. It was, "Oh, yes, it is the girl." And it was "the girl," as nobody would call me a woman at that point. And there was a big thing about using "Ms." It took a long time for the department to use "Ms.”

The attitude towards women was not as negative as I think it got later on when people started believing that the gender was more important than talent, saying, "It is a woman, that is why. They had to have her do that." There was no sense that women were being given preferential treatment at that point. Women officers, particularly in political or economic work, were still enough of a rarity and still having to prove that they could hold their own in the Foreign Service. So the sense was a little strange.

I think in the workplace it could become uncomfortable because people really didn't know how to deal with a woman, especially for a lot of the older men. If you were overseas and the control officer and invited to go out to dinner, it was all of a sudden awkward. It put men in a situation where they really didn't know what they were supposed to do, what the ground rules were. Sometimes I think people were making passes because they weren't sure whether they were supposed to or not. That part of the etiquette had not been decided yet, how you deal with a colleague outside the office or even inside the office. There were people who were really used to dealing with women in a certain way and would continue to do that in a work situation.

Q: I was part of this and it was difficult. I think all of us were going through a learning process. In a way, the paternalism thing could be helpful because as a more senior officer there were a couple of younger women who I kind of took under my wing, as I think many of us did, and really pushed. It was kind of fun to watch them being ambassadors. I have been to a number of ceremonies. But in a way it was discrimination of a reverse sort, but there was a paternalism behind it which isn't a bad thing. I think at a certain point senior officers should take younger people under their wing and push. I think it was easier for many of us to do it with women than with men.

CARY: I did think the age thing did make a difference, because older women really resented it more. Many of them were bringing in something from a second career and felt that they were being treated in a condescending way. There was one case where there was a male supervisor, two women and another man in an office. The supervisor basically condescended to everybody. He would say, "Now you write a memo and say ‘To so-and-so,’ and put these points in it and do this and that and the other thing." I looked and saw that he treated everybody that way, even the minister-counselor, because that was his approach to things. But the other woman really took it as pure condescension and denigration of her ability.

There was no effort to tell people how to deal with these problems. That one particularly came out very badly, as it degenerated into a fight over a leave slip. An easy way to get back at people is to deny leave or to take unauthorized leave.

Q: We are talking about a time when the unwritten corridor rules were being set up. Did you find yourself able to tap into a women's network? Or was the generational thing between the older women who had clawed their way up the hard way, and you who had come in with perhaps the skids greased just a little bit to get more women in, or at least that was the perception … Were you able to find women role models?

CARY: There simply were not very many senior women at the time. My first job was in the [Operations] Center and Regina Eltz was there. But senior women were single and they were not a role model for me because I didn't want to be single all of my life. To me there was a difference because they had given up everything for their career and I was not going to give up everything for that career. It was partly seeing women, not just officers, but secretaries as well, who had lived for their jobs and were left at the end with not even a place to live. Later on there was more variation, but early on there were just not very many senior women in a position to go out of their way to make an effort for other women.

…

Casablanca, Morocco: Consul General (1992-1995)

Q: I recall you getting ready to go [to Casablanca]. For the record, you were great with child at the time. Where did you have your baby?

CARY: Here at George Washington Hospital. Again, the State Department was pretty good about it. Sometime in February or March I got a call from my predecessor, Tim Foster, who asked, "Could you be here for July 4?" I said, "No, I can't because I am going to have a baby at the end of May, but will be there as soon as I can after the DCM [deputy chief of mission] course." FSI [the Foreign Service Institute] and [the office of personnel] tried to be accommodating about timing. Because the DCM course is only offered three times a year, I knew I was going to be nursing during the time of the DCM course. Special arrangements were needed because some of it took place offsite. Most people were in one part of the offsite place and I had a little cottage with two rooms and brought our nanny. She would come and knock on the classroom door when it was time to feed the baby, and everybody got used to it. James was six weeks old and was the youngest participant ever in the DCM course. For the courses at FSI, the director made her office available from the beginning so James could be with me. There really was no alternative for a six-week-old. And then I took three weeks of French, and again, the ability of the system to respond officially is, "No, we can't do anything for you. I am sorry, there isn't any space," but individually the instructors were willing to find space using various offices or classrooms not in use.

Q: You are talking about nursing?

CARY: Yes. The system does have to realize that more and more women are choosing to continue working and have their children. I had three children while working in the Foreign Service. I took six weeks off with James, which was my longest postpartum break. It’s not an easily addressed problem. It is inconvenient to have to come up with a substitute for a period while somebody is having a child. And now that the department is insisting that women return to

the United States to give birth, it means mandating a gap of really at least three months, because most airlines won't let you fly when you are more than eight months pregnant and most doctors don't want you to fly either. When [the State Department] was giving medical clearance for women to have babies overseas, you had more flexibility. When our daughter was born we were living in Ethiopia. I flew to Nairobi two weeks before she was due and we returned when she was four days old. They haven't quite worked it out, how to handle trips and all that when you are nursing. I got an e-mail in 1994 from a female FSO who asked, "Please share your experiences of how you managed to have your kids and keep working."

…

Q: How about your contacts as consul general with the elements of government? Did you have any problems with being an American and/or a woman?

CARY: I was the first female consul general in Morocco, so everybody was curious. Here I arrived with a three-month-old baby and two other kids. The Moroccans reacted very, very well, very positively. I had a sense that they could relate to me as a daughter, a sister, or something, I had kids. I felt no sense that people thought I should be home taking care of our kids. Amongst the upper class nobody takes care of their own kids, so it seemed perfectly reasonable to be out working. A number of women have taken over family businesses or are involved in the family business. So there is an acceptance, particularly for women my age.

…

Q: Before we end this interview, you mentioned you would like to talk about the gender issue, experience in the Foreign Service, etc.

CARY: Specifically, what happens when your foreign contact makes an unwelcomed advance: It changed the way that I did business. In Haiti a high-level contact made a grab for me at a restaurant. I thought I had been giving out the wrong signals and had made a mistake, so I decided I would never have a one-on-one dinner with a male. Okay, that seemed to work. Then I stopped having most one-on-one lunches because on more than one occasion a male contact, a colleague in the foreign government, somebody with whom I had to repeatedly deal, would make a pass.

Q: For future readers, a pass is a mild sexual advance.

CARY: Yes. Some of them weren't so mild. And I felt partly it was the confusion because people really weren't so used to women in these roles and when you put a male and female in a role that they are used to, such as a lunch or something, they put it into a social context and there are certain men who believe such situations call for a pass. This happened enough that I decided I would avoid situations that would put us in a social context. I would meet in offices in a clearly work situation. I thought that would solve the problems. But in Ethiopia, while seven months pregnant, I went to call on the Tunisian ambassador about an OAU [Organization of African Unity] issue and he grabbed and kissed me. Now, how do I ever deal with this guy again without retching? I just found it very bizarre, the fact that such a thing would happen. It certainly

happens with Americans but it is much easier to deal with because you know their cultural context and know what is going on, and there are indeed ways of dealing with this if it continues to happen. But when this is somebody that you need to see on a continuing basis, it poses problems. It was a learning process for me. You know, there are certain people you can't tell at all how they are going to react, and somebody like the Tunisian ambassador … there is nothing you can do except make sure it is always your office after that, which is what I did, although the Tunisian ambassador shouldn't be coming to call on a first secretary.

Some of the others were American colleagues, people who were traveling on TDY [temporary duty], with very peculiar ideas about what a control officer really is. I would disabuse them very quickly that that wasn't why I was there. I had some great times as a control officer. But there were people who had different opinions. Because visitors did the Brussels-Paris circuit, I could compare notes with female friends in a similar position in Paris serving as control officer for the same person. We would compare notes as to whether so-and-so had been obnoxious. It was amusing that it wasn't just a one-time situation, but clearly there were people who thought that was the way it was supposed to happen in terms of female officers. As a supervisor I have never been required to attend anything on sexual harassment or what is considered to be sexual harassment, although I think the [State] Department is starting to do that. The Department of Commerce required people to …

Q: This whole sexual harassment came to its forefront in the late '80s and early '90s and is still with us. It has always been there, but as far as being a legal thing … Once you start getting into the mold of making official complaints, it puts you into a different category, and no matter how nice everybody tries to be about it, it is not good for one's mental attitude, I think, and also not really very good career-wise, I would think.

CARY: Right. I had a secretary that was involved in an actual case involving the Department of Defense and she had to go back to testify. She testified that the accused grabbed everybody. This raised the question of why is it that some people could deal with unacceptable behavior and others couldn't. That was the focus of the investigation. But that puts the onus on the wrong person. It isn't for the person who is getting grabbed to deal with it, it is why do people think they can abuse their position. As a female supervisor of males you get into it too, thinking, "Okay, that is right, it can work both ways." To hear people talk about situations they have been in with a female boss was something I had just not thought about. Indeed, the possibility is there and may be even more subtle and more difficult to deal with, because at least when you are a woman everybody more or less doesn't blame you for it. But some people would look at a man claiming harassment and think, "What is wrong with him?"

Q: Yes. I think it is one of these things that we keep working on. Often it gets overly legalistic and gets into victimization. We are working on it. I would think though that often to get somewhere in business, our business or any other one, often the more informal setting of the lunch sort of takes you outside the office setting. Did you find this prohibiting, or did you sort of work around it?

CARY: Actually, I learned, as you learned, that if it is at your house you are in much safer grounds. So that is what I would do. I found that it was the one-on-one lunch or small group … if

you picked your group right, you could get just as much information and perhaps more as people bounced ideas off one another. But when you were really looking to cultivate somebody as they were going to be a good source of information — again, by being in a position both in India and in Morocco of having a cook — I invited them to the house. You also didn't have a problem with a bill. That was another thing. Men were always grabbing the bill when you had invited them to lunch. I would make arrangements of paying in advance so that no bill was ever presented at the table. I found entertaining in my own home made it a lot easier.

Ambassador Frances Cook

Ambassador to Burundi (1980-1983)

Q: Did you have any difficulties with loneliness abroad? You always lived by yourself.

COOK: I really never did. I think the exception to that, and this is really more a female perspective than an FSO [Foreign Service officer] perspective, I found that in developing countries, particularly, it is very hard to have close female friends among the nationals of the country you're assigned to. That's true for their cultural and educational reasons — namely that, as a single person, it's very hard to be close to a married woman of a foreign culture. They're almost all married.

Q: There aren't many career women.

COOK: I find that female support systems are very important for women professionals. They've been important to me through my whole career. They're perhaps more important to me than many, because I don't have any sisters. I always had a lot of friends in the third world among females, but never really the close kind of support relationship that I think is good for you. Now I had those kinds of relationships there with Americans and with men and women, but it wasn't that kind of qualitative relationship that you have in Europe or in Australia or in Washington.

Q: So that would make it a little bit lonelier. I should think it would be exacerbated the higher up the ladder you go — more visibility. When you're chief of mission, it's lonely at the top.

COOK: I think that's absolutely true, and you cope in various kinds of ways. One way I've always coped is being a great letter writer my whole career.

Q: You keep your circle of friends going.

COOK: I keep in touch with them. I've been less good on that recently than I used to be. I found I wrote a lot of letters in Australia and Dakar, for example, and keep it going at a distance.

Q: What about a hardship post as opposed to a non-hardship post? Did you find because they are more difficult, you're putting more of yourself into the assignment?

COOK: They're more difficult climatically, and in terms of isolation, and in terms of how long it takes to get to a place, and in terms of the diseases, perhaps, you're exposed to. In terms of the living, they frankly are easier for a woman, who has to manage a house, in addition to an office. In these "hardship posts" you have generally a competent house staff, at least you have one you can work with and train. In Washington or in Europe, you have to do it yourself. I think that even in the department currently there is a great underestimation on what that really means, being a female, or an unmarried male officer. You basically carry two full-time jobs, and the job gets much harder to do, and much more time-consuming, the higher you go up. Running a residence is a full-time job. I've had six years straight of doing that, and I came home really tired. I realize that there was basically no time off, ever. I think the same is true for unmarried male officers. There are very few of them. Where it's more the norm, I think, for senior female officers, it's unusual for a male officer. But serving in the third world in those conditions, I think, makes that part of the job easier than it would in Europe, for example.

Q: Because the help is still available?

COOK: It still is available, and in Burundi it was better than anything I've ever had any place. You can't judge it by the isolation of the post. It was far superior in Burundi, than what I had in Egypt.

…

Q: What do you think was the reaction of the host country to your being a woman?

COOK: I think they didn't know America well enough to know... If it had come from any other country they may have been surprised. From America, I think, they thought anything can go. They were so in the European mold. This is true of most African countries. It's a country where women occupy less senior government positions than most others in Africa, although they named their first female ministers while I was there, which I was very pleased about.

Q: Do you think because of you?

COOK: I don't know. I did a lot of things there that other ambassadors didn't do, and I guess I just made a visual impact. I'm not a small person. If I'm in a crowd of Africans I stand out one way or the other.

Ambassador Jane Abell Coon

Entering the Foreign Service (1957)

Q: At any time in these early days, did you have any interviews with people in [the office of] personnel? Did you have any of them ask you if you were going to leave to be married and that sort of thing?

COON: I don't remember anything like that. It may have happened, but I don't remember it. What I'm really conscious of now, probably as a result of the feminist movement, was that, back in the '50s, you accepted the fact that you were a woman and therefore it was going to be more difficult to compete. I didn't particularly get upset by it. It was just part of the environment.

Q: It's just the way life was.

COON: That's the way it was, and I hate to say I accepted it, but I didn't have any tremendous sense of injustice. I didn't have any great sense of anger over discrimination. It was just the way things were.

Q: We didn't know it could be any other way.

COON: In later years, talking it over, for example, with my husband … Every male officer in his A-100, his junior officer class, came in with a fixed notion that they were going to shoot for the top, that becoming an ambassador was the name of the game.

Q: Sure. Political cone.

COON: Particularly political cone. We didn't have cones in those days.

Q: No, that's true.

COON: I don't literally ever remember during my first period in the Foreign Service, my first sixteen years, ever dreaming that that could be possible. I did not aspire to it because it was not one of those things one aspired to. I'm not even sure I ever thought it would be possible to become a political counselor, because that implied supervising men, and women didn't supervise men very often in those days. It was not a common thing. There were certainly women in the department who did, but it was not an expectation. For a young male officer at that time, there was an expectation of rising up that wonderful ladder. I realize, looking back on it, I really did not see that as a goal. I thought I would work on each successive assignment. I loved the work, I loved the Foreign Service, but it never occurred to me that I would ever be able …

Q: Did you assume that you would marry, and leave the service? Or were you just accepting things as they came along?

COON: I think probably I operated at two levels. There was always an expectation there that there was a possibility of marrying and leaving the service, but I think there was also an equal expectation that this was a great and wonderful way to make a living. So probably both things operated at the same time. I think that young women now who come into the service find this absolutely inexplicable.

Q: I know. I know. And you find yourself defending yourself, perhaps?

COON: Sometimes I find it inexplicable, too.

Q: That's what consciousness-raising is all about.

COON: So anyway, I worked hard on Pakistan, and, as the INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] analyst, I learned a lot, and the time came to go out overseas. My predecessor's time was coming to an end in Karachi. I don't remember exactly what I did. There was no bid system in those days. But I worked to get myself in line as the candidate to succeed him in Karachi, and it seemed to be working. It was a logical, onward assignment for me. It was logical for the embassy in Karachi to take someone who knew something about Pakistan.

Q: Did you have to take the A-100 course?

COON: No. And I suppose that probably Karachi wasn't considered a plum by many, when you get right down to it. [*laughter*]

Q: I was just thinking how brave you were to go out to Karachi.

COON: I thought it was the place I really wanted to go, because I knew I could break in there. Again, I don't think there was a paneling system, but I got up to the assignment process, and I was assigned, when the word came back that neither the ambassador nor the DCM [deputy chief of mission] nor the political counselor felt that it was a reasonable assignment. A woman could not do substantive work in Pakistan.

Well, the prospects didn't look very good. I still don't know quite what happened. The assignment went up, apparently, all the way to the assistant secretary, who, to me at that time, was about two steps away from God. I mean, he was so high that I'd never met him. I don't even remember who it was, to this day. Apparently, the Pakistan desk officer must have recommended me, and he made the decision that I would go.

But I went out with some trepidation, knowing that I wasn't wholly welcome in my new post of assignment. [*laughter*]

Karachi, Pakistan: second secretary and political officer (1957-1959)

Q: Did you experience culture shock?

COON: I can't remember that I did. I was so curious and so excited about being at my first overseas post that I just plunged in and thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the country and the people. I felt, after I'd been there a couple of years, that, as a woman, despite the resistance to my coming there, I had really in many ways a distinct advantage. I was in some ways a third sex as far as the Pakistanis were concerned. Their social mores really didn't apply to me, their expectations of me as a woman. But at the same time I was a woman, and I could get into Pakistani families, which was virtually impossible for a man, so that I made a lot of really very good friend in several families.

I also had something of an advantage in terms of getting to know the very tiny handful of Pakistani professional women that existed then. In fact there were about four of them, and we used to have lunch together about once a month, and I learned an enormous amount about their problems as professional women in that society.

And I learned a lot about the culture. I can still remember one lunch when one of the women — she must have been in her early thirties and had her doctorate from the University of Minnesota — came in and rather, almost blushingly, which was not her style, announced that she was being married. The instant reaction of all of the other women at the table was, "Have you met him?" which indeed she had.

Q: She was a very forward woman, wasn't she, to have met her fiancé.

COON: She did not know him well, but she had met him. The family had almost despaired of her getting married because she was so years old.

Q: You mean she was in her twenties or something?

COON: I think she may have been as much as thirty.

Q: I see. She was really long in the tooth.

COON: May have been only in her late twenties, I'm not sure, but she was long in the tooth. I think I just learned probably more at that post than any post about the society and how it worked and how families functioned. And despite the fact that women were in *purdah* [the practice of concealing women from men], there were frequently very strong women in various families who wielded a great deal of power in family decision-making, and family decision-making is important in that part of the world. They were the ones, for the most part, that arranged the marriages, and they had an awful lot to do with issues of inheritance and issues of land and property, although technically the power was in the hands of the men.

…

Q: In your first assignment, did you feel you were treated like a talking horse or something, as this very unusual person, a woman and a Foreign Service officer?

COON: You mean by the Pakistanis or the Americans?

Q: Both. Did the Americans accept you as a colleague, the American men?

COON: I think so.

Q: Or did they treat you like the "little sister"? I mean, the sort of treatment you got at home.

COON: I suppose there was a little bit of the “little sister,” but no, I think I was accepted pretty well once I'd established that I could get around, that I wasn't afraid of getting out. In fact, I just loved getting out and was enormously curious. I just enjoyed myself enormously.

Q: Yes, and that enthusiasm carried over, of course.

COON: Yes. There was also a young group of diplomats in Karachi, single, mostly men: a couple of Turks, and a British officer, a Belgian, and a couple of Americans (myself, and one or two of the secretaries from the embassy). We had a great time, socially, as a small group.

Q: You were the only woman in this group?

COON: I was the only, at least, woman professional in the group. We had a wonderful time. We'd go out to the beach huts at a place called Hawks Bay, just outside of Karachi, and engage in camel races where you could rent a camel. As a group we'd rent what was known as a “bunder boat” in the harbor, the fishing boats, and go out for parties. It was a very pleasant sort of social life as well as a lot of fun professionally.

Q: Hardship post?

COON: It was a hardship post, yes; supposedly a hardship post, but I didn't find it much of a hardship.

Q: How did you arrange for entertaining? You had a flat-mate, you said. Did you work out a schedule with her?

COON: She didn't do much entertaining outside of the American community, and she did play bridge, and we worked out a schedule, so that didn't seem to be a problem.

I suspect they would not have put a young male political officer into a flat where he had to share with another. In fact, later a colleague came out who was a single officer in the political section, and he had his own house. I'm quite sure that he would never have been expected to share a house. But I didn't particularly fuss about this because I didn't have enough dishes and cutlery and what-all to really handle very much entertainment on my own.

Q: Was this an instance of "taking care" of a woman?

COON: No. I don't think for a moment it was an instance of taking care of a woman. I thought they were solving a housing problem, and they could put two women together without getting a squawk. And I didn't squawk because it turned out —

Q: You didn't have enough cutlery. [laughter]

COON: I didn't have enough cutlery to handle more than twelve people. And after I'd had typhoid it was nice to be in a place with somebody else. That's a very depressing disease. I look back on Karachi as just an awful lot of fun and a place where I learned a lot.

Bombay, India: consular and political officer (1960-1964)

COON: Anyway, I went on to Hindi training and got ready to go out to Bombay as consular officer. My assignment was made in January, and I wasn't going out until the following summer. I was told not to communicate with the post, because the consul general, who was retiring in June, was unalterably opposed to women in the Foreign Service. He was very much old-school. And [the office of] personnel said that it would be unwise to communicate with the post until absolutely the last minute before he was leaving.

So it was finally communicated. I guess by that time I'd finished Hindi language, was taking the consular course, and I went to a party to meet my new consul general, who was going out to replace this gentleman.

My new consul general — I can still remember the party — said, "Oh, I'm so glad to meet you, Jane. I guess I really ought to tell you what I've been doing today. I had a letter from my predecessor, a long letter, three pages, explaining all of the reasons why a woman could not do consular work in Bombay, so I have been going through the department today to see if I could break your assignment."

So far he was unsuccessful. But this was literally days before I was supposed to leave for the post. He wasn't in a position to make a judgment himself, and he accepted the judgment of his predecessor that a woman couldn't do consular work. When I think of how many women are in consular work now … [*laughter*]

Q: I know, I know. That's where they're supposed to be naturals.

COON: Fortunately, he was unsuccessful. I went out, but I went out again with that wonderful feeling that my boss thought I shouldn't be there. He had been a long-time economic cone officer, knew nothing about consular work, and it was a one-person consular section, so I was on my own.

It turned out to be really a piece of cake. I mean, it was hard learning the job in terms of a one-person operation, but there was no problem in being a woman. In fact, again, it turned out in some respects to be an asset.

What the old consul general had particularly emphasized that it would be impossible for a woman to handle was shipping and seamen.

Q: Same old story. They use that in any part of the world.

COON: Same old story, yes. In fact it was probably easier for a woman to handle shipping and seamen than any other part of consular work. I very quickly discovered that most seamen had been raised at the knees of a strict mother, who had beaten into his head that you don't swear in front of ladies.

They'd come into my office, and I had arranged it so there wasn't a handy chair to sit in, so they would stand. They would start complaining about food on the ship, or working conditions. They'd say, "Ma'am, that go– … uh. That da– … uh. That — the captain is serving us absolute sh– … ma'am, the food isn't good." [*laughter*] It would only take them five minutes before they were so absolutely paralyzed by their inability to communicate that it generally solved the problem. The captains were, in many cases, equally docile.

I found that jail visits and that kind of thing were no problem. The Indians were extremely helpful. Usually an American sailor in jail was appreciative of anything you could do, like getting him put on a non-[vegetarian] diet schedule, rather than a [vegetarian] diet, and arrange to have some food sent in. So that it didn't turn out to be, again, at all a problem. In fact, as I say, it was probably an advantage being a woman.

I wouldn't trade that consular tour for anything because I think you learn as much as a consular officer as you do in any other job in the service. You learn an awful lot about people.

Q: Yes, I imagine you must. Is it monotonous work?

COON: No. It wasn't monotonous then. By present-day standards Bombay would have been a very low-volume visa post, so you could spend quite a lot of time on each case. There was a mix of protection and welfare: you know, the odd American who died or was hospitalized; shipping and seamen. It was before the hippie phenomenon, but you had this wonderful phenomenon of world travelers at that time, Americans going from England to Australia. They were usually very interesting, if a trifle offbeat. If I found one interesting enough I'd have him or her home for lunch. So you met a lot of interesting people.

I traveled in the consular district, mostly by train up through Madhya Pradesh. [I] made one two-week trip up through central India. Again, I was certainly the first woman consular officer anybody had seen. I was calling on Indian officials and visiting mostly missionaries.

Then the second year I moved into the political position, and I spent the next three years as political officer in Bombay.

…

Q: So your consular work really fed right into your political work, didn't it?

COON: Yes. One other interesting aspect: I guess being a woman was an oddity, and I didn't quite realize what an oddity it was until about 1963. My mother and father came out to visit, traveling on one of the last Anchor Line ships through the Suez Canal, and landed in Bombay and spent about three months with me.

They arrived before Christmas, and my Indian friends were just absolutely delighted to have my parents there. It somehow made me human to have family, to actually be “born of woman,” so to speak. I realized that it humanized me.

Q: You weren't sprung from the head of Zeus.

COON: Exactly. [*laughter*] They just fell all over themselves giving my parents Christmas presents and inviting them out for dinner. My parents, I think, were really quite overcome by the amount of attention they got. But it was clear my Indian friends were just delighted to find that I indeed was human like the rest of them.

Q: Yes, yes. Isn't that fun.

COON: Bombay was my only four-year tour. I think your first tour is special and your longest tour is special, because you get to know a place so much better.

I was transferred to Delhi in 1965. The political counselor who'd gotten to know me and my work in Bombay asked me if I would come to Delhi at that point, which I did, and I spent two years as first secretary in Delhi. There we didn't have a political and economic section; we had an external section and an internal section. I was in the external section following Indo-[Pakistani] and Indo-Nepalese affairs, among others, so I traveled several times to Nepal. It was also during this period that, very early in that tour, there was a very bad downturn in Indo-Pak relations over the Rann of Kutch affair. I remember being over at the British embassy with my British counterpart, and the two of us down on the floor with a whole lot of maps, looking at the Rann of Kutch [a salt marsh on the border of India and Pakistan], when the British ambassador walked in, and the two of us sort of leaping to our feet. [*laughter*]

Q: Now all this time, had you been getting promotions consistently?

COON: Yes, I got two promotions, really, out of Bombay. I was promoted, I think it was after my consular tour, and then I was promoted when I first got to Delhi, which was really based on my Bombay work.

Q: So this would make you about a [rank of] three now, would it? As first secretary, you'd be a three.

COON: Yes. I was a three.

Q: The old three.

COON: The old three. I was, in age, a young three, because I made three when I was thirty-five or something like that, which in those days was young.

Q: So it certainly didn't hold you back, being a woman, did it? You certainly got them when you should have, and in fact that's very good to go from four to three in less than three years, very good. By this time, though, you were building up a very good reputation, because we heard about it in another part of the world. So you must have been doing very well.

Leaving the Foreign Service: marriage to Carleton Coon (1968)

COON: All right. I came back to Washington from Delhi. In the course of my Delhi assignment, the India desk officer had come out, actually a couple of times, a man named Carleton Coon.

Q: I see. He was the desk officer.

COON: The first time I met him I was up to my ears in a rather complicated arrangement between India, Nepal, and the United States, where we were attempting to help the Nepalese and also encourage some better relations between India and Nepal. In the course of this effort, we undertook to provide some construction equipment to the Indians. The Indians were going to use it to build an east-west highway in Nepal. This was a road that would go from the eastern to the western end of Nepal at the southern edge where the terrain is not as mountainous, in the plains area called the Terai.

Well, the Indians were skeptical about whether we were going to come through with our construction equipment, and I had been sending off messages, and there had been great negotiations in the United States about breaking some equipment out of Army stores, I think. I was very anxious to get a token shipment at that time of four bulldozers and ten dump trucks.

So I was introduced to Carleton Coon for the first time in the political counselor's office and apparently turned on him roundly, as he remembers it, and said, "Where are my bulldozers and my dump trucks?" [*laughter*]

He was astonished because he had seen my name at the bottom of reports as “J.S. Abell” and didn't know I was a woman. So we met initially over bulldozers and dump trucks. Then he came back on another trip, and I don't remember very much about that trip. I think we had dinner together, but it was strictly as professional colleagues. He was married with a family, and I certainly didn't think twice about the contact.

I was assigned back to the [United] States in February of '67. I had arranged to have furniture built in Delhi before I came back, and after I came back I bought a small house on Capitol Hill, just a gem of a place, a lovely little place right on Third Street. And I settled and moved my furniture in June.

Meantime I had seen Carl a couple of times professionally. Shortly thereafter, his wife died of cancer.

Q: You didn't know her?

COON: I had met her once or twice, but she'd been ill with cancer for some time. In the following weeks and months Carl persuaded me that it would be wise to give up my little house on the hill and become a Foreign Service spouse instead of a Foreign Service officer.

Q: How did you feel about that? Here you had this terrific career going. You were one of the stars.

COON: To use a cliché, I guess I was somewhat swept off my feet. Carl has often said that he was slightly crazy at the time, as you are in a period like that, and he was enormously intent and enormously determined, and it seemed as if I had little choice.

Q: A very persuasive man.

COON: He had six children, so really the question of continuing in the service was not a very real option at the time, quite aside from the fact that the service did not allow women who were married to Foreign Service officers to continue in the service.

Q: The unwritten rule. Didn't you have to think several times before you took on six children and gave up your career? I think you were very, very brave.

COON: Either that or not very wise.

Q: How old were the children at this time?

COON: The youngest was four, and the oldest was sixteen. It ran sixteen, fifteen, roughly fourteen, twelve, six, and four.

Q: So the little ones really needed a mother very badly, didn't they?

COON: Yes. I think it did take a fair amount of thought.

Q: How did your family feel? Did they give you any of their ideas on this?

COON: I think my family was in a state of considerable shock, as a matter of fact. [*laughter*] They thought I had gone out of my mind. But they'd been used to me doing strange things.

Q: I should say. By now they must have been. But you didn't worry about giving up your complete freedom to do whatever you wanted? I mean, you have to do a lot of compromising.

COON: I don't think I was aware of the business of giving up one's freedom. I wasn't quite clever enough to have figured that one out. Even after we were married, on several occasions I'd forget to tell Carl where I was going or when I was going to be home in the evening, and I discovered that you didn't do that.

Q: Panic sets in.

COON: Yes. I was just used to being independent and on my own and not responsible for telling anybody anything, so it took me a while to get used to that.

…

COON: [*laughter*] I can honestly say that I worked harder during that period than I have ever worked in the Foreign Service, and I am under no illusions about what a woman who looks after

a family does. I worked incredibly hard during that period. Every time you were just bollixed up to a fare-thee-well in the kitchen trying to get dinner, would be the moment that a child had to talk to you about something. They never can talk to you about something when you're at leisure.

So that was an action-packed two years, the older children being kicked in and out of schools. Oh, goodness.

Kathmandu, Nepal: wife of deputy chief of mission (1970-1973)

Q: … You not only are one of the women who left the service to be married, but you subsequently came back in, and you had left at a pretty high position and now you were the wife of a DCM. How was that, switching gears that way?

COON: I don't think I was very conscious that it was difficult, but in fact, looking back on it, it was difficult. We were out in the Foreign Service context again, in a wonderfully exciting assignment. We loved Kathmandu. It was a wonderful family post in the sense that you could do a lot together as a family. And we did a lot of day hikes. Once I got over my problem with my ankle, we did several treks during the three-and-a-half year period, mostly, I think with one exception, with the children. So it was a very satisfying family post.

I was in the slightly anomalous position of being the DCM's wife, working under a [woman] ambassador who didn't have a spouse in residence.

Q: That's the point I should have made, because in effect you had to be the ambassador's wife, didn't you?

COON: I had to work out that relationship. I worked it out, I think, to a large extent, to my satisfaction. I'm not the least bit sure whether I worked it out to the ambassador's satisfaction.

Q: You did. I can tell you that.

COON: Because at the beginning, I was fairly certain that she wasn't quite sure whether to treat me as another officer on the staff or the DCM's wife or quite how. Clearly, I was not another officer on the staff, and I also wasn't, as the DCM's spouse, about to play the role of her staff aide. Nor could I play, really, the role of her spouse, in terms of entertaining and that sort of thing. So we had to work out a workable relationship.

Q: But vis-à-vis the other women, you fulfilled the role of ambassador's wife, didn't you?

COON: To a large extent, yes, in terms of the American Woman's Club.

Q: Yes, the things that a male ambassador's wife generally does.

COON: I think people were still calling on the DCM's wife in those days, and so I played that role. Communicators' wives and officers' wives and everybody called. Because of the children

being in school, I took an active role in the school, and was on the school board for a couple of years.

Q: In effect, you would sort of be the welfare officer, wouldn't you? Not officer, but the person in touch with the community. If there were any morale problems or something, you would hear about it?

COON: That's the supposed role of the DCM's wife. I'm not sure I played that role very effectively. I think it was a role I wasn't terribly accustomed to. In retrospect, I'm not sure at all how well I played that role. I think in some respects I did. I tried to be sympathetic to women who had teenage problems, because heaven knows, I shared a number of those problems. We were all in it together. …

…

COON: … I think the last two years in Nepal I began to get very restless. And again, not recognizing it at the time, but in retrospect, I think I had periods of significant depression. Again, it was a question of not having a job. When you have been in a professional situation and then are in a position where you are the spouse of the DCM or whatever, you have a change of identity, and your identity to a very large extent becomes a derivative identity. Again, I wasn't particularly conscious of it at the time, but in retrospect I think I had a hard time on the issue of a derivative identity.

Q: Sure, sure. You weren't Jane Abell Coon, you were Mrs. Carleton Coon.

COON: That's right. That's right. I noticed it in social situations, and in my present job I use it as a training device. At a cocktail party, when you would be introduced to a young male officer from another embassy, or from your own embassy, you would find, more often than not, he would be looking directly over your shoulder as he was introduced to you and shaking your hand, obviously looking for somebody interesting to talk to. I now act this out with junior officers.

Q: Do you? Good.

COON: Suggest that this is not the way to get ahead.

Q: No, and I think it must have been difficult not to be on the inside anymore.

COON: Well, Carl has always talked about his work. I'd been in the Foreign Service and Carl discussed his office.

Q: But you weren't reading the cables.

COON: No, I wasn't reading cables, but we discussed a great deal of what went on. And of course the ambassador treated me as sort of at least half an officer, which I appreciated. She was very good about that, so that I wasn't on the outside completely. Probably more on the inside than most spouses in a similar position, because I'd done the work. But it was still partly a

derivative identity. It was also a question of — which did not reflect terribly well on me — that I did not really have the self-discipline to take on an independent, say, writing project, or something like that. I was a product of my profession, and without external events in a sense setting my agenda, I had a hard time setting my own agenda. That's the best way to put it.

Q: Well, I think that an awful lot was asked of you, to completely turn your life around into another totally different channel.

COON: I have a great deal of regard, a very great respect for wives in the Foreign Service who have the capacity to set their own agendas and get on with an independent life, whether it's writing or art or whatever it may be. I learned to have a great deal of respect for that.

Q: How did this manifest itself? You were tired all the time, that sort of depression? Just didn't enjoy life much?

COON: Yes, I wasn't as active as I should have been, and I didn't get out as much as I should have during periods.

Q: How did you feel about entertaining and having people there so much? Did you get fed up with that?

COON: I don't think so. To this day, I don't find hostessing large cocktail parties a great joy, but no, I didn't mind a stream of people through the house. At least, I don't think I did, because many of them were quite interesting.

Now there was one development up in Kathmandu that I think relates a little bit to the theme of this enterprise, and it certainly has made an enormous difference in a lot of my attitudes and thinking. In the early '70s the women's movement reached Kathmandu, although in the United States it had begun in the '60s — but everything in the Foreign Service is about ten years later. A group of young American women in Kathmandu — some school teachers, some young AID [Agency for International Development] professionals, a Peace Corps staff wife — anyway, about fifteen younger women in their late twenties/early thirties got together to form a woman's consciousness group.

They had fair diversity in terms of being married or single, and in terms of background, but apparently after they got together a few times, they decided they didn't have enough diversity of age, so they very tentatively approached me and the AID director's wife, a woman, as I was, in her early forties at that time. I guess maybe Helen Ide was a little older than I was. She had seven children, and I had six. And they asked us if we'd like to join, and Helen and I thought about it and said, “Yes, we'd be delighted.”

Well, that turned out to be, I think, a very unusual and important experience for me in the sense that it was my first exposure to any of the thinking, any of the consciousness, any of the evolution of the women's movement. I can't even remember how often we met, every two weeks or something like that for the better part of a year. So we got to know each other very well, and I

still keep in touch with some of these women. It really was an eye-opener for me, just absolutely an eye-opener.

Q: You read the literature, did you?

COON: Yes, we read some of the literature. One of the women had been in a group in the United States and had some notion of how you led them. So that we'd take a topic each week, or every two weeks or whenever we met, and discuss a topic. And it was, I think for all of us, a very important and useful experience.

Q: Did you go through a phase of intense anger?

COON: During that period?

Q: As you realized the subtle put-downs and all? Having had a very successful career yourself, perhaps you didn't feel that you had been treated as a second-class citizen?

COON: I don't recall going through a period of anger. I recall becoming very conscious of some of my own inherent patterns and attitudes, that at a party I would avoid talking to other women because men were obviously the only interesting people to talk to. When I got over that, I discovered there were, gee, an awful lot of interesting women.

Q: Who didn't just want to talk babies.

COON: Who didn't just want to talk babies. So it really changed my social behavior.

Q: We were part of our own problem, weren't we?

COON: Oh, we were very much a part of our own problem. And it also made one very conscious of the level of competitiveness among women, that we competed with each other rather brutally for the attention of men. My exposure certainly raised my consciousness of women's issues.

There were two things that came earlier that are at least worth mentioning. The earliest one I remember treating with sort of astonishment and amazement. It was in Karachi way back in the late ‘50s. I'd gone out as a woman officer in my first post. In the ‘50s, at least the conventional wisdom was that a woman secretary hated working for a woman officer. We were poison to secretaries. I was conscious of this, and I always tried to be terribly careful in the way I handled myself in the office vis-à-vis secretaries. Of course, I had never dreamt of dictating or anything like that. Just really out of the question.

One day in Karachi, after I'd been there sometime, one of the two secretaries in the political section — I still remember her name, Marie Martinez — marched into my office and said, "Jane, if you're going to get on in this business, you're going to have to learn to dictate."

And I said, "I can't dictate."

She said, "I'm going to sit down here. You have some thank-you letters to do" for the ambassador or somebody. "I'm going to sit down here with my book, and I don't care how long it takes, and I'm not going to look at you. I'm just going to sit here, and you're going to dictate."

And so I stuttered through two or three two-sentence short thank-you letters. At intervals Marie would come back and make me dictate, and I learned to dictate. I learned something else about a woman helping a woman. She was amazing. Why she did it, to this day I don't know, but it certainly made a lot of difference.

And then, of course, the second event was probably common to just about every woman of my generation sometime in the mid-'60s. Several years after the book came about, somebody sent me a copy of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, and that was an eye-opener. There we are, my generation.

Q: That was the seminal work for you, was it?

COON: Oh, I think so, yes. I think it was for a lot of us. So those two preceded this woman's group in Kathmandu, but I think the woman's group in Kathmandu certainly changed and internalized an awful lot of different attitudes. I don't think I have ever since then had the same sense of women as competitors. I think it's made possible, not only for me, but for many, many other women, the informal networks we have now, which I think are invaluable. I really look back on that as a very important event.

Q: Yes, and I suppose it changed the way you thought about your daughters, didn't it? You were careful not to inculcate in them the same sort of competitiveness?

COON: I'm not sure. I don't know whether I did or not.

Q: It's interesting because we can intellectualize something, but the application is not always right there. Well, I mean such things as making sure the girl is attractive physically, and always looks nice, and has the pretty dress, and that sort of thing.

COON: Oh, yes. Well, I'd never been terribly good at that anyway. [*laughter*]

Q: Because that was so important to our mothers, certainly.

COON: Also, I have long felt that the woman's movement liberated the men as much as the women. Certainly, the organization of our family when we got back to the [United] States evolved in different directions. My husband, for example, actually enjoys doing grocery shopping more than I do, but before it wasn't sort of okay. He enjoys cooking breakfast; I hate cooking breakfast, and so when we came back he became the breakfast cook. There were little things like that, which not only freed me up, but freed him up to do things that he enjoyed.

Q: Which were thought sissy before.

COON: Isn't that ridiculous? It would have been interesting to have taken a census in a Giant Store in 1959 as to how many men were there, and how many men are there now.

Reentering the Foreign Service (1976)

COON: So we left Kathmandu in September of '73 and came back a year. Carl was assigned as diplomat-in-residence in Northfield, Minnesota, at Carleton College, which meant putting the children in school, actually late, the first of November. We spent the academic year in Northfield, which I rather enjoyed, although I still had this restlessness about not having a defined role.

Toward the end of that year, I was invited to do a lecture for one of the courses on China, on the Sino-Indian War, and I dove into the research on that and just thoroughly enjoyed it. I spent about a month on one lecture. Carl and I did some joint lectures at various colleges in the Middle West. So I began to get back a little bit.

Now it was at this time, too, when we came back, that someone from the department, whose name escapes me, approached me on the subject of coming back into the Foreign Service. The window had been opened for women who had left during the period I left. I don't think I ever would have, on my own, applied. I'm not sure why. At that point I was thinking just very faintly of going back to law school, but this woman approached me and sent me all the papers, and when I was in Washington she encouraged me to come in and talk. And we did, and I applied.

Q: She was a Foreign Service officer herself?

COON: She was in the department, in an office that was concerned with this business of bringing women back in. I do not remember her name, but I, again, give her a lot of credit for taking initiative rather than just sort of … So I applied. I don't know whether it was before we left for Morocco the next summer, or after we got to Morocco, I was accepted back in at my old grade. They said that they could defer until we returned to Washington, so it was a two-year deferral there. I don't know, it may have been only a one-year, because of the security clearance; I don't remember exactly. So anyway, we went from Minnesota to Morocco.

Again, I considered this sort of something in my hip pocket, so to speak, coming back into the service, but it didn't seem to me to be very viable if we had another overseas assignment after Morocco.

Ambassador to Bangladesh (1981-1984)

COON: The issue inevitably arises — how did my mission, the Bangladesh government, and my colleagues in the diplomatic corps respond to the new American ambassador in the form of a woman? I think without question there was an enormous amount of just plain curiosity all around. I suspect that within my own mission, particularly among some of the older men, probably in the AID mission, there was a very considerable skepticism about the wisdom of the United States government. Among my colleagues in the diplomatic corps, I heard afterward that in fact there was very considerable skepticism among several of the Western European ambassadors — not,

interestingly enough, the Asians — again, questioning the wisdom of the United States government in sending a woman to a Muslim country. I think I can safely say that within a very few months, most of the people who were skeptical at the beginning were coming around to me to consult on various aspects of the political situation.

With the Bangladesh government, so far as I was able to ascertain, and obviously I can't be 100 percent certain of this, I did not sense any problems at all. The foreign minister was extremely gracious; the president, of course, the finance minister, [and] other key members of the government, I think, accepted me as the American ambassador, and it did not appear to be an issue.

I've often said that in South Asia, at any rate — I don't know about other parts of the world — I think in many ways a Western woman is sort of a third sex. They don't expect you to conform to their social mores. You aren't a part of that culture. You're obviously still a woman, but you're something outside of their cultural context. So I think it was perhaps not surprising that I got probably more raised eyebrows from my Western European colleagues than I did from Asians.

Q: Did it bother you? Did you have a feeling that, "I'm on trial now, and all eyes are on me, and I'd better not make a misstep," or did you just sort of figure, "Well, I know what I'm doing"?

COON: I think it was more of the latter. By the time I got to Dhaka I knew South Asia pretty well. I had visited Bangladesh on several occasions, the first one as far back as 1957, while some of my contacts in the Bangladesh government were still in graduate school, so I think I was reasonably confident in my knowledge of the local situation. Although obviously the role is different than when you're either a junior officer or when you're a visiting fireman from Washington. But I don't think I felt that I was on trial, particularly.

I felt then and throughout my tour that, by virtue of being a woman and the American ambassador, I was far from being invisible. I was obviously a conspicuous figure in the community. When there would be a function of some sort, like at this ceramic factory, being covered by Bangladeshi television, almost inevitably the TV clip that evening would zero in at some point on me in the diplomatic corps, or the Saudi ambassador, or both — the Saudi ambassador because he wore Arab clothes (and Saudi Arabia was also a significant aid donor to Bangladesh), and me because I obviously was different from the other ambassadors and represented the United States. There was no point in my tour in Bangladesh when I did not feel that I was a public figure, and I think perhaps the biggest difference between any other job in the embassy and being the ambassador is that as ambassador you are a public figure all the time.

Q: You can't let down at all, I suppose. You're always on parade.

COON: You're always visible to either your own community or the Bangladeshi community. Now this doesn't mean you go around acting like a stuffed shirt, but you're conscious of the fact that when you're doing your laps in the swimming pool, there are two or three of the wives nudging each other and saying, "There's the ambassador." Not to speak of diplomatic receptions or anything like that, where one expects it.

Q: And you're more on display than if you were the ambassador's wife?

COON: I think so. Because in some ways I was, you know, the two of them wrapped up together to the distaff side of the community. To pursue that subject just briefly, there was an enormous amount of curiosity on the distaff side, which I was not really conscious of. When my new DCM came, his wife, who is a marvelous person and had very good antenna with respect to the community, suggested that I speak to the American Woman's Club. We talked about what I would speak about, and I was going to talk about U.S. policy toward Bangladesh, and finally she said, "You know, what they really want to know about is you."

And so I got up and gave an autobiographical account, slightly embarrassed by this, but it obviously was something they were just inordinately curious about: how I got there.

Q: Did you ever feel, when you were doing your daily rounds out there, that you were not only doing them for yourself, but you were doing them for other women? That's a comment many of the ambassadors have said to me. They felt a burden that they had to be just as good as they could be because they were striking a blow for women. Did you ever feel that?

COON: You know, in the beginning, in the first year, at least, while I was there, I was asked by several women's organizations to speak. I think maybe I spoke to one, but I consciously made a decision that it was important to be seen as the American ambassador and not the woman ambassador. So that I did not, the first year and a half, take much of a role with women's organizations, for example.

And I didn't make this decision lightly. I got together the professional women of the embassy — there were several professional women in AID, USIS [U.S. Information Service], and the embassy, some of which had been there longer and had very good contacts in the community, both men and women — and we talked about it. They concurred that it was important that I be seen as the American ambassador and not a woman ambassador. We actually had a discussion on this point.

Now, I think where it hit me … I think I realized, not immediately, but fairly early on, the symbolic import for women of my being there. It was something that continued throughout my tour there, and I found in many ways quite touching. One of the first receptions given for me was a reception by the DCM for embassy staff, including the Foreign Service nationals and their wives. Many of the wives followed their husbands and were very shy. In retrospect, I suspect that many of them would not have come if they hadn't been curious about this new phenomenon. And repeatedly, throughout the evening, as I stood in the reception line, I would shake hands with Mr. So-and-So, the agricultural assistant in AID, and his wife then would take my hand and almost whisper in my ear, "We're so glad you're here."

This became almost a pattern at the early receptions, that many Bangladeshi women — it wasn't just one an evening — would repeat this: "We're so glad you're here." "It's wonderful to have you here." "I'm glad the Americans sent you." That kind of thing.

Q: Which you know they would never have said to a man.

COON: No, that was strictly the women to me. And I realized that I had a symbolic value, and this continued for the three years.

Q: So it had a big impact.

COON: So I think without question, it had a significant symbolic impact on half the population, if you will. My last year there, when I was well established, I did consciously accept more invitations from women's groups. Not a lot, but more.

Q: No, I see your point. I should think it would be very important to make it seem that this was such a … not an ordinary event, but, "I am not to be treated any differently than a man." And make it seem as though, "Of course this is the way we do things."

COON: It's in the normal course of events. That's right.

Q: Would make probably a bigger impact, I should think. Provided you carry through and do the job well, which we know in your case, you did.

COON: Right up to the final receptions I would get these very quiet comments, and in some very far corners of the country where I traveled. Because I had appeared so much on television at all these functions the government televises, apparently my general recognition was very, very high.

…

Q: Well, may I ask you what were your relationships with the women officers — or were there any women officers?

COON: Oh, yes, there were several in both the embassy and the AID mission. I'm not sure whether I mentioned this before, but a few weeks after I got there, I met with several of the professional women in the various parts of the embassy to consult with them on how I should relate to women's organizations in Bangladesh, because I was being deluged with invitations to speak to women's groups. And I think they concurred with my judgment that, at least the first year or so, I should not speak to many women's groups, feeling that I needed to establish my credentials as the American ambassador in Dhaka, not a woman ambassador.

But when I left, the women members of the staff in the embassy — professional and support staff — all had a luncheon for me. Two or three of them said that they felt it had made a substantial difference to them to have a woman ambassador. I think one of them implied that it was good for her boss, [*laughter*] who apparently was not among the most enlightened of men. And he had to report to me. So I found, among the women in the embassy, generally a very positive reaction.

Q: Did you find that this carried over at all to the Bangladeshi women?

COON: Oh, yes, very much so; very positive reaction.

Q: One of your fellow ambassadors learned, subsequent to her tour in Africa, that because she was there, two women were appointed to very high positions. Because she had been there, it was thought that, "If America does this, it's got to be the thing to do." These women met her subsequently, and they said, "Had it not been for you, we would not have been given these slots." Did anything like that happen to you?

COON: I'm not conscious of anything specific like that, but again, as I said earlier, I was constantly told by Bangladeshi women that they were terribly glad I was there. I think it did make a significant impact on that portion of society.

Q: What about your secretaries, your personal secretaries? They were women?

COON: Oh, yes. I had two of the best. I had one, Julie Holmes, for the first two years, and then Barbara Matchey the last year. Both of them were highly professional and enormously competent.

Q: What was your relationship with these particular women? What I'm getting at is this: In some cases, if the women were not married at post, which in effect you weren't, because your husband was off running another embassy, about the only person they could turn to, to sort of chat with afterhours whatever, were their secretaries because they didn't want to create any ill-feeling by playing favorites among the wives of officers. You see what I mean? But [with] their own secretaries they could, and so some of them came to have very good friendships with their secretaries. Or was your relationship totally different, because you were flying out to visit your husband from time to time?

COON: No, I think I had a good relationship, particularly with the second secretary, and we joked a lot together. She was very good about dropping things off for me at the house if I had to be home early. Actually she lived very close by and so was always more than willing to drop by and take dictation, or if I had a memorandum of conversation I wanted to do, so that we had a good, warm relationship. It was not, I think, a relationship that you described, in that sense.

Q: I think part of that's a matter of personalities, don't you? Temperaments. And by no means all of the women have done this.

COON: I have a horrid feeling I'm going to begin repeating myself, but did I earlier tell that wonderful story about my first secretary who looked at me as I was leaving for the foreign ministry, and my slip was showing? She said, rather speculatively, "You know, Madame Ambassador, it's easier to tell a lady ambassador, "Your slip is showing," than to tell a male ambassador his fly is open." [*laughter*]

Q: [Laughter] *That's quite true, isn't it?*

What about the wives? Did you see much of the wives? Or just socially?

COON: Just pretty much socially. I had a wonderful DCM's wife, Rika Schmidt, who is a very self-sufficient, independent person, of tremendously wide interests, and a very warm personality. I think we worked out a good relationship where I did not, I think, use her as a substitute wife,

the way some single ambassadors of either sex tend to use the DCM's wife. But she was there, you know, in a pinch, when I did need advice. So that was a good relationship.

Q: Was she willing to do the usual women's clubs things?

COON: She wasn't into that very much, but at one point when there was a problem in the women's club, she brought it to my attention and agreed to go on the board, ex officio, to keep an eye on it. But normally she was not my, sort of, substitute on that sort of thing, and there was no reason to expect her to be. In fact, I rather respected her independence.

Q: What did happen then? The women who wanted to belong kept it up?

COON: Yes. The first meeting of the women's club each year, as I recall, was at the residence, and shortly after I got there I spoke to the women's club because I discovered there was just enormous curiosity about me. On another occasion, I had the spouses over to the residence after there would been a security incident. There was a level of tension in the community, and so I had the spouses over to the house to be sure that we had open communication to them.

Reflecting on work-life balance

Q: You'd had it yourself. Do you feel that, while this was a high point of your career, being an ambassador, and in his career, his being an ambassador, that you really sacrificed quite a bit those years?

COON: Actually, I think I probably sacrificed more during the period when I was an office director and deputy assistant secretary because I was working so terribly hard, and that, particularly the last two years there, '79 to '81, I neglected my family — in terms of not just my time, but attention and focus.

Q: Sure, sure. I'm interested in this, because you're not the only one who has discussed this. Of the ones who are married, there seems to be terrible guilt feelings among these very high-achieving women, and I'm sure that their husbands don't feel any guilt if they don't get home in time to take care of the family.

COON: That's right, that's right. Yes, I felt very guilty about those years, particularly, that four years from '77 to '81. My children were … the youngest was … let's see, Ellen graduated from Andover in '79 and Richard in '81, so it wasn't as if they were little, and they were both in boarding school — but I still felt guilty!

You know, I can remember the Thanksgiving of 1979. On Wednesday before Thanksgiving the embassy in Islamabad was overrun. The kids were all home for Thanksgiving, and I managed to stagger in, I think, for about an hour and a half for Thanksgiving dinner, and the rest of the weekend I was in the office. And, okay, you know they understand that it's a crisis, but still . . .

Q: But still . . . You know there were things they wanted to ask you about.

COON: That's right. Yes.

Q: A mother's the linchpin in the family, there's no question about that. But I just wonder if this is going to always go on. Is there no way that men can share the emotional burden of the children as well?

COON: Carl changed his views, very radically, when he was widowed. He had always been, you know, home at seven o'clock or seven-thirty, and his wife was supposed to have the kids under control and fed and be able to sit down and have a martini with him. When she died, he realized that he had left the management and the raising of the children almost entirely to his wife.

Q: Which I think all men of his generation did.

COON: Exactly, all men of his generation. He changed his pattern a good deal. Even after we were married, there were some things that I could not substitute for. But more than that, I think he realized he just didn't want to live that way anymore. His relationship now with the youngest children — who were quite young at the time, and therefore he has spent much more time with — is really quite different than his relationship with the four older ones. So that I think he has a slight sense of guilt about that.

…

Q: Would you have any advice to give to young women who want a career in the Foreign Service?

COON: Well, I think I was pretty lucky in terms of being able to combine family and career. I think it can be done, obviously, but I don't think it's very easy. For women to think they can have it all, I'm not sure that many of them will be able to do so; whether they come in as tandems and look forward to a joint career with their husbands, or whether they come in as singles, and lose out on family life. I don't know. It is not as easy as a lot of women think, and a lot of us thought, perhaps, in the '70s that it would somehow be.

Q: [Ambassador Rozanne Ridgway] feels that, in her case at least, had she been married earlier, she would not have become an ambassador.

COON: Why, I wonder?

Q: Had she married at a younger age, she feels she would have had to give more than she's now giving to a marriage, because you have to. Well, you did, Jane. You gave up the service for nine years. That's what she means. You did make it, but let's face it, you are the exception. Most people aren't as capable as you, and it's a combination of things.

COON: Of course, it's a combination of things.

Q: You're the ultimate tandem. I wonder if there will be any others.

COON: I don't know.

Q: It certainly is an unusual thing. But anyway, that's what she said. She just didn't think that it would be possible, and with the pressures that are now …

COON: The pressures on her must just be phenomenal.

Q: Oh, they are terrible.

COON: I mean, she must be working about a twenty-seven-hour day, as well organized as she is.

Q: Then I will ask you the last question I ask —

COON: On the other hand, you know what? I would much rather be married than not, because, you know, time comes for all of us when we have to retire, and it's an awful lot nicer having someone there.

Q: Are you saying you would rather be married — well, how can you say that, because you did make ambassador?

COON: Either/or. Okay, I'd like to have it both ways. [*laughter*] That's right. But I'm not saying it's very easy to have it both ways.

Q: No, no, it can't be. Because you have to pay in some way, and that's what you're telling young women: that they've got to expect it. Would you consider that the life is interesting enough, and worthwhile enough, that it's worth —

COON: What, Foreign Service?

Q: Foreign Service.

COON: Oh, sure.

Q: Worth doing again. In other words, you would not discourage anyone from coming in?

COON: No. I am not a cynic. I think obviously things have changed since I was a young officer. The security environment, I think, is very, very different, so that our missions abroad in many areas are almost fortresses, and I think that changes life for many people in the Foreign Service. It inhibits, perhaps more than is necessary, getting out and traveling and getting around in the country to which you're assigned. I think there's some very good people coming into the Foreign Service now; I've seen in this present job. I've been in charge of the — [*interruption*]

Q: The very last question is, what do you consider the most significant achievement in your life?

COON: Oh, good heavens!

Q: I thought you'd like that.

…

Q: Then, what's given you the most satisfaction? That might be another way of putting it.

COON: What's given me the most satisfaction? Okay, apart from my marriage to Carl — that's probably the greatest satisfaction — apart from that, possibly . . . When one becomes the instant stepmother of six, there are some rocky times. I think possibly the different, but generally very, very satisfying, relationship I have with the children now. So I guess that comes at least in part from the private life, but I have a lot of satisfaction in what I've done, too, in public life.

Q: In a real way, you did have it all.

Barbara J. Good

Women's Action Organization founder and president (1970s)

Q: Were you involved with any women's organization with the State Department during this period?

GOOD: In 1970 I was the only woman on the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Board because the men wanted to make the organization more democratic and bring on a representative for clerical members. They treated me like an equal partner and supported me in changing rules which improved the status of the clerical staff. Because women's issues were being ignored by the thirteen task forces convened by the State Department and AFSA to reevaluate its management and personnel policies, Jean Joyce, a journalist in the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, approached the AFSA president stating that not one of the thirteen task forces had even looked at how Foreign Service regulations negatively affected women. She was told to contact me and we then brought together a group of nine women from [the State Department], AID [Agency for International Development], and USIA [U.S. Information Agency] and in July 1970 we formed the Ad Hoc Committee to Improve the Status of Women in Foreign Affairs Agencies in order to do battle against the department's long-standing discrimination against women and to demand equitable treatment. In 1969, women FSOs [Foreign Service officers] constituted only 4.8% of the Foreign Service. In November 1970, the Ad Hoc Committee formally became the Women's Action Organization (WAO), a voluntary nonprofit association with branches in State, AID, and USIA. Toward that end, WAO monitors the status of career women, provides programs in career development and other employee issues, and maintains a dialogue with senior management on these issues. We worked with Deputy Undersecretary for Management William B. Macomber, who sympathized with our proposals for policy changes, to overturn in 1971 the department's regulation banning married women from having a Foreign Service career, and to provide for reappointment of those women who had previously resigned. By working directly with management, WAO helped to bring about other significant reforms, such as: increased recruitment of women into the career service; increased representation of women on promotion boards; revision of regulations adversely affecting single officers (chiefly

women) at overseas posts; elimination of references to sex or marital status in performance evaluations; and provisions for appointing tandem couples to the same post. In 1972, we received a Presidential Management Improvement Award for our initiatives and our first president, Mary Olmsted, received the Christian Herter Award for "intellectual courage."

Q: Effect change — what were you working on?

GOOD: Well, for example, for twenty years I couldn't get married in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, the rule was that anyone married to a foreigner would have to resign, but if a woman did, the resignation was accepted.

GOOD: Even if you married an FSO, you had to resign. Well, the good side is that a number of women FSOs who had married and had children came back and now have moved to the top level. This was one of the most wonderful initiatives I could ever have been involved with — at the right time and the right place.

Q: In working on the Women's Action Organization, you were at the time when the real revolution happened.

GOOD: Yes, because that was the resurgence of the women's movement, and the fact that a lot of feminists were pressing the government for change, it was the right moment to effect change. Then when I was appointed director of International Women's Programs and alternate delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (1979-1980), I was also nominated president of the Women's Action Organization. It was a wonderful time, both career-wise and coordinating with USIA and AID to strengthen ties for improving the status of women in the foreign affairs agencies. In that position I was able to organize a group and draft a worldwide policy on status and rights of women because I was able to bring the right men and women to collaborate with me. Also, Secretary Vance was very supportive, as well as Warren Christopher. That's why I want to bring this policy back again because for the last twelve years it was dismissed by the Reagan/Bush Administration. Now I want to reintroduce it and add the elimination of sexual exploitation of women to the policy and send it abroad to embassies and consulates around the world.

Ambassador Theresa A. Healy

Assignment to Washington (1966-1972)

HEALY: … Then of course it came time to consider where I would go from there. It was '66 and everybody, it seemed, was concerned about what was going on in Vietnam. I thought a Vietnam assignment would be useful and fascinating and it was the thing to do at the time. I was not in Washington, I didn't thoroughly understand, I think, all the ins and outs, but I did write to the department and say I would be interested in going to Vietnam on assignment. Back came an answer saying, "We think that Saigon is a good, likely possibility; in fact, we have a job

identified for you via six months in the economic training class," which had just been organized at FSI [the Foreign Service Institute]. I think I was in the third intensive economic training course.

I was very pleased to do this because after three years in Bern, I was beginning to realize just how important economics is. The economic section was twice the size of the political section. The intertwining of those two subjects in Bern is perhaps more common these days than back in the mid-'60s, but I remember thinking to myself, "I would be a more valuable political officer if I knew something about economics." So when they offered this, I thought, "Fine, I'll learn economics, I'll be at home for six full months and have a chance to see the family a lot before I go off to Saigon." I just thought this was working out very well indeed. I came back to Washington. The six months' intensive economic training was very difficult. I don't think I have a flair for economics. I worked hard at it, though, and did very well in it.

The thing that was most disappointing is that the assignment to Saigon fell through, and fell through, I am convinced, because a woman was not wanted in the job. I have no proof of this, but from comments made to me by an acquaintance, comments which I still remember, to the effect that there are two female officers in Saigon and Saigon thinks it has its quota; it doesn't want another woman. The official reason given, after a very painful interview with some political appointee over at the Executive Office Building, was that I didn't have the economic experience to deal with the job. Well, I thought that was a sham.

Q: A little late in the day to be using that as an excuse.

HEALY: Well, there was a little conversation that went on there between my acquaintance and the man who was going out to head the economic section, to the effect of, "Why didn't you tell me sooner that this assignment had been made? And my acquaintance responded, "I only found out about it last month when I visited Saigon." Which also led me to what, I think, was a very sound conclusion that discrimination played a part in that.

I was very hurt. I didn't know what to do, but at this point I'm afraid I decided, "If I'm not going to go to Saigon, I'm not going overseas at all. I want a Washington assignment." My pride was badly hurt because I thought I could have handled it.

Q: Of course.

HEALY: I was very annoyed that people would think that I had tried to get out of the Saigon assignment through fear or …

Q: Oh, you had that to contend with as well?

HEALY: Well, I don't know. But here I'd been telling everyone I was going to go to Vietnam and all of a sudden I'm not going. The question: "Why is Terry not going to Vietnam?" Answer: "Maybe she's afraid of the danger." So all in all this was a very unpleasant summer.

Q: I should think so.

HEALY: Lightened by one fact. I was assigned to a job that was very, very useful to me. It doesn't sound glamorous. It was Washington, as I had requested, and it was to INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research], a research job on European common market and economic organization affairs. I learned a great deal in that job. I enjoyed working for Anton De Porte, who came into the Foreign Service with me but was also my boss at the time. I learned a lot from Anton. It was a very, very useful and valuable assignment. I remember thinking at the time that I couldn't stand it because my previous Washington experience had been in one of the geographic bureaus where the phones were ringing all the time and somebody was calling up, and in INR it's a cloister. Perhaps not so much now, but in those days it was. So when RPE [Office of Atlantic Political-Economic Affairs], which is the European action counterpart to the research work that I was doing, suggested I come down to the Bureau of European Affairs and work in the action office, I was very happy to do so. I spent three very happy years there, doing more or less the same work, except in the action side rather than the research side. So I had five years in Washington that I enjoyed very much indeed. I had a chance to come to know something about the department, to learn something about issues such as unionization, and whether AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] should become a union. I never got involved for some reason, possibly because I was so taken up with the unionization issue, I never got involved in the women's discrimination issue, which was becoming public knowledge in '69.

Q: Yes. Yes, indeed.

HEALY: I was in Washington from '67 to '72, and yet my only involvement in those issues … It must have been peripheral if it existed at all. I would read about the Allison Palmer case in the newspaper, but somehow or other, my spare time energies were devoted to tennis, to skiing, and to turning the Foreign Service Association into a union. But those were very happy years in Washington, as well.

Q: Now how did you feel about your promotion schedule, so to speak? Did you feel you were going up as well as you should, better than you should, or about the way you should?

HEALY: It's very hard for me to judge that. I tended to be younger than others.

Q: Yes.

HEALY: I think I was the youngest one in my Foreign Service class. I've always been fairly modest about deserving “recognition.” I just felt, "Well, do a good job and if you deserve a promotion, a promotion will come."

Q: Yes.

HEALY: And by and large, they came at a point when I was not yet becoming concerned about why I wasn't being promoted. So I can't remember being particularly concerned about the promotion schedule.

Q: Do you think you sort of distanced yourself from the intense competitiveness that exists between male officers, especially in the political and economic cones?

HEALY: I can't understand the question, Ann. What do you mean, distanced myself?

Q: Just didn't put yourself in direct competition with them in your own mind?

HEALY: No, I don't see how that could be so. I knew who I was competing with: everybody else in my class in the Foreign Service.

Q: But you didn't dwell on it, is what I mean?

HEALY: No.

Q: Men tend to discuss it so often, in my experience. They talk about who's getting ahead and why did so-and-so get promoted and this sort of thing. You didn't wish to participate in that sort of thing?

HEALY: I didn't get much involved in that kind of thing, except when the promotion list would come out. I'd be part of the usual group going over the list and I'd hear somebody saying, "Well there's good old Joe Blow, he really deserves it." Or, "For god's sake, there's a loser if I ever saw one." So I knew this kind of thing went on, and in groups where conversations like that took place, I participated, but …

Q: But you didn't waste a lot of your time or stay up at night worrying about it?

HEALY: No.

Q: No.

HEALY: I just figured if somebody got a promotion sooner than I did when I thought that perhaps we were on a par, I would say, "Well, he did a better job, he had a better efficiency report, or there was some other type … But putting it this way, I rather naively believed that the system worked properly.

Q: I want to ask you a question that was suggested to me by one of your colleagues, a woman who has had a career, a very …

HEALY: I'm just going to get a cup of coffee, you go on and ask.

Q: A very successful career. She says that when she came into the service she never expected to rise to a very high position. She never could conceive of herself as being the boss of a man. Now did you ever have that feeling, that is to say, that the expectation of sex roles in America at the time you came in were such that you never saw yourself as rising very far?

HEALY: I didn't think about it, quite frankly. Remember, I had been in an all-girls high school. I had been a schoolteacher. I had seen school principals who were women, bossing men school teachers. It just never occurred to me. I think I tend to take things one day at a time. I have the general outlines of the future pretty fairly in mind, but I don't agonize from one day to the next

about when is the promotion list coming out? Will I be on it? Will I not be on it? Will Joe Blow be on it when I think Joe Blow is a nincompoop? I don't worry about those things and I do not recollect ever really worrying about bossing a man, because for one thing, my first boss in the Foreign Service was a woman and she was bossing men.

Q: Was it?

HEALY: Yes. Alice Griffith. So I saw it happening in the Foreign Service. I assumed that the day would come when I would be bossing other people, and I never thought of whether those other people would be men or women. I also knew that at no point had I made any permanent commitment to the Foreign Service because I knew at the time that if I elected to get married I would have to resign.

Q: Yes.

HEALY: So it was a question of just going on from assignment to assignment, taking things as they come, sticking with the Foreign Service until something else offered, when I would have to make a decision.

Q: I see.

HEALY: The only one time I was tempted, the decision was made in favor of the Foreign Service.

Women's Issues in the State Department

Q: I see. Changing the subject now to one that concerns you, only you, do you consider yourself a feminist?

HEALY: That's a little bit hard to say. I've never been deeply involved in fighting for women's rights, but I have supported, for example, the Women's Action Organization in the Department of State by becoming a member. I would tend to say I'm probably middle-of-the-road feminist. I realize that a lot of what has happened in the past has been part of the culture and it's a little bit unfair to lay it at the doorstep of a particular, individual man, unless that person turns out to be extremely prejudiced.

Q: Then that was your attitude toward the women's movements in the '60s, or did you think they were perhaps too strident? '60s and '70s, I should say.

HEALY: Some were. Some were. I was just heavily involved in my own work, and I remember at the time that the Women's Action Organization became prominent in the Department of State, I, by pure chance, was more heavily involved in a different issue at the Department of State, which was whether or not the Foreign Service should become a union, should be unionized. And if so, whether the recognized union should be the professional association, AFSA [American Foreign Service Association], or whether it should be AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees], which was an already organized union of government employees. So

for some reason I was not terribly aware of what was going on in the field of women's rights in the Department of State, although the two movements, one for a union and one for women's rights, were active at almost the exact same time.

Q: Which did you favor, the AFGE or the AFSA?

HEALY: I was in favor of having AFSA perform the functions.

Q: And they did indeed?

HEALY: Eventually it ended up that way, yes.

Q: As you look back can you think of anything along your career that you wish you had done differently?

HEALY: I'm sure if I thought hard, I'd find something, many things, in fact, I might have wished I'd done differently. But I'm almost equally certain that I'd probably never confess them to anyone. No, offhand I might have tried harder, for example, to get out of European affairs. I might have decided that after five years in Common Market work in Washington, a move to work in Common Market affairs in Brussels was not the wisest thing. Various things like that I might have changed in retrospect, but that's a sort of fruitless occupation.

Q: It really is. But as an ambassador looking back, were you satisfied with the way you handled that assignment? Or, looking back, would you have changed [some things]?

HEALY: Oh, I probably would have tried to do a little bit more, perhaps, in training junior officers personally, but then we had so few and they were so busy doing the work that there were really few so-called training opportunities. I might have been more active in one area or another, but once, again that's hindsight. You never have the opportunity to do over again things that you might wish [you had done differently].

Q: I'm just asking because part of the book is going to be to recommend to young women coming along things that they might want to look into themselves. What do you think is the future of women in the service?

HEALY: Well, I think the question itself should not need to be asked these days. I think the future of women in the Foreign Service is whatever they can make of it for themselves. The Foreign Service has, in my career time, always permitted women to enter. The department has not been as welcoming in past years, in early years, as it is today, but I think that women have every opportunity, and it's up to them to make a career for themselves.

Q: Are there any characteristics thought of as typically feminine that make women more valuable than men in certain circumstances, or with certain groups of people?

HEALY: I would have to think about that very hard. I know I've heard people say that women make very good consular officers because they do tend to be patient with people's problems, and

sympathetic, and that perhaps distressed people are more inclined to discuss their problems with women than with men. I don't know about that. I just cannot … I think you need a professional assessment for something like that.

Q: What about the idea that has been told me that, in emerging countries, women do a very good job because they are perceived as less threatening? Do you go along with that?

HEALY: I am not a professional in that field of human behavior. I don't know. I think too much depends upon the individuals involved to make generalizations.

Q: I see. Do you have any advice to give to young women who would like a career in the Foreign Service?

HEALY: Well, I would suggest they prepare themselves well or they will never get into the Foreign Service. I would suggest that they bring to the job requirements every bit of skill and dedication that they have. You cannot succeed in the Foreign Service by doing a halfhearted job. It's a job that demands a great deal of you. And I would hope they would recognize that the nature of diplomacy may be changing in future years, that it's becoming a profession that is more dangerous than it used to be, and one that will require perhaps greater language skills in the future than in the past.

…

Q: Then, is it a fair statement to say that in your opinion the job title and the role that you play and the title you're given outweighs any considerations of sex or gender?

HEALY: In my experience and in the countries in which I have served, my answer would be yes.

Q: Good.

HEALY: But I have served in Western European countries, I have served in New Zealand, and I have served in West Africa. And the answer that somebody, a woman, might give, whose experience had been in Latin America or in the Middle East or in some parts of Asia, I simply do not know. I was very fortunate.

Q: Did you feel any impact of the woman's movement on your career?

HEALY: It's hard for me to be precise about that for the very reason that if I questioned a certain assignment, nobody was going to say, "You're being given that assignment because you're a woman," because that in itself would probably be a violation of regulation or whatever. But yes, there were certainly times when I felt, this would be probably more in the late seventies, when I felt that I had been given an assignment against my wishes because of feeling in the Department of State that the administration needed a woman in that office in order to deflect criticism on the part of the women's movement. I'm thinking in particular of an assignment from the National

War College to the Board of Examiners. I did not particularly want the assignment and I think we have discussed this already.

Q: Yes, we have.

HEALY: I did not want the assignment but I gathered — and nobody, of course, would be precise about this because it would probably be actionable — I gathered that I was being assigned to the Board of Examiners because the people in [the office of] personnel felt it important to place a woman in that particular office to avoid criticism that we were not including women in the recruitment process. As it turned out, as I've already said, it was a very happy year and I cannot complain.

But there have been other instances where assignments had been proposed which I judged, perhaps incorrectly, which I judged were for the same purpose. In other words, I was a fig leaf, or I was a flag to be flown to indicate that the department's heart was in the right place because, lo and behold, they had assigned a woman to this particular position. Whether or not it played a part in my selection for ambassadorship, I cannot tell. I was in New Zealand at the time. Certainly I questioned, I do ask myself, "Did it play a role?" and I don't know what answer to come up with.

Q: So your feeling of this impact of the women's movement has been to a large extent negative, then?

HEALY: No, I wouldn't say negative, because for all I know, my selection [as ambassador] for Sierra Leone was entirely due to the fact that I was a woman. I don't like to think that. I like to think that twenty-seven years of doing what I think of as a very good job in the Foreign Service earned me that assignment. But I do have to raise the question: Was it a factor? And I have to say it could very likely have been a factor. So on the one hand, yes, I have been given assignments or I have been proposed for assignments that I didn't want because I was a woman, and on the other hand, perhaps I've received assignments I wanted also because I was a woman. So positive or negative, I can't play it all out.

Q: Sure. Did the fact of women's liberation have any effect on your views of yourself? Did you feel at all liberated?

HEALY: No.

Q: No?

HEALY: No, I mean I know who I am and I've more or less always known who I am. I would charge right ahead and do whatever I felt was something I wanted to do. And the fact that women's liberation came along has not changed me in that sense.

Q: Did you ever have any feelings that there were social expectations that you couldn't go beyond, such as in a job you could not picture yourself as giving orders to men underneath you?

HEALY: No. I was in effect professionalized by the Foreign Service, so what I saw being done at higher levels was automatically assumed by me to be the way I would act when I reached those higher levels. I made no distinction as between male and female because I've had female bosses.

Q: At other posts did any sex-connected views impinge on the way you lived? You were mostly in Europe, but you were in Italy which is supposed to be very male chauvinistic. Were there any things you had to change there, places to visit, dress codes, or … ?

HEALY: No. I'm a very modest person. I was brought up by the nuns and socialized in my religion. Since I tend to be a very retiring person anyway, I never had to modify my behavior, nor was it ever a problem overseas.

…

Q: Do you feel a woman DCM [deputy chief of mission] or ambassador does the job in the way a man does?

HEALY: We're talking about individuals. I can't make generalizations about men and women as DCMs or ambassadors because we're talking about a very small group of people and everybody is different and individual.

Q: How would you feel about a female DCM for yourself?

HEALY: It wouldn't trouble me.

Q: It wouldn't trouble you at all?

HEALY: Good heavens, no!

Q: How about a male secretary?

HEALY: That wouldn't trouble me either. I believe Anne Martindell had a male secretary in New Zealand. This is a little bit vague in my mind because I think it was only the latter part of — it would probably be within months of my own departure — but I do recollect that there was a male secretary there. But it wouldn't trouble me to have a male secretary just so long as he did a highly competent job.

Q: Sure. You can remember back to when you were a very junior officer, when you went to social events, receptions, did men ever seek your opinions and listen to you, or did you find yourself off in a corner with the women?

HEALY: No, I did make a special point to see to it that that didn't happen. If I found myself in a corner with a group of women who were talking nonessentials, I can find that quite pleasant, number one, but number two, if I became sensitive to the fact that the males were grouping in

one area and the females in another, I would try quietly, without making a point of it, I would try to move myself perhaps by taking another women with me over toward a male grouping and try to enter the conversation there.

Q: Very good. One last question: How would you describe your energy level?

HEALY: It's pretty high.

Q: I guess it would really have to be to carry out all of the different roles in the State Department.

HEALY: No, I would tend to say there are many women who are homemakers and mothers and workers and their energy level must be incredibly high too, or else they're always tired, one or the other. I just find I do have a good bit of energy, a good deal of physical energy, and this is one reason why I found tennis to be a very useful sport, because it takes up some of my physical energy, which work does not. In other words, the mental work that you do in the office is not physically tiring enough for me. I have to add to it something that is physical, and that is tennis.

Ambassador Mari-Luci Jaramillo

Ambassador to Honduras (1977-1980)

Q: You looked toward a symbiotic relationship with your DCM [deputy chief of mission], didn't you?

JARAMILLO: That's right. And I did look around and see if somebody would suggest a woman that would be available. I had thought it would be marvelous if the ambassador and the DCM would be women. But lo and behold! Not one was surfaced in the process that we were using to surface them, who was free and all that. Not one. And I don't know if it was because of the language that I had stipulated, because I think since Latin America hadn't been paid attention to by women, I think Jean [Wilkowski] is the only one that had been around Latin America at that level, and at that time Sally Shelton had gone down to the other post.

Q: Hadn't she been nominated to go to El Salvador and it fell through? She was serving in Washington, I believe, at this time, because she didn't go out to her post until 1979.

JARAMILLO: Until later, much later.

Q: You were only the third woman ever to be named [ambassador] to a Latin American country, you know. There was Clare Boothe Luce, named to Brazil — didn't go; Sally Shelton, named to El Salvador — didn't go; and yourself. There had been one in the Caribbean, but that's all. Women have not been in Central or South America, and I don't see why not.

JARAMILLO: I don't either, because they're naturals for the way women work. Women have this observation power, this nurturing, this people-relationship that's, "Let's talk it out instead of

fight it." You know, these kinds of skills that they have. They're natural for a setting where that's the way they operate, too, just a natural setting for women. I don't know — they've had so many military all over that maybe that that was the feeling that they're not going to pay attention to women. Like I tell you, the military in a Latin country — it's up to us.

…

Q: [Were your major successes] because you were a woman, or just because you were such a skillful educator, and also Hispanic, and knowing both cultures? In other words, did any of your success, do you think, stem from your gender? One thing you said, about how Latin Americans stand back and let the woman talk first; maybe that would be an in?

JARAMILLO: Yes. Just being a woman was an advantage; it wasn't a disadvantage. It was an advantage. Look, in the diplomatic corps, you remember how all the ambassadors stand — in the reception line — by how long they've been in the country?

Q: Yes.

JARAMILLO: So you come in, and you're way at the back, right? Okay, I'm the American; I just arrived, so Brazil and I are at the tail end. I'd been there a couple of months — do you know that those ambassadors keep pushing you? Pushing me? They'd turn back and then, "Oh, no, no, no, Ms. Ambassador." They'd stick me in front of them, and I'd say, "You're breaking all protocol." "The heck with protocol" — they wanted me to be in the front of the line. That happened so many times. I'd always go to the back and stand in my place, and I was so correct. It was just a neat thing, and that was because I was a woman.

I think if I had successes, they were a combination of things. It was because, as a woman, you have special skills; because, as a minority person, growing up where there's a major culture, you pick up skills; because I, myself, am a people-person; because I had the skills and knowledge of a professional; and because I am an educator and have dealt with masses of different people in trying to convince them that the way I see the world is the right way to look at the world, and that's what a teacher does. And so then you take those skills and you package them to fit the occasion, and you're off. It's a combination. I don't think that just being a woman, or just being an Hispanic, or just being a minority, or just an educator, but when you combine those — boy, I was at the right place at the right time.

Q: You certainly were. Did you feel, when you left, that you left anything unresolved?

JARAMILLO: I really felt that we had come to closure on all our major goals.

Q: Is that so? Well, that's wonderful. Let's move along to personal items such as the details of entertaining and running a residence. For example, as a woman without a "wife," were you not entitled to have a housekeeper? And did you, indeed, have one?

JARAMILLO: Well, it was very interesting because I had heard of some men that were there that had someone to run the residence because they didn't have a wife. They had just started it.

Now I guess bachelors or divorced people … they were just starting to let them be ambassadors. I had heard of that so I tried, at the beginning when I went, to hire a young Honduran lady to supervise the staff, because I realized it was going to be terribly hard for my husband, who hadn't done any of that stuff before, to try to do it. He was going to be in charge of supervising the buying of the liquors and what was needed; he was going to do all that. I hired a Honduran woman who was up high in the Honduran society and so knew what Hondurans that would be dealing with the embassy would like, and what they'd expect and all. I don't know how long she worked. Maybe she worked six months or so. It was the perfect thing for her to work because she allowed me to spend all my time on embassy matters and not have to pay any attention to the residence. Although I paid attention to it because my virtue — I'm the kind that has to straighten out rugs and put flowers, that's me, but I didn't have to worry that the food wasn't served attractively. What she would do was prepare menus and she'd prepare guest lists, and lots of that stuff, then she and I would sit and go through it. Then I would take my lists and the protocol officer would look at it, so it had three people looking at it. I think that we made few mistakes because so many people were looking at it.

When she decided that she didn't want to do that anymore — she had thought that I was hiring her so that she could be my representative, and I started noticing that she would be fabulously dressed. All of a sudden, I realized how it was developing. Then when she said she thought she'd done her service — and we were real good friends — I just took her up on it, and then I didn't have anyone. But I think it was perfect because it took us through that initial period.

Looking back on it now, I think that I could advise every woman ambassador to immediately hire someone and I would suggest they would hire someone from the Americans. See, we couldn't do that. Remember, when I was there, we couldn't hire wives for that. And I would say that it would be a permanent position and the ambassador could then work with it if they wanted them full-time or only on call, whatever they thought was best. But I do think that a woman should not have to worry at all about how the table's going to look or if they serve the right thing. My husband was just wonderful staying on top of every little detail, trying to make sure that the staff … the staff was trained and had done it for many years, but there are still a lot of slips. I don't ever remember a major catastrophe, maybe a little too much liquor in something they were going to flame, but not bad, not bad.

Q: Did your husband, then, actually make certain the table was set properly? Did he get down to that detail?

JARAMILLO: The first six months, the woman was doing it and training the staff to be sure, and then by the time she went, I had such a wonderful relationship with the staff that they were going a mile to please me because I had told them that if I wasn't successful at both the job and the home, I couldn't be there, and that I had to spend all my energies in the office. So they knew it. My husband helped a lot. Yes, he checked things.

Q: Who bought the food?

JARAMILLO: A combination. My husband would go with the cook and they would buy it. I never went to buy anything, ever, related to food or liquor — never. My husband and the cook

would prepare the lists. When I had the woman there, she was helping with the menus. Of course, from there we were getting the grocery lists. My husband would supervise the putting of the stuff, the cellar of the liquor. You see, my husband did all of that. And as a Latino man, he had never done any of that, but he was just so willing to help out. We took all kinds of etiquette books, and they'd be paging through. When we were going to do something brand new, they'd be paging through it. It was real good for him, too, because he learned so much about "women's work" that he would have never known any other way.

Q: And developed a sensitivity, I'm sure.

JARAMILLO: Oh, yes.

Q: Your relationships with these —

JARAMILLO: Secretaries, I already told you about. Women officers — we had a few and we were great friends. And the wives — we were all friends. We became a closely knit community, just really beautiful.

Q: You may find way down the road that you were somebody's role model among the women officers. Did you have very many of them there?

JARAMILLO: Let's see. We had several in AID [Agency for International Development], a couple in USIS [U.S. Information Service], several in the consular section, a couple in administration. We didn't in the commercial section. We didn't in the political section, and that's the one I wanted, because that's where I was really shining and I would have loved to have been there. [*laughs*]

Q: The list you've just given me proves the validity of what we were talking about earlier. There were no political ones, no commercial, no economic officers.

JARAMILLO: I think we had one economic officer that came in sometime during my stay there.

Q: And they were all in what are considered at the department as "safe" jobs for women — AID, USIS, consular, admin.

…

Q: Another thing I'm curious about: at dinners at the other embassies, was there any problem over where to seat your husband? That has been a problem in various embassies around the world.

JARAMILLO: It was so neat. They must have given him ambassadorial rank because everywhere we went he was always made the center of attention. I think that that was the way of the Latins showing him that he wasn't a lesser person, especially that he was the male. This is the way we got our invitations: from the American community, we got "Ambassador and Dr. Jaramillo." From the diplomatic corps and from the Hondurans, we got two separate invitations.

Q: Oh, really?

JARAMILLO: Dr. Jaramillo, one, and Ambassador Jaramillo, the other. That way my name didn't have to be in front of his.

Q: Isn't that fascinating.

JARAMILLO: So you see, there's a way around everything if there's a will. That way he was not an appendage. He had his own invitation. Now, as you know, there are so many stag affairs and I went to many, many stag affairs where I was the only woman with all the men. Once in while, there was a chargé if one of the ambassadors was out, and usually the second one was a woman from the Latin countries. But for a lot of the stag affairs, they invited my husband.

Q: Did they?

JARAMILLO: Yes, with a special invitation. That was an accommodation for the male that they were doing for each other.

Q: Would he be seated at the right of the hostess, if you were at the right of the host?

JARAMILLO: Sometimes. I guess it depended if there was another high-ranking ambassador in; then probably not. He'd be sitting someplace else. But I guess with some ambassadors, that they felt maybe weren't as important, I don't know. Or we would be invited to where only the ambassador that was invited was us and all the rest would be non-diplomatic people, and then he was always seated to the right.

Q: That's very interesting. So it just worked its way out.

JARAMILLO: Yes. Now I don't know if that can only be worked out in Latin America. I don't know how that works out in Europe.

Q: Well, some people have had a lot of difficulty with that, like Patricia Harris. They had to have an actual "Harris Ruling" on this as to how he would be treated.

JARAMILLO: The other thing is that Heri was always called "Dr. Jaramillo," very formally, very formally.

Passing of Jaramillo's grandmother

JARAMILLO: … But my little 96-year old grandmother died when I was in Honduras.

Q: I see. Were you able to come back for the funeral?

JARAMILLO: No, I wasn't, and I'll share with you why. I had only been in country three months when my grandmother died. I decided that if I came back, someone would say, "It's because she's

a woman. " And I decided not to, that I wasn't going to be able to help anyway. I had been very close to my grandmother.

My husband and I would visit her at least every other week, if not weekly, the 200-mile trip to be with her. We were very, very close. I felt that because we had been so close and had been together that it was okay that the last three months of her life I didn't see her. But my decision was, they'll say, "You see, you can't bring a woman down here. Her grandmother dies, for God's sake, she has to leave the post." I decided that was something that I very consciously did.

Q: It's a little bit hard to be a pioneer, isn't it?

JARAMILLO: Yes, it is. You're conscious of it every single day; that whatever you do means another woman comes or another woman doesn't.

Attitude toward the women's movement

JARAMILLO: I think my attitude toward the women's movement has been an interesting one. I think the ones that have profited the most from the women's movement have been your middle-class women. I think the rich women already have had the freedom of doing whatever they darn please, whenever, and I think the lower social class women have not profited from it because they're still trapped in poverty. So I think that the movement has affected the largest group within the middle class and that's great, because those middle-class women have been able to do lots of different things and move up the scale and do exciting things that maybe they wouldn't have had they not been alive during the movement.

From an Hispanic woman's point of view, I think the movement has been very good, but it's not as influential as it could have been if ethnic minority women had been involved in the beginning movement. I think that it was very Anglo-oriented at the beginning, very threatening to the subgroups that were … that our tasks were very divided between men and women. The strategies that they used at the beginning to call attention were not acceptable to the Hispanic woman, and so it took a long time for the Hispanic woman to come aboard. I think now the Hispanic women that have come aboard are middle-class, professional, working women. I think there's been tremendous change in the Hispanic home regarding women because of the women's movement, but it's not a big, overt thing that you can say, "This has changed," but little, subtle things, like the tasks were so divided between male/female roles and those are blending now, and people doing each other's roles, and that kind of thing. So I think it's been very helpful, but as a whole, Hispanics don't see that much help from the women's movement in jobs, because what has happened to many Hispanic people, Anglo males have retired and Anglo females have taken the job.

Q: Ah, that's very interesting.

JARAMILLO: So you don't see the kind of movement that people, say, Anglo women see, because they see themselves up there, but there hasn't been that much for the Hispanic women. However, like I say, I think it is making a tremendous difference for Hispanic women in the home in subtle little ways. Definitely, for middle-class Hispanic women, there's a lot of

movement. I see university women studying subjects they would have never studied before. But, again, most of those Hispanic women at the university are middle-class already; their parents already had an education. So maybe, just the tenor of the times, they would have been studying these new things. You don't know. But whatever, I'm glad the women's movement came.

I saw it even in the most desolate places out in rural Honduras. I saw women talking about the rights of women. It is this worldwide movement and sometimes we tend to think that it's an American movement. It's a worldwide movement, and American women were kind of Johnny-come-latelies, really. There had been so much movement in Europe already about women. I think it's wonderful. I've participated much more in the ethnic movements than I have openly in the women's movement.

Q: Do you think that it's still on the rise? That is to say, the gains that have been made can't be lost now?

JARAMILLO: Oh, I don't think they can be lost. I really don't, no. Even if the government dismantles everything and I think this administration — federal administration — has not been supportive of women at all, and I worry a lot about the women that think that they are and I think, "You're being used. Can't you see that in general terms they're not doing anything for women?"

…

Q: What do you think women bring to the Foreign Service?

JARAMILLO: I think we talked about that a little while ago, that because we've been raised right or wrong, the way we've been socialized, we bring an extra sensitivity to people. We bring the whole nurturing concept. We bring the whole concept of "let's talk it out" instead of conflict. I think those are all traits that women have had up to now. Now, I don't know if the women's movement is changing that, and now we're raising men and women that are going to be same, but up to now, the way we were traditionally brought up, that's the element that we were bringing. Another thing is, being kind of the second-class citizen gives you an insight into how the other guy feels that some of the men don't seem to have. We have it in large quantities, so that I think we bring that.

Q: Do you think women, perhaps, for that very reason, would be better utilized in certain parts of the world?

JARAMILLO: I think so; I think so. For example, I don't see women ambassadors being very effective in the Middle East, where women are nothing. Now, if we want to make a cause and make a statement and we send one, all we can do is make a cause and a statement, but we're not going to be very effective because you're not going to get any work done. But in other areas I think that they would be just excellent, [and in general] there should be no difference whether a man went or a woman.

Q: You don't think the world ought to be divided into men's posts and women's posts?

JARAMILLO: No, no. No way, but I do think that occasionally a post needs a particular kind of person, and at that time it should be decided that this person has the skills. You know, we might have some men with great nurturing skills and great tact but, in general, I think that the society in the United States has told men, "You go out and be competitive and combative." And with us [women], "You learn to behave and be nice." And so that's going to make a difference of how you handle problems.

[Reading] “Advice to Women as Aspirants for a Foreign Service Career” — I would say get a broad, broad, broad education so that regardless of what comes up, you're ready for it; a broad liberal arts background. Don't specialize early on. Don't become a mathematician, or a historian, or a sociologist. Don't do that until you get your advanced degree. I would say that that's the most important.

The other one is learning all you can in the way of other people's cultures, and learning as many languages as you can before you get there. Even if they're not perfected, they can be perfected easily, but it's difficult to start from scratch if you haven't had some playing around with languages. I think those are important. You don't become knowledgeable about the world overnight. You develop an attitude that you're interested in the world, so I think that's something else that women have to know. You've got to be interested in current events. You've got to be interested in what's happening in the world, not just in your area. So many people are geographically bound. As I advise women, and by the way, I recommend a lot of people for the Foreign Service and they have sent me packets. I'm constantly talking to people about the Foreign Service. Three of the students that I know took the test this last go-around. I'm really playing it up. I think probably that's advice for everybody, but women, because they've been left out traditionally, should certainly get this information.

Now, [reading] “Most Significant Achievements in Your Life” — I think having gotten an education is a significant achievement in my life because it was difficult to get an education under the conditions in which I lived. I think it was a real achievement that I did not become a bitter person. I have a lot of friends that have gone [through] the same experiences that I've gone [through] and they've got a chip on their shoulder, and I'm very fortunate that I don't have a chip on my shoulder, that all these problems I kind of look at by attacking them from an educational point of view or an attitudinal point of view and that I never say, "You do that to me because you hate me" or "You do that to me because of this." I always try to put it in a context and understand and go from there. I think another one of my achievements, probably, is having been able to develop such wonderful relationships with everybody I come in contact with. I think that's an achievement that not everybody has. People will have worked with other people and not know anything about them.

Q: And not care.

JARAMILLO: I know. I can't get over that. So in that way I think those are my achievements. One last one: having been a world traveler. Having grown up so poor in a tiny little town in northern New Mexico … and now there are very few people, only if they've been in the military or the Foreign Service, have they traveled more than I have.

Nancy E. Johnson

Baghdad, Iraq: political officer (1989-1990)

JOHNSON: … One of my stories about Baghdad that I've never told April, and I don't know why, is about a Foreign Ministry dinner we attended with some American visitors. I was sitting with a senior member of the Foreign Ministry. He turned to me and said, "Miss Nancy, why did they send us a woman ambassador?" I don't think of myself as particularly quick on my feet, but I said immediately, "They didn't send you a woman. They sent you the best that they had, the best Arabist, the most experienced person in the region, the very best they had." He looked at me and he said, "Oh. I'll tell them that." One of the myths people have about women operating in the Middle East is that because women are or seem to be second-class citizens, they can't be effective. I think that my conversation reveals something quite other and that is because women are not threatening, people will say things to them that are much more revealing than to a man who is a competitor. Women can be extremely effective.

Q: I've also talked to women officers. One of the things too is that they could go to the K____ Hareem or whatever it is and this is, of course, where the real news is anyway because this puts you right in the middle of the information network — this ability to go backwards and forwards. In the diplomatic world, male or female or what, you are an American representative, which means that you carry an awful lot of clout. People appreciate it, accept that.

JOHNSON: Yes. It was interesting because that man would never have asked a man, one of my male colleagues, that question. My answer, I thought, was really quite a good one. I am rather proud of that. There were all sorts of difficulties in Baghdad. Every room in the Foreign Ministry was bugged, including the waiting area. You could see microphones hanging from the ceiling. If somebody in the Foreign Ministry wanted to say something to you off the cuff, they'd say it to you when you were in the hall.

There are things I remember. For example, there was a man behind the reception desk at the Foreign Ministry. You would enter and say, "I'm here to see so and so," and he would call them up and then you would sit and wait until someone came to fetch you. I called him “Smiley” because he was a very dour fellow. One day I was sitting there and he said, "Miss Nancy, how old are you?" And I said, "Why do you ask?" He said, "Well, we've decided that you are 35," which was very funny because I was then 47 or 48. He couldn't believe it. I was amused that they didn't have anything better to do in the Foreign Ministry than to talk about my age. Then there was one time I went in to meet with a woman I had never met before. I didn't know how good her English was so I prepped myself to do my demarche in Arabic. Her English was about as good as my Arabic. We did it in English and I said to her, "I came prepared to do this Arabic." She said, "Fine. Do it." I then did it in Arabic amid gales of laughter. Whenever I made a mistake, she'd say, "lah," which means "no," and then give me the correct word. Iraqis were not without humor.

Ambassador Arma Jane Karaer

Entering the Foreign Service (1966-1967)

KARAER: … Anyway, back at Minnesota my professors were critical of government and all of them said to me, "Oh, that's very nice, that you passed the test, Miss Szczepanski, but you know they don't take women." For the first time in my life I was really angry at the establishment. I was so angry. I went into the oral interview thinking, “Okay, they're not going to take me, but by golly, they're going to spend the time interviewing me.”

Now, I also knew that we had passed the Civil Rights Act. I wondered how this was going to impact. I went in there and they started asking questions about my background. I had worked for one summer at the Department of Agriculture as a summer intern. They wanted to know how this had taught me about America, American policy, the American economy, and so on. They asked me personal questions mostly. They asked me if I was engaged and I said no, I wasn't. Well, they kept coming back to that, asking in different ways, was I planning to get married. I said, "You know, gentlemen, if you want me to say that I don't like men and that I'm never going to get married, I won't, because I do, and maybe one day I will be married, but I haven't predicated my life on it." The head of the panel said, "Now, now, we like young ladies." I thought yes, right, as long as they don't get married. Then they started the actual questions of the test. It was great, because having got that off my chest, I wasn't nervous anymore. Because along with being told that they never took women, I had also been told all those stories about how they tried to trick people during the test.

Q: I'm trying to recapture that time. The general presumption was, it was almost the fact that if a woman became a Foreign Service officer and married anyone, I mean another Foreign Service officer or a foreigner or an American, they were expected to resign. That stopped about five or six years later, but at that time, the general feeling was that if you took a woman on you were displacing somebody who would probably have a career in the Foreign Service. It was a fallacious thing, but I mean that was the mindset.

KARAER: Although it was the general belief that you had to resign if you got married, that wasn't true, because men didn't have to resign if they got married. The problem was that they would apply the “being available for worldwide service” rule very strictly. So even if you married another officer, they had no program to try to keep you both officers in the same place. If the department said, “He's supposed to go to South Africa and you're supposed to go to Iceland. Suck it up or resign,” that's what happened. There were some female officers in the service who were married, but they were married to men who were retired. One I heard [about] was an artist, another one was a writer, men who could take their careers on their backs with them. Of course there were very few women officers and most of them, as you say, resigned once they married. Anyway, after the question period was over, they asked me to wait outside of the room for a little while. Then they called me back in and they told me right away that they were going to recommend that I be hired. I was called to go to Washington the following January. So my A-100 course started in January of '67 and that was my entry into the Foreign Service.

Karachi, Pakistan: deputy principal officer (1986-1988)

KARAER: As much as Bill Rope exhausted me with the never-ending projects that would take us until midnight to complete every day, he was a very thoughtful boss as far as helping his people get the kinds of assignments that they wanted. He had written a number of notes to people about me, pointing out that I had done a lot of political work on the desk. Now, in addition to my consular and commercial experience, I also had political reporting experience. He suggested that I meet with the assistant secretary and get her advice about how to get ahead in the Foreign Service as a woman. He got the appointment for me.

Q: This was Roz Ridgeway?

KARAER: Roz Ridgeway, yes. Her fundamental advice was, "Don't let them make you the permanent assistant. That's what this organization tends to do with capable women. They've got all kinds of good reasons not to make them the boss, but they can't do without them as the assistant." Then she told her own story of what had happened to her when she was in the fisheries office in the [economic] bureau. We were having the “tuna wars” at the time. Apparently, if I remember her story correctly, she had been brought in to be the assistant in this office and worked at it for a couple of years. They negotiated some major treaties and agreements with Latin American countries. Then she was supposed to go on to the Senior Seminar or something like that, something important anyway, a training thing, and they said, "No, no, we've got to keep you here because the boss is leaving and we haven't found another person to take over the office." She stayed in there for several more months and they're still saying, "Well, you're doing a great job and we're still looking for somebody to be the head of this office." Finally she said, "Obviously, I'm the one who is qualified to be the head of this office. Either I get the job or forget about me staying here at all." So they were like, "Oh, okay, fine." That was her advice to me: “Watch out for that.”

…

KARAER: … Benazir Bhutto sent a number of her people over when I first got to the country, because I had been written up in the local newspapers as the first woman to have ever had that position at the consulate.

Q: You mean the deputy consul general?

KARAER: I was the deputy principal officer, yes. However, being a woman *anything* doesn't count for much in Pakistan. A reporter from one of the conservative Urdu newspapers interviewed me because my husband was a Muslim. The first question he asks me was, “What's it like being married to a Muslim?” I didn't tell them that my husband is not a practicing Muslim. He is a child of the Turkish revolution. The last thing in the world he does is pray five times a day, but I didn't tell the reporter that. I did tell him that I married a man, not a religion. Anyway, Benazir Bhutto sent several people over to see me over the first few weeks I was there to say that she would like to meet me. I certainly wanted to meet her, but the consul general told me that she was his contact and I was to stay away. Okay, fine. I only ever met her just in passing at receptions to shake her hand.

Stephanie Smith Kinney

Foreign Service Beginnings (1971)

Q: Mrs. Kinney, I'm very glad to be here. I understand that you came into the Foreign Service with your husband in 1971. Perhaps you can tell me how you two arrived at the decision of coming into the Foreign Service. Any discussions?

KINNEY: Okay. When we were introduced at a cocktail party in Cambridge in the latter part of 1969, I guess, Douglas was introduced to me and made the comment that he was hoping to go into the Foreign Service. And I laughingly said, “Yes, that's what I thought I'd do one day too.” He didn't ask me at the time, but as we courted and eventually got married, he took the exam and was offered an appointment to the Foreign Service. We had to face the decision about whether this was what we wanted to do. It was a choice between the Foreign Service, City Bank, or AID [Agency for International Development]. There was some lengthy discussion.

This was in 1970, a little time short of the famous '72 “Directive on Spouses” [a State Department policy statement outlining the responsibilities of Foreign Service spouses]. But there had been announcements in the paper in 1971 that there were changes coming in the Foreign Service and after much discussion, we decided that we would do it, my assumption being that, "Well, I'll take the Foreign Service exam and come in and be a Foreign Service officer. We'll go around the world being officers together." It never occurring to me that things might not turn out that way, in part because this had been a long-term interest of mine and ended up somewhat as a vindication for my aspirations that had been thwarted as a 16-year-old.

My high school in central Florida in the early '60's, 1961 to be exact, taught us to write research papers by giving us a really dumb topic. The topic was "What I Want to Be When I Grow Up." For reasons that I don't remember, it occurred to me to write about being a Foreign Service officer. So I sent off to the Department of State and got all sorts of information and gathered pamphlets and read books and found a person in Winter Haven who was a retired Foreign Service officer and interviewed him. But the fruits of my efforts and my research were discouraging, as I recorded in the last paragraph of the research paper, which went something along this line: "And so if you're a young girl who hopes to have both a family and a career, it would appear that the Foreign Service is not for you. It appears that the only way for a married woman to make it in the Foreign Service is to marry a successful officer."

Q: And that was in 1961?

KINNEY: That was in 1961. So I didn't think anything of it. I thought, “Well, that's the way the world is,” and I put that aside as a possible career possibility and went about my merry way. I went to Vassar College and spent my junior year in Spain, where I became quite enamored of things international and knew that I wanted to work in the international area but figured that probably teaching Spanish or history and working as an academic might be the only particular route. I met Douglas some years later.

Q: That's when you were in Harvard [for graduate school]?

KINNEY: It was after Harvard. I was teaching at a private school in Boston and he had just come back from the Peace Corps in what was then Upper Volta [now Burkina Faso] and had returned to the Kennedy School to get an MPA, master's of public administration. We courted for a very short time, were married, and the next year he finished up school and we had to make career decisions. And I was absolutely elated because word had just come out in the newspaper that the State Department was changing its directive on married women and married women would indeed be allowed to join the service. So we came to Washington in, I think it was September of '71, and he started his A-100 class and I took the Foreign Service exam in October, the old exam, when it was given on a predictable date. I was elated some month or so later to be told that I had passed. I took the oral exam and was thrilled to death to be told that I was the second married woman who had ever been admitted into the service at that time. So I was thrilled to death, but I had to wait on the list the same as everybody else, and I had been interested in USIA [U.S. Information Agency]; being a water lily floating on the sea of culture, essentially I thought that would be the métier for me. But President Nixon at that time, having little faith in the younger generation, put a freeze on hiring for junior officers. This was the period of Vietnam and he figured he didn't need any more rabble-rousers in the government than he already had and was interested only in hiring midlevel, reliable journalist types that he felt would tell the kind of story he was interested in about the war. So I accompanied Douglas to Mexico, which was his first assignment, and kept myself busy down there.

Q: You had already passed the exam.

KINNEY: I had passed the exam when we went to Mexico, yes. And I was waiting essentially to be called, but then this hiring freeze was put on. I didn't know how long that would last, but I figured I would have to find something else to do in Mexico. I set about getting the house set up, and after I'd done all that and gotten to know the city and so forth, learned a very important lesson which is a family rule now: "When in doubt, go." Because Douglas wanted to drag me to some American veteran's do one evening, and I wanted to go to that about as much as I wanted a toothache. But he said, "Oh, please, come on. It's very important to them. We have to have some representation from the embassy." He was the ambassador's staff aide by this time, for Bob McBride, who was really one of the wonderful old-style ambassadors. So I reluctantly went. I happened to meet a marvelous woman by the name of Louise Honey at that party who, finding out my background, my interest and desire in working, immediately offered me a job as a history teacher at the Colegio Americano. There was just one problem: Diplomatic spouses weren't allowed to work.

Return from Mexico: Creation of the Working Committee on Spouses (1973)

KINNEY: … In the meantime, I passed my thirty-first birthday, I discovered I was pregnant, came back to Washington, and had to start all over again [with the Foreign Service exam]. My frustration level was, needless to say, high. And I was going through a major transition in addition to the work issue and all of this just gave fuel to the fire.

Q: What happened to your exams? The Foreign Service exams that you passed?

KINNEY: Well, yes. Mr. Nixon lifted the freeze two months after my eligibility ran out.

Q: Nice guy, huh?

KINNEY: So that also added to my frustration, just everything that year. I just remember that summer was so awful. I just hated everything. I was furious. "Hell hath no fury" and I was really fit to be tied. I thought, “Well, you can go around being angry, but I've always been somebody who was taught that you have to find something to do about your anger.”

So I thought, well, I was pregnant. There was no chance of my getting a job knowing I was going to quit nine months later. I felt obliged to tell them. I remember I interviewed out at Madeira and I blew the interview because I knew I was pregnant at the time and my heart wasn't really in it. So I decided, "Well, I'll do volunteer work." So I got a job as issues analyst at Common Cause on energy issues and went to Dorothy's class and decided, maybe I would meet some people there who would be helpful to me. And I met Hope [Meyers].

And then the next thing I knew we were meeting in what became known as the Working Committee on Spouses. There were six of us, as I recall. It was Hope and Anna Ralph, Cynthia Chard, myself, Molly Kux, and I can't remember the sixth person; I can see her, but I can't remember her name (Cecile Ledsky?). We would meet every Tuesday in the department, initially to complain to each other and talk about all the things that we didn't like, and then to start identifying things that we could do to change things. One of the things that we learned from each other was that the so-called "regulation" that required married women to resign never existed.

Q: It was never on paper.

KINNEY: It never existed. It was just practiced. We got information from the Director General, we talked to people, we learned as much about management as we could. We tried to learn about why people were opposed to these changes involving women that were beginning to take place. We talked about the problems that resulted from taking away the old structure without putting anything in its place.

Our frustration derived largely from the fact that, although we had been declared "private persons" from the '72 Directive, there was nothing private about our lives at all. Our lives were totally circumscribed by our husbands' professions and their vagabond existence, dragging us from pillar to post with no chance of career continuity, pay or anything else. And so out of that frustration came the sense that, all right, there was one thing worse than being an adjunct to your husband: It was being a non-person. That private persons weren't really private persons at all, they were just non-persons because we didn't exist at all — at least before you existed. You were recognized in OERs. There was a certain responsibility owed to you because, although you weren't paid for your work, it was recognized that you did certain things and therefore the department in general dealt with you. Now: nothing.

Q: You were referring to the fact that spouses were evaluated on their husbands' reports?

KINNEY: That's correct, on their husbands' report up until 1972. The Research Committee on Spouses became somewhat loosely allied with the Women's Action Organization [WAO]. The more we did, the more WAO identified themselves with us and would point to us and say, "Ah, they're part of our group." I don't ever recall feeling all that close to WAO. Basically my recollection and my feelings at the time were that it was the six of us against the world trying to gather information. It was WAO and our nominal association with WAO that did enable us to get in the building, and that was important, and get the room so we could meet every Tuesday.

Q: Was that a conscious decision that you were meeting regularly and at the State Department?

KINNEY: Yes. I think Hope was the one who arranged the relationship with WAO. I don't remember. I'm sure she must have. But the thing that I remember most about that experience was this growing sense of empowerment by gathering information and being together, sort of solidarity, getting increasingly fatter as my baby grew in my tummy; the wonderful sort of irony of being an impending mother starting this little nascent revolution with the six of us.

Organizing a study … it wasn't a study, it was really a questionnaire that Cynthia Chard and I did that, to my mind, was one of the most seminal acts of the Research Committee on Spouses. It was a very unscientific questionnaire. It was designed for the simple-minded to get simple answers and it was about two pages long with considerable space after each question. It was distributed to as many men as we could get our hands on in the department who were officers.

The single most important thing we learned from it was that: One, we got a tremendous response back, as I recall, about 33 percent — which is very high for any kind of questionnaire like this. Two, 25 percent of the respondents indicated that the working status of their wife would influence their next assignment. And at that point, I said, "Aha, this is our handle. This is not a women's issue. This is not a malcontent's problem. This is a management concern." And from that point on, we started attacking the issue as a management issue.

Q: The fact that it affected the husband.

KINNEY: It affects the [Foreign] Service and so forth. We collated the information, pulled it together, sent it in a small report to Carol Laise, who was Director General of the service at that time. I think we met with her. I don't remember all that clearly.

Q: Hope Meyers indicated that you did.

KINNEY: Yes. I remember being periodically disappointed and indignant because Carol didn't seem to give us the support that we thought we deserved. But basically we kept at it. In that same time frame, Cynthia Chard also did the first effort at putting together a spouse skills talent bank. One of my memories of that is afternoons over at Cynthia's house addressing thousands and thousands of these forms to send out. She financed it with her own money. Maybe we put in some contributions, I don't know, but that was where that started.

We did that work in this format for about a year and then I remember Hope coming into one of the meetings and informing us that new leadership was coming on at AAFSW [American

Association of Foreign Service Women]. She asked me in particular to please come. She was a stalwart member of AAFSW, which was the old traditional lady's aid society kind of organization for Foreign Service women, although they would not have appreciated that description. That was the way I looked at them. Hope asked me to come to one of the meetings and to explain my concerns, that this new president was coming in and she thought maybe there was a chance of doing something. And I remember her saying, "Stephanie, you must work. You must give the traditional organs a chance. You can't just dismiss them. You can't act as though they don't matter because they do."

…

KINNEY: Well, one of the things that we pointed out in the report [on Foreign Service wives] … A lot of this had been couched in terms of women's [liberation] or the feminist movement. The association with WAO certainly gave it that cast and it was one of the reasons I, at least, wanted to move it to AAFSW, and I was very glad for the opportunity to do that because feminism in the Department of State had a bad name. It was associated with Alison Palmer and class-action suits and general cantankerous rabble-rousing. That made it harder to get things done because that particular style evoked opposition in what was a very male-dominated, basically macho institution.

So what we did was play the old sweet Southern thing. I mean, I'm a fifth-generation Floridian bred and born, and when I came into the Foreign Service, in my autobiography I had to say why I was qualified to be a diplomat. I said that I had been born and raised a Southern women and I knew there was more than one way to skin a cat [*laughter*]. Well, what we did was use female networking — shamelessly played on our male counterparts to mentor and ram through, for the better good of womankind, dramatic institutional change.

Q: I'm glad you did that.

KINNEY: And there were those who, for feminist purity and ideological reasons, might have found all of that reprehensible, but frankly I was more interested in getting something accomplished, not the ideology.

Moving to Rome as Tandem Couple (1979-1981)

KINNEY: … I remember while I was up there [at the Director General's office], I got commissioned the first study of tandems. My recollection is probably a little imprecise, but I think I recall that when the first count was done, there were thirty-four tandem officer couples, and most of those were couples in which the wife had left the service and had come back recently. Because when they promulgated the '72 declaration and rescinded the non-existent rule on married women, a good number of women came back into the service. They had been being Foreign Service wives in the intervening years, accompanying their husbands overseas, etc., etc., and [when] they were able to come back and work and be their own officer, they took the opportunity. There were relatively few of us, in fact there was practically nobody I felt I could turn to who was my age, my stage in life — you know, young, small child, and married, and also an officer.

I remember when we went to Rome looking around, it was a huge embassy. It was about 600 people. The country team was about thirty-five people and I remember being as lonely as I had ever been in my life because I left the DG's office and went to Rome, and when I left the DG's office, when I left Washington, I left all of my women friends, all of my women support group. And I was utterly alone and there was no one like me. I know how a minority feels when he or she goes into a room and doesn't see him or herself in the group because I went into Rome and I was a freak. There were women who had small children, but they weren't officers. There were officers who were women, but they weren't married or they didn't have children. There was no one that I could look at and see myself in.

Q: That was the first time you went overseas as a tandem?

KINNEY: Yes. And candidly and openly share souls, experience, and exchange notes on how you survive. So I basically had to figure it out on my own and it was hard. It was very, very lonely, very, very conflicted, because it's bad enough to have the childcare situation such as it is in Washington, but then to take your sweet little rosebud at age 3 or 4 and transport her overseas and fall into the hands of foreigners and long bus rides to the school and the chaotic city that Rome was and everything. There were many wonderful moments and we all had ultimately pretty happy memories of that time, but the conflict and the loneliness of that first year, added to the fact that we didn't have a house to live in, was as miserable as I ever remember being in the service.

Q: How does that compare to your first tour as a spouse in Mexico?

KINNEY: Seventy-five thousand million times harder.

Q: Harder as an officer of a tandem couple.

KINNEY: Oh, yes, because I didn't have a wife. I very badly needed a wife to run the house, take care of the child, worry about the schooling, and make life easy for me … And the fact that we worked with a rather demanding officer.

…

KINNEY: … The Foreign Service had an abnormal number of divorces, not of bad marriages, but an abnormal number of divorces relative to the American population in the early '70's. We've now caught up and probably surpassed the national norm, but in those days, while divorce was becoming more common and more acceptable in the society at large, within the Foreign Service it was still something of a taboo. It demonstrated you couldn't manage your affairs, and if you couldn't manage your affairs, how could you be a good officer? If you're not a good officer, you won't get promoted, and if you don't get promoted, end of career.

So there was a lot of unhappiness, there were a lot of bad marriages, there were a lot of women in what I consider to be deplorable and unbearable circumstances. But they were tough. They were disciplined. They didn't question. If they questioned, they kept it to themselves. You know, stiff upper lip and all that. Sometimes they drank themselves under the table, but you know that

happens today, too. It's no big deal. We're just a little bit more open about it and we have programs. …

Challenges of Foreign Service Life

Q: If I may, I'd like to go back to [Director General] Carol Laise one more time, because she had an interesting background, and perhaps having worked with her, you can comment on that.

KINNEY: The significant thing about Carol was that she was a self-made woman. She started out as a secretary and she made it to ambassador in the Foreign Service, one of the few women ambassadors at that time. She ultimately ended up marrying Ellsworth Bunker, one the great statesmen of this country. They had a commuting marriage. She was in Nepal and was he in India … I don't remember exactly. India or China, I can't remember exactly.

Q: She had been in India in the beginning of the '60s, the late '60s, but I don't know where.

KINNEY: But she was ambassador to Nepal, as I recall. And Bunker was ambassador either to China … oh, he was ambassador to Vietnam! So they were really a startling couple at that particular period in history. She married very late. She never had children. I always felt very sympathetic to her because, as disappointed as we were at her lack of enthusiasm and apparent empathy for our problems, she was one of the women who had had to give up everything in order to have a Foreign Service career.

Back to my introduction to the Foreign Service as a 16-year old: You could not have both. You had to choose. And she chose the career. It was a difficult career for a woman. There was no social underpinning and sympathy for it. She could not get married in the terms of her time and did not and was solely and exclusively dedicated to the Foreign Service.

One of the things that I remember most about Carol and that has stayed with me most — and I find myself, interestingly enough, in the last year or so, repeating to younger officers who I think need reminding of this — it was Carol who said to me, when I was furious one day and ranting and raving about all the things I thought the service should do for me, who said, "But Stephanie, the service is not here to serve you. The point of this career is service to the U.S. government and its citizens. Your concerns are secondary and will always and should always be thus."

Q: Wow.

KINNEY: So she had as strong a service ethos, something that I think has been significantly and unfortunately diluted, damaged, diminished today. But she felt that dedication, she believed that the first obligation was to serve, and anything personal came second.

Q: And how did she make the transition from Foreign Service secretary into the Foreign Service officer? They were separate, weren't they?

KINNEY: Damned hard work, talent, and perseverance. At a certain point in time in her career, there was an opportunity to shift systems and she simply lifted the opportunity. Things had

opened up enough that she could work as a midlevel officer, and she was talented, she worked hard. In her later years, she benefited from the feminist movement because when they were looking around for token women — there weren't very many — Carol was there, and she exploited every opportunity as the political overlords exploited her.

I don't want to ascribe anything negative to either side. It was simply the right time in history. She had the skills, she had the background, she had the ability, and she was a woman when they needed women.

Q: How many of those women were there, do you think?

KINNEY: Very few. I mean we still don't have more than 1 or 2 percent in the senior ranks of the Foreign Service. And I don't believe that's because the Foreign Service is inherently evil, sexist, and discriminatory, I think it's because most women are not willing to make the sacrifice that Carol made. Most women are not prepared to be single-minded about it. Now that's not to say that you have to be single-minded today. There are women at the top, ambassadors who are mothers, wives, etc. But the career is a very hard one. It is hard enough to be a working mother in Washington, D.C. It is four times as hard when you transport it overseas, have to move in and deal with a foreign culture and your children the same.

There are more models now, certainly, and I think that makes it easier. The younger generation, I think, I hope, is a little less conflicted than my generation was, too. Such anguish, such pain, such, "Oh my God, what am I doing? Am I doing the right thing? Am I doing the wrong thing?" Just some days having to close your eyes and say, "I have faith. This will all work out. I am not damaging either my family, my daughter, or myself. We are just very challenged." And hope and pray that something terrible doesn't happen as a result of the decisions you've made.

But having no support anywhere you turned to say, "You're doing okay. Don't worry, it's all right." At least today, a lot of the young mothers may still have a very tough time. They may still feel very conflicted, but there are sources of affirmation, there are sources that confirm them all around them, whether it's the media or the television or other officers in the embassy or just American society. But it's still tough because learning foreign languages, learning foreign ways …

I think the hardest thing for me about the Foreign Service is what I call “going back to kindergarten.” That every three years, just as you achieve a certain level of competency and accomplishment and recognition for that, you are stripped of it and you have to start back at square one, proving to everybody that you're worth it. And this doesn't change. It's the part that I just hate.

There are two parts I hate that are psychologically wrenching. One is that and the other is having to leave good friends, relationships that you have worked very hard developing and opening up, and then from day to night, that's the end of them. Some people are better at writing letters. I don't seem to be very good at carrying on long-distance relationships and so I've developed a certain hardness about learning to be open and to love, if you will, to give, to share while it's

there, but moving on when it's over, because I just can't deal with the … If I thought about it, I'd sit down and cry.

And then coming back to Washington, you know you're not coming home. This place is just as strange as going to East Wa-Wa when you come back because the friendships, the networks, the support systems and so forth, don't necessarily stay the same. When I left in '79, I left with a very heavy heart. Rome was tremendously difficult. We did end up loving it, which was important and good. Then we were sent to New York, very unexpectedly, to the U … Doug was Jeane Kirkpatrick's Latin American specialist. I was given a nothing job that they hadn't been able to fill for nine months because nobody could afford to do it. And here again, one reason we had that tandem assignment was because I was convenient for them. They could slam-dunk me into it because we would have two salaries and therefore they could get the job filled.

New York turned out to be great. We had a good time. Mercier loved it. It was a satisfying assignment in the final analysis. One makes do and creates things and I ended up having a good time. But then we came back to Washington and it was like starting all over again because I couldn't really go back to my old spouse network, because that wasn't my primary identity, that wasn't my primary modus anymore. I was an officer now.

Reflecting on Foreign Service Career as Tandem Couple

Q: We talked about some of the difficulties as part of a tandem couple. It appears that you might not have gotten as good assignments sometimes?

KINNEY: You can't have it all. You can have it all — how do I say this? I believe that it is extremely difficult to have it all and make it big. Occasionally an extraordinary person does it. Donna Rhinak, for example, married late in life to a wealthy jeweler who was able to support her. She had a child and she's extremely talented and Louis takes care of her and makes life work for her and makes it bearable. She's fantastic — a very bright woman, and she's a deputy assistant secretary. I would say Donna has had it all and made it big.

In general, however, I think you can have it all and make it small. That's how I would characterize myself. Or you can have it big but not have it all. And you have to choose. One of the reasons Donna has made it big and has it all is because she's not married to a Foreign Service officer. She's married to a gentleman whom she met in Mexico who is a businessman. He's a good deal older than she is and he's at a certain stage in life, secure, able to go around with her.

I think it is virtually impossible for two Foreign Service officers to both make it big, have it all — by that I mean marriage, family, children, and good work all at the same time, and make it to the top. Carol and Ellsworth Bunker did it, but it was a marriage late in life. She never had children. It would be interesting to go through and see who the tandem ambassadors or tandem DCMs [deputy chiefs of mission] are. I think they're probably very, very few.

Q: But this is something that you and your husband are conscious of so that you decide together what assignments you should make and who should take what, that sort of thing, in order to work this out.

KINNEY: One, we spend a lot of time in Washington, which I love because it's where policy is made and I think the policy is really where it's at. Two, we have been flexible. We have settled for jobs that are less sexy, will get us less recognition, from which we are less likely to be promoted. But we have stayed together. I mean, that for us is … Now, maybe there are some tandem ambassadors and DCMs out there, but were they able to stay together? I believe that in the final analysis, you're probably not going to be able to have everything and it's just a question of what you're willing to sacrifice or what decisions are going to be right for you at a given time, and it's going to be different for different people.

I think that Doug's career has suffered more than mine because his expectations were greater. He came in assuming, desiring to be an ambassador. I don't think that will happen. That hurts me. I think he thinks it won't happen now. He's an office director in IO [Bureau of International Organization Affairs]. You know, maybe fate will strike again like that call out of the blue: "Do you want to go to Rome?" Weird things like that happen in the Foreign Service. You sort of have to keep the faith, and we don't know what's going to happen. But I think his perception right now is he's not even sure he'll be selected into the Senior Service, much less DCM or ambassador in anyplace meaningful.

Q: But you never know.

KINNEY: You never know, but he has definitely accepted jobs that were less career-enhancing for him in order for us to be together and in order for me to have a job. And in most of my cases, my jobs are not things that mainline Foreign Service officers would ever want to do, but they have been extremely career-enhancing for me. I've had a faster promotion rate than Doug has. I don't fit in anybody's scheme of things. I've never done what I was supposed to. I've only done what I wanted to, which was a little offbeat and weird, but I've been terribly satisfied and pleased while I was doing it.

Ambassador Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick

Ambassador, U.S. Mission to the United Nations (1981-1985)

Q: Now, did you believe that your gender would be an asset or a liability? You were the first woman.

KIRKPATRICK: It might. I had no notion what a shock my gender would be. Let me tell you how much the first woman I was. I was not only the first woman to head the U.S. Mission to the United Nations — I was the first woman to ever represent a major power at the U.N. I was the first woman to ever represent a western government at the United Nations. Western, broadly interpreted, that means a European government, Eastern Europe or Western Europe. There had only been about three or four women to head missions at the United Nations before I got there. There had been a Guyanese, there had been a Sri Lankan, Mrs. Bandaranaike headed their mission briefly. There had been a Liberian; that's about all. Such a big shock.

Q: Were there none from South America?

KIRKPATRICK: No, I don't think so. I didn't really know the extent to which the diplomatic corps of the world and the diplomatic profession are an exclusive male preserve. I also was the first woman — think about this — I was the first woman to sit in the National Security Council on a regular basis, much less in what I sat in, which was the inner circle of the NSPG [National Security Planning Group], of which I was a member of in a, not ex officio, but personal capacity. I didn't think there'd ever been a woman in those councils on a regular basis at the table.

There are a few women who have made their way into the background; not even many of those, though. So I think my appointment was a big shock to my colleagues at the United Nations. It was a bigger shock than I realized it was going to be. I hadn't thought much about it before I accepted, quite frankly. I had grown accustomed to being the only woman in a lot of rooms that I was in. I was the first woman on the Rank and Tenure Committee at [Georgetown] University, the first woman to be a Senior Scholar here at the American Enterprise Institute. But even so, I didn't think much about it; I didn't give much thought to it. And it turned out to be a bigger shock to my colleagues than I'd dreamed.

Q: Yes. It rocked the world.

KIRKPATRICK: It rocked them. I think that's fair to say; it rocked them. I mean, it would have been strange enough for any Western country to send a woman — but for the United States to send a woman … By the way, when I said, not only was there no woman head of mission, there weren't any women, you know, as ambassadors. The Soviets have eleven ambassadors; not one is a woman. The United States had five ambassadors; well, there was one woman ambassador there, Joan Spiro. But there are very, very few senior women around the U.N. system in any role whatsoever.

Q: How are they perceived at the U.N., these other women who are in the background?

KIRKPATRICK: After my appointment, two other women were appointed by Western nations. The Belgians appointed Edmonde DeVer as permanent representative, where she has performed extremely well, let me say, and today admits to more consciousness about being a woman in that role than she would admit when she got there. She's undergone a little consciousness-raising herself, so she's a little franker about it. She's a career officer, very highly regarded. The Swiss appointed a woman to head their mission. Now they're observers, but still they participate quite a lot. Nobody believes that those women would have been appointed if I hadn't been appointed. But, by the way, I left, Edmonde is leaving this week, the Swiss has already left. Once again, there is no woman at the top of any Western mission. I don't know whether we made any permanent impact.

Q: Well, I'm sure it will be easier for the next one who will eventually go.

KIRKPATRICK: Eventually.

Q: But they were perceived as …

KIRKPATRICK: As competent.

Q: As competent. I guess you took most of the flak.

KIRKPATRICK: Well, they came about, oh, a year and a half to two years after I was there. I think the shock was past then. But I have no doubt that my appointment and survival of those first two years, which was very tough, in fact opened doors for women in career foreign service positions in those two countries.

Q: I'm sure it did, because not only did you survive, but you survived a lot longer than many men.

KIRKPATRICK: That's right. I stayed longer than anybody since Adlai Stevenson.

Q: And were perceived as successful. Now did events prove that your gender was a plus or a minus?

KIRKPATRICK: I don't know. You know, in the beginning, I think it was definitely a minus. I have no doubt that it was. That's an extremely complicated, difficult, frustrating job, which is the big reason that the turnover is so rapid in it. Don McHenry said to me, for example, that I had to be ready to be criticized for not being adequately accessible. "Because," he said, "no matter how much time you spend with representatives of all of the other countries represented here, it will never be as much as people think you should." You're dealing with 159 countries, and it's enormously complicated and difficult. They all want to see the permanent representative. If they're an ambassador, they want to see the permanent representative, in spite of the fact that you've got five other ambassadors there who are very competent. The demands are fantastic. So it's a very difficult job for anybody.

I think there was also quite a lot of deep skepticism and concern about the Reagan administration. That was also a problem, I think. In the beginning, nobody knew what kind of people Reagan appointees were going to be. And on top of it, I was a woman. I think it was a problem--it just made me a little more strange than I already would have been as a Reagan appointee, or as a political appointee, because probably 80 percent of the U.N. perm reps are career officers.

Q: Eighty percent are career officers?

KIRKPATRICK: Well, I don't know. Seventy-five percent. It's a high percentage. By the way, most of the ones who aren't are academics, which is kind of interesting; professors of constitutional law and so forth. I think with some of the Europeans, the Asians, at least as much as the Africans and the Arabs, I sensed some sort of sex-related reticence — static, I would say. I think they just regarded me as a very odd creature. Now, since nobody ever gave me any training in how to be an ambassador, maybe I was a pretty odd creature [*laughter*]. This was maybe a little true, though I was, of course, very serious from the very beginning, and I worked prodigiously. And I did something else that most of Americans haven't done — namely, I spoke a couple of languages well enough to do business in them, which is very important.

Q: French is one?

KIRKPATRICK: French and Spanish. Those are two very useful languages at the U.N. It is very useful at the U.N. to speak other languages, to be able to really function in them. I am told that I was the first U.S. perm rep who could actually function in other languages. Now, of course, Dick Walters [U.S. permanent representative to the U.N., 1985-89] functions in nine.

Q: I know it.

KIRKPATRICK: But that helped. Once I established myself, demonstrated to my colleagues that I was serious and I did my work, and that I was businesslike, I think in fact that I probably profited as much from being a woman as I had ever suffered. I do believe that there are whole cultures in which men, like ambassadors and foreign ministers, and even heads of state, may find it a little easier to deal with a woman than with another man. I think in macho cultures, like both Latin and Arab – and somebody said African — they're much less likely to regard a woman as a competitor. And I think women are generally, including me, trained to be good listeners. I did an awful lot of listening and a lot of seeking of advice, and my colleagues liked that. So I think that I probably had some advantages overall, once I got over the original sort of shock of being a woman in there.

Q: Did you find that you could get away with saying things directly to a man that another man couldn't say?

KIRKPATRICK: I don't know.

Q: Millicent Fenwick [U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, 1983-86] has reported that from her job. She said, "I can say the most outrageous things, and because I'm a woman they accept this." And I wondered if that would hold true with the U.N., or maybe they're more sensitive there.

KIRKPATRICK: There's an interesting culture at the U.N.; it's an interesting mix of informality and highly stylized diplomatic communication. Everybody's on a first-name basis almost immediately — and I mean everybody, except the Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge, the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], the people we don't speak to at all. My Soviet colleague and I were on a first-name basis from within the first two or three weeks I was there. On the other hand, everybody is very polite and relatively formal; I mean, formal in the conduct of business in a context of informal salutations.

Q: That's curious.

KIRKPATRICK: It's an interesting mix. That's observed by almost everybody. I think I adapted, frankly, my own style of communication to that of my colleagues that I observed around me, especially the British, the French, and the Dutch. When I was with Latins, I talked like the Latins talk to each other — as "the ambassadors," you know. I didn't associate with anybody but ambassadors; of course, there are so many ambassadors at the U.N. I don't think I said many outrageous things. I will say this: maybe I was more outrageous than I realized. I developed very quickly a reputation for extraordinary and often shocking candor. Now, I never thought of myself

as particularly candid. Nobody ever called me particularly candid before I went to the U.N., so I think I must have been speaking in a way that made me seem shockingly frank.

Q: Was it one of your desires, ambitions, goals when you went there to elevate the status of the United States at the U.N., where we have been kicked around for so long?

KIRKPATRICK: I don't think it was one of my desires when I went there, but it rapidly became my principal goal [*laughter*] When I fully realized our condition there, then it became an almost obsessive goal, frankly. Not just to elevate the status, either, but to secure decent treatment for the United States. I always said that my goal for the U.S. at the U.N. was that we should be treated with as much fundamental respect and consideration as any small third-world country, which we were not. And we probably still are not. I didn't deliberately say shocking things. When I was shocking I think it was largely inadvertent.

I do agree with Millicent Fenwick about one thing, though. I think women tend to communicate more directly than men. I know Millicent thinks this because I've heard her say it with a little laugh. When I was trying to be as formal and diplomatic as I possibly could, I was probably being more direct than most of my colleagues. Americans would tend to be more direct, anyway.

Q: When you began your duty, what was your perception of the career diplomats and of the State Department?

KIRKPATRICK: You know, I never thought about the State Department, to tell you the truth, before I went in. I worked for the State Department once. My first job ever was in the State Department and he [*pointing to her husband*] was my boss. He was not my teacher, but he was my boss. I decided, after one year's experience, that I didn't want to work at the State Department, but my problem was not with the State Department, it was with big bureaucracies. I simply thought I didn't want to work in a big organization. That was my only personal reflection.

I thought that the State Department had done an absolutely miserable job in Central America, if I may say so. I thought that because I started following U.S. policy toward Central America, particularly both El Salvador and Nicaragua, in about 1978, and I followed it unusually closely. I read all the hearings. I became convinced this part of the world was terribly important to us strategically, and the decisions we were making there were terribly important to us. I did very close analysis of predictions. When I say a "bad job," a "lousy job," I mean to say that the predictions that were made turned out to be not true, and all those standard kinds of objective criteria about the adequacy of analysis. So I guess I had a poor opinion of the group. But I mainly attributed it to the Carter Administration, frankly, rather than the Foreign Service. I didn't have any generalizations about the Foreign Service. I developed some views about what I took to be some policy biases in the Foreign Service rather early on, especially concerning the Middle East. And I think I discerned those famous State Department Arabists rather early on. I became aware of this because we were continually dealing with attacks on Israel at the United Nations. It was the first issue I dealt with, and then obsessively through time, we were dealing with complaints against Israel. I also was dealing with the IO bureau [Bureau of International Organization Affairs] and the Secretary of State.

One of the crazy things about the job of perm rep is that you have to operate on many different levels. Any perm rep has to, in fact. I found that the NEA bureau [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] was, in those days, out of step with the administration, by which I mean the secretary of state, with whom they should have been in step, and the national security adviser, and the president, and me. It was difficult; it was much harder than it should have been to get support and staffing to implement decisions made by the heads of government — the U.S. government. That's sort of the first, of what might be called "opinion" about the Foreign Service, and it wasn't about the Foreign Service; it was about a particular group of Foreign Service officers located in a particular place in the department. But when I came in, I didn't really have any views about the State Department. I mean, I assumed they were competent professionals.

Q: Before you had Ambassador Sherman, you had somebody else with whom you just did not click. But that was a personality thing, wasn't it?

KIRKPATRICK: I hope so. It didn't have anything to do with Foreign Service, I don't think. It may have had something to do with sex roles. I chose him, by the way. I take responsibility. But the problem was one which, I am told, the women political ambassadors have rather more frequently than others. And the problem was basically …

Q: The DCM syndrome?

KIRKPATRICK: The DCM syndrome. He literally proposed to me the first week that I went to New York, that in order to learn something about the way the U.N. system works, perhaps I would like to take a trip around the world, observing missions and all that. He assumed I was not going to be interested in the running of the mission; he assumed I was not going to be interested in policy, he assumed I wasn't going to be interested in administration, and he assumed that it was going to be his job to do it all. And I felt very strongly that he systematically not only cut me out, but cut me out and simultaneously took charge of the mission and the relationships in Washington and the process in a way that was going to be incompatible with my functioning. I hate letting people go, firing people. I really hate it. In my life, generally, I hate it. I keep people a long time because I hate it so much, and I have fired very few people. He was the only person I ever let go at the U.N. the whole time I was there, out of a lot of people. But I concluded — and all the other [U.S.] ambassadors up there concluded, by the way — that we were not going to be able to function without getting rid of him. And so, feeling a real sense of personal failure about having chosen the wrong person, I went to Joan Clark [director general of the Foreign Service]. Or maybe I told Al Haig first. But very early on, I went to Joan Clark and told her my problem; I confessed my problem, and said basically I wanted some help about getting rid of him. I understand Anne Armstrong [U.S. ambassador to Britain, 1976-77] has had a very similar experience in Britain.

Q: Well, she did with Ron Spiers [deputy chief of mission, American Embassy, London] until they finally sat down and talked it out. And then it was all right. But they were on the point of positively blowing up. The one who had … well, there are several. Ruth Farkas [U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg, 1973-76] had bad trouble.

KIRKPATRICK: Yes, I heard that, too.

Q: And Anne Cox Chambers [U.S. ambassador to Belgium 1977-81] had a very bad time. As you say, it happens.

KIRKPATRICK: And Geri Joseph [U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands, 1978-81], I think.

Q: I have not interviewed Geri Joseph. I'll be interested in that.

KIRKPATRICK: She's very good; she did a super job.

Q: But that is definitely a theme that runs through this. It's an arrogance in a certain age Foreign Service officer.

KIRKPATRICK: Would he have treated a man as he treated me? I'm not sure.

Q: I don't think so; no, I don't think so. But a political man might have been given a rough time.

KIRKPATRICK: Mmhm, mmhm.

Q: But never as bad as the women are; I don't think. And I have talked to a couple of hundred people on this subject. But it seems to be a certain generation, and thank goodness it's not the entire generation.

KIRKPATRICK: That's great. I'm happy to hear that.

Q: Was that man, perhaps, in his fifties?

KIRKPATRICK: Yes.

Q: Well, there you are. It's the "old" Foreign Service, and it runs right through.

KIRKPATRICK: Very smart, very competent guy. When I told him that I was going to let him go, request his transfer, I told him I didn't want to destroy him; I didn't want to destroy his career. I believed he would, in fact, do well for the United States as an ambassador someplace else. And I felt that. And he did, as a matter of fact — but not with me.

Q: Well, of course, there is a question of personality.

KIRKPATRICK: I don't think it was personality. I don't think we had a problem in personality. I think, actually, we were sort of the people who would have enjoyed each other as dinner partners, you know.

Q: So it was a matter of his attitude, really, more than anything else?

KIRKPATRICK: It really was. It was really a work-related attitude.

Q: What I don't understand is how these men, and it happens over and over, can be so stupid when they don't have the strong cards in their hands.

KIRKPATRICK: That's right. You'd think they'd be a little more cautious.

Q: Well, wouldn't you? Especially when it's their career.

KIRKPATRICK: He was totally surprised, by the way, by my decision.

Q: Was he really? Had no idea that you …

KIRKPATRICK: Totally.

Q: How long did you keep him? I did not know that.

KIRKPATRICK: Two months maybe. I made the decision early.

Q: I presume you hadn't know him very well, just had no idea.

KIRKPATRICK: No, I had not. I had not. I had decided myself that I wanted to get a Foreign Service officer as a deputy because I had no experience in the State Department, and I just thought it would make sense to do that. But I didn't do it after I let him go, by the way. I didn't do it again.

Susan M. Klingaman

Education at Oberlin College (1955-1959)

Q: Did diplomacy come across your radar at this point?

KLINGAMAN: No, not at all. Oberlin was basically toward the left of center on the political spectrum as far as most students and most professors were concerned. I didn't have any exposure that I can recall to the government … except I do remember something now, and this is very interesting. I haven't thought about this in years. A recruiter from the State Department Foreign Service came to Oberlin College to speak at a career day. I went to that session; it must have been my junior or maybe my senior year. This State Department speaker was a woman, probably from the personnel office. She said to the audience very frankly that the Foreign Service was not a place for a woman. She did not recommend it.

Foreign Service Oral Exam (1962)

KLINGAMAN: The oral exam for the Foreign Service was the longest and most grueling and most confrontational exam I ever encountered before or since. In those days, the name of the

game was to make the interviewee as uncomfortable as possible. The reason was simply to see how poised we were, how we would extricate ourselves from potentially embarrassing or awkward situations, and how well we could think on our feet.

There were three male examiners on one side of the table and I was on the other side. I had prepared myself as best I could. In those days the gossip around the Fletcher School was that you should read the *New York Times* for several months, you should know where Yemen is located, you should be prepared for them to offer you a cigarette and not provide an ashtray, all of those little tricks. I was prepared for those but I was not prepared for the length and intensity of the exam. I was not prepared for some of the questions that I received, which, quite frankly, were very sexist.

Q: Obviously today it is different.

KLINGAMAN: It is totally different.

Q: But could you talk about it?

KLINGAMAN: Sure. One of the questions was one I was well prepared for, and it was simply: What are you going to do if you are accepted into the Foreign Service and then you decide to get married? And my answer was, quite simply, that I would have to resign. They asked me why and I said there was a regulation in the State Department that requires women to resign if they get married, no matter to whom. So I would because I would be required to. I would not necessarily want to but that would be the requirement. They accepted that answer as obviously the correct answer. They didn't ask me, really, for my views on that. …

First Years in the Foreign Service

Q: Did you find any sexism in the Foreign Service as a young woman coming in?

KLINGAMAN: Not really. I mentioned the Foreign Service exam questions. I mentioned the marriage regulations. I knew that at that time only about two or three percent of the FSOs [Foreign Service officers] were women; that figure was being tossed about. I also knew that most of those women, almost all of those women, were doing consular work, administrative work or cultural work. But at that stage in my career, I was innocent about the issue of discrimination against women. I was just operating on the assumptions that I had grown up with. At Oberlin I had never felt any discrimination. I did have a taste of it at the Fletcher School when I applied in my second year there for a scholarship from Fletcher and was told point-blank by the man in the administrative office of Fletcher that scholarships were for men. That had come as a shock to me and had left a very bad taste in my mouth. But in all fairness I can also say that Fletcher did eventually arrange for me to receive a scholarship from the National Soroptimist Association for my second year of study at Fletcher. But that was the only taste I'd had of discrimination.

I did, however, experience another taste of it when I came up for assignment after Dusseldorf.

Q: You mentioned several times the regulations when a woman gets married. But actually I'm told by someone I've interviewed, Eleanor Constable, who asked to see the regulation, that there wasn't a regulation. She married a Foreign Service officer, and there wasn't a regulation.

KLINGAMAN: Oh, really, so it was all a nasty rumor? I know that in the 1960s we were told that women FSOs who married were required to resign whether we married within or outside the Foreign Service. I never actually checked on it myself, but I had thought this was a regulation and that it was later changed in the early '70s.

Dusseldorf, Germany: Awaiting Assignment (1965)

Q: Well, then, in '65, what then?

KLINGAMAN: That was the big question. And then along came my first real introduction to problems facing women in Foreign Service. I was obviously going to stay in the Foreign Service for another tour. A man named Elwood Williams came out to Dusseldorf and other posts in Germany. Elwood was a civil servant on the German desk who was handicapped and was an expert on Germany. I think he had multiple sclerosis. He had for years taken a special interest in junior officers and tried to steer them in the right direction for their onward assignments. He came out to Dusseldorf and asked me what I would like to do next and I said that I really would like to practice using my French. He said that probably meant an assignment in what had been French West Africa, not Paris. I said that would be fine and so he went back to the [State] Department and directed my name toward the African bureau.

At that time, the personnel assignments were managed in the geographic bureaus rather than in a centralized personnel office in the department. I went into the African personnel hopper and out came Monrovia, which of course is an English-speaking post. So I was assigned to Monrovia. I went down to the PX [a store carrying American goods] in Bonn and bought all kinds of supplies for two years that I might need at that hardship post. Shortly before I was to leave in October of '63, we received a dispatch by boat mail saying my assignment to Monrovia was canceled and news of my onward assignment would be coming soon.

I had no idea why the Monrovia assignment was canceled. I could not imagine and I was quite upset. So I had another few months in Dusseldorf. Then we received another assignment by boat mail, which was that my next assignment would be in the political section in Hong Kong. I thought that was interesting and certainly nothing I had ever imagined. I didn't think I would be speaking any French but thought it was fine and sounded exciting. Why me, though? I wasn't a China hand and had no aspirations in that direction, but okay. Then I sent off my air freight and was all ready to go on home leave, and three days before I was scheduled to go, we received another dispatch by boat mail which said the assignment to Hong Kong was canceled.

At this point I was very upset and word had also filtered through that the ambassador in Monrovia had not wanted a woman on his staff. In those days ambassadors could refuse any officer that they didn't want for whatever reason. Rumors also came through that the assignment in Hong Kong had been canceled because the consul general there felt that that particular

position, which involved working on refugee matters, would not be suitable for a woman. So I was about to say goodbye to the Foreign Service. I just felt totally disillusioned.

The consul general in Dusseldorf became very upset about this. He and my new immediate boss, Jim Hargrove, were very supportive and very encouraging. The consul general got on the phone with Bonn and the department and what not and soon the department came through, by airmail this time, with an assignment to Manila, the Philippines. So I left Dusseldorf in December of 1965, went back for six weeks of Southeast Asia area studies in Washington, and then went off to Manila.

Manila, Philippines: political officer (1966-1968)

KLINGAMAN: … During that period we had the Seven Nations Summit meeting in Manila and I was very much involved in the logistical backstopping of that. It was very exciting. It was my first backstopping of a state visit and this was a seven-nation-state visit. It took place in Manila. The city was painted up, literally, for the occasion. President Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird arrived; Secretary of State [Dean] Rusk; and the chiefs of state and foreign ministers of the other six nations, which were Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Korea. It was a large event.

I have a very nice memory of that event. During that time I was called on to (I think it was during that event, it might have been afterwards) … In any event, it was at a time when Secretary Rusk was in the Philippines. I was the duty officer at the embassy and a message came in for him and I was asked to deliver it to him. He was at the ambassador's residence at the time. I delivered the message to the residence and I had instructions to await his reply that I was to hand-carry back to the embassy to be telegraphed back to Washington.

I was just a mail girl, nothing exciting, but I delivered the message to the ambassador's residence and I sat down on a bench outside the front door of the residence to await the reply. I waited and I waited and eventually the door opened and out came Secretary Rusk and Mrs. Rusk with the ambassador and I was introduced. Secretary Rusk said that he had heard the duty officer was a woman and that he wanted very much to meet me. He shook my hand and he sat down and said he wanted me to know that he was very pleased I was in the Foreign Service and thought we should have more women in the Foreign Service. He wished me the best of luck. I was terribly surprised, very touched at how very, very nice he was. It is a very nice memory.

The "Women's Issue" in the Foreign Service

Q: On the women's issue, when you came in, was there such a thing with the women who were in the Foreign Service that you were able to get together with other women and sort of sit around and talk about the state of things and all that, or was each one kind of alone?

KLINGAMAN: Each one was pretty much alone, although I must say my first two tours were overseas. In Dusseldorf I was the only female Foreign Service officer at the post, and in Manila I was not the only one but there weren't very many of us. The women's issue was not really an

issue at that time; it really hadn't entered into the awareness of most women, certainly not really of myself, except as I mentioned a little bit on the Foreign Service oral interview. I think that women FSOs pretty much felt that we'd do the best we could. I didn't really have an awareness of being special, different, or alone at that time.

Q: Probably it was healthier that way.

KLINGAMAN: Well, I'll get to that later. I mean, in a way it was. It was healthy.

Q: There seems to be a tendency to put people in boxes now; it doesn't work very well.

KLINGAMAN: I would agree, and I want to get into that a little bit later, but I really didn't feel that I was being discriminated against in any systematic way. I didn't really feel that my male colleagues treated me differently, so I was quite content.

Bonn, Germany: political officer (1973-1975)

KLINGAMAN: I was able to develop a very good contact with the man who had been the chairman of the Young Socialists in the early '70s. When I arrived, he had graduated from that position and was very active in politics in the state of Hesse in the Frankfurt area. I was interested in getting to know him, and he was interested in getting to know someone in the embassy that he could present his views to. His name was Karsten Voigt. I met him in Bonn; I was introduced to him. He was not in the Bundestag at that time. I was introduced to him in Bonn and he invited me to visit him and his wife in Frankfurt for an evening, which I did. I think it was in the spring of '74. We had a good rapport with each other. One reason was that he had spent time in Denmark; he had studied for a year or so at the University of Copenhagen, so we had that common interest. But I really didn't know much about him except that he was one of those young, left-wing socialists. We didn't really know what they wanted except they had been anti-U.S. involvement in Vietnam; they were left-wing socialists. They wanted more government involvement in the economy of Germany and so on.

I did visit him in Frankfurt. I had dinner with him and his wife in their apartment in Frankfurt. In the course of the evening, Voigt set forth all of his ideas about where he thought Germany should be going. His main interest was in foreign policy and he presented his ideas about NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], the United States, and whither Europe. He had ideas about greater cooperation eventually between Western Europe and Eastern Europe. He wasn't radical. He went to great lengths to say he wasn't anti-NATO. He said he didn't really like it but it would not be realistic to call for the abolition of NATO. He hoped eventually there could be a regional security organization including countries of both Western and Eastern Europe. He was not communist. But he was a left-wing Social Democrat. He said he did see the possibility of greater Eastern-Western European cooperation over the long term; he saw the possibility some day for the enlargement of NATO.

Voigt's wife mentioned to me that one of the reasons Voigt had not liked Americans over the years was because when he was a child in Germany, he watched American planes bomb his neighborhood. So he had some very bad memories. Voigt also told me that he always held

against the United States government the fact that as he put it we tilted toward Adenauer in the postwar years. He really felt we had tipped the balance in favor of the Christian Democrats in the postwar government of West Germany.

Q: Kurt Schumacher.

KLINGAMAN: Right … who was a Social Democrat and a very strong political leader. Actually, I knew something about Schumacher so I was able to talk with Voigt a little about that period. One of the biographies I had read years before was about Schumacher. Now I don't know enough about what we did or didn't do in those postwar years but Voigt's perception was that the United States had been more comfortable with Adenauer and the Christian Democrats in the early postwar years and had tilted toward them rather than Schumacher and the Social Democrats. Well, socialists conjure up communist images for many Americans. There are German socialists of different stripes and there were some very left-wing socialists who did work with the communists. But in any case, I had a very long conversation with Karsten Voigt that evening. He clearly wanted to present his views to the American embassy; he clearly wanted to stress that Young Socialists as a group and left-wing socialists in West Germany were not communist and were not anti-U.S. in general; even though they opposed some U.S. policies, that German Social Democrats were responsible and respectable.

Well of course I went back to my hotel in Frankfurt that night and stayed up late writing all of this down. I went back to Bonn the next day and wrote a very lengthy memcon [memorandum of conversation] about Voigt's views. Now I would like to tell you a little story about that memcon. My immediate boss at that time was Bill Bodde and he read it and thought it was extremely interesting. We hadn't gotten anything like this before from a young, rising politician in the left wing of the SPD [Social Democratic Party]. My report was written as an airgram to Washington enclosing this memcon, which was probably twenty pages long. Bodde approved it and then it went in to the political counselor for his clearance and the next thing I knew the political counselor was in my office. He sort of looked over his shoulder and he closed the door. I thought, "Well now, does he like my report or what is coming off here?"

The political counselor said it was a very interesting report and that the embassy hadn't gotten that kind of information before. I should note here that on the memcon I just had listed Susan Klingaman and Karsten Voigt as the conversation participants. I had explained in the covering memo that I had been at the apartment of him and his wife for dinner, etc. Well, the political counselor looked at me and he said that he saw my comments and he saw Voigt's statements, but where were the comments of Voigt's wife? And I said she really wasn't political and hadn't made any substantive comments. Then the political counselor said I could get into a great deal of difficulty for this report, that people back in Washington might wonder how I had obtained the information.

Q: Oh, God!

KLINGAMAN: I was totally stunned. I was in a state of shock, totally aghast. I got very angry and asked him what he was implying. It was obvious. I asked him if he was questioning my judgment or morals. He said no, he just was trying to protect me from the gumshoes in the

security branch of the department. I was really deeply upset and I thought that at least he could have said it was a great memcon before he had gone into this! Anyway, as a result I did add Voigt's wife's name to the memcon. And I put a note at the end of the report that Mrs. Voigt was present throughout the conversation but had made no political comments because she herself was a professional architect and not politically active. Anyway, with that explanatory note the airgram was sent to Washington. The ambassador liked it, and the memcon was very, very well received in Washington and I received a commendation for it. That took some of the sting out of the incident. The political counselor was a fine person and he felt that he was trying to protect me at the time. But it was one of my experiences of being a woman political officer in the embassy and it put something of a bad taste on what did turn out to be a wonderful special piece of reporting.

I would like to note that Karsten Voigt soon thereafter became a member of the Bundestag, the German national Parliament, and later the foreign policy spokesman of the Social Democratic Party. And now, looking back on it, Voigt's visions of a possible reunification of Germany, the eventual enlargement of the EC [European Community] and NATO and so on, turned out not to have been so farfetched after all!

Q: You know, you can get into this more because I had this from some other women — the problem of dinners, lunches, particularly with foreigners and how to deal with them.

KLINGAMAN: Actually, that is the only incident that I recall. Voigt was perfectly correct. He invited me to dinner at his apartment with his wife there. It wasn't as if there was anything inappropriate or out of line.

I had begun representational entertaining in Copenhagen. I did some in the Philippines, too, but not too much, mainly in Copenhagen and in Germany. I never had any problems. I liked to cook; I liked to entertain. I did a lot of entertaining in my home. I always invited the wives of male politicians and the husbands of female politicians if they were married. Luncheons were never a problem. I invited men out to lunch in Germany and it was never a problem. They never thought anything about it; I never thought anything about it. They were professional lunches for exchanging views and information.

A number of people used to ask me how I got on with Germans; how did they take to a woman officer? Aren't they very patriarchal? I didn't experience this in the professional world. You know there were German women who were politicians; the president of the Bundestag at that time was a woman. In some ways, women were more visible in some of the professions in Germany than they were in the United States at that time, particularly in the medical world. I never had any problems inviting men to lunches in restaurants in Germany or anywhere else.

…

Q: Are there any other areas that we should talk about during this time in Bonn?

KLINGAMAN: I think we should talk about the women's issue because this is when it hit the fan. The women's issue in the United States government became a very popular issue in this period with the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act [EEO].

Q: Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan.

KLINGAMAN: There were the front-page feminists. There was Gloria Steinem and the National Organization of Women and there were, pursuant to the EEO Act, new U.S. government regulations on affirmative action for women. We were not talking about quotas or anything like that. Basically consciousness-raising about women's issues was very much in the air. Now I didn't feel it as much as I might have if I had been in Washington at the time. I was in Bonn. But I did feel it because I was the only female State Department Foreign Service officer in the embassy in Bonn.

Q: Good God, and it's a huge embassy!

KLINGAMAN: It's an enormous embassy. I think at that time we had about 700 Americans all told, officers and staff and of course many other agencies — the Defense [Department] attachés and USIA and [the Treasury Department] and FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and so on. But I was the only female State Department FSO, which was for me very much of a mixed blessing. The fact that I was the only woman when I arrived did not really affect my thinking or the treatment I received one way or another. I didn't feel special; I wasn't treated as being special. But when the women's issue became the “in” thing, tokenism started.

One thing that happened to me which I was not happy about was that shortly after I arrived in Bonn, we received a cable calling me and a few other officers back to serve on promotion boards in Washington. I was waiting for a promotion myself! Obviously I was being called back because they wanted a woman on a promotion board. Bear in mind I had had only ten months in Copenhagen, four of which had been in a hotel, and I forgot to mention earlier that immediately on my arrival in Bonn I was sent TDY [temporary duty] to Bremen for six weeks to fill in while that consul general had been called back for a promotion board in Washington. So I had been in Bonn maybe three months, and boom! I was being called back to Washington to serve on a promotion board. I said, “Hey, wait a minute, I just got here! I want to get going in my very substantive job here in Germany.” I was being called back as a token and I was very upset. I said I did not want to go and the DCM [deputy chief of mission] in the embassy, Frank Cash, supported me. The embassy sent back a cable saying I had been moved around quite a bit in the last year and so why don't you give her the opportunity for the promotion board at a later date. The department said okay. But that was number one. I was wanted to be a female token on a promotion board.

Then the embassy received a request from the International Women's Club in Dusseldorf to send a speaker on the women's movement in the United States. That request came into the ambassador's office and the staff assistant, of course one of my fellow FSOs, bucked it down to me and said, “Sue, here's your opportunity to go give a speech on the women's movement in the United States. I sent him a note back and said, “Jack, why don't you do it?” Actually another reason why I wasn't too enthusiastic about giving a speech on the women's movement in the

United States was that I really did not know that much about it. I really didn't. And what I was hearing about it was Gloria Steinem and abortion and “let's call ourselves ‘Ms.’” and all of this didn't seem to be Sue Klingaman somehow.

The reason the women's club in Dusseldorf asked the embassy for this speech was that the club was headed by Joan Hennemyer, the wife of the consul general in Dusseldorf. I had met her, so I agreed to do the speech. I found that I had to do a lot of research on the situation of women in the United States. USIA had an ample supply of materials. So I did study up on the issue and in so doing I became very interested in it and I wrote a rather substantive speech, which I still have. The speech had a number of statistics about the problem of unequal pay for equal work, statistics about the number of women in various fields, and so on. I remember that in researching for the speech I became quite interested in the issue.

I did go to Dusseldorf. I spoke about the subject, and it was then that I began to sort out my own ideas about the situation of American women. Was there a problem? If so, what was the problem? Where do I fit into this? One of the things which I said in that speech, and which I still feel quite strongly about, is that the issue is not whether a few very bright, very talented women can rise to the top in their chosen profession. American history and the history of other countries show that they can. The issue is really whether average and ambitious women can do as well as average ambitious men. That is really the issue, I think. And that is what seized my interest.

I offered my prognosis about the future of the women's movement in the United States. At that time the so-called “women's movement” was very dramatic. There was a lot of noise, a lot of rhetoric. It was very shrill. I felt that the issues that I wanted to be concerned with were the substantive issues about pay, about job opportunities, equal opportunities for job, for pay, for education. I was concerned that some of the rhetoric might create a backlash that might be harmful for furthering progress in those substantive areas. I expressed that in one way or another in that speech in Dusseldorf. I felt that the women's movement would probably make better progress over the long term if it proceeded slowly.

Q: What was the German women's reaction?

KLINGAMAN: The German women were very interested in the issue. The German women were interested to hear me say that there were more women in politics in Germany proportionally than there were in the United States. They were interested to learn that there were more women doctors in Germany than there were in the United States at that time. I think that they were somewhat baffled, as I was, by the rhetoric that they were hearing about the women's movement in the United States. They were certainly observing what was going on with the American women's movement, but quietly, I would say. As far as the women that I met in Germany were concerned, those who were in the professions were doing well in their professions and were taken seriously.

Q: I think your point is that much of it, particularly in the beginning, was really focused in the United States on well-educated, upper-class women and not really much farther down the line. There was lip service, but the main thing was that, as a group, this was not very representative and it was shrill.

KLINGAMAN: And as someone mentioned to me the other day in those days in the women's movement the leaders in the public rhetoric really took on everything. They didn't really choose their battles, you might say. They chose to take on these highly visible issues such as, “Shall we call this person a fireman or a firefighter?” Well, I understand symbolism and language usage are important; that we call them firemen because they were mostly men at that time. Yes, there is a point here, but is this the main issue that is troubling us? It wasn't really troubling me and it certainly wasn't troubling the many women who had to work to support their families and who were not receiving equal pay for that work.

Q: Again, it comes down to the fact that a great many of the people who were leading this did not have children and were being heard because they probably would have been heard anyway because they were very articulate.

KLINGAMAN: Well, I'll talk more about the women's issue when I go through my assignments, how I found myself relating to it or not relating to it.

Q: Well, you were all by yourself in Bonn so you weren't exactly … mean any women's organization would have taken place in your mind!

KLINGAMAN: That's right! Well, of course there were other women in the embassy, but there was no other female State Department FSO in the embassy at that time. There had been a few women FSOs in Manila when I was there. There were none besides me in Copenhagen, and in Bonn at that time I was it. The American Foreign Service secretaries were not mobilized in the women's movement. I had very good relationships with all the women staff in the embassy, but they didn't seem to be seized by the issue either.

Q: On the issue … could you address it as to how a woman officer, you alluded to it earlier on, but in the mid '70s we are looking at what were supposed to be the regulations. They never really were but you had to be very careful. If you got married you had to resign and all that. That must have been a great damper. If you wanted to go one way or another, this must be a problem.

KLINGAMAN: Well, for me it was never a problem. As I said early on, I had been engaged to a German and at that point if I had married him I would have stayed in Germany. I would not have stayed in the Foreign Service. I think that was my attitude throughout. It really wasn't a damper for me because I had decided that if I met the man I wanted to marry I would leave the Foreign Service. I never felt like I had to have a career for my fulfillment or whatever. I think if I had married, whether it had been a Foreign Service officer or whether it had been someone outside of the Foreign Service, I would have raised a family and probably would have been very happy doing that. So it wasn't really an issue for me.

Q: I was just wondering if in talking to any others it was sort of an initial inhibitor in normal relations or not?

KLINGAMAN: I don't think so. I don't recall a single conversation about it. Other than the conversation I had on my oral exam for the Foreign Service, I don't recall that I ever raised it or

that anyone else ever raised it. It was not a live issue in my circle of women friends in the Foreign Service at that time.

Washington, D.C.: State Department European bureau, Austria/Swiss desk officer (1975-1977) and West German desk officer (1977-1980)

KLINGAMAN: … A few other words about the desk before we move on: During this time, of course, the women's issue was again percolating and I remember being hauled off again from what I considered to be substantive work to go off on a recruiting trip for the State Department, a trip specifically targeted to recruiting women and minorities. I did it and I had a good time, but once again I felt here I was once again being fingered as the only woman in the Office of Central European Affairs, an office which was doing lots of interesting work. So, boom! The personnel system says, “Let's send her out to recruit women and minorities!” But that is just an aside.

Q: While we're on that, how responsive did you find your audiences?

KLINGAMAN: Not very. I said to whomever it was who asked me to do this that, fine, I would go; I didn't want to go, but I would go if I must. But I was going to go where I wanted. So I chose to go back to my alma mater, Oberlin in Ohio, and I spent some time there and then I went to other colleges in Ohio including Ohio State and Dennison.

At Oberlin I made contact with my favorite professor, George Lanyi, my international relations professor, and that was a nice reunion. I had meetings with students at Oberlin. Most of them were really skeptical that the State Department was truly interested in recruiting minorities, at Oberlin primarily black students. They of course listened to me politely. At the same time I was a white woman and most of the minorities in the colleges that I was visiting were blacks. I would say that they listened to me politely but with considerable skepticism.

You know, there were also other times when I was pulled away from substantive work to do things I really didn't want to do at the time. When I was in EB [the economic bureau] I was called to be the sole woman on a promotion board. And then later on the German desk I had to go up to Boston for two weeks to be an oral examiner for the Foreign Service applicants. But you know, looking back on it now, those assignments were good experience for me, and I must say it was also more than about time that women were included on those important boards.

Q: This time you were back on the desk, talking about women's issues, did you find yourself in sort of a lonely position or was there a network? How would you put it at this particular time?

KLINGAMAN: Let me sort of expand the time frame a little bit so that it includes not only the two years I was on the Austria-Swiss desk, but also the following three years when I was on the West German desk in the same office, so that means we are dealing with '75 to '80. This was a very difficult period for me in many ways on the women's issue and my place in it.

In 1976, I think it was, a female FSO named Allison Palmer filed her case against the [State] Department. I went through a lot of soul-searching about that because it was a class-action suit.

This was in the early days of such suits. She was alleging that the department had discriminated against women all the way through, in recruiting, assignments, promotions, etc. Sometime during that period, probably around '77 or '78, women in the department had to choose whether to opt out of that suit; otherwise women would be automatically included in it or something like that. I frankly did not — despite some of the incidents that I have recounted before — I frankly did not feel I had been discriminated against in any way that would justify a suit. So I remember thinking a great deal about it.

I went up to see Joan Clark about this. Joan was, at that time, executive director of the European bureau.

Q: A very powerful job.

KLINGAMAN: Yes. I had come to know her through my unfortunate experience of having my position abolished in Copenhagen, and ever since then Joan had taken an interest in me. She had visited me when she visited Bonn. Back in the department she was instrumental in my getting the Austria-Swiss desk job in the first place. I never worked for her. At that time I stood in great awe of this senior female Foreign Service officer. But I went up to see her and just asked her what she thought about this class-action suit, and what should I do? I didn't care what she personally was or wasn't doing, but what should I do? I just felt very confused. Joan, in what I now know was basically true to form, sat and listened to me and didn't say much. Basically she did not tell me what to do. She left the decision up to me. But I remember that she said something like this: I think women should continue to do what they have always done. She didn't describe what that was. She said something like women should get along the way we always have. I think she meant that we women should work hard and do our best and move up that way.

So in any event, I went back and thought some more about it. I actually opted out of that case. Later, as the case went on and on for years and years, we female FSOs kept getting all these legal documents, piles and piles of stuff; I never knew whether I was really in or out of this case. At some point they said you have to actively opt out or actively opt in. I got so confused; I never really knew whether I was in or out of the case. But in the beginning when we were told that we had to make a decision to opt out or we would be included, I opted out.

Q: Was there the equivalent of a network?

KLINGAMAN: Of women?

Q: Was it more a network of people dealing with Germany … male or female?

KLINGAMAN: Well, yes, there was definitely a network of German hands. I would consider myself to have become a part of it, although it was predominantly male officers. Actually, now that I think about it, I can't think of any other female officers working on Germany in those years.

Regarding a women's network, well, there was the Women's Action Organization in the department, which was an Allison Palmer organization. I think I went to a couple of meetings. I never was active in it. At that time I was very busy on the desk and I saw that as what I wanted to

do and I just was working my tail off on the desk. I was working long hours and didn't pay much attention to the women's movement in the department. I was listening to it, as I said earlier. I was trying to figure out where I fit in. But basically I was just not really in contact with other women other than Joan Clark about the class-action suit and so on. In the first place there weren't that many of us. Most of us female officers who were in the department were busy working hard on our jobs.

I did say earlier that this became very difficult for me. I would say it was later, when I was on the German desk, '79-'80, when you had a real rumble of a white male backlash developing in the department. I felt it from one of my colleagues, who was a wonderful guy. He also worked on Germany and we got along famously together. I never felt or took it personally, but I know he was extremely concerned about the whole women's issue because he felt that this was going to jeopardize his chances for promotion, that women might be favored for assignments and promotions.

During the Carter Administration it was the day of human rights generally, women's rights in particular. You had Pat Derian there in the department in a high-level position as human rights coordinator, trying to make sure that human rights considerations were factored into U.S. foreign policy, and during this time they started some affirmative action programs in the department. There were not quotas, but more attention was being given to putting women into more visible positions and so on. For example, we had two female staff assistants in the European bureau front office, and that was a real groundbreaker. Those jobs had been unofficially off limits for females before that. Well, more visible positions are the kinds of positions that get you promotions, so some white males started grumbling. I felt this and I also thought that some of this feminist rhetoric was getting out of bounds and that it might lead to a backlash that could hurt me. I had been treated equally, I felt, very much as a colleague, and I didn't want people to start to look at me and say that I was getting ahead because I was a woman. I wanted to get ahead because of my abilities and my merit. So I saw it beginning to cut both ways.

Basically it was, I would say, a rather stormy time in the sense that I didn't know where this women's movement was going. I thought it might hurt me. I thought it might hurt me vis-à-vis my male colleagues. Up until that time as regards my male colleagues, I was always treated very well.

Q: Was there any problem on your part … Was there concern about the leadership? Allison Palmer, and I think Cynthia Thomas was another person and all … Was there some disquiet on your own part and others about the leadership because they seemed to be carrying the banner in a direction that wasn't exactly the way you wanted to go?

KLINGAMAN: As I say, I and the few female FSOs that I knew were concentrating on our jobs. I really didn't have any time leftover. There was no real attempt to engage Allison Palmer on the issues. The Women's Action Organization was primarily an Allison Palmer organization with other people sort of looking on. The other women I knew just were not really involved in it; they were like I was. We felt, I felt … I joined the Foreign Service because I liked foreign affairs; I liked my job and it was more than a handful for me just keeping tabs on what I was doing. I think

the other women that I knew felt the same way. So there wasn't really any power struggle going on in the Department of State about who would take the leadership of women's issues.

I would say now that I think that in our own way our leadership consisted of leadership by example, in a sense. We were doing our jobs. Joan Clark was up there doing her job. She was one of the most senior women at that time. She went on to much higher positions. Roz Ridgway was at one point during this period counselor for political affairs in the department doing her job. There were women such as Eleanor Constable in the economic bureau and Terry Healy in EUR [the European bureau] at the time. Our leadership consisted in performing well in our jobs. We were in the women's movement in a different way than those who were engaging in the rhetoric and the litigation.

Washington, D.C.: State Department inspection corps (1984-1986)

Q: Did you find yourself getting involved in personnel issues?

KLINGAMAN: Some, yes. One of the interesting things that we learned in our inspection corps training was how to interview people — how, when interviewing different officers and staff in a particular section of an embassy, to look for patterns of perceptions and complaints. Recognizing that one person says X and another says Y and particularly if they are critical of one another or of their boss and learning not to say, “Well, if one person says so that this is not necessarily so, there may be other angles to this.” So we were looking for patterns of perception. We did find them sometimes, and we realized if you have a pattern of a number of people saying that they don't like X because he or she does this, then we might feel that we have a problem here; let's pursue it.

We found serious morale problems in several posts. Some of them were related to people. Most of them were related to hardship posts, particularly in Mauritania, which was a really difficult post. The embassy literally had to be bulldozed out of the sand every couple of months. That was the period of the drought. The desert had literally moved in. Even though the embassy was located on the coast, it was a pile of sand, and it was absolute hell for anyone with sinus problems, respiratory problems, whatever. So that was an issue.

On personnel matters, I remember one issue involving women. It was the first and only time that I ever came upon anything that would today be called sexual harassment. It wasn't in those days. The term sexual harassment did not exist in everyday vocabulary. But it did come up in a post in Africa. There again it was a pattern of complaints, of younger female officers complaining about an economic counselor who liked to slap their fannies. So we felt there was a problem here. It was brought to me and I took it to the senior inspector in charge of our team.

As far as I could ever figure out, it was the case of an older man who just really didn't realize that times had changed. There was nothing malicious about it that I could see. And yet times had changed and so the senior inspector discussed it with the DCM and they together took this man aside. This was a good example of a management consultant role of the inspectors in which, you know, we didn't write an inspector's recommendation down in black and white. I mean, how embarrassing and how counterproductive that would be. It was an example of saying, “Hey, look,

you really don't mean this, do you? This is a different time and you can't do this anymore." I think the problem was taken care of very effectively.

Ambassador Caroline Clendening Laise

Ambassador to Nepal (1966-1973)

Q: … Can you think of any way in which the fact that you were a woman contributed to your great success in this post [as ambassador to Nepal]? I know you were very much beloved by the people in Nepal.

LAISE: It's very hard for me to make that assessment. I think somebody else should make the assessment. I was discussing this question recently with another woman ambassador to another part of the world but to a developing country, and I think we were both prepared to speculate that where the personal qualities are such as to command respect in a country such as this, then a woman, I would venture to believe, perhaps does have some advantages that certain men would not have. It's not true of all men, and it may not even be true of all women, but I don't believe that a woman is as threatening to a male official in this part of the world as perhaps another competitive male would be. In discussing this with the other ambassador, she recorded, as I experienced, a willingness to be candid and confide in rather extraordinary ways, I mean in a rather extraordinary degree, and we were trying to figure out what might have led to it, whether it was just a personal chemistry or whether it was something more than that.

I tend to feel, at least in my situation, it was not so much a matter of personal chemistry as it was the fact that the presence of a woman simply was easier somehow for them to cope with.

Q: Now this woman you were talking to, was she an American?

LAISE: Yes.

Q: Continuing along these lines, do you think that women make better ambassadors in certain posts, in certain parts of the world, than men do?

LAISE: I'm not prepared to say that. I would never conclude that the quality of an ambassador to a particular post really depended on sex. I think it's a matter of competence and personal characteristics, but I do believe that women are more intuitive and the male mind is more perhaps abstract, and where you have a situation where an intuitive understanding of things is an advantage, then a woman perhaps has a certain advantage.

…

Q: In 1968, you were promoted to the personal rank of career minister. Before, you made a

comment that you think you got this so quickly because of the women's movement. Would you like to amplify that remark?

LAISE: Well, as I testified in court on a class-action suit, not very long ago, the record of the Foreign Service in having women anywhere in the service, and certainly in the higher ranks, was deplorable. My impression is that the women's movement forced the department, and indeed a president who was wanting to get votes, to have more visible appointments of women to high places. I think the department has sought, where it had qualified women, to speed up the process to the extent that the women demonstrated it. I'm not suggesting that they should set the standards aside, but to the extent that a woman can be tested and demonstrated to have talent, they gave the opportunity, and I think the progression was faster than normal.

The upper ranks are still very thin indeed, largely because not very many women came in through the examination process, which is a bottom-up process, during the ‘60s. The women who had been blanketed in under the Wriston Program were retiring or thinning out or getting discouraged, because many of them did not have the kinds of skills that would necessarily be successful overseas. Therefore, they didn't move as fast as they would have liked.

Q: In 1973 you received the Career Service Award from the National Civil Service League. What was that for?

LAISE: Well, the National Civil Service League is an organization that sought to recognize distinction in public service.

Q: Men and women?

LAISE: Men and women, oh yes. This award was in recognition of distinction.

Q: How many are given?

LAISE: Each year, I don't know that there's any set number, but I think four or five, maybe six. At that time, the two major service-wide awards were the National Civil Service League award and then the Rockefeller Public Service awards. The National Civil Service League awards, I think, have sort of fallen by the wayside, and now the president is conferring awards for distinction in civilian service. Of course, the department itself confers awards for distinction or for superior service.

Q: I know at one time, in the early ‘70s, there was an award for outstanding women.

LAISE: The Federal Women's Award, and I received that too.

Q: Is that still being given?

LAISE: No, I don't think so. Again, it's really a product of the women's movement because now women are given much more of a shot at the awards in competition with men. And obviously special awards because you're a woman fall by the wayside.

Washington, D.C.: Director general of the Foreign Service (1975-1977)

Q: Turning now to women's issues, I wonder if you could tell me what impact the women's movement made on your career. You have told me before that your becoming an ambassador was certainly an outgrowth of this. But I wondered, in your own view of yourself, do you feel it has been liberating to you?

LAISE: My case, I'm told, is somewhat atypical, because the evolution of my career has been in new areas of diplomacy, and so I was essentially leaning against an open door. Therefore I've had no particular sense of discrimination, and therefore I don't have any personal sense of suddenly having greater effectiveness, if you want to put it this way, because of the women's movement. I think there's no question that, as I said earlier, it created an updraft that advanced my career faster than would otherwise have been the case.

Q: At the very beginning of your career during the war, when women were needed to replace the men who were doing the fighting, it was understood that the men who returned would take back those jobs and the social order would revert to what it had been before. When you started out, did you think, "I can do this only until the men come back," or "I can try to do this, but, of course, women don't do this job?"

LAISE: No, never.

Q: You never had any of that feeling?

LAISE: No.

Q: Well, you really did have an atypical career. So in other words, there really wasn't anything for you to be liberated from, was there . . . really?

LAISE: Well, at least I was unaware of it. Let's put it that way.

Q: And you never had any difficulties viewing yourself as being the "boss," to use the vernacular, of men?

LAISE: No.

Q: It never was a problem.

LAISE: I think you have to understand my perspective, though, which may contribute to this. First of all, I am interested in service, and secondly, in problem-solving. I really wasn't going at this from the standpoint of "my career." I had entered a profession, and in other words, I was in public service. I've always been in public service, and I viewed it from the standpoint of somehow being in service. I mean, after all, during the war one was certainly imbued with that, and it stayed with me because I moved from wartime service to a relief agency, relieving the suffering and dislocation of war, and then into the Foreign Service, where again it was building new institutions to promote peace and reduce the prospect of another war. And so always my

focus has been service and seeking to somehow resolve problems of relationships in conflict to this contribution to peace. It was much less career-oriented.

Q: Yes, I see. At your posts in India and in Nepal, how did sex-connected views impinge on such things as your dress habits, your ability to go where you wanted, your ability to entertain whom you wanted, that sort of thing? Did you feel restricted at all?

LAISE: Well, no, I didn't feel at all restricted, but one does have to be aware of the decorum that's required in traditional societies, just as a matter of course. But the degree of decorum required was not at all contrary to my own particular standards.

Q: Did you ever feel there were expectations from your family members for the female of the family to make sacrifices, such as stopping what you were doing to take care of elderly or ill parents or siblings?

LAISE: Well, as you know, I did keep house for my father and brother after my mother's death during college, which dictated my staying home to go to college rather than going away to college. But then my father remarried, and that certainly freed me to a large extent, although I think he had hoped that I wouldn't go overseas. Nevertheless, he did not stand in my way of going overseas. Although, perhaps I felt psychological pressures in this regard, a pull, I basically considered that the career interests had to be fairly served.

Q: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

LAISE: I don't know what you mean by that.

Q: How interested are you in the women's movement? Maybe that's a better way to put it.

LAISE: Let's put it this way: I'm sympathetic, but I've not been an activist in it.

Q: You weren't connected at all with the group that Mary Olmsted headed at the State Department?

LAISE: The Women's Action group at the department? No, but when I was in public affairs, my deputy was active in that group and I kept lines out to them. I felt, as director general, I had to represent all the people and not just one group, but I certainly was sympathetic to their interests, as I also was to the wives of service people, and the movement that began to emerge when I was there, and to which I lent encouragement, that eventually ended in the family liaison group.

Q: Are you now affiliated with any particular groups?

LAISE: No. You mean women's groups?

Q: Women's groups, yes, or church groups, or League of Women Voters, that sort of thing?

LAISE: No, I do give financial contributions to the — what is it? — the Women's Political Caucus. Anyway, I do give contributions to assist women to get elected to national office. Sorry, it's not the Women's Political Caucus, it's the Women's Campaign Fund.

Q: Are you connected with the AAUW [American Association of University Women]?

LAISE: No.

Q: NOW [National Organization of Women]?

LAISE: No.

Q: Are you involved in volunteer work, community groups?

LAISE: Well, I don't know what you would call serving on boards of educational institutions.

Q: That would certainly qualify.

LAISE: That's certainly volunteer work, and pro bono work. And perhaps you could say that I am involved in that. Purposely I accepted when it was offered to me to be on the board of a women's college, Mount Holyoke College, because it was a women's college. I felt it was important to support the women's colleges in developing the confidence in women to cope in the world, and Mount Holyoke is one of the foremost leaders of that.

Q: Yes. What do you think is the future of women in the Foreign Service?

LAISE: [*Laughs*] I think it's as great as they choose to make it.

Q: Would you have any advice to give young women who are considering a career in the Foreign Service? How to prepare themselves, perhaps?

LAISE: From what can I see in my association with Georgetown, for example, it seems to me that the women coming out of the schools such as that are extremely well prepared to enter the career service, so I don't think there's any lack of opportunity to prepare for the service. I think the problem is the career service seems less attractive to young women today than other career opportunities. I think this is a cause of some concern. I think anybody going into the service these days has to have not only the ability to think and analyze and communicate effectively, as far as the substance of foreign policy is concerned, but the need and real benefit from experience in other areas, such as relating to the Congress, being able to deal with the press, being able to explain foreign policy to the American public in general. And this is all in addition to accumulating the tools that are necessary to pursue the profession, such as language, such as tools of economics, the tools of science. They're absolutely essential in negotiations these days. So to absolutely have the caliber of excellence that we need, one has to think, I think, in terms of a Renaissance-type person. But this, of course, makes it much more interesting.

My understanding is that those who have entered the service don't lack a challenge. Sometimes they lack the time to hone their skills. But I think the opportunities will remain great because the need is very great, and national interest requires it.

Ambassador Patricia Gates Lynch

Ambassador to Madagascar and Comoro Islands (1986-1989)

Q: Were you able to get the feeling and get much response for … here you were at a time of tremendous revolution about the role of women in the American society. This was not the lot of many women who were continuing to fight their way up. Were you able through your interviews to bring out all this as well as the black and Hispanic experience?

LYNCH: Yes, without being a women's program I had a special and personal interest in telling what was happening to women in this country. Let me give you a little aside when you said that it was an interesting time. I remember the day, and government certainly was a leader in accepting women in the working place and making it fair for them, when I very politely said to my supervisor, "I really think that it is time for me to have a promotion because I am doing exactly the same thing that my male counterpart is doing, but I am making thousands of dollars less." He said, "Well, I agree but we have to go a little higher up." We went a little higher up and they said, "Well, we are sorry. Yes it is true you are doing the same thing and a fine job, but we can't give you any more money while we have men who have families to raise. They must have the promotions first." I thought that was extremely interesting and frustrating.

I was not the type of woman who would sue or march, but I have discussed this with some rather high-ranking women in government and we have all decided that, although we weren't the kind that were pushing, we certainly are the beneficiaries of the women who worked very hard out in the shouting arena, which we didn't believe in because we were making slow and steady progress. I admire those women because they opened the path for many.

Q: This is the usual course of revolutions. You have two groups, one of the steady workers and the other out in front.

LYNCH: That's right. I think you need both and I think you need women helping women. That is what I have always felt very strongly. If there is a chance to promote a woman, or bring her along, that is very important for women who have been able to forge ahead to reach out and help other women. That is a must, and you will see as we talk later on about my becoming an ambassador, I had a DCM [deputy chief of mission] who was a woman — an extremely capable black woman, Marilyn Hulbert — and as far as we know we were the first embassy ever in the Foreign Service to be headed by women.

Q: This has also been one of the stumbling blocks about the ambassador and DCM relationships: "You really shouldn't have two women there."

LYNCH: I think we blasted that theory a little bit.

Q: Before we move to the ambassadorship, what about your listener response? Were you finding particular responses from any particular part of the world? Were more women responding to you?

LYNCH: No, and I want to get back to one of your questions about what I did on the air about women. I think perhaps I had more male listeners than female. I will give you some examples of that. During International Women's Year, it was the early '70s, the United Nations International Women's Year, I decided that I would do something with my listeners about women, not just in this country but all over the world. I asked listeners to write in a nomination for an outstanding woman in their village, their city or their country or any other country. I had a committee … I remember Vanetta Washington, the wife of the mayor in Washington, and other people in this city outside of VOA [Voice of America] were on the committee. I said that we would choose three letters a week that I would read on the air. The nominated woman would receive an International Women's Year pin as would the person who did the nominating.

Well the letters just poured in — more from men than from women, which I found very exciting. The woman nominated might be a teacher in the village; someone who had helped build a well; Mother Teresa, who received more nominations than anyone, and I sent her a pin and letter; several people nominated a Japanese mountain climber; people from all different parts of the world. It was exciting because the letters did come in and you started to have a sense of more appreciation for women because people stopped and thought about it.

Barbara Shelby Merello

USIA: Sao Paolo, Brazil (1960s)

Q: Do you have impressions of those people, or were you too low on the –

MERELLO: No, I was too low. No, I was a junior officer in training. There was no air conditioning to speak of in Washington in those days, and I guess that's why they trained in the fall. And as I remember it was about six weeks, probably, that we were there, maybe two months. And I remember when I had my first interview in the agency after I was accepted. The director of personnel was a man named Leon Schelma, very nice man. I have the best memories of him. And I asked him at the time — we knew that any Foreign Service officer had to have permission to marry, but I also had learned that women could not marry at all — and I asked him about that, and he said, "Well, you know, that really isn't fair, because as a matter of fact, as many men leave after a few years as women do." And it wasn't until 1971 that Foreign Service officers who were women were given permission to marry and stay in the service. It's amazing what we put up with in those days. There was a great deal of discrimination, mostly in assignments, special assignments, for example. I don't know of any woman who was actually assigned temporarily to be a PAO [public affairs officer], for example, filling in for someone, and that makes a

difference because, of course, you're not on the first rung for that ladder. But we put up with a great deal. Of course, in those days you also called on the wives of the ambassador or maybe the consul general when we first went to a post, and you were expected to wear gloves and a hat — you may not believe it, but that was it — and leave the little card with the corner turned down. You would stay ten minutes, and then if she invited you graciously to stay a little longer, you'd stay another five minutes. But you know, all that protocol had its reason for being. After all, it was important to become acquainted, and there was a formality that, in a way, I'm sorry they did away with all of it. On the other hand, I felt very sorry for the wives, particularly in Brazil. They were expected to do everything from walk the dog to make sandwiches to … Whatever their careers might have been or whatever their interests were, they were expected to fill in whenever necessary. But then, of course, women Foreign Service officers were expected to do both. We were expected to be good officers and do the entertaining as well. Anyway, that's all in the past, and that's changed very, very much.

Q: Your comments are very appropriate. It gives us historical perspective.

MERELLO: But I really didn't think of it as I think of it now in those days. I admire the women who pushed to get equality for women. I'm sorry to say I wasn't one of them. My only contribution was insisting on having my own byline. But that was later, anyway; that was in 1968, when I was writing a weekly column which was translated and sent to our embassies in Latin America, and then they would offer it to local newspapers. It was called "*América Joven*," "Young America." And at the time, there was a great deal of interest in what young people were thinking, and so I wrote about whatever interested me. I didn't know what they were thinking either. I'd been out of the country for years at that point. So I wrote about whatever seemed interesting, and many of the columns were published. And there was a question — I think our PAO, our public affairs officer, in Colombia, I think it was, suggested that we use a man's name and a Hispanic name — and I said, "Absolutely not. This is my column, and we're going to use my name." And of course, he was wrong. It was his own prejudice. He said that the Colombian editors might be prejudiced. It was not true at all. They printed it. It was his own prejudice, which I think was often the case. But I don't want to harp on this too much, because I really didn't give it much thought. It was all very exciting.

Ambassador Phyllis E. Oakley

On entering the Foreign Service (1957)

Q: Did you get a lot of comments that you, as an attractive woman, would undoubtedly be married soon and a mother thereafter and would then spend the rest of your life as a homemaker?

OAKLEY: Of course. There was always that undercurrent and a knowing smile would often by followed by the phrase "two for the price of one." I began to hate that expression. It was insulting. I didn't hear that expression as much at [the Tufts Fletcher School] as I did when I came to Washington at the end of August 1957, during my A-100 class at the State Department.

…

OAKLEY: At the end of August I thought Washington rather a sleepy little town. I had a friend from Fletcher who had gone to work for the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] earlier in the summer and had arranged with her to share an apartment when I arrived. She was waiting for me in some dreadful women's hotel. We immediately rented an efficiency apartment with twin beds in the Sherry Towers across from the State Department; it was a move of desperation just to get out of that hotel. Between the two of us (she, who had graduated from Tufts and Fletcher, and I, from Northwestern and Fletcher), we had a relatively large number of acquaintances in Washington, with a great deal of coming-in-and going-out of town — particularly young military officers. Our hearts were young and gay. It was just wonderful. Nothing complicated, but a steady stream of friends. We had very simple dinner parties in the apartment and we had a great time.

We then moved to a larger place in the Sherry Towers when Priscilla Mitchell came to join us later in the fall. We didn't have our own cars so we had to find boyfriends who would transport us around for shopping on Saturdays and who would help us move. I was going through the A-100 course, where there were about thirty of us, Foreign Service entrants. I was the only woman. But they did add some other women later who had been working in the State Department while waiting to be assigned to the A-100 course. This meant that the composition of the group was somewhat fluid.

Another A-100 course that had started in July included a couple of other Fletcher classmates. And thus, in September, I was introduced to Bob Oakley, although we did not start dating until late October. I was involved at the time to a fellow in Boston, complicating the situation as you can well imagine, but I broke off with him. There were lots of informal parties, and friends in and out of our apartment. It was great fun!

I must add that I had a wonderful group in my A-100 class. It included Bill Luers, David Korn, Peter Bridges, and Jim Briggs, all people who remained wonderful Foreign Service colleagues through the years.

Q: Did you pick up any tidbits that gave you any clues as to what you might want to do or what you did not wish to do?

OAKLEY: I think we all recognized at that point that we would have little choice in first assignments. We didn't know what they would be and no one had any great expectations. Even in those days, many officers spent their first tours in visa sections in far-off posts. There was no

feeling that one could influence that first assignment. There was just a higher authority that told you where to go and off you went like a good soldier. I had not passed my French language proficiency test yet, so I was held back from getting my first assignment until I had completed French language training.

Bob did not have an assignment either when he finished the A-100 course and some French training just before Christmas. He was sent to study more French in Nice, which at that time was the site of FSI [Foreign Service Institute]'s overseas French programs. Some heiress, maybe Barbara Hutton, had donated a building. Later Congress closed it down — they felt it was unseemly for the USG [U.S. government] to have a program in a villa in Nice! And right after that, in May of 1958, he was sent to Khartoum as the general services officer (where they spoke Arabic and English). By this time, we had decided to get married and it was a very complicated situation. I knew that I had to resign. I must say that at the time my consciousness was very low. Women in the Foreign Service knew that if they married they would have to resign, and we accepted that discrimination without batting an eyelash. At the time, there weren't many vacancies for junior officers; if the department had offered me something potentially interesting and challenging, I might have felt differently about resignation. My decision to get married was undoubtedly greeted by [the office of] personnel with relief because it was just one less person whom it had to place. I was told that the department could not pay my way to the Sudan to get married, but that it might be able to arrange a marriage by proxy. Dwight Dickinson was the person in [the office of] personnel trying to be helpful and take care of my problems. I told him that I did not want to get married by proxy; I didn't think that it really was the way to start a marriage. A number of people found my situation quite amusing and used to laugh at my wedding plans; it confirmed their prejudices about the Foreign Service accepting women.

Q: It was pure discrimination, and the department even today still had troubles employing both husband and wife.

OAKLEY: That is true, but the 1950s were totally different from today. In those days, when women married, they generally did not work. I never asked to see the regulations about married women; I did not object nor demand a job when I got to Khartoum. I just accepted life as it was generally lived. In fact, the department operated by custom, and not because of legal limitations, but no woman thought of challenging those customs; our consciousness was very low indeed.

Q: I read somewhere that until 1974, a middle-grade male officer could support a wife and a family. But that from that time on, a family needed two incomes, so economics apparently had some impact in changing customs.

OAKLEY: I am sure that played a role. As I said, in 1957-58, it never occurred to me to challenge the department on its personnel policies. I was deeply in love, ready for marriage. I did not see myself as a victim in marrying Bob; it was the beginning of a new phase in my life. I had had a feeling on a number of occasions in college and at Fletcher, as I was taking one more test

or filling out one more application, that it might have been easier and time to give up and just get married. That is what many women did. They didn't see any use in pushing and fighting for certain positions when the outcome was quite evident when one got married. I knew how they felt, as I had had similar feelings at moments of discouragement. But when I decided to marry Bob, I didn't feel that I was doing it because other professional avenues were just too hard; I looked forward to being a partner in a shared life in the Foreign Service.

Q: There was some validity to that view since when one married in those days, one married into the Foreign Service. It was not just getting married and living in some small American town. Both husband and wife were going to be challenged when he was assigned overseas in the Foreign Service. It was a different era. Let's talk a little about the role of a wife in the Foreign Service. First, what happened to you when you decided to get married?

OAKLEY: As I said, Bob was sent immediately from Nice to Khartoum about April. I had found out first what was going to happen to him through a phone call from a friend in the Foreign Service who had a contact in [the office of] personnel. I called Bob immediately (not easy then) before he got his official orders and was told to be in Khartoum in three days. It became very complicated to get home for a wedding from the middle of Africa in June 1958. Even with jet planes, it took two or three days to get back to the United States and Bob didn't have much leave. The embassy was in desperate need for all hands because it was expanding with a new assistance program and he was reluctant to tell his boss, after just arriving, that he wanted to go back to the U.S. to get married with two weeks off. On the other hand, if he had returned, we would have had to have a big wedding that neither of us really wanted. We considered meeting in New York and being married with the immediate family present. Both families had become acquainted and friendly through an exchange of visits and everyone was very involved in all the planning, and it seemed to become more complicated daily. (Our minister, at a large party my parents gave just before I left, said not to worry about the legality of the wedding — he would take care of that later!) In the end, it all seemed too much and simply easier if I flew to Cairo alone to marry Bob. Bob was to come up to Cairo a little earlier to make the arrangements, and for our honeymoon which we hoped to take in Beirut. Unfortunately, the Marines landed in Lebanon about this time, but Cairo offered excitement enough for a honeymoon.

Beirut, Lebanon: wife of Foreign Service officer

Q: In your social life with the Lebanese, was Israel a topic of conversation?

OAKLEY: Certainly. We talked about American positions on Arab issues, the role of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], and what a settlement might look like, as well as Lebanese politics. As supercharged political animals, the Lebanese lived and breathed these issues, and they would discuss their role and perspective in this part of the world at great length. We had friends in the embassy in Tel Aviv with whom we exchanged visits. It was important for all

American diplomats in the Middle East to travel throughout the area and understand both sides.

There was a very active American Women's Club in Beirut with about 300 members. It sponsored language classes, bridge lessons, art and archaeology tours, as well as general travel. The tours were so good that a couple of the women who ran them became professional travel agents. Forty of us did a camel trip through Wadi Ramm in Jordan in late April 1974. The club had a wonderful group of people. There were a lot of Americans in Beirut then, with business, the schools, as journalists, and visitors and the embassy had a full range of U.S. government programs: military assistance, AID [Agency for International Development] projects, and public affairs. The UN [United Nations] had many representatives and UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] headquarters was in Beirut. So there was a large group of expatriates and diplomats. In retrospect, all things considered, I know Beirut was our favorite family assignment.

Sometime during our tour, we began to hear that the State Department was changing in regard to women. The issue of married women in the Foreign Service had been revisited and policies were changing — for example, women were no longer required to resign when they married. So I went to see the embassy's personnel officer and told her that in light of the policy changes being implemented and in the likely event of a next assignment to Washington, I would want to apply for a return to the Foreign Service. The personnel officer suggested that I not wait until the summer of 1974, but that I submit my request right away. She knew that the process would take some time and she, wisely, was prepared in lend a hand in getting the paperwork completed in Beirut and submitted to the State Department, so I prepared all the documents and letters required. That personnel officer was very helpful.

By the end of June 1974, we were all back in Washington. Bob had been pulled out of Beirut earlier in the spring to be in Geneva if Middle East peace talks started there, but I stayed so that the children could finish school. I knew by then that in the fall my request for reentry would be approved and that I would rejoin the Foreign Service. At this point, I felt I could do it; our daughter was going to enter high school (the National Cathedral School) and our son was going into junior high, and we would probably be in Washington for a while. So the timing for reentry was quite propitious and soon after our return to Washington, I "came back in."

I should say one other thing about my decision. I have never denigrated the role of women and wives in the Foreign Service; I was "wife of" for sixteen years and know how difficult it is to manage a family under very trying circumstances and many moves. The management of children and a household and the required social life was a full-time job. We had wonderful posts. I did volunteer work when I could. I did learn what it took to play a contributing role in the Foreign Service overseas and it was an invaluable education. So I didn't reenter the workforce because I looked down at the role of a Foreign Service wife.

Q: I certainly agree with that, but it is very hard to impart that point to succeeding generations. My wife certainly played a major role in my overseas assignments. I think that attitude changed later on, but I do believe that the U.S. had a much more solid representation abroad because we had these husband-wife teams that worked so well together for the benefit of the U.S.

OAKLEY: As I mentioned before, when we were in Khartoum, Bob's grandmother came to visit us and told me to watch the ambassador's wife and do everything she did because she was a paragon of virtue — managing the household, entertaining, and assisting the ambassador in making sure that the embassy staff cared for newcomers and others who might have needed some special attention. By the time we went to New York in 1971, I think this atmosphere had changed. Of course, New York was a unique posting, but in general the feeling of an "embassy family" was rapidly disappearing. People were very much more on their own, and it could be a big, lonely city, and yet I really didn't mind because it gave me considerably more liberty to do what I wanted.

Q: That brings us to 1974. Tell us what happened then?

OAKLEY: As I said, we came back to Washington, our first time back since 1963. That meant getting the children into schools, finding a house, and setting up a new household. It all got done, although some problems took longer than others.
Bob originally had been assigned to the Senior Seminar, but that was changed early in the summer to a position on the policy planning staff, although by the fall he was reassigned again, this time to the NSC [National Security Council] staff to replace Hall Saunders on the Middle East. My application to rejoin the Foreign Service was approved and I more or less told that I had to find a job — no one seemed in charge of placing me.

I have always said that the Foreign Service was not society's leader, but a follower. In the late 1960s and 1970s, American views on working women and women's rights evolved rather quickly. Society came a long way in a short period of time. On the other hand, it took the concerted effort of a group of concerned women in the Foreign Service to get change moving in that institution. The first major case was that of Allison Palmer. She sued the [State] Department over its assignment policies and was helped by other women who also felt discrimination. She with others opened up a whole range of women's issues in the Foreign Service.

I remember that a couple of years earlier I had spoken with Cleo Noel, a very good friend who was working in the office of personnel. He had been assigned by Bill Macomber, the deputy under secretary for management, to develop the department's defense of the existing policy on forcing the retirement of women from the Foreign Service when they married. Macomber wanted to know what tack the department's defense would take. He was told by Cleo and others in [the office of] personnel that there wasn't any defense. It was a policy that had just developed over years and never reviewed. But the world had moved on and that policy needed to be eliminated.

I think also that as the department looked at the issue of what to do with those who had been forced to resign because of an archaic policy, it recognized that it applied to so few cases that it was not worth a battle. It was simply easier and less costly to open up the system for those who wished to rejoin. Not only were there so few cases to begin with, but many of the small number who had left had gone on to other careers and would not wish to rejoin. I never knew exactly how many there were of us — I would guess under twenty.

The department's decision was certainly the right one, both statistically and operationally. It shouldn't have been very hard. When we were in Beirut, I knew that this issue was really bubbling in Washington. As I said, thanks to the advice of the personnel officer, I immediately applied for reinstatement when we heard that the policy had been changed as it indeed took some time. So my processing started in April or May 1974 and was finished in October.

Q: You seemed to be right on the timing because Bob was a senior officer by this time and had been assigned to Washington. Were you concerned what might happen once both of you were eligible for an overseas assignment?

OAKLEY: One remarkable aspect of my reentry was that there was so little discussion of that issue. Everyone assumed that, finally back in Washington, we would be there for some time. The problem of the first overseas tour did not seem to loom very large at the time, either between Bob and me or in the department.

I was fortunate enough to have Bill Buffum, our former Ambassador in Beirut, offer me a job in UN/P [UN political affairs] in [the Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO)] (where Bob had started) handling most Middle East questions, including the PLO. I worked directly for John Baker, who was the office director. I was struck very early in this process by how little I actually knew about the organization of the department and how it worked, even though I had been associated with it for many years. I laughed very hard when, after writing my first cable, our secretary came to ask me what "tags" I wanted on the form. I looked at her, dumbfounded. I didn't know what she was talking about. The women who had applied for reinstatement and had been accepted were given no refresher training at all. I guess the powers-that-be must have thought that as a wife I would have known all about the organization and processes of the department. In retrospect, one reason I was so green in so many ways was because these were matters Bob had never discussed with me. He didn't care or talk a lot about process. So I knew little about how the department actually worked, but I did have some advantages in that I knew about Beirut and the Middle East. So I did not have many problems with substance, but I certainly had to learn from scratch mundane things like tags on cables and "memcons."

When I reentered the Foreign Service, as I said, I had had the experience of living abroad in many different places. I had taught American history in a small college in Louisiana, while Bob was serving in Vietnam. I had worked as a part-time consultant in international affairs for the YWCA, working essentially as an NGO. I had headed the American Women's Club in Beirut

that gave me some managerial background. So I was not exactly inexperienced, but I did find that none of this really counted when I reentered the FS. As I had resigned as an FSO-8, there was an issue of what new grade I should be offered. The first suggestion was FSO-7 but I thought I should be offered something higher — FSO 6 or 5 in light of my age and experience. I had heard that someone whom I had known in Beirut, who clearly was opposed to allowing married women back into the Foreign Service, served on the panel that was discussing the issue of my new grade level. So there were hints of bias on the part of those who could not reconcile themselves to new times. At that point, I was happy enough to be returning to the Foreign Service, so I decided not to challenge the offer of a 7. In retrospect, I made a mistake. It does take time to reach every level in a career system. I would have been better off to have reentered at a more reasonable rank. There was no one to turn to for advice on what to do with the department's offer.

Also about this time, the department changed its ranking system. It dropped the FSO-8 designation and reordered all personnel into a new system. I was moved up to FSO-6. Thereafter, I was promoted rather quickly and I probably made up for lost time. Nevertheless, I think, had I been given what I think I deserved based on my experience, it would have made a difference. I attribute the department's position to outdated thinking by men who were resisting the expansion of women's rights in the Foreign Service.
Q: It is, I think, not a surprise that men feeling increased competition might well have resisted the new policies. But did you find career women in IO who also opposed the new approaches?

OAKLEY: Not really. You have raised an interesting question that I did not consider at the time, or since. I never received anything but full support and encouragement from the women in IO. We were a new phenomenon; I claimed, and it was undoubtedly true, that I was the oldest FSO-7 in the service. Everyone knew that Bob was a rising star. The question was whether I could make it in the Foreign Service. Would good things happen to me — and us? Would it all work? In that sense, I felt I was given more encouragement than neglect or hostility, although I am sure that there were people who disapproved of what was going on.

Q: Was there any effort made among the reentrants to plea with the department for some short reentry training?

OAKLEY: No. There were so few of us that neither we nor the department were proactive. So there was no training, no luncheon meetings, no nothing. I did have a long transition period with my predecessor, Xenia Wilkinson, which was very helpful because she spent at lot of time tutoring me. The other people in IO were also extremely helpful. There were two or three other newcomers in the bureau: a fellow named John Teft, who has just been named ambassador to one of the Baltic states, and an officer by the name of Molly Williamson, married to an FSO as well, although she joined after marriage. We were all learning together. I think that most of the people in the office tried their best to help, but there were a few who I think probably did not view the department's new policy with enthusiasm. They also may have had some questions

about how and why I had gotten this very good job in IO.

Our office director, John Baker, seemed a rather difficult and cold man, but I must say I now have more sympathy for him. He probably should have insisted that I get some training. I was very green and not accustomed to [the State Department's] office routines and therefore probably not much help at the beginning. I had to learn all of this on the job.

Q: How did you, as a woman, find dealing with the seven Afghan leaders?

OAKLEY: Some would not shake my hand. They could not bring themselves to touch a woman. I tried to remember which leader would and which wouldn't. Here and in Pakistan, of course, everyone sticks out their hands as a way to say hello, as a greeting. There I tried to curb that instinct. If they wanted to shake hands, they would have to initiate the process and I would respond. I wondered what power a 55-year-old woman could have that would impede some of these leaders from shaking my hand! It was, of course, tradition that stood in the way. Some of the younger American AID [Agency for International Development] workers would become quite annoyed at the Afghan treatment of women, demanding the covering of heads, arms, and legs, if not the burqa. They wanted me to go with them because they thought that I added a certain amount of presence and gravitas and if I didn't cover my arms in summer they wouldn't have to either. But I tried to be on the conservative side and not create an issue. I had no trouble dealing with Afghans, frankly. They had known me from earlier incarnations and I was the wife of the American ambassador, and I was well informed and serious about what I was doing. It was a job entirely different from what I was used to; this was essentially fieldwork — going out and seeing and evaluating the situation "on the ground." I made a lot of good friends and I really enjoyed this aspect of the job.

My duties as wife of the ambassador were relatively easy. The residence was wonderful. It had been built in the late 1970s. It was very modern in a very dramatic setting overlooking the Margala Hills. It was in a compound that had tennis courts, a swimming pool, a commissary, medical services, and apartments for American personnel. I had traditionally opposed American compounds because they tended to separate Americans from the local community, but for a lot of the young embassy people it was an appropriate facility in a Muslim country. You could see young women driving into the compound with white knuckles because they had been subjected to so many rude remarks and sexual gestures by Pakistanis. Whenever a truck driver — and others — saw a Western woman, it was an opportunity to behave inappropriately, to our Western eyes. So when these young people entered the compound, they could get into their jogging clothes and run free, swim and sunbathe, play tennis, and behave as they would in the [United] States. The compound was a refuge from the hostile and difficult atmosphere of the streets. …

Reflecting on Career and Family

OAKLEY: … Someone recently asked me the question of what might have happened to my

career if I hadn't been forced to resign when I married, or if I hadn't married. Those possibilities had really not occurred to me — and I gave a lot of thought to my answers. I think I would have had a good career, but I don't think it would have been as rich and rewarding, and varied, as it turned out to be. I know my life certainly would have been different and probably harder. I like to think that I helped Bob in his career and I know he helped me.

Q: Of course, a mother spending full-time with her children cannot be duplicated; it is awfully important.

OAKLEY: I don't regret those years that were devoted to Bob's career and our children. Those sixteen years I was out of the Foreign Service were not dull and boring — we were moving from one continent to another every two years and it was hard on our children. By the time I returned to the State Department, our daughter was entering the National Cathedral School and our son went to junior high school. Perhaps my reentry was difficult in another way, as our family was used to my doing everything. I think we really would have had problems moving every two years if I hadn't been there at home all the time in the early years.

Q: There just isn't a totally satisfactory way to have both a career and a family, particularly in the Foreign Service.

OAKLEY: You're right. I have given advice to women who have come to me with questions about Foreign Service life — that going into the Foreign Service is a career, it is not just a job and it is certainly not a “9-to-5” job. Entertaining and enjoying meeting people socially is important, as well as writing reports and staying late to get them out. All of these requirements are important, even essential. The Foreign Service must be seen as a way of life, not just a job. …

Ambassador Cynthia S. Perry

Ambassador to Sierra Leone (1986-1989)

Q: How was life as an Ambassador?

PERRY: Great, fantastic, demanding, exciting, exhausting. And I think in many ways it was different for a woman ambassador. My relationship with government officials was overall positive. I was not the first female American ambassador, nor the first Black American Ambassador — I was the first who was both black and woman. Although the women embraced my strength and felt empowered by my presence, the men in government were somewhat threatened. Traditionally the ambassador had been a male; all of my colleagues heading the fifteen or so embassies were male. Some men (and especially the military) made a point to salute my husband when he accompanied me.

I know I brought a certain softness to strained situations that allowed me to get information as well as to influence decisions. On the other hand, I did not have a good relationship with the foreign minister. He was supposed to be my first contact in the government, but I had a direct line and open door to the President, which the minister resented. He was Muslim and on his first visit to the State Department (which I had arranged) he tried to have me recalled. He didn't know I was going to be in the meeting. His face fell when he saw me, but he said simply there was a problem between us that he did not think could be resolved. Surprised, I asked him, "What do you think the problem could be? What is it?" He said, "You do not like my religion." It was ridiculous! I had never done anything to offend Islam, other than just being a woman in leadership. It was fixed clearly in his mind that as a woman, I could not be Ambassador. That was the biggest thing.

This inexcusable and unprovoked action taken by the foreign minister against me became a sore point between the two. The President first apologized to me, and then began the necessary political actions to remove him from his cabinet. He succeeded, but not before I left the country.

Ambassador Joan M. Plaisted

Entering the Department of Commerce (1969)

Q: Was the State Department still something you were shying away from at this point?

PLAISTED: I was questioning it more. Did I really want to work for the U.S. government? After I had my master's degree, every time I get a degree I go out to California to see, besides I really like that area, to see if there was something I could do. At that point, I had worked quite hard on getting my master's. I had two graduate assistantships and a scholarship, and I really wanted to do something on Asia. I had promised myself for the first couple of years after I graduated I would work on Asia. I went to California after each degree to see if I could find something interesting to do. After I got my master's, I remember going to the Asia Foundation, which was a logical place to work for someone with a master's. They were very interested in talking to me. They xeroxed all my research. I had done projects on the communist party, the PKI, in Indonesia. I had done something on how to use Theravada Buddhism for advancing social development in Thailand. They xeroxed all my research papers. At the end of this they told me they never hired … they were impressed by all my work, but they had never hired a woman in a professional capacity before. This was '69. I accepted that. I went to the Bank of America to see if they might send me out to Asia because at that point I could speak and write Thai, which I had studied in graduate school. They told me they had never sent a woman overseas as a professional before. Today I would probably sue them, but then I just accepted it and decided that it was going to be difficult to find something on Asia and ended up coming back to Washington, and in my searching for something to do on Asia, ended up with the U.S. Department of Commerce in the Far Eastern division of the Department of Commerce.

Q: Had you, while you were in college and in graduate school and before, had you and your female colleagues talked about what they call the glass ceiling? Was this something that was almost accepted, or was this something you ought to do something about?

PLAISTED: I don't remember any discussions at that point. I don't think I knew the glass ceiling terminology, knew the concept; that terminology really hadn't come into our vocabulary. It was important to me, you know, because I was experiencing this firsthand, where could I, as a woman, find a job working on Asia? One of the conclusions I reached is probably the U.S. government is going to be the most likely employer to hire me on Asia, to do something on Asia, because I was running into blocks with private industry.

Q: In particular, I suppose Asia, more than the general idea … Well, the Asian man won't accept a woman, and you can't get anything done like that. I recall that type of thinking.

PLAISTED: Yes, from working on Asia there is some truth to that.

Department of Commerce, Far East division (1969-1973)

Q: Well, it does bring up something, we will talk about it when we get to the Foreign Service, that is still around the State Department quite a while. Did you find any women counterparts to you in the Korean context?

PLAISTED: No, I don't think I saw a single official woman in their ministries; it was very uncommon in those days. When I was traveling around the country to go to the industrial sites, and to the port of Busan, the Koreans would host their traditional party. I was with our commercial counselor and others from the embassy and our Korean control officer. The Koreans would host the traditional form of Korean hospitality for their visitors, the *kisaeng* party. But what are they going to do with me, a woman, at a kisaeng party? One didn't usually have an official woman at a kisaeng party. So they would name me “Mr. Plaisted” because a “Miss Plaisted” should not have been allowed at a kisaeng party. They made me Mr. Plaisted and gave me my own kisaeng girl, an attractive young Korean who was going to feed me and take care of me, which was rather unusual. When I came back to Washington to the Commerce Department, my bosses found it hard to believe they hosted kisaeng parties in my honor as Mr. Plaisted.

Q: I think that is wonderful. Actually, the kisaeng girls served a very … I don't really like sea slugs and things like that. I was able to indicate that I really preferred to stick to just some beef and kimchi and things like that. They were very quick, and that took care of the feeding thing. Did you have to get up and sing songs?

PLAISTED: Oh, absolutely. To this day, with all my work on Asia, I should be able to sing better, but, yes, I would always have to get up and entertain our host and hostesses.

Foreign Service exam (1980)

Q: In these oral exams, can you recall any of the questions that were posed to you?

PLAISTED: One of them was to design a cultural tour for Europeans to visit authors in the United States. Where would you take this group of Europeans? I suppose the first thing one would say is I'll take you to see Saul Bellow in Chicago, Norman Mailer in New York City, or someone in East Hampton. You not only had to know your literature, but also needed to know where these great authors were located. There were hypothetical administrative issues that they always loved to ask, questions about the policy for who could swim in the ambassador's swimming pool where there was no right answer, just to see how you would handle the knotty administrative problems. Quite a few questions were on cultural issues and problem-solving.

Q: Did a question in any of this come up about being a woman? Was that a factor at all, did you feel at that time?

PLAISTED: I didn't. I was trying to think what the atmosphere was at that time, but it was very shortly thereafter that the State Department was more active in trying to recruit women. It wasn't a real big issue when I was first interested in the Foreign Service.

Q: When I was doing it, which was close to this time, we always had a woman on our panel. The woman would be … every time they were taking the oral exam we had a woman there. It was sort of a mixed blessing because a lot of the women said, "If I made it, by God, I am not going to cut anybody any slack because they are women." You know, the men were usually, you know, more positive than the women.

PLAISTED: I don't remember a woman ever being on the board of examiners when I was being interviewed. In fact, I remember it was all male. There was the one time I was told that the full board had decided I had not passed. It was the two women members on the full board who questioned if I really had passed, I was told. So two women kept me out of the Foreign Service, initially.

Hong Kong: economic officer (1980-1983)

Q: How did you get information? I mean information is fairly easy to get wasn't it in Hong Kong?

PLAISTED: People were usually fairly willing to talk to you, but they were also terribly busy. You couldn't call on these top businessmen in their offices for any length of time. I got most of my information over the dinner table. I was quite popular on the social circuit. The good news, being a woman, you can always sit next to the principals who were the men. I could sit next to the men whereas my boss, the consul general, couldn't. He would be sitting next to their jewel-laden wives. So I really was collecting most of my information on the dinner circuit, or socially

when you could get involved in more relaxed conversations. I did have close relations with the political advisers and the assistant political advisers in the governor's office. On trade issues, I had very close contacts with my Hong Kong counterparts. In fact, it wasn't a situation that pleased me very much, but they would hear what Washington was doing on trade issues long before I would. The Brit who was my counterpart, who was in charge of the U.S. office the way I was in charge of the Hong Kong office for the consulate, would take great glee in calling me up and saying “Joan, did you know … ” And of course I didn't. When I later became the economic director on the China desk in Washington, one of the first things I did was to make certain we kept our embassies in China and in Hong Kong informed to the extent we possibly could on what was happening in Washington on the issues.

Geneva, Switzerland: U.S. trade representative (1983-1985)

Q: … Because often I have been told by people who have dealt with Canada they are very difficult, not difficult but hard negotiators. Did you find this to be true? Or in this particular milieu, perhaps it didn't make any difference.

PLAISTED: I didn't find them particularly hard negotiators. Particularly in the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade], their position was almost always very similar to the U.S. position. The Japanese, when they would become engaged, could sometimes be more difficult in negotiations. I have worked at the U.S. mission to the UN in New York three times now. I have represented the U.S. at the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] and the UNCTAD [Conference on Trade and Development]. The Japanese had the most difficulty in dealing with me as a woman. I remember once we were very engaged in tropical timber negotiations. The Japanese wanted the headquarters to be in Japan. Eventually they got their wish, but at one point the U.S. instructions were that we not agree to this. As a courtesy, before I took the microphone to announce the U.S.' formal position, I went over to tell the Japanese delegation informally about our negative position. It was a fairly high-level delegation, and I explained to their all male representatives the position the U.S. planned to take and why we were taking it at that time. They all sort of looked at me, and they all started bowing in unison.

Q: Putting their heads together.

PLAISTED: … and said, “It is too bad your position is not as beautiful as you are.” One of my great moments in diplomacy — the Japanese bowing and saying it is too bad your position isn't as beautiful as you are. They later succeeded in getting the U.S. position reversed.

National War College (1987-1988)

Q: So that would be ‘87 to ‘88. How did you find your experience there?

PLAISTED: Well, it was very interesting on a couple of fronts. When I was first assigned to the War College, my reaction was, “Great! I am going to have a year off, and I can pursue my own interests.” There are no grades at the War College. No one really checks on you. You do have to attend classes, but this is going to give me time to do what I want to do. I really was very interested at that point in reading a lot of history and trying to integrate what was happening in Western civilization with what was happening in the Eastern world. I don't think anyone had ever written a book really integrating Eastern and Western civilization. How could Kenneth Clarke entitle his book *Civilization* and not say a thing about China? That was going to be my personal project during this year of freedom. Well, once I started attending the War College, sitting in the auditorium, I was absolutely enthralled by the quality of the speakers we were hearing. We would have a session on the presidency and every chief of staff going back to Ed Meese, in Nixon's days, and even the Eisenhower administration would come and speak to us. Every forty-five minutes, here comes another chief of staff for the former president of the United States to talk to us. We just had such top exposure. We would go to the Supreme Court and talk to some of the justices. I started getting really involved in the academic program at the War College . You could take elective courses in the afternoon. Everyone took three electives. I asked, why can't you take four? They said well, you could. No one has ever done that. Well, the price was right. I wasn't paying for this and the courses were fascinating, so I was adding an extra course each semester because it was just such a fascinating place to study. Some of the professors were superb, including Mel Goodman on the Soviet Union. The professor who handled the Middle East taught me a lot about what I knew about the Arab world before my tour in Morocco. Academically I took full advantage of the War College. I went on almost all of the voluntary trips. I crawled around the back of a B-52 bomber when we visited the SAC, the Strategic Air Command, in Omaha. I went to Colorado Springs, where we visited NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command] and SpaceCom. I visited the scenic Coast Guard facilities in San Francisco. I descended down into the missile silos in Minot, North Dakota, at the Minot air force base. So academically it was a fascinating place. As a woman, all of a sudden at the War College, my antenna was sort of raised, because of the things that were happening all the time — little things. I was always getting “Mr.” placed on my name tags. There were fourteen women at the War College at that time, but they just didn't seem to be prepared to deal with women. It would come up in very small ways. At one point, I probably could have made a name for myself at the War College: I was going to write to the commandant who is in charge of the War College and tell him how delighted I was with his policy of topless bathing at the swimming pool, that I felt right at home just as if I were on the French Riviera again. I wanted to congratulate him on his liberalism that I would not have expected to find at the National War College. The student handbook read, “Upper garments must be worn at all times, except at the swimming pool.” I would have made quite a name for myself at the National War College testing the commandant's policy. But those are the type of things that I was running into all the time at the War College.

Q: Could you give a few samples?

PLAISTED: The head of the Marine Corps came in to address us. He starts talking about the role of the wives in the military being to support their husbands and how wives are expected to work for the military and it should be voluntary. They shouldn't expect to be paid for it. This is part of how the husband is going to be judged in his career. I guess there were no women in the Marines, he could say this. This was at a time when the State Department was starting to pay spouses for their work overseas. It was no longer expected to be completely on a voluntary basis that spouses were going to help others integrate into the society, the post. The State Department was moving a little beyond expecting spouses to be unpaid laborers overseas. When the Marine Corps commandant spoke, even my colleagues in the military were startled at some of the remarks he was making.

Rabat, Morocco: deputy chief of mission (1991-1994)

Q: You did raise a question. You obviously were on trade negotiations. You worked out a reputation of your own, but there was this series of suits of women feeling they had been discriminated … I won't say "feeling"; they were *discriminated against. Did you get involved in any of this, or were you sort of off doing your thing? It was called the "women's suit" or something like that. Did this affect you or did you get involved?*

PLAISTED: I wasn't actively involved in it. It was called the Women's Class Action Suit. I never wanted to opt out of it. You were automatically part of the suit as a woman unless you opted out of it. I certainly did not want to opt out of it because I really was very interested in seeing how the courts would resolve this issue. I always followed it with interest to see just how the courts would come out. Had women been discriminated against? Had they not? Because there were times in my career when I felt, yes, I was discriminated against. There were other times when I felt it was very much to my advantage to be a woman. In the final analysis, did it all balance out? So I followed the case with great interest.

Q: This was not … You weren't a driving force?

PLAISTED: No, I wasn't really active in the case.

…

Q: What was your impression of the Moroccan foreign service, particularly as you would see it reflected in their ambassador here in Washington? Was the word getting through to the king or was everything predicated on how the king felt about things? Was there a good foreign service that was bringing back information?

PLAISTED: I am not sure how active their embassy here was in feeding back information at the time when I was in Morocco. We weren't working that closely with the embassy here, at least I wasn't in Morocco. It all depends on your access to the king. It depends on who their ambassador is here in Washington. Later their ambassador became someone who had been the minister of

culture during my time. Then he became ambassador to the U.S. He went on to be foreign minister. In fact, he is still foreign minister today. Mohammed Benaissa definitely had the king's confidence — that is, King Hassan's. He is still foreign minister today under Mohammed VI. Someone like that, yes, he does have access to the king, and can probably pick up the phone. Today it very much depends — as it does in the U.S. Foreign Service, but even much more so because of Morocco's being a monarchy — on the personalities of their ambassadors here in Washington.

I found the officials in their foreign ministry, in general, to be quite highly educated, quite reasonable. We didn't always agree, but I would lay out the arguments for the position the U.S. wanted them to take, and, depending on the issue, they would often have to bring it to the king's attention. Or I would go and see how close I could get to meeting with the king to talking with his top counselor, if it was really a major issue where we truly wanted the king's support such as troops for Somalia or election observers for their parliamentary elections. They were very educated people, quite rational. I was concerned as a female how are they going to react to a woman making these demarches. Something I have always done, I think I learned it early on, I don't come in and say, "Hi, I'm Joan. Weak woman that I am, please, would you do this for the U.S." Rather I would say, "The President of the United States, President Bush, President Clinton, would like to call this to your attention and for you to consider this course of action." It didn't matter if I were a green frog, or at least I wanted them to think it didn't matter if I were a green frog. I was speaking for the President of the United States. I am the spokesperson for the President of the United States. That I learned early on.

…

Q: Was it a problem being a single woman in this sort of society?

PLAISTED: It was very unusual for a woman to be in such a high position in Morocco. It is very unusual to be single, too. But I considered this part of my role. I have always enjoyed the public diplomacy side of issues. I would make a couple of speeches a day. I think I made six speeches in two days at the time of the Fourth of July in French and English on TV. So I considered it was very much part of my duties to get out there and be seen, in part as a woman. I have a friend who is the chairman of the anthropology department at Columbia University. She was doing research in this little tiny village way outside of Marrakech. They were watching TV. I was at the airport in Rabat seeing the king off on his state visit to the U.S. On TV, you see all these military officials. You see the king's advisors and his family, and then you see this woman dressed in turquoise shaking the king's hand, not bowing lowly and kissing his hand as they all do. The little girls my friend was watching TV with said, "Who's that?" I really stuck out in the film clips. "Well, she's the chargé, the acting ambassador at the American embassy." They sort of looked again. "She is a woman?" "Yes." "Well, can she do that?" I really did want to get out and make speeches and be known throughout the country.

There was one very funny incident in retrospect. The Moroccans were rightfully very proud. It was the opening of the magnificent new mosque in Casablanca, just an incredible structure - almost all indigenous architecture, indigenous materials. The king, naturally, was going to open the mosque, but women are not allowed in the mosque, or at least certainly not on the ground floor. He did, of course, want to invite the diplomatic corps. What do you do with a female chargé of the United States of America? So this went on, this debate went on, and the mosque was actually to open on my birthday just by coincidence. They couldn't really tell me what was going to happen. Was I going to be invited? They certainly could not invite the entire diplomatic corps, but exclude the United States. Our consul general in Casablanca also should be invited, she was a woman.

Q: Was that Ann Carey?

PLAISTED: Ann Carey, yes, Ann and I.

Q: Was she quite pregnant at the time?

PLAISTED: No. She wasn't. So what they finally decided was that all the diplomatic corps, mostly infidels, would be upstairs in the balcony which is where they would normally have women in the mosque. We would all be up there in the balconies where they placed the women. That way I could be with the diplomatic corps. So we were all sweltering up in the top balcony. Ann and I were completely dressed in black with our heads wrapped in these shawls. We even had to cover our ankles. As we were going out the residence door, of her residence in Casablanca, I said to her husband, "You have to take a picture of the two of us" wrapped in our Arab shawls all dressed in black which he did. It was published in the State Department magazine. I sent a copy to my mother and said, "Now find your daughter's photo in this magazine." There were the two of us completely disguised going to the opening of the mosque.

Marjorie Ransom

Entering USIA (1962)

Q: Were you getting any sexism about what a woman was doing in this sort of thing?

RANSOM: I got it from my father. My father thought when I went to Colombia University that I was studying French and that I was going to become a French teacher and marry a nice man and settle down and raise children. He only realized at the end of my first year at Columbia, when I got this scholarship to go to Lebanon, what I was doing. He was very angry, but he let me continue. We all discovered that the Syrian and Lebanese merchants he dealt with were of Arabic origin and spoke Arabic. We were so stupid that we hadn’t realized that. When I went to

Lebanon, I wrote letters the entire summer and worked on the family to tell them what a great place it was and how hospitable people were and to humanize them. He came around.

Q: How about during the exam? Were you getting any questions such as, "Do you think, as a woman, you will stay in the Foreign Service?"

RANSOM: I don't remember that. I had a very positive experience in the exam and felt as though those two men treated me with respect and courtesy. They were very impressed by the fact that I didn't come from a big Ivy League school. The fact that I came from a village, that I had had to work in my father's store, that I knew the people in that northern community, I knew people from different backgrounds, that all seemed to impress them. I did have problems later.

Beirut, Lebanon: spouse of consular officer

RANSOM: When we went to Jeddah, I was pregnant with our second child. David was assigned to the consular section. He was the juniormost officer in the embassy in Jeddah. I was very busy with one small child and another one on the way. That is when I really experienced what it was like to be a Foreign Service wife. When I arrived, I was told the women I should call on. I think I had my own calling cards. They were wonderful women and I respected them a great deal. Actually, I looked on the diplomatic call, the formality of it, as useful. I got to know these women and they introduced me to other people. It wasn't easy for me to get to know Saudis, so I went to a lot of tea parties. Andrea and Bill Rugh were in Jeddah at that time. Andrea was a very good friend. We went to endless tea parties. Andrea was interested in anthropology, so she was probably more interested than I was. I was trying to find women who were sufficiently liberated to come and socialize with us with their husbands. I don't think I was very successful in that, but I certainly met a lot of women and got to know the female Saudi society in Jeddah that mixed with Western women.

Q: Let's talk about this. This is not a group that is easy to penetrate and you have to be a woman to do it. If you're a working officer, that's not your target. In a way, it was a unique opportunity. What was your impression of the wives of what amounts to the professional class within the Saudi society?

RANSOM: Well, I got to know some women at the university, professors and the woman who ran the university, who was someone I admired. Our best friends in Jeddah were a group of couples who socialized regularly. In this group, there were two Palestinian couples, two Saudi couples, and ourselves. Two of the Saudi wives had studied at the equivalent of a junior college in Alexandria, Egypt, so they were fairly well-educated. One of them had been a champion swimmer. At that time, we had access to an embassy boat. A very nice way to go swimming in the Red Sea was to go out on the boat into the middle of the sea, several miles from shore. You were out there by yourself and it was totally private. When I talked to this woman, she talked about how she missed swimming and being able to engage in athletic activities. I said, "Well, we

have this boat. You can go out and we could pick the group that would be with us and could assure your total privacy. Would you be able to go?" Yes, she said she would be very interested. So David and I both became quite excited about this opportunity. We organized a group and got ready to go and went to the boat. Her husband came, but she never appeared. That taught me something early on about interpreting signals: Arabs almost never say "No." I should not have been surprised that she wouldn't feel free to do so. There was a veil drawn over their activities. I saw her a lot after that. We just didn't refer to that incident. She never explained the why or wherefores. There also was a Saudi woman I got to know quite well in Riyadh who was more educated, and her husband was a minister in the government. She was much more active, but still, she could only go so far. She would go out wearing a long coat and a scarf over her head. She didn't veil in those days. She was able to move around town with a car and driver quite freely. But to me, and I was relatively young then, it seemed that the women were surprisingly accepting of the limits that were placed on their lives, even though both of them had studied abroad (one in Egypt and the other in the U.S.). It was fairly frustrating.

I had another Saudi female friend who got a Ph.D. from Columbia University and who came back to Jeddah imagining that she would be able to become the head of the women's university there, because the women who was the head of it at that time was Palestinian and not Saudi. This woman came and visited me at home a couple of times. I was very frustrated, however, for when she came she refused to see my husband, even inside the house when no one was around. She absolutely refused. He had to stay totally out of sight in another part of the house.

Another time, a young woman from a very good Saudi family in Jeddah returned from studying in the U.S., full of energy and ideas. She was ready to challenge the system. She told us that she was going to be the first Saudi woman to work in the foreign ministry; she was going to do this and that. Then she simply disappeared from sight. We would try to call her and the calls weren't returned. I met her father at an embassy function and asked about her. He said, "Oh, she got married a couple of weeks ago to a cousin." So they had married her off and set her aside.

Q: Did you find that you could talk to these women about events that were happening of the period? Were they following things, listening to the news?

RANSOM: It depended on the women. Those who had studied in the U.S. did follow events and were more interested. The women who studied in Alexandria, Egypt, were much less interested.

Q: Did you ever have problems with the fundamentalists, the religious police?

RANSOM: I think I had one minor encounter with the mutawwa in Riyadh, but not in Jeddah. They just had civilian police at that time. I did find that in Jeddah in the souk, some of the shopkeepers were not very friendly and were sometimes rude. A friend of mine had given me before I went to Jeddah a heavy, dark, drab, cotton dress which was several times too big for me. She said, "You'll want to wear this when you're in Jeddah." I said, "Yuk," and put it in the back

of the closet. One time, I had a particularly unpleasant encounter with a shopkeeper. When I said to him "*Salaam alaikum*" ("Peace be with you"), he responded, "You can't say that because you're not a Muslim." That was outrageous and very bad behavior on his part. Then, I pulled out that dress and thought, "Well, maybe I'll try this." Another time, I had trouble with a foreign worker following me around the souk and could find no shopkeeper friendly enough to ask for help. So I thought I'd try this dress. I actually found the dress quite liberating in the souk. I then was treated like a man. I hated wearing it. In fact, I hated the whole idea of such a garment. But it was the only way I could go here and there freely. I was determined to do that, so I used the dress to make it easier.

Q: Separation always has made it very difficult for our American diplomats or other diplomats to penetrate the society.

RANSOM: I never had any difficulty in any country doing my job. People recognized what my job was and they dealt with me on that basis. Socially, it was trickier, but being a woman gave me access to the families of my contacts. I think that it has become a lot easier to get to know Saudis since that time when I was there. There weren't many U.S. graduates. They were the people that we would naturally have easier intercourse with.

Sanaa, Yemen: public affairs officer (1975-1978)

Q: How about with the women? Were you able to observe their role?

RANSOM: Most of the women wore a veil because it was something new and revolutionary for them to be able to be in class with men. They veiled, but they sat right next to men and studied right along with them. The numbers were few. But there was a lot of support from U.S.-trained Yemenis in the government for the development of women. When the Yemenis drew up their first constitution, they wrote it in a way that didn't indicate sex, so it meant that both men and women had the right to vote. I brought in women to talk about women in development. There was a conservative group that tried to impede women's progress, but the progressives managed to keep the university coed. A small number of women, primarily from good families, have done quite well.

Q: I was wondering whether you found yourself up against the Islamic fundamentalist male conservatives that didn't like what you were doing and made things difficult for you.

RANSOM: No, I had no trouble at all like that. In fact, I had only been there about a week when the Ministry of Public Works called me. The minister, Ali Abu Il-Rijaal, sent word that he wanted to meet the new PAO [public affairs officer] who was a woman. I called on him and he wanted me to do everything I could to develop women, to educate them. He sent me to meet with all the women in his family. His attitude was typical of many of the Yemenis I worked with. They were very excited. They were very proud that the U.S. thought enough of Yemen to assign

a woman officer to the embassy. They were very supportive. When I had been in Yemen in the ‘60s that one year that we were there, and we sent our forms off to apply for driver’s licenses, I never got a response. This time, mine came back before David’s. They treated me as they would treat any man in that job. I was an honorary man.

Charlotte Roe

Washington, D.C.: Foreign Service Institute training (1983)

Q: Well, did you find a certain amount of unwillingness to accept your status? Here you [were] as a mid-career person coming in and I think it was also at the time the State Department responded to judicial pressure to get more women in the business. So part of this mid-career program was designed to give people just like yourself with your gender or a different ethnic origin a broader opportunity in the organization. An organism like the Foreign Service can't help but react defensively.

ROE: There were a few sharp elbows. I didn't pay any heed. The paternalism that was present in the labor movement had immunized me. Among union leaders at the time, you could almost read the thought process taking place. It has to do with instant decision making, intuitive decision making.

Q: “The blink,” I think it's called.

ROE: “The blink,” yes. When you came into a meeting with someone in, say, the building trades, within a couple of minutes they had made up their minds about whether you were someone who had your own power and knowledge or someone who they imagined had slept their way into that position. Once they decided you were competent, they would treat you with a lot of respect. In the State Department, the power relation was more subtle. A couple of my supervisors in the early years were oppressive, either because they were insecure, or inexperienced managers, or felt uncomfortable with someone from an activist background. I was busy with work, and so clueless about [the State Department’s] personnel process, I could hardly fight back. But most FSOs [Foreign Service officers] were fair and helpful. I liked the Latin American region because it tended to attract more adventurous types.

Q: When I do these oral histories, I see a remarkably diverse breed of cat coming up through it, particularly since the post war period. The G.I. Bill of Rights changed the face of the Foreign Service. The farm boy had seen Paris, and he was not going back to the farm. Veteran’s benefits allowed him to go up through Harvard by ability, and the old-boy system started caving.

ROE: That's so true. The casting pool now looks a lot more like the U.S. as a whole. But I sensed the more vibrant life was below ambassadorial level. At that stage in life, I wanted to serve my country the best way I possibly could. I had zero interest in pushing my way to the top of the totem pole.

Q: The Foreign Service may have changed considerably because I've been out almost twenty years. But the male officers would have randomly associated women assigned to do a job and they'll find, "Gee they're really very good." I've seen some of my protégées go on to be ambassadors. I would probably go the extra mile on their part, because at the time the feeling was that women weren't getting as fair a shake. Then, I had two daughters. In a sense there was more of a mentoring system for women than for men.

ROE: At some levels, perhaps; at others, I have my doubts. Many new doors are open. Still, I've seen plenty of bars up along the way. I should add that of the handful of really difficult bosses I ever encountered, several were male — and several outstanding bullies were female. In my experience, good management is gender-free, but can't deny certain differences. Men are generally better at self-promotion; it's how they're brought up. Women tend to be naturals at networking. Now, there's a huge support system for the junior officers regardless of gender. You're on your own at mid-level. But when I came in, the labor officer network was strong. They ran yearly training programs, had good mentors at headquarters with an institutional memory on what every officer did best. My first job was both a political and labor position, and well chosen.

Anna Romanski

Beijing, China: assistant cultural affairs officer (1981-1983)

ROMANSKI: … Another visitor I remember — although he was not cultural — was former President Nixon. He was well received by the Chinese since he had opened China, but less well received by the embassy because we still remembered Watergate. I remember attending a reception at which Nixon made some kind of sexist remark about being happy to see so many "little women" out here supporting their husbands. Not only was the remark sexist, but it was also off base since all the women he saw were working at the embassy. It was the kind of post where most of the spouses sought employment unless they had very young children.

President George Herbert Walker Bush also visited. To demonstrate that sexism was not all on the Chinese side, I got to arrange a tea for the embassy wives with Mrs. Bush at the ambassador's residence. I suppose I could have protested, but I honestly didn't mind. In fact, the event was a great success. Contrary to our cookie-pushing image, tea parties don't get one promoted! I think each and every wife came, whether they were working wives or not. This was unusual since a lot of the Chinese-American wives didn't like to mingle much for whatever reason but, for an event of this caliber, they all showed up. It was a lovely event, if I do say so myself. …

Ambassador Mary A. Ryan

Training at the Foreign Service Institute (1966)

Q: How would you describe your entering your class, the basic officer course, the A-100 course, in February of '66?

RYAN: Well, it was interesting looking back on it, because there were seven women in the class. There were about under 50, 47 [in the class total], something like that. I remember being very impressed with April Glaspie, who was in [the] class, because she was writing Arabic. And I thought that I was probably not where I should be if I was in class with people writing Arabic script in front of me. I did not think that the training that we got in the basic course, or in consular training, was any good at all. And quite honestly, if I had had any other option, any other thing to do, I probably would have left, because I thought it was very condescending, I guess the word is. It was kind of silly, I thought — you know, how to write a cable and how to dress and all of that. You know, the old Foreign Service, how strict they were about various things. And consular training was only "talking heads." It was not practical training the way they do now at ConGen [the Consular Studies course at the Foreign Service Institute].

Q: They didn't have ConGen then?

RYAN: No, we didn't have ConGen. We had people who would come in and tell us war stories. I remember someone talking about how she shipped the wrong body to someplace, and those kinds of stories. They were entertaining to a certain extent, but they really didn't prepare you for going out and doing consular work. And some of my classmates I liked very much, and some, of course, I'm still in touch with. And some were insufferably arrogant and conceited the way they are. And so …

Q: Was Alice Kern running the training?

RYAN: Yes.

Q: My feeling was that she did not do the consular service any great service by doing this. Because it was run, well, it sort of reminds of some of your nuns, sort of locking the doors. Did you get any feel for consular work?

RYAN: No, I had no feel for it. I loved it once I started to do it in the field. I really loved it. But I had no idea how to do it. And certainly, I mean, okay, I passed the test. They had a little citizenship test. They had a little visa test and things like that. It wasn't hard, but it didn't really teach you how to do the work, not in a practical sense. In a theoretical sense, I guess it did, but not in a practical sense.

Q: Did you get any feel for, at that time, that women were pushed off in one category and that men were in another or something like that?

RYAN: Yes, probably. Well, most of the women in my class were consular or [administrative]. I think April was political, but I don't remember any of the others being political or [economic]. They were still not sure of us. They didn't really expect us to stay, because then the rule was still if you were married, you had to resign if you were a woman. And so they weren't so sure of us and they weren't so sure they wanted to waste their time teaching us anything, because we were

all going to go off and get married and then we would be lost to the service. My love for the Foreign Service came when I got abroad at my first post, which was Naples. I started to do the work and realized how much I loved both the work and the living abroad, and the getting to know people, and just being part of the organization. But the training, the Washington end of it, I thought was abysmal. It was awful, I thought.

Washington, D.C.: State Department career development officer (1977-1980)

Q: Was this the beginning of being concerned about sex discrimination, racial discrimination and all this?

RYAN: Well certainly, the women's class action suit was going on. I was a part of that. Allison Palmer in 1975 filed that women's class action suit. And while I personally never experienced anything that I could identify as gender discrimination, it certainly did exist in the service for a long time. And I'm sure there was also racial discrimination, because you know, it was the idea that African-Americans would be happiest in Africa because everybody would look like them, and they would be fine, you know — which is absurd. There were not that many Latinos at that time, but you know, they would all go to Latin America, because you know, they spoke Spanish, and they understood people. So there was that. I don't really know if the people who were doing it realized that they were guilty of discrimination. I think in many cases, they thought they were doing people a favor. I don't think that they would have seen themselves as sexists or racists. In fact, I know some of them most certainly did not see themselves as that, although that's what you could certainly think of them as.

And it was the time that we began to bring people in at mid-level. The mid-level program was well underway. And at first, I thought it was a very good program. We got some very talented people in through that program. But then, after a while, even while I was still in personnel, it simply was just a numbers game, you know, so many African-Americans, so many Native Americans, so many women, because women were still part of the mid-level program at that time. And I didn't think we got quite the talent that we got in the beginning. But we had that program for quite some time.

Washington, D.C.: State Department inspector general staff (1982-1983)

Q: Were you looking at all at various forms of discrimination that had risen to the surface?

RYAN: Well, we always looked at that to see if there was any of that, but I don't remember that we ever found that, at least at the posts that I inspected. I mean, we'd find, of course all the personnel officers would be women, because that's what women were supposed to do — personnel. Because women are good at personnel; that's what everybody thinks. So that was still the case then. But I don't remember running into discrimination, nor do I remember anybody alleging discrimination.

Washington, D.C.: executive assistant, State Department management bureau (1985-1988)

Q: It's a very difficult time. I wonder if you could talk about a couple of other things. Talking about hysteria, I think that '85 to '88 was at the height — I'll be vilified for this — but the hysteria about sexual harassment. I mean, all of a sudden, you don't hear it anymore, but people were either being harassers or being harassed or something.

RYAN: Yes, there was that. And I remember meeting with some women when I was in to try to spare [Ron] Spiers that, who claimed that they were being harassed or had been harassed, and in one case, by someone that Mr. Spiers knew well. And when I listened to the complaints, it was not what I understood by sexual harassment. It was probably paternalism. You know, granted, there was discrimination against women in the Department of State. I was named plaintiff, for heaven's sake, in Allison Palmer's suit against the department on that issue. But the sexual harassment part, it really wasn't, at least the cases where I met with women to try to hear them out to try to make recommendations to Mr. Spiers about what was going on. It was more that the boss, who was a man — let me see if I can get this right… He would call them by nicknames when they would say, "Don't call me that. Call me, you know, whatever my full name is." And they resented that. Or he was in fact trying to hold them back, but I'm sure the men didn't really see it like that. It was, "Oh, you don't want to do that kind of work. You don't want to go there. You don't want to do this." Much less than how I would understand sexual harassment, which is trying to make a pass at somebody, or trying to force them into a relationship with you because you had the power over them. You could say what you wanted about them in their evaluation, so the women felt like they had to go along. In my experience, of the cases that I knew about — and, of course, I didn't know about them all — it wasn't that. And I remember how amused everybody was about the memorandum that went out, the department notice that went out, on sexual harassment at the time. Because it was like, "Sexual harassment. Where have we been?" It has died down now. You don't hear about it much anymore. I think it's much more equal.

Q: I think it's much more equal. And, you know, people were hit over the head with a two-by-four and they got the message.

RYAN: Well, yes, it even happened when I was in consular affairs. There was a post, a big consular operation, where three women individually came to see me about this one man that they thought was harassing them. And when I called him and spoke to him, he was just an idiot. He wasn't really harassing them. He thought he was being nice. They were junior officers, and so he would put his arm around their shoulder when they were working on the line, on the visa line, and ask them how they were doing. He would compliment on their clothing. And he was horrified to find out that you're not supposed to that. But they were young, and they thought that was sexual harassment. But I had to say to him, you know, how can you be so stupid? How can you not be paying attention to what we're doing these days? And so, don't tell them that they look nice; they don't want to hear it.

Q: It's a very tricky place. I guess I was out of the service by that time, but I was watching it from the sidelines. There were classes and lectures. And, of course, the lecturers were almost always — I hate to say it — enraged women.

RYAN: Well, when we had diversity training, we had to go early. I was working at the time for Mr. Richard Moose, who was the undersecretary for management, and I was in CA [consular

affairs]. And to set an example, he made us all go as fast as possible to diversity training. So I was in one of the early classes, and the woman who was in charge of that, who presented the diversity training, I thought was excellent. I thought it was kind of sensitivity training, to be perfectly frank. But it was okay, and it wasn't crazy. Later on, I heard that it got a little weird. But then, one of my staff assistants when I was in CA, who was a very attractive young woman — very tall redhead, very, very attractive — was in diversity training with an area assistant secretary or assistant secretary equivalent, who put "the moves" on her right in the diversity training. So, there was a need for it obviously, but it didn't get to everybody. Some people did not understand.

Q: We are talking about some level of chemical reactions.

RYAN: In many cases, it was silly, but it was necessary. And now, I think that we don't hear so much about it, because there's sort of a critical mass of women and minorities in the service, and I think that people sort of caught onto it, what was trying to be taught.

Q: Well, what about, sort of the other side of this issue, diversity discrimination and this type of thing?

RYAN: You mean, like, reverse discrimination?

Q: I'm not thinking about reverse discrimination … well, the problem of minorities in the Foreign Service. Was this something you were having to deal with?

RYAN: Yes, we were dealing with that. It was a tricky time, because we were getting a lot of, in the mid-to-late-'80s, a lot of women who were taking the exam and passing it. The problem was that we were not getting a lot of minorities. We were getting a lot of minorities who were taking the exam, but we were not getting a lot of minorities who were passing the exam. And that was a problem, because it looked as if we were discriminating against minorities when, in fact, I don't think we were, because it was a written exam. It wasn't so much the assessment center at that time. People were not getting through the written exam, which, of course, is horribly difficult, or certainly always has been horribly difficult. And as I look back at M [management], the M area at the time, with the exception of Joan Clark and the very notable exception of Ambassador George Moose, who was at that time the director of what was called M/MO (management operations), there weren't a lot of role models at the senior level, which means that we hadn't been bringing people in, minorities and women, for a very long time. And so it was just starting to get to the point. Now we have this very good idea of having fellows who come in and sort of learn the ropes. And I can't remember what they call them, the fellows. They're not Rangel Fellows, but they're some other … and so, that's why nurturing is important, which I think is a good thing, sort of bringing people along and sort of showing them what the service is like and giving them opportunities to be interns abroad and to know much more about the organization than walking into a room or taking an exam cold.

Q: Looking back on my time, as I recall, there was no push to mentor people who came in. I'm talking about particularly, at that time, African-Americans, and to help them over time …

Because the feeling was that if you did that, you're discriminating against them. So it was "sink or swim," which is really the wrong way to go about it.

RYAN: I think it was really very much the wrong way to go about it. I think mentoring is critically important. I mean, if you love the service, if you care about the service, then you want more junior people to be successful in it and to do well. And the only way to do that, I think, is through mentoring. And there's the official mentoring program that we have, but then there's also unofficial mentoring where you just sort of watch out for people on your staff and don't go beyond your immediate office. But you do watch out and you make sure they understand. I mean, Ambassador Davis, Ruth Davis, used to do a wonderful session on how to write evaluations and how to read evaluations and how to do your own statement. Because a lot of junior officers, and I'm not just talking minorities, but a lot of junior officers don't know what a good EER [employee evaluation report] is. And they certainly don't know that they needn't go into excruciating detail in their own statement, and so Ruth used to do this wonderful session for anybody who wanted to come. She would just announce it; she would just do it one day, sort of a brown bag lunch, and people would come and talk about their evaluations, and she would look at drafts and, you know, sort of advise them about, "This is not a good thing to say."

What I remember really, about African-Americans particularly, is one of my very dearest friends, who is African-American, told me that he could tell by reading evaluations on a board, when he was on boards, who was African-American and who wasn't because of the way they were written. And I remember being horrified by that. But then after he told me that, reading evaluations when I was on a board, and reading one where they talked about, I guess a low- or mid-level woman who, as they later described it, had been in food service before she entered the Foreign Service, which means she had been a waitress. And I remembered her name, and I checked it out later, and she was African-American. And that was really discriminatory, I thought. She didn't realize it. I mean, he didn't mean it that way, but there was no reason to say that. So I think we learned a lot as time went on.

Q: From your own point of view, '85 to '88, where were women? Did you feel that you had gotten to the point where this was no longer an issue for you?

RYAN: I certainly felt like it was no longer an issue for me. I made MC in …

Q: That's minister counselor.

RYAN: Minister counselor in 1985, and so I was set. I used to worry about women in the service, but I really stopped worrying so much sort of towards the end of that period and then in the early '90s, because women were coming in in such numbers and they were so successful. And without getting too gender-specific, and without repeating myself — I think I probably have said this before — I think women are particularly skilled at diplomacy. It's more, again, gender-specific, but I think we're more likely to want to talk about things, to negotiate, to look for points of agreement than to go to war. So I think women are very good at this business, and so I really don't worry so much about women anymore, because there are so many now.

Q: I know when this oral history program used to really go out, because I was working the retirement ranks. And I was making a great effort to get women to be interviewed, because there weren't any. Now, it's over the hill. It's changed certainly in the twenty years we've been doing this. …

Swaziland: ambassador (1988-1990)

RYAN: In '88 I was nominated to be ambassador to Swaziland. In fact, at that time, President Reagan called potential nominees himself to ask you, or to tell you, where you're going to go. So I remember that vividly because they don't do that anymore, and my father was so politically conservative that he would have been particularly thrilled to know that it was Ronald Reagan who called me to ask me if I would be his ambassador to Swaziland. And then we were able to go over to the White House. We went over to the White House and had our picture taken with the president. I have this lovely picture with President Reagan. But all of that is sort of lost now. But it was much more personal.

And so it was very nice because it was Africa. I love Africa, and I had visited Swaziland. I had never been stationed there, but I had visited Swaziland when I was a rover in Africa when I was in Mozambique. So it was very nice. It was very nice. It was really Mr. Spiers who did that for me and got me the nomination. And so off I went to be the first woman ambassador of any country to Swaziland. And as I learned subsequently, there was tremendous consternation in Swaziland when a woman was nominated, because they didn't really know how to act, or how to behave, or what to do. And they knew they couldn't refuse agreement, because it was the United States, after all. But now, of course, Swaziland has women ambassadors itself, but then it was 1988, and they just didn't know. And I found out well after my time there that they had decided to treat me as an honorary man, the way South Africa used to treat people as honorary whites. But I didn't know that at the time, and so it was all fine. And so off I went to Swaziland.

Q: You were in Swaziland from '88 to when?

RYAN: June of '90. It was 18 months.

Q: Can you describe Swaziland at that time?

RYAN: Well, Swaziland at that time was a beneficiary of the apartheid regime in South Africa, because companies that wanted a foothold in southern Africa would come to Swaziland because they were not allowed — American companies, that is — were not allowed to go to South Africa because of economic sanctions that were in place at that time. Swaziland had a young population, a relatively well-educated population, and an English-speaking population for the most part. And so we had a Coca-Cola bottling company and we had pineapple canning factories and we had interests in … I mean, we had a trade mission come. My DCM, Arma Jane Karaer, had spent a lot of time with the [indistinct] consulate and so she had done a lot of economic work and so she got us this group of people to come to explore Swaziland as a place for their operations, which was tremendous for the country. And so it was way more important than the very small size of the country would have led you to believe. The Swazis were completely oblivious to all of this in

many ways, because I remember talking to some of the ministries and cautioning them about how if South Africa ever freed itself from the Afrikaner regime, that's where all of the trading and investment would go, and that Swaziland should be paying attention to this, paying much more attention to the investment that they had at that time. But then, of course, none of us imagined that the Afrikaner regime and the apartheid regime would disappear as quickly as it did from the scene. And so they didn't take it at all seriously. And so, of course, now it's very much, I'm afraid, a backwater. Well, it's always a backwater to South Africa; I'm not saying that. But the investment and everything has now gone to South Africa and has left Swaziland.

Q: What type of government did it have?

RYAN: Well, it's a monarchy. The king was very young at the time that I was there. He celebrated his twenty-first birthday while I was in the country. His father, King Sobhuza, had been the longest-reigning monarch in the world, and was believed to be, and certainly had the reputation of being, a very wise leader. King Mswati had been sent to England to school, and had had no opportunity to observe his father's rule/reign. And so he came back when his father died, and he had a very tricky succession because King Sobhuza had fifty-one sons and innumerable daughters of many wives, but the rule of succession was that you could be the only son of your mother, so that you would not have full-blooded brothers competing with you. And so this young man was that, he was the only son of his mother. And so he was the one determined to be the successor, and brought back.

And he was very young and not well educated; he was still in high school or prep school in England when he was brought back and surrounded by traditional leaders, old men, who had no experience of the world whatsoever, and who always talked about the Swazi way of doing things. And so we basically had an absolute monarchy. I mean, he was not a tyrant, or not, as he was named recently in Parade magazine, the tenth worst tyrant in the world, which he's really not. But political parties were banned by King Sobhuza when a couple of people of his party were defeated. When you look back on it, you have to laugh. But political parties were banned then. They have a parliament, but it's, you know, under the control of the king. And it's getting increasingly restive now. It was not very restive then. They had unions and all. It's not an effective government. It was not an effective government, in my judgment, at the time. [Indistinct] had two women at the top of the American Embassy in Mbabane, Swaziland.

Q: Who was your DCM?

RYAN: My DCM was Arma Jane Karaer.

Q: I remember her.

RYAN: They had a debate in parliament about whether it was acceptable to beat your wife. I mean, they actually had a debate about that. I remember talking to the speaker of the House, as they called it, and asked him, "Do you think this is the right kind of debate to be having in the twentieth century?" And he was all shamefaced and embarrassed and everything, but they actually had a debate. And the conclusion was, only if she deserved it.

Q: Well, that sounds reasonable [laughing]!

RYAN: So Arma Jane and I were like, "to the barricades." It was absolutely incredible. A long time after I had left Swaziland and one of my colleagues was in Canada, the Swazi high commissioner there was a woman, and Jim Walsh told me that she told him that men in government used to say that the American ambassador did that, and the American ambassador was a woman. And if the American ambassador can do that, then we can do it too. But I didn't realize that at the time. This was not "heavy lifting," this job, believe me. After you read the traffic that came in by ten o'clock in the morning, I was sort of hard-pressed to know how I was going to occupy the other time of the day without driving the staff completely insane.

And so what I did, I accepted every invitation I got. Every little women's sewing class graduation I went to, every single thing that went on. Everything that AID wanted me to do, anything that anyone wanted me to do, I did. And so I did that deliberately in terms of women's activities; I wanted to show the chiefs of the area that women's work was valued by the American ambassador and to show the women that, you know, there was more to what they were doing, which was to keep the country afloat, God knows.

The women of Africa do everything, and it was no different in Swaziland. They do all the work in the homesteads, and they somehow did the little sewing things that make money to get the children the school uniforms they need and the books they need to have an education. The men used to sit around and drink beer. And the men thought that was perfectly acceptable. There was an American missionary couple in the south, south as it was in Swaziland, who invited me to come to see their work. And this was a couple that belonged to some church (I can't remember which denomination it was now), but they had just decided that they should be missionaries, and they decided that they should come to Swaziland, husband and wife, very, very good people. And it was a little homestead, and the women had to go to the stream, which was like one half-mile or a mile away from where this little collection of houses was, and carry the water back to the homestead. And this couple wanted to run pipes from the stream to the homestead, because water is very heavy. And so they would walk with their empty containers of water to get the water from the stream, and then they would bring it back carrying it on their heads, little kids, little girls, older women, and it's heavy, and so this would relieve them of that burden. And the chiefs refused to allow it, because "what would the women do with all that free time?" And you would just go insane with stuff like that. They would just get into trouble. And they had to work all day, so the men could sit around and get drunk. And I remember how good this couple was, and how frustrated they were at this, such primitive type of thinking.

Ambassador Dorothy M. Sampas

Entering the Foreign Service (1957)

Q: Did they ask the question that they seemed to be prone to do in those days: "Well, if you join the Foreign Service, are you going to get married and leave us?" or something like that? Did that come up?

SAMPAS: Yes, they did, and I said that I was sure I'd be able to handle that. I got the same question, curiously enough, when I came back into the Foreign Service in 1973. By that time, the winds of change had blown under the doors, even in the hallowed State Department, and we already had women's groups trying to see that women had a better shake in the Service. And again there were three people at a table at one point and myself, and one of them asked a similar question about combining career and family. By that time, I had two children. The chairman of the board stopped the question in a hurry and said I needn't answer. I said, "I don't mind answering this." "No, no, we don't want that question answered." They knew perfectly well that the lawyers could hop all over them. So that's how much the atmosphere had changed.

Q: It's interesting. I've interviewed one woman with whom I worked, an outstanding officer, and she was, around this time, told, "Well, you didn't pass, but I think it would be just splendid if you'd marry a Foreign Service officer." You can imagine she didn't exactly hold that gentleman in any high regard.

SAMPAS: Oh, dear, as if they were offering to bring one to the table with a ring in his nose!

Q: After your time, you've got sort of the traditional Foreign Service initiation, you know, working in a paper mill in Washington and then working on visas overseas, what did you want to do? Did you have any feeling now that you were moving along where you wanted to go and specialize?

SAMPAS: Well, by the time I left Hamburg, I had certainly learned that political work was the place to be — “political work”; they didn't have "cones" quite yet — and that it was very difficult work to get into. And I certainly felt that my credentials were as good as anybody else's and that I must have some chance, with my credentials, but of course, at the time I left Hamburg, I resigned because I was going to get married to a fellow Foreign Service officer. At that time, although there was no rule that you couldn't marry a fellow Foreign Service officer, it was certainly frowned on. The department was certainly going to do nothing to try to seek an assignment together for the couple. In fact, I'm sure if they had had their druthers, they would have put each one on the far side of the earth, because they didn't believe in it and they didn't want it. And there were no grievances in those days. So I left, thinking, “Well, that's the end of my Foreign Service career.”

Q: How did you feel about that at the time?

SAMPAS: Well, I didn't like it then. I didn't like it then at all. But at least I was going to have the pleasure of seeing different societies, since my husband was also in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, did you feel, I mean at the time, make sort of a mental calculation — “Yes, I could carry on as a Foreign Service officer being married and all that?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, I thought I certainly could. There was nothing in marriage itself that keeps you from being a good Foreign Service officer, contrary to what the department's standard opinion seemed to be in those days. Obviously, arrangements have to be made, if you're going to

have children, to see that the children are well taken care of. You can't have your children running hither and yon all over the city getting into trouble, but joint careers are possible. If you apply a little intelligence and a little money toward it, there you are.

Washington, D.C.: reentering the Foreign Service (1971)

Q: It sounds like you're ready to go back to the Department of State. Did you?

SAMPAS: Yes, that's right. We came back [from Iceland], we bought a house here, and Jim went off to work — I think he was in Scandinavian affairs. In the early '70s, there was an article in the Department of State newsletter that I found intriguing. It said, more or less, "We're going to try to find couples, who were both Foreign Service, assignments together. We're not going to pressure anyone anymore to leave if they marry a colleague, and — this was the part that intrigued me most of all — we'll even consider 'taking some of the old bags back,'" although they used more diplomatic words. And so I said to myself, “They mean me!” I just knew they meant me. And so in due course they set up an office of women's affairs, headed by Gladys Rogers. I didn't know Gladys Rogers directly, but I knew of her because a friend of mine, the very one who had introduced me to my husband, had argued a case before her, a case of a woman who was married and no longer in the Foreign Service, and Gladys Rogers had watched the whole development of that case, which could have become the department's first class-action case.

Q: What was her background? Do you know?

SAMPAS: She had been in the Agriculture Department for some time, but as a result of this case and the other things that she saw going on, eventually, I believe, went to law school. Anyway, some time passed, and I wrote Gladys Rogers and asked, "Is there going to be any follow-up to this? I hadn't seen any." And she quickly asked Jim, because they were both in language class together, if we were related, and he said, "Yes," and she said, "Well, have her come in and see me." So I went in and found, indeed, they were giving exams to some of the women who had left the Foreign Service, and I could arrange for an exam — so I did.

And it was an unusual sort of exam because they were all a little pussyfooting, being sure not to ask inappropriate questions, and I had passed beyond the point of thinking that these things were inappropriate, you know. I'd lived through it and that was that. But I remember one of them asked me how I would manage the family if we were overseas, and somebody else snapped, "You can't ask that! You can't ask that!" And I said, "I don't mind," that I'm not here to abandon my family, I can make arrangements now, and I'm quite sure that I can, and so I will when the time comes, if the time comes. But it was funny, and then they wondered what kind of track I would like to go on to. They did not have "tracks" when I left the Foreign Service. And, in all honesty, I thought I was better prepared in the political track than any other, but I had been told that they certainly wouldn't let me in, and they didn't. It was "oversubscribed." So thinking about it, I said, "Alright, I'll take the administrative track." And then that shocked them. They weren't sure I should be saying that or doing that. Apparently some people with advanced degrees had come in directly — men — into the administrative track, and had been eaten alive by some of the old administrative officers, who perhaps didn't have much education but had perhaps developed a rather bullying personality over the years.

Q: And know-how.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: They knew where the bodies were buried and how to get them from one place to another.

SAMPAS: That's right, that's right. So in any case, I said, "Well, you know, I already know what administrative officers are like because I've had to work with some, and you're not telling me anything I don't know, but I suppose of all the areas in the Foreign Service that I think can be done better most easily, that's it, so I'd like to try." And eventually I did come into the administrative officers' track and was sent to the Foreign Service Institute for an administrative training class, I think a couple of months long.

Ambassador to Mauritania (1994-1997)

Q: … What about dealing with the government there?

SAMPAS: Well, that was a pleasant surprise for me. I mean, here I was, a woman, French-speaking but not Arabic-speaking, not an African specialist, who had to go and talk to these people about human rights, their attitude toward their own black citizens, slavery, and female genital mutilation.

Q: Oh, yes. That's a great subject to [tackle]. There isn't much sensitivity training that they can give you to do that.

SAMPAS: Certainly not. And if you think it's easy for a sweet little Washington girl to talk to male ministers and others about female genital mutilation, you've got another thought coming. That took quite a bit of courage, but I got there. I got there. But it was clear that the Mauritanians wanted to be nice to me, and I had the feeling that it came directly from the president's orders. In my statement to the Senate, which was then published (they put those things in the Congressional Record), I had not bullied Mauritania; I had said there were problems, serious problems, but progress had been made and there was no reason progress could not continue. And the Mauritanians were so pleased at that kind of an attitude that I had the feeling that they were really trying to flatter me.

Q: This is the Human Rights Report.

SAMPAS: That's right. The statement to which I was referring, though, was the statement I made in connection with my appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And I don't think that I was, you know, going to fall flat on my face with their flattery, but I recognized it for what it was, and I felt that they needed a lot of help, quite frankly.

Q: You were the first female ambassador they'd dealt with?

SAMPAS: Yes, first female ever. But Mauritanian women are not like other Arab women.

Q: More like the Tuareg, where the women are more open.

SAMPAS: Oh, very much. They have never worn a veil, unless the sand is blowing. There was an Arabic visitor back in the thirteenth or fourteenth century who was utterly shocked to find women sitting with men in the tent unveiled. But the women of Mauritania make a special point of wearing dresses that are unique. It's mostly just a long piece of cloth colored in a very different way, each one different. Any idea that they would get into some black garb like the Saudi women do or the Afghani women or Iraqi women is just a nonstarter. I don't think they'll ever do that. And the Mauritanian men are quite happy when they have daughters as well. There's nothing of the "Sorry for your troubles, lady" business when a female child is born. They're very fond of their daughters. So they heard me out. They didn't get angry. They gave me their point of view on everything that I was fussing about. I never had a moment's feeling — whether it was the president or one of the ministers or one of the others — that they would have told a male something, in my position, that they weren't telling me. And they couldn't get angry at me because in their culture men don't get angry; they don't raise their voice to women. And the women there, unlike women, I think, in any other African country I've heard of or any other Arabic country I've heard of, will often initiate divorce and feel that the more divorces they have, the better off they are. In a sense, they are, since they get to keep some of the riches of the household. But it's rather like collecting men like beads on a string. So men are very gentle with women and very kind. And, oh, I would often throw back in their face kind words that "I know that that's flattery, and I think it's nice, but don't expect me to believe it." And they would understand. They would understand.

Ambassador Teresita C. Schaffer

Entering the Foreign Service (1965-1966)

SCHAFFER: In December 1965, I took the written exam and fortunately passed it. That was a full day's test. My oral was in April 1966; it took about one hour and a half. Some ground rules for the Foreign Service [FS] were explained to me — erroneously, it turned out. For example, I was told that a married woman could not serve in the FS. Not true, as I learned later. I did speak to one Foreign Service officer who came to Bryn Mawr on a recruiting trip. He struck me as unbearably stuffy at the time, but didn't discourage me.

It was the oral exam that brought the subject of married women and the FS to my attention. The examining panel consisted of three men, all of whom had served as ambassadors. The chairman was Outerbridge Horsey II. It was three of them and one of me, in some government building in Washington furnished with standard gray furniture. In my case, they started out by asking questions about myself; I assume they did that with every candidate. Then came questions about subjects that I could logically be expected to know something about. The last half hour was just a free-for-all. During the first part of the examination, the chairman commented that he assumed that I understood that if I were to get married, that would be the end of my career in the FS. By

this time, I had an answer to that comment. I told the panel that I understood that ground rule. I must say that I was greatly irritated by the question, not because I was surprised by it — I had anticipated some questions regarding my gender — but because each of other two examiners found it necessary to ask the same question separately in turn, even though I had given the textbook answer.

Tel Aviv, Israel: rotation officer (1967-1969)

I also learned something about supervision. That was training in a perverse kind of way. I was working for a boss — the head of the American citizens service section — who I found immensely, personally, very likeable, but who would occasionally lose his cool. I might note that the consul general [CG], Cliff English, did not like women officers even though (or because) he had two women officers on his permanent staff. He was always snippy about his female officers; his predilections were well-known in the embassy, and many advised me not to go to the consular section. So he was not pleased by my assignment, but my immediate boss protected me from the CG; I kept out of his way. But he was the exception in the embassy. Otherwise, I was never discriminated against because of my gender.

Embassies in many places become protective of the country in which they serve. That is a little different from "localities," which is usually policy-oriented. I am referring here to the tendency to mirror some of the social habits and prejudices of the host country. It has been said, that people assigned to Bonn find themselves in an embassy that is intensely rank-conscious, reflecting the mores of German society. On the other hand, Israeli society is very casual; people drop by without formal invitations. It has a long tradition of women in many different occupations, including leadership positions. I found the same attitude prevalent among my colleagues, unlike that found by my embassies' colleagues who served in the Arab world, especially when women officers were still few and far between. In those embassies, I was told that the American male officers were made very nervous by this new trend of women officers.

Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs: development finance (1971-1973)

Q: In 1971, you moved the bureau for economic affairs. In that same year, you were married. As I recall, during your oral examination, you were told that if you married, you would have to resign from the Foreign Service.

SCHAFFER: Correct, although even then it was erroneous information. In any case, the regulations had changed in approximately 1970 to allow "tandem" couples — i.e. both husband and wife — to continue their Foreign Service careers. Furthermore, the allowance structure, which had penalized working couples, was changed. The rules were changed to allow both husband and wife to work in the same post overseas, provided that one did not work for the other and were not in the same embassy section. Perhaps most significantly, the regulations were changed to allow a spouse to accompany the working partner on leave without pay for one tour,

without jeopardizing his or her career. The phrase “one tour” was never defined and has been flexibly administered. These new regulations were in effect when I got married.

Even though I was not directly involved in the rewrite of the regulations, I very much supported the changes. If recall correctly, I think AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] was involved in pushing for the changes. And I was an active member of AFSA through the junior officers' club. I did follow the progress of the changes closely. A friend of mine, Kathy Shirley, was the test case, or one of them. She and her husband went on to become ambassadors; they are now retired in Stonington, Connecticut. As I said, I followed these potential changes very closely.

Interestingly enough, I did not at this time — or even before — have any sense of gender discrimination, although the old regulations did make it difficult for women who wished to carry on as Foreign Service officers after marriage. Fortunately that situation was changed, as I have described earlier. The debate about the new regulations did raise my consciousness about gender discrimination. Some of the attitudes that I had shrugged off earlier in my career came to seem more significant. I basically felt — and still do, to some extent — that the key problem that women faced in the Foreign Service was not the system or the rules, but the institutional culture which had prevailed for most of the careers of our older colleagues. They had a hard time adjusting to the “new” woman. In some overseas posts, the problem is compounded by the local culture, which also views a woman's role in narrow terms. My first encounter with that attitude probably started with my assignment to Pakistan, which I will discuss later.

My assignment to the economic bureau was in the development finance office. The office director was Richard Benedick; his boss was Sidney Weintraub, a deputy assistant secretary. In our office, there were about six officers and two secretaries. I should mention that prior to my transfer from INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research], I had taken an economics course at FSI [Foreign Service Institute]. An officer had to pledge to serve two tours in an economic position if he or she wanted that FSI training. So it was almost automatic that after the course, an officer would immediately be assigned to an economic position. That gave everyone an opportunity to see how much of the course had sunk in and how much an officer could put his or her knowledge to work in a real situation. That was a very good idea.

Initially, I had been looking at possible jobs both overseas and in the State Department, but my marriage in October 1971 changed that. The bidding process at the time had not become as elaborate as it is now. It was much harder to find out what vacancies were looming. The assignment process had not yet become overly bureaucratic.

Howie Schaffer and I had a short engagement, although we had been going out together for a long time. We became engaged after I started the FSI economics course. The Monday after we announced our engagement, I received a call from [the office of] personnel asking me if I would be interested in a job in Stockholm. Under other circumstances, I would have packed that night and left for Sweden before the orders were even written. In fact, I was probably the only person in the Foreign Service who was qualified, since it was an economic job which required Swedish

fluency. I turned it down because of my situation and asked for a departmental assignment so that I could stay with my new husband.

As I started to look for a Washington assignment, I was approached by Miss Frances Wilson, who at the time was the executive director of the economic bureau. She had been given the names of all of the people in the economic class. Wilson, as all FSOs [Foreign Service officers] will remember, was a legend in her time — and long after. She got a report on each of the students, looked at their backgrounds, and finally decided which officers she wished to have assigned to her bureau. My name was on her list.

I had never met Benedick or Weintraub, my future bosses. I was asked to go to talk to Sid Weintraub. After the interview, he offered me the job; I accepted it because it sounded interesting. Then Benedick called and asked me to come to see him. I started the conversation by saying that I was looking forward to working for him in an interesting job. He cleared his throat and noted that he had not yet approved my selection. That was my first experience with the Weintraub/Benedick relationship. Benedick was a very bright guy, but complicated. I think he felt that Weintraub did not give him his proper due. Sid was a straightshooter; what you saw was what you got. He is still that way today; I work with him at CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies] now. He was also a very much a “hands-on” manager.

Dick Benedick was a rather straight-laced fellow. He had risen very quickly in the Foreign Service. He knew the international development institutions well. He demanded that the work be done in an orderly fashion. His staff considered him to be somewhat up-tight, especially on the subject of women. He always wanted to know what had been said if any of his staff members had spoken with Sid. That was a real problem for us because when a deputy assistant secretary calls you to come to his or her office, if the office director is absent, an officer can't refuse just because the director is not available. This was a constant source of frustration for Dick and for us, but it was one of the facts of life with which we had to cope.

The most interesting story from these years was how the office, and more broadly the Foreign Service, dealt with married women. When I reported for duty in January 1972, I was the second woman officer in an office with three male officers. I was newly married, and my female colleague, Joyce Bednarski, got married to Foreign Service colleague Ron Rabens about a year later. Joyce requested an early transfer in order to go overseas with Ron. Her successor, Melinda Kimble, also got married fairly soon after joining the office and also requested an early transfer to join her husband, an AID [Agency for International Development] officer. I became pregnant about a year after joining the office. Melinda was replaced by another woman, Kay Stocker. Meanwhile, one of the departing male officers had been replaced by another woman, Genta Hawkins (later Holmes).

For Dick Benedick, we represented a series of culture chocks. Two marriages and one baby among his women officers, plus the marriage and departure of his secretary, brought to mind all

the stereotypes of flighty women professionals, and his frustration showed. It was amplified by a bad mismatch of styles between him and most of the women officers involved. Joyce was outspoken and earthy; Melinda and Kay were strong feminists; Genta was drop-dead gorgeous and not inclined to play second fiddle to anyone. All were first-rate professionals who went on to extremely successful careers. To his credit, Dick showed the flexibility we all hoped for in dealing with our unexpected assignment complications, but I think he felt like cannon fodder on the front lines of societal change.

His feelings were not altogether justified, however. During the year and a half that I worked in this office, two or three male officers also left his office because of “needs of the service,” giving him two to six weeks' notice of their departures. The women who had left for family reasons all gave substantially more lead time, three to seven months.

These were the pioneering days for tandem couples in the Foreign Service. In some ways, joint assignments were easier to work out than they later became because they were treated as necessary and, for the most part, permissible exceptions to the normal assignment process, which in turn had not yet developed the complex bid-driven process that came in some years later. But the attitudes of the State Department's personnel managers were a very mixed bag.

I fared best in my quest for a next assignment, largely thanks to the help of Frances Wilson. I was more than a little nervous when I went to ask her support for my request to leave the office six months before the end of my stipulated tour to spend a year in State Department-funded graduate training in economics at Georgetown. Frances’ hard-boiled determination to make officers finish their tours in the bureau was famous all over the State Department. Frances heard me out, punctuating my story with the “mm-hmms” for which she was famous. When I finished, she said, “Well, all right, but there's one thing I want.” Quaking, I replied, “Thanks so much, and what is that?” “A picture of the baby,” said Frances.

Joyce, on the other hand, had considerable difficulty persuading personnel to look for an appropriate assignment for her at Ron’s post, and when the State Department reassigned him from Brussels to a small African post, her joint-assignment luck ran out. And Melinda, having heard from a succession of women that [the office of] personnel was unsympathetic to joint assignments, worked out an assignment to her husband's post (Tunis) first, and waited until that was in the bag to tell [the office of] personnel of her marriage.

Islamabad, Pakistan: deputy chief, economic section (1974-1977)

Q: In 1974, you and Howie were assigned to Islamabad. How did that assignment come about?

SCHAFFER: As a matter of fact, that is an interesting story. Howie was ending his fourth year in the personnel assignments office responsible for NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] jobs. He had hoped to be assigned to one of three DCM [deputy chief of mission] positions. He did not

get one of those, but he had decided that he had to leave administration and get back into a serious, substantive job. Ambassador Henry Byroade, our ambassador-designate to Pakistan, interviewed Howie for the political counselor job and selected him on the spot. He knew that I wanted the deputy position in the economic section, when it would be available in the summer of 1975. I think he was initially concerned that Howie and I might spend time together at the office; he talked to me and in the end decided that we were serious about our work and would contribute to the work of the embassy.

A word about "tandem" assignments: At that time, as now, there is always the problem of identifying appropriate assignments for the two officers at the same post. In my case, I was willing to take a year's LWOP [leave without pay]. This choice turned out even better than originally expected because I became pregnant before leaving for Islamabad, so the timing worked very much in my favor. We left for Pakistan in May, and my second son was born the following January. I might say that in the early 1970s, many posts' leadership needed to be persuaded to accept tandem assignments, which were at that time still relatively new. Sometimes, of course, posts might reject a nomination because it was a woman officer — "not suitable for the culture." That prejudice spilled over into some tandem assignments, although I think in most cases, the issues were separable. In our case, we were the first tandem assignment to Pakistan; Byroade had some reservations, but finally agreed. I was not the first woman married officer in Pakistan; Sharon Erkamp Ahmad preceded me by several years, but she kept her marriage to a Pakistani a secret until after she finished her tour; then she resigned from the Foreign Service. Eventually, she returned.

New Delhi, India: Office of the Science Advisor (1977-1979)

SCHAFFER: … My whole experience with a trip by a first lady was fascinating. First came the pre-visit planning. I had never been involved in a presidential visit and the planning was an eye-opener. One member of the White House's advance team represented Mrs. Carter. The advance team was quite nice. I talked to one colleague who had been through the Nixon visit to Poland; he thought that the contrast between the two White House staffs could not have been greater. The Carter people could say "please" and "thank you," which apparently were foreign words to the Nixon crowd.

The Carters originally planned to come in November 1977, but sometime in October, the White House asked for a postponement and scheduled the visit for New Year's Day. We first had a pre-advance team, then an advance team and then the visit itself. The embassy was asked to submit a schedule for the president, for the first lady, and for the Carters together. We did and proposed a number of events. The events that we did propose for Mrs. Carter were approved and were built in her final schedule.

I particularly remember two events. One was a luncheon to be hosted by Mrs. Goheen. I wanted to include in the guest list people with considerable substance in Mrs. Carter's fields of interest,

who all happened to be women. We also suggested to the advance team that Mrs. Carter visit a community center in Delhi, which had a lot of interesting programs for young people. After we sent these suggestions to Washington, we didn't hear for week after week, despite our periodic reminders. Silence!

Entirely unrelated to the Carter visit we hosted Mary King, the director of the Peace Corps. We had been told that she was a close friend Rosalynn Carter. I was the escort officer for Ms. King, primarily because she wanted to see what was being done by the Indians in the health field, so I took the opportunity to discuss our problem with Ms. King. After a meeting, in the embassy car that we were using, I told her the state of play and how much we needed help to move Mrs. Carter's program forward. I told her that we had not heard anything from Washington in months and wondered whether we had taken the right approach. I asked Ms. King whether our selection of possible events might be of interest to Mrs. Carter. I got a funny look from her. She said that Mrs. Carter would like our suggestions, but her staff would hate them. I then asked what could be done to bring this matter to a close. Ms. King volunteered to see what she could do about it.

Eventually, again after a prolonged period, the White House permitted us to proceed with the planning of the visit including the events that we had proposed, so we put together the guest list for the luncheon. It was an A-level list. For example, we had Ela Bhatt, who was internationally famous for having organized rag-pickers into a union in Bombay. There was one woman who had been one of Gandhi's collaborators; she was also a very interesting newspaper columnist. So all of the guests had serious credentials in one field or another.

Just before Mrs. Carter landed, the prime minister asked to have his daughter invited to the luncheon. We agreed. A few days earlier, I had heard from the traveling party that it wished press representatives — one Indian and one American — to be included. I suggested the *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Sharon Rosenhouse, who was Delhi-based, and Rami Chhabra, who was a prominent female columnist for a number of the Indian papers. Her main topics were social issues, which I thought that Mrs. Carter would be interested in. There followed a lot of communications between us and the White House; finally, we were instructed to invite *The New York Times* correspondent Bill Borders and a representative of the India wire services. He turned out to be one of the "mousiest" guys I have ever met.

So at the table, there sixteen high-powered women; the journalists, both men, got each end of the table. In the course of preparing this luncheon, I was told that I could not be included at the table, but that I could listen in on the conversation which was to take place after lunch. The purpose for inviting the reporters, of course, was to get good press coverage. Bill Borders, who was very congenial and a good reporter and who has risen in *The New York Times'* ladder, told me ahead of time that he had never covered a lady's luncheon. I assured him that the women were experts in their fields and could answer any substantive questions that he might have. He called me in the evening after the luncheon; he was a "pool" reporter for the luncheon who had to post for public view his story. His only question was how one spelled "pomegranate," the juice of which had

been served at the luncheon. So his story went into great depth about the yellow roses and silver elephants that he found on the table, spectacular saris, and pomegranate juice. I thought that was outrageous! I really resented the superficiality of the report since I had worked so hard to make the luncheon as substantive as possible. I thought that people would view the whole event as having backfired.

The same thing happened at another event: a press interview which Mrs. Carter's staff asked to be set up. They would screen the reporters who wished to attend. They selected five Indian journalists, all very reputable. In briefing these journalists, the staff pointed out that Mrs. Carter was not a "women's page" type. She was a person of substance prepared to discuss foreign policy as well as domestic issues. Unfortunately, that stimulated these journalists to ask questions about Latin America and the Middle East. She gave non-answers — quite properly, I think. She realized that for her to express an opinion on these issues would have made headlines around the world, which would not have been very helpful to her husband and his administration. Toward the end of the interview, someone raised a question about care for the elderly. Then she expressed her views, some of which were quite interesting. Those insights were very quotable, interesting and "substantive." But unfortunately, that discussion only lasted for about five minutes and was overshadowed by the other topics. I thought Mrs. Carter's staff had missed a golden opportunity not only to showcase Mrs. Carter, but also to have on the record her views on issues which were of great interest to the Indian audience.

Despite my comments about the Carter visit, I must say that I did not encounter in my tour many prejudices about women in foreign affairs. Of course, there are always individuals who for one reason or another have a closed mind on this question; they think women's minds are made of mush. There were some men I called on who were somewhat surprised by the visit of a woman FS officer. After the initial shock, they seemed to be able to figure out what to do with me. But in general, I did not notice much prejudice. In some respect, that reflects the nature of my contacts. Many were Indian women who were involved in interesting things. As a general statement, I would say that women professionals have to learn to compensate for some of these prejudices. I think it was somewhat easier for me to work in India than in Pakistan, partly because the Indians were accustomed to woman leadership — i.e. Mrs. Gandhi — but also because, in general, urban, sophisticated Indian society is open-minded on this issue. …

Washington, D.C.: director, State Department Office of Trade (1980-1984)

SCHAFFER: … I enjoyed my job as office director immensely. On occasions, there were long hours, but most of the time the workload was bearable. The hours were certainly shorter than those I had to spend in the regional bureau. I was promoted during my tour in EB [Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs] to an MC [minister counselor] — it was just at the time that the system was changed to the new designations. I should say that I did not find that I had any problems with the bureaucracy because I was a woman. There were a lot of women working in

the trade field, but there were not that many women at my rank in the Foreign Service. But I never felt any discrimination because of my sex. …

Ambassador A. Ellen Shippy

Guatemala City, Guatemala: general officer (1970-1972)

Q: Today is September 17, 2001. We ended up by saying that you found that all the women in your class were assigned to consular jobs when you came out. That is right, isn't it?

SHIPPY: That's right. I should clarify, though, all five of us with [the State Department] were indeed assigned to the consular cone. I don't know if the others were consulted first. I can only speak for myself. I believe the others stayed in the consular cones and had successful careers, so I can only speak for myself and my dissatisfaction and disgruntlement.

Q: I think, because these accounts are for people who may not understand the ins and outs … Could you explain why you were unhappy about sort of the women being coned consular, put in the consular specialty?

SHIPPY: Well, first I was upset because we had been told we would be consulted before a coning decision was made, and there was no consultation at all. Secondly I was upset because I tried to find out what was happening on the coning process, and I received no answer from anyone at the State Department. I learned that I had been coned only when the inspectors came down in the last part of my tour in Guatemala, and kind of said, "Oh yes, you are consular coned. Didn't anyone tell you?" I said, "No." That is how I learned about it, which was very unsatisfactory. Finally, I was doing consular work in Guatemala and I didn't like it at all. We were interviewing probably 90 percent of our nonimmigrant visa applicants — and there were lots of them — and refusing about 80 percent. These were people who were just trying to better their lives and provide for their families. They were good, hardworking people and they saw their way to get ahead was by going to the United States and working, which meant they were not eligible for nonimmigrant visas. But I found it very hard to tell these basically very good people “no” for hours every day. So I did not like consular work and didn't want to stay in it.

Q: Also, by this time you had been in the service for a couple of years. Did you see consular work as a way towards leadership positions in the Foreign Service?

SHIPPY: Not particularly. There was the impression that women were shunted aside into consular work. With some exceptions, even in consular work, men tended to be in the more senior jobs.

Women’s Class-Action Discrimination Suit (1975)

SHIPPY: Before we move on to other topics, let me talk about the women's class discrimination suit.

In 1975, a small group of women began meeting to discuss problems with the [State] Department. Marguerite Cooper-King and Mary Lee Garrison are two of the names I remember. John Andereg, an AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees, a union] representative, was part of the group. I don't remember who had the idea to start talking. I know I participated because of my unhappiness about the consular cone issue. After many sessions, we slowly came to accept the idea that it might take a suit against the department to effect change.

About the same time, Allison Palmer won her second suit against the department for sex discrimination. She gave some (or all, I don't remember) of her monetary award to our group to fund our efforts. We hooked up with a law firm which specialized in such suits, and the process began in 1976. We were arguing that there was systemic sexual discrimination in the department in many areas: the written test, conal designations, assignments, promotions, evaluations, awards, training. We were not using individual acts of discrimination, but saying that the system was flawed and discriminatory. We first brought a class-action grievance against the department. The department threw it out on the basis that a class-action grievance could not be brought; it had to be individual grievances. That went to court, which ruled that class-action grievances were permissible.

So back to the department, with our class-action grievance: The department threw it out that time on the basis that there were no grounds for the grievance, so back to court. The class was all female Foreign Service officers [FSOs], and some women who had not passed the Foreign Service written exam in specified years. Female FSOs who wanted to opt out of the suit were given the opportunity to do so. (I don't know how many did.) We had approached some senior female FSOs to ask them to join the suit in a prominent position, but none did. I certainly didn't hold that against them; they had more to lose than we did.

I left for Zanzibar while much of this preliminary work was going on, so I don't know the details. I do know that, while in Zanzibar, I received a department notice that announced the class-action suit, with a named plaintiff for each part, and my name was on one of the actions. (I can't remember which one, perhaps the one on evaluations.) That was a bit of a surprise!

The only negative reaction I ever heard about with respect to my participation was a comment made by someone in [the office of] personnel who, at a party a friend of mine was attending, said when my name was mentioned that "Oh, Ellen Shippy is one of the enemy." I never had any indication that retaliatory measures were taken against me. (They would have been illegal, of course.)

The court case dragged on and on. My impression was that the department took an excessive amount of time, whether deliberately or just the usual bureaucracy working I don't know, to respond to requests for discovery, for example. Our case was built on statistical evidence; for example, X number of women took the written exam, and Y number of men did. But a smaller percentage of the women passed than did the men, when both groups had basically the same background. Our lawyers gathered the statistical evidence which, admittedly, took a great deal of time to collect, and then said it was evidence of sexual discrimination. The department had to prove there was another reason for the discrepancies.

We eventually ran out of the money from Allison Palmer, so members of the class-action suit were asked to contribute something monthly to help pay the lawyers who were, as I understood it, charging only half of their usual pro bono fees.

The case continued to drag on without going to court. In the meantime, the department had made many changes that helped to improve the situation of women in the Department of State. For example, for a few years in the mid-1970s, one part of the annual Employment Evaluation Report (EER) was a page listing different characteristic. The rater was supposed to mark a certain number of the rated employee's stronger characteristics, and a smaller number of their weaker ones. The Bureau of Legal Affairs (L) did a study of how these were marked, and discovered that male FSOs were given strong marks in "judgment," "policy analysis," "objectivity," etc. Female FSOs were given strong marks in "organization," "neatness," etc. It was so blatant, albeit probably unconsciously so, that L not only said the department couldn't continue to use it, but, as I understand it, said the promotion boards were to disregard it for the years it had been part of the EER form. I was of the opinion that, even if we lost the suit, the situation in the department was better for women because we had brought it.

Finally, in the early 1990s (remember, the process had begun in 1976!), the case was heard in court. I, and other female FSOs, testified, but the case really depended on the statistics. Our lawyers had professional statisticians testify. We lost the case, and the department trumpeted its triumph in a cable to all posts.

Our lawyers, however, were confident that we would win on appeal. They were so convinced that they decided to not charge us for the work to bring the appeal; they felt they had pretty much gotten what they could from female FSOs. They brought the appeal, and we won! And our lawyers were awarded their fees from the department. (The department printed a small notice to this effect somewhere inconspicuous.)

Several more years went by as remedies were discussed and implemented. The law firm split, and there was a discussion about which lawyer our case should go with. African-American FSOs brought their own suit against the department (the Thomas suit), but I don't know the details of that.

I am proud of having been a part of this lawsuit from the beginning, and believe the department is a better institution for both men and women as a result of it.

Zanzibar: principal officer (1977-1979)

Q: How did you find … As a woman, was there any problem?

SHIPPY: No. I have always found that for the most part, if you are a diplomat and you act like you are a diplomat and expect to be treated as a diplomat, you are. The rules of society that pertain to women don't pertain to you because you are not a woman, you are a diplomat. You must also be culturally sensitive, of course, and, for example, not wear clothing that would offend local custom.

Elizabeth Ann Swift

Entering the Foreign Service (1963)

Q: How was the oral at the time?

SWIFT: Oh, it was hysterical. I went in having been told it would be a personality test. They just wanted to see if you were a nice person, and if they would like you. Wrong. They asked me all sorts of horrible questions about what was the gross national debt, which I could not tell you today, and certainly couldn't tell them at that point. All sorts of esoteric and wonderful questions, none of which I knew, and I did a terrible, terrible job on that first exam. At that point you had your exam with three people for maybe two or three hours, and then at the end they sort of said, "Thank you very much," and you went out, and the chairman called me back in and he said, "Miss Swift, we're very sorry to tell you that you haven't passed." And I knew it already so that didn't bother me. And he said, "But we really liked you." And I thought that was an odd comment, and "We'd really like to have you in the Foreign Service, so why don't you marry a Foreign Service officer, and you can become a part of the Foreign Service that way?" I was so angry, because I'd been brought up by my mother, my father having died when I was very young, and I had been brought up in girls' schools until I went off to Stanford and Radcliffe, had done very well at Radcliffe, and by that time Radcliffe was coed in everything but name with Harvard, and I'd always competed well with the guys. It never occurred to me that I was any different from any guy, and it never occurred to me that there would be something different about hiring a woman as to hiring a man.

I was so angry I walked out of the front door of the State Department and swore I would never, ever come back, and almost went into the Peace Corps but the Peace Corps wanted to send me to Tanzania, and I wanted to go to Thailand. So I got a job at the State Department in the Message Analysis and Dissemination Office of the telegraph branch.

Q: Just to catch a little of the flavor. You came in when?

SWIFT: '62. No, I get confused because my birthday is in December so I was 22 when I came in. I came into the State Department in '62, I came into the Foreign Service in '63, in May or June of '63.

Q: Was there still sort of a spirit of "get out there and do things" with the Kennedy administration?

SWIFT: Oh, yes. I was very much a Kennedy kid. That's why I wanted to do Peace Corps or something like that … very idealistic, all of us. And my class was one of the early classes where there were three women in it, and one black, which was sort of unheard of at the time. So we

were the early … I mean, there were a lot of women in the Foreign Service at that point. I mean a fair amount of women, but they were just starting a diversity program.

Q: I'm trying to catch both the political and social things. Again, I'm appalled having been on the board of examiners somebody saying that to you.

SWIFT: It really didn't bother me. I was young, I was a hard-charger, I was very idealistic, and I wanted to go out and serve my country and this seemed a very good way to do it. I guess I was mad at him. I was furious, but I really don't think at that point I thought much more deeply beyond that. It really didn't occur to me that if they let me into the Foreign Service finally that there would be any limitation on what I could do.

Q: Did you find any of that attitude when you came in? I'm talking about when you first came in.

SWIFT: Oh, sure, absolutely. It was always … being a woman in the Foreign Service, you were always told that unless a woman had been in the job before you, you were always told that a woman couldn't possibly do the job. That was standard. You were always being told you couldn't go various places, you couldn't do various things because you were a woman, and women just didn't do that sort of thing. I found usually that once I got into a job, that it would take two or three weeks or so, and then people would start treating me like I was a perfectly normal person rather than something different.

Q: I'm a slightly older generation than you, and we all went through this process where women came in, you'd sort of have the feeling, oh gosh, I don't know. But at a certain point, hell, it doesn't make any difference, it's the person. But there was a great learning process going on. Back, then, to your training: When you first came in, what was the attitude of your group of people who came in?

SWIFT: There really wasn't an attitude that I remember at all. I came in with a class of about twenty-three, and as I said, three of us were women. We were all just coming in together. Those were in the days when you had the limit of thirty-one as the age that you could come in. It must have been twenty-one to thirty-one. At any rate we were mostly young. There were one or two of us that were thirty, and those of us who were right out of college thought that the guys up there that were thirty were golly old and wise. But there was no feeling of anything unusual among ourselves. I don't think there were any preconceived ideas of how anybody would do anything.

Jakarta, Indonesia: political/economic officer (1968-1971)

Q: You did that from '66 until …

SWIFT: '66 to '68, at which point I had been trying to get back into Asian studies. Now, of course, there I was on the Benelux [Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg] desk, and Bob

Anderson, who was our country director … I was there just at the time they moved from the old WE, Western European big unit. They split everything up and went to these country directorships. The trivialization of the Foreign Service was just beginning. And Bob Anderson, who had been deputy in WE, which was a big group of countries, became country director for France and Benelux, which was a big and important unit. Since I was in the European bureau, I could probably have gone off to France or any place else but all I wanted to do was get back to East Asia. I was looking at going into Japanese language training, and actually got myself into the Japanese language training program — and then discovered that the role of women in Japan was minimal and that trying to be an officer in Japan was going to be real tricky. So I decided I would pull myself back out of the Japanese language, which was probably a wrong decision, but I guess I don't know very many Japanese experts that are women. There still don't seem to be really … anyway, I went and learned Indonesian, and went off to Indonesia and again, this is a period when you had very little to do with your assignments. You could wangle your area of the world if you were lucky. You could run around and look and see if there was … what I did was I got myself into language training, and then they were going to take me from language training and put me into some spot in Indonesia. They could put me anywhere.

My first assignment was to go to Surabaya as economic and consular officer in a dual-hatted [post]. Now mind you, I knew very little about economics, but had been a consular officer in the Philippines. I thought, "Good, okay." Off I go to Surabaya. But the consul in Surabaya was a political officer, a Foreign Service officer who was in charge of the consulate. He wrote a letter back to [the office of] personnel which I plainly was not supposed to see, that said while he had nothing against women in general, nor women Foreign Service officers in particular — and then he went on for three pages why a woman could not possibly work in Surabaya. And [the office of] personnel, being craven, decided the way they would cure this slight problem was to send me up to Jakarta and put me first in the econ section, and then transfer me up to the political section, maybe.

My lower-ranking personnel officer was a woman, and she was absolutely furious about this. She was just furious, and this was not going to take place. This was disgraceful, etc. And I sort of said to her, "Don't fuss too much. I'd much rather go to Jakarta than go to Surabaya." In the end I ended up going to Jakarta, and ended up in the political section in Jakarta.

…

Q: This is one of these things if somebody slipped in and then once...

SWIFT: … if you got a foothold, you were okay. In the Philippines they had always had a tradition of having … they had had several women go through there, and in the Philippine society women play a major role, so there was no real question but that a woman could work in the Philippines, and the question never really arose. When I went to Indonesia you've got a Muslim country and the question immediately arose with the consul in Surabaya, and then they said it’s alright, we'll send her up to Jakarta and she can go up to the political section eventually

because Mary Vance was up there and women have a big role in Indonesia, and she can handle women's affairs. My idea of women's affairs was not theirs. I thought I would handle something to do with regular political organizations, and if women had a part in it that was all good and fine. At any rate, when I went up to the political section I was in charge of women's affairs. I ended up being in charge of communists, which, of course, had pretty well been knocked out by that point and the Chinese. I was assigned the students later. I also was assigned the government party, which was just starting to get going, because it was viewed as unimportant and something that a woman could do. However, the government party became very, very important. So all of a sudden I ended up handling what was really the most important piece of this action. And when I left, a friend, Harriet Isom (who was also a woman), came to take my place, and I had been told I could not do the Muslim parties. There was no way I could do the Muslim parties because the Muslims wouldn't talk to me; I was a woman, and they wouldn't talk to me. Well, that's nonsense, it's absolutely crazy. So when Harriet took my place, guess what happened? She was given the Muslim parties, and somebody else took Golkar, which was the government party very important at that point, so it got whiffled off immediately, and Harriet ended up with the Muslims. The funniest thing I ever did see.

Washington, D.C.: cultural affairs, Philippine desk officer, congressional relations (1972-1979)

Q: You just hated to come back.

SWIFT: No, I was a very unusual type of person because my career, until I got into consular, was spent basically in Washington with some postings out. And from '71 onward I was back in the United States until '79. Not because I didn't want to get out, but because as I was a woman, it was one heck of a lot easier for me to get really good jobs in Washington, where I knew everybody, than to get myself assigned out to a really good job in an embassy abroad. I kept getting offered better and better jobs in Washington and was not being offered comparable jobs abroad. So I took the Washington road. It was fun; I loved it. But a lot of people didn't like it. …

Tehran, Iran: political officer (1979-1981)

Q: In 1979 you got a real plum assignment. Would you describe how this came about?

SWIFT: By mistake, basically. I was up on [Capitol] Hill and I needed an assignment. This time I really did need an assignment abroad. I had been three tours back in the United States, and one up on the Hill. I'd been '71 to '79 and I really wanted out. Also, my entire career had been in East Asia except for that one period on the Benelux desk. So I really wanted a job outside of the East Asian Bureau, which was a mistake because I could have gotten pretty good jobs in East Asia. But trying to go to another bureau was real difficult. I mean difficult for two reasons: one, because I was an unknown quantity for them; and two, I was a woman. So this was the period in my life where I really hit up against being a woman. Being a junior officer woman is no big problem, but as you come up through the ranks and get to the point that you are now qualified for

higher-ranking jobs, then it got tricky. I was working in the mainline bureaus, rather than AF [Bureau of African Affairs]. AF was just a wonderful place for women because they took women and did all sorts of wonderful things with them. But the EUR bureau [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs] and the NEA bureau [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] were not as good. My own bureau, EA [Bureau of East Asian Affairs], would have been quite easy to deal with. Trying to get out and go someplace else was real hard, and I wanted to go as consul general to Palermo. I thought that would be good fun, just because it happened to be coming up and it was ready to go. And I was told in no uncertain terms that no way were they going to put a woman down there. Now, I did not realize that a woman had been down there about ten years before. But naturally when a woman gets out of the job, then of course a woman can't do it anymore because you're dealing with all these terrible male-chauvinist Sicilians and they won't have anything to do with a woman. It was nonsensical.

What would have been a much better argument was that the job was one grade above my present grade, and I spoke no Italian.

Q: Also because the Italian hands tend to be Italian. They've been back again and again.

SWIFT: Oh, yes. But my competition wasn't coming from anybody who was an Italian hand, actually. It was coming from all sorts of other people. There would have been a perfectly good reason. There were all sorts of reasons for me not to get that job. I saw them perfectly well. But one of the main reasons given me was that I was a woman, and they didn't want no woman down there. And I also looked at a Pol/Mil [political/military] job in Korea. Phil Habib roared with laughter. He said, "Ann, you're just not going to be allowed in any of those ginseng parties."

Q: You didn't miss a thing.

SWIFT: I could have gone to Korea. I would have pushed, and they would have given in. But I really was trying to get out of East Asia. So the jobs that I was being offered were just not really wonderful. And along came one of my good friends in [the office of] personnel, and said, "Oh, how would you like to go as deputy in the political section in Tehran?" And at the point they came along I was getting a little desperate. One of the problems was it was off-cycle. It was January and they hadn't assigned me up until the end of January.

Q: Normally the summer period is the assignment cycle.

SWIFT: So I was off-cycle anyway, so it was a little bit difficult. [U.S. Representative Dante] Fascell was glad to have me up there as long as I wanted to be up on the Hill. I really did not want to use Fascell … I mean, obviously I had a great deal of potential influence that I could have used to get an assignment, but I didn't want to use it — which is just my stupid pride. So I had not been telling Fascell and his guys how much trouble I was having. It was a certain amount of loyalty to the State Department. So when this thing with Tehran came up I thought it was kind

of fun. The shah had been kicked out, the place was in chaos, but it looked like it was going in an interesting and reasonable direction.

Q: There's nothing a Foreign Service officer likes better than chaos.

SWIFT: Well, that's true, and it was a good job in a big world area. And I thought it would be a real winner. So I said, "Sure, I'll do it." This is [the office of] personnel coming to me and saying, "Would you like to go?" At which point, I said, "Sure, okay, I'll do it." At which point the entire system, the old-boy network, leaped on me and said, "No way. Put a woman in the number two slot in the political section in Iran at such a time? Nonsense. It will not happen." So I said, "Now wait a minute, guys. You came to me wanting me to go to Iran. This is not some place that it's real easy to get people to go to. You all came to me. Now, if you want to say to me that a woman cannot do the job because you've got a whole bunch of Muslim fanatics that I won't be able to communicate with, fine. The fanatics were not that fanatical at that moment. If you think that there's a good concrete reason that a woman can't do the job, tell me. I am no radical and I'll let this go." Well, no, they didn't want to do that, and Vic Tomseth, who was there as political counselor, looked at it very seriously, and called me and said, "No, Ann, I don't think it's a problem. I think you can do it." Bill Sullivan, who was still out there at the time, I ran into in the corridor and he just laughed at me. He said, "Ann, it's not that you can't do the job; it's why would you ever want to come?" So I was getting different readings.

The DAS [deputy assistant secretary] for the area was a woman, and she took up my cause and pushed it through the NEA bureau.

Q: With friends like that …

SWIFT: Yes. So I got assigned. I started off into language training and right about that time the political counselor position in Kuala Lumpur came open, and Bob Fritz was looking for somebody to go. It was just the right rank, right everything. And Bob said, "Why don't you go?" Well, I was too proud. I should have backed out of Iranian language training at that point and stop causing the system such trouble and gone to KL, but I didn't. It was one of the stupidest decisions I ever made.

The next thing that happened was that the system got this wonderful idea, Henry Precht got this wonderful idea, and they found another officer. They were trying to build up the section and they found another officer, but he was one grade above me. And they were going to put him in the political section. You know, if they're going to put him in the political section … he was also a grade above the political counselor. He was going to have to swallow his pride and work under the political counselor, Vic Tomseth, but it was going to be too much for him to swallow his pride and work under me too. And therefore, rather than me being deputy in the political section, I was going to be like number three, but it was a wonderful job anyway. And that was when I lost

my temper, and said … this was Henry called me in and tried to talk …

Q: Henry Precht was the desk officer.

SWIFT: Was the country director, and Henry tried to talk me into it, and I just got madder and madder. He was telling me what a wonderful job, and wonderful opportunity it was, and I got madder and madder. He called me at night, and by the next morning I was so angry you just would not believe it. At that point, I called Ben Read, who was the head of management, whom I knew, and I had not talked to before. And I said, "Ben, I'm really sorry to bother you, this is absurd, but …" And I put the whole thing in front of him, and I said, "Look, this is Tehran. I am not nuts; there's no particular reason for me to go to Tehran. I'm happy to back out of it, but I will not go as number three in the political section. I will not have this done to me. So all I'm asking you is either send me to the job to which I was assigned, or pull me out — but protect me." You know how the system is, you pull out of the job … if I would have pulled out they would have just creamed me. And Ben called me back later that day or the next day, and said, "Oh, don't worry about it, Ann. It's all fixed." And off I went as number two.

Q: As number two.

SWIFT: … as number two. So I got out there and I was only there two months before the embassy got taken.

Nadia Tongour

Taking the Foreign Service Exam (1968 and 1980)

Q: By the way, at any of this time had the Foreign Service ever crossed your radar?

TONGOUR: Yes it did. I failed to mention that when I was a senior I had also applied for a Fulbright grant to spend a year in Finland and had taken the Foreign Service exam. I was twenty years old; I was young. I took the written exam and passed it and then took the oral. This was 1968. I'm stressed this because the tests have changed many times since then, as have attitudes towards hiring different categories of applicants. In that particular year, and perhaps for many years thereafter, the attitude toward hiring women for the Foreign Service was not, I would say, overwhelmingly favorable or enlightened … Or let me rephrase this. There had long been a few women in the Foreign Service, but they were the exceptions and they were exceptional. When I took the oral exam, it seemed that every third question dealt with my social life. They never would ask such questions today but in that era they would, for example, inquire, "Miss Tongour, what would you do if you married? And do you have a serious boyfriend? And have you thought of the implications for your family life were you to join the Foreign Service?" After several such questions, I probably shot myself in the foot by saying, "I guess if I were absolutely desperate I

would marry a Foreign Service officer." I did not like the tenor of the questions and wasn't very diplomatic in my response. I mention this only to give a flavor of how things have changed.

Q: But also to give a flavor, too, to the attitude at the time. One was, if a woman married she left the Foreign Service.

TONGOUR: That is right.

Q: This was actually not complete written in steel but it was accepted.

TONGOUR: Well, I actually knew of several cases, including the wife of a boss of mine who had had to leave the service once she got married. Years later she was allowed to return.

Q: Yes. But also so, I mean, if you approved a woman you were basically saying yes, she might be here for awhile and then leave. And there has always been a higher attrition rate but in those days it was very high, so in a way you were almost looking at somebody and saying "will she get married," you know.

TONGOUR: That's right.

Q: I served on a panel but we have gone beyond that, but this is in the mid '70s, but still, I mean, you could not get it out of your mind because you said, "Gosh, she is a very attractive woman, but will she get married?"

TONGOUR: And so ten years later — and this is a good segue — after I finished college, attended graduate school, and taught for a few years, I took the Foreign Service exam again. This time I passed and without any such questions; if I recall correctly, the panel focused on the Horn of Africa instead. Interestingly enough, after telling me I passed, the examiners did ask why I had waited so long to take the test a second time (in that period the examiners told you the results the same day). I explained what I had been doing during the interval but also allowed as how the attitudes toward admitting women and the questions asked of them were quite different. To their credit, the examiners interviewing me acknowledged that this was the case.

Q: Yes, I would say around '74 is about when things really switched.

TONGOUR: I understand that women were discussed on their husband's evaluation form at least until 1972. In any event, I did consider the Foreign Service but put it aside for a few years.

Entering the Foreign Service (1980)

Q: How about mix, male, female, women, minorities [in your A-100 class]?

TONGOUR: I think yes, here is an issue. We have come a long way. But still, within that A-100 class the majority were male, white male, but maybe not as many "to the manor born" as had been the case in earlier generations. There was a smattering of males who were non-white, at least one Hispanic and one from a Chinese background. There were a good number of women

compared to years past gone by, but what was noteworthy about the women was that overwhelmingly they were assigned to the consular cone. I happened to have been assigned to the political cone and that was considered highly unusual for a woman then. In fact, later on there was a class-action suit involving some women from my class who believed they had had the same background as many of the men and yet — we had no choice then — were consigned to the consular cone. So that was probably one fundamental difference from today.

Q: Well, tell me, I am trying to pick up an attitude. When you were there, could you … were you picking up an attitude, both in general and, more specifically, the Foreign Service, about where women were going? I mean, this was 1980, you know, things were really changing. How did you feel about that?

TONGOUR: It did not occur to me. Having done much of what I wanted to do as a woman up to this point, I was not as conscious of the women's issue in the Foreign Service as I would become a very short time later. I did not know, for example, of the tradition of including (until 1972) wives in their husbands' performance evaluation, nor did I know that women officers had been expected to resign if they got married. That had changed by 1980, but "different" attitudes were still apparent. And here are some examples.

One centered on concern over protocol. I remember in the A-100 class a protocol officer spoke to us about how protocol had evolved for women and how previously wives were expected to call on different women in other missions. There was a whole ritual associated with turning down the corners of their calling cards to indicate that they had visited. I vividly recall giggling at this description and finding it slightly off-putting. Later when talking to a friend who had been raised in the system about the presentation, she was appalled that I — along with other colleagues — had not found the protocol discussion terribly edifying and had even laughed about the calling cards. For me, this was a different world. …

…

Q: You know, something I did not ask you before: As I have been doing these oral histories, I started with people actually coming in in the ‘20s but basically after World War II, and I happen to be straddling and I consider probably the most significant social movement that involves slightly over 50 percent of our population, and that is the role of women. During your time at the universities, how did women's [liberation] hit you? Let us take it up to the time you got in the Foreign Service.

TONGOUR: Let me say that while I answered honestly before, I undoubtedly omitted some important points that I may have not thought about in years, namely that while on one level we were certainly treated as equals — admitted to graduate programs and professional activities — on another level the faculty I studied under came from a different era and cultural milieu. Specifically, a number of my professors were from Eastern or Central Europe. They could be quite charming, but they essentially saw "the ladies” as one of two types of women. Either we were to be figuratively patted on the head and expected to serve spaghetti at the student get-togethers, or, without using pejorative terms, we were effectively “neutered.”

Q: Almost asexual.

TONGOUR: Asexual is right, or "honorary" men, much as some women diplomats are treated in parts of the Middle East. For the most part, it was only gently patronizing with women students treated as charming additions to the group. They did not deny our intelligence but, not unlike an earlier Foreign Service attitude, they assumed we probably would not last and would give up our careers for family or other reasons. And so there was not quite the same emphasis on ensuring we got the same breaks. On a certain level we did fall into the “spaghetti-making category.” By the same token, there was a bit of resentment for the attitudes associated with it. We were becoming increasingly more aware, conscious if you will, of the women's movement, and it made a difference in our lives. My own circle of friends were drawn to an Australian writer named Germaine Greer, who spoke at Stanford while we were there. I remember that she was beautifully dressed and very well put together, which prompted one of the more militant women in the audience to question why she wore makeup or fancy clothes. And she replied, “I do it for myself.” She didn't deny that she was influenced by her environment but noted she would not feel better about herself had she been slovenly. My friends and I were more or less of that ilk. We were trying to push the envelope and be more independent but by the same token, we carried our baggage from the past as well.

…

Q: Well anyway, what was your impression of how women were treated at this particular point in time?

TONGOUR: I think much better than they had been ten years earlier when I took the exam, and the department had come some distance already by then. There were certainly fewer, if any, questions that could be regarded as gender-based. But, as I mentioned, there were still too many cases of "reticent" females in the group negotiation exercise. Many still tended to appear more comfortable when asked to talk about cultural or political development than when in the fray.

Q: I have interviewed people who said that at one point … this goes way back, but they were interviewed, when they were told no, they did not pass but they hoped that maybe she could marry a nice Foreign Service officer because she would make a wonderful Foreign Service wife.

TONGOUR: I think I mentioned that when I took the exam first right out of college I certainly experienced this attitude, but by the time I entered, the situation had changed. Still, some of the security guys who did the background check on me seemed more resistant to the changing times. One security officer interviewed a longstanding boyfriend of mine and according to him was asked why he didn't marry me and save me from “this life.” It seems the security officer still believed it would be better for me to stay home. And he was not alone in this regard.

Washington, D.C.: State Department Soviet desk officer (1991-1993)

TONGOUR: Well, I also became a single mother as a result during this period in connection with a long-term relationship in Barbados. Just before returning to a fairly high-powered position on the Soviet desk, I found myself pregnant and decided to have the baby. Obviously, that's a

much longer story, but this is not the place for it.

Q: Let me just ask the question about this because we are doing the social thing. Being a single mother, you know, in a certain period this would just have been a no-no.

TONGOUR: Absolutely.

Q: Sort of what were the calculations and how did this … did this cause any problems or not?

TONGOUR: Are you talking about in my life as a whole, or …

Q: I am talking the Foreign Service issue.

TONGOUR: Okay. Actually, I can make this a broader discussion inasmuch as timing may have made all the difference in the world — my own timing and the times we were in for the Foreign Service. Had I been twenty-two, perhaps the sky would have fallen. Who knows how the parents or my immediate world might have reacted. At this point in my life …

Q: How old were you?

TONGOUR: I was already in my forties, and parental disapproval was no longer an issue. In fact, my parents were quite happy to have a grandchild. Moreover, I was personally and financially self-sufficient. From the Foreign Service standpoint, I was very fortunate to wind up back in the proverbial "womb" of the Soviet desk. When you earlier asked about being part of a particular community at [the State Department], I had already had one tour on the Soviet desk, worked in Eastern European affairs, and these were, you might say, my people, and I felt as though I were going home again when I worked on the Soviet desk the second time. I hadn't announced my pregnancy before starting the job, but that was not a problem. I took three months off after my son was born and then returned to work. I was fortunate in being able to afford a nanny, and, therefore could return to work fulltime and carry my weight. Plus, my office was very welcoming to this new addition; except for an occasional bout of baby sickness, my child did not impinge on my work. You are absolutely right, though — a decade earlier and it might have been a real problem. I'm sure it would have been. Now, single motherhood seems to be quite common among women Foreign Service officers, with some adopting and others having their own babies. That said, there is no question that in a broader sense, raising a child on one's own does impact on a career, and I know it did in my case.

For me, the main career problem or obstacle associated with single motherhood centered on assignment choices. I know that from that point on, each time I had to bid or make choices about where to go, I made decisions that I might not have made had I been childless. The system did not make it difficult for me; I basically made my own choices. Here is a perfect example: working on the Soviet desk, I sometimes worked long hours, but I was in Washington. Having worked on issues related to Moldova and Georgia, it would have been very logical and a real option to follow my desk job in SOV [Soviet affairs] with a tour in either Moldova or Georgia as political counselor. It was certainly a viable option. But when you have a one- or two-year-old child, do you want to take him to new posts such as Tbilisi or Chisinau? The latter, in particular,

would have been a rough posting at that point, with our staff still living in hotels. Ultimately, I decided against these options and picking more “family-friendly” postings, where the workload would be more or less normal, rather than perhaps seeking the “prize,” if you will, or more demanding, “serious” assignments in Moscow or other areas of the former Soviet Union. And as you know, there is a price to be paid for "lifestyle" tours.

Changing Role of Women in the Foreign Service

Q: Okay. Well, sort of a big question: Just looking at your career and we are still, I think, sort of a revolution is almost over now as far as women in the Foreign Service, but you were doing … There during the revolution when women were being brought in, what are your impressions of what happened to you and how things have changed?

TONGOUR: I think the fact that this is a nonissue in most respects now is probably the biggest change of all. Historically in most professions there has always been the exceptional, brilliant woman who was able to get into the field and get ahead. We all know about the women prime ministers and the occasional assistant secretary — or more recently actual secretaries — at [the State Department]. What matters more, I think, is when an organization reaches the point of allowing women to be as "mediocre" or middling as their average male counterpart. That, in a sense, is when you have real progress. That fact that today at [the State Department] there are women at all levels and of all calibers — just as there are men — is a real sign of change. I think on the whole the progress, while slow in coming, has been real, and given the starting point, impressive.

Q: Well, for you, did you feel that when you came in things were of one state and that things were changing as you moved up the career ladder?

TONGOUR: Absolutely. And I think that the State Department deserves to be commended on that score. Whether it did so voluntarily or was pulled into changing is irrelevant at this juncture because in terms of women, minorities, and the disabled, major strides have been made. I know we've talked about how it used to be, before I entered the service, when women officers had to leave if they got married. Even beyond that, for quite some time there were other more subtle forms of discrimination with regard to career development, specifically in terms of “conal designation.” I happened to have been one of the so-called "fortunate" ones in having started out as a "political cone" officer, but that was rare then. When I entered, there was a four-cone system, which has evolved substantially over time. Then, entering officers were simply assigned a cone, and traditionally women were assigned to the consular or possibly the administrative cone. It was much more unusual for a woman to be assigned to the political cone, because that was the cone for future ambassadors or those expected to rise quickly within the system. In those days, people actually referred to political and economic as the substantive cones. So one of the biggest changes over the years — and linked to some extent to a class-action law suit — is the distribution of women more evenly among all the cones. And women from various cones have in recent years risen to become ambassadors, deputy assistant secretaries, assistant secretaries, and so on.

Now, that said, the Foreign Service remains a tricky career on the personal front, in ways that has little to do with the official system but rather with the lifestyle choices of its members. Very recently a high-ranking Foreign Service officer and a former ambassador publicly berated the department for its policy on domestic partners. He himself was openly gay, and a major factor in his decision to retire when he did was the department's unwillingness to make accommodations for his domestic male partner. For women — especially for women with children, or for women officers with spouses or male officers married to professional women — the career comes with a number of specific problems associated with uprooting families every few years and transporting them to various parts of the world. While the State Department has done a fairly good job in minimizing the attendant disruptions, the problems are partly inherent in the profession itself as well as tied to conditions in other parts of the world. In other words, it is still a wonderful profession for a man who brings with him a wife, who may well be accomplished and capable in her own right but is not burning to have her own career. I recognize that this scenario may come with other problems, and everyone faces certain difficulties in adjustment. Nevertheless, the configuration of officer, spouse, and a couple of kids still may be the optimum configuration for the type of life we live in the service. How to make the system more user-friendly for other types of individuals and families and those seeking to balance the tradeoff between personal and professional development is still one of the toughest nuts to crack in our profession.

Q: And that is getting more and more difficult.

TONGOUR: Possibly so.

Helen Weinland

Washington, D.C.: receiving first Foreign Service assignment (1974)

WEINLAND: And then I took two weeks of consular training. Then my first assignment, I had a kind of funny, well, had an interesting experience. I went in for the second meeting with the CDO [career development officer] and he said, "Well, nothing is open in Europe. You have the choice of three constituent post consulates in Southeast Asia and East Asia: Udorn, Thailand," where of course at that point, during the Vietnam War, we still had an enormous air base, "Medan, Indonesia, and Cebu in the Philippines." I knew a couple of people who had been in Indonesia out in the Far East and so I asked them, "Which one of these would be the best bet?" and they said, "Oh, no question. Medan." So I told my CDO, "OK, what I want is Medan."

I went to panel and was refused. I was told later by somebody who had been on the panel, or he actually told somebody who told me, that the reason was that I was female and it was a predominately Muslim area and they did not want a woman, even as a vice consul, in Medan. Of course this was highly ironic because about ten years later, Harriet Isom was the consul general. So there I was, and then they said, "You can't go to any of those three." You know, I didn't even have the choice of going to Cebu. "You are going to go to Manila and be a consular officer in Manila. That job won't open up for a year so in the meantime, you are going to go to the Philippines desk."

I said, "I do not want to go as a consular officer to Manila. I am happy to go to the desk, but I will spend the next year trying to change my assignment." So I went to the Philippines desk, which was a fabulous experience for a new officer. …

Kigali, Rwanda: deputy chief of mission (1984-1986)

Q: Were you aware that this was a period of time when the Foreign Service was beginning to put a great deal of emphasis on getting women into positions of authority, particularly in DCM [deputy chief of mission] jobs and all or not?

WEINLAND: I do not believe the [State] Department at that time was very interested in that because there were only three female DCMs worldwide; there were more female ambassadors. The other two DCMs were April Glaspie and Arlene Render.

I went to see John Blane personally. I was back in the department the previous summer, when I was on leave, and was putting my bid list together and I learned he was in town and so I went down to talk to him. He, of course, was given a short list of people from whom to choose a DCM, and I was the one with whom he had had a personal encounter so he picked me.

He was a very good person on women's issues. He was married to a woman named Diane Blane. They had met when they were both in Cameroon, and she was with USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] and he was on the State [Department] side, and they met and married there. According to what the department did in those days, they told her that if she married, she would have to resign. John said to her, "Don't resign, make them throw you out." So she did not resign and eventually she got a letter separating her from the service. A few years after that, the department lost that lawsuit and they had to allow married women to serve in the Foreign Service, and Deedee was reinstated almost without any to-do because she had never resigned. She was, by the way, one of the Mount Holyoke political science department people, so she came in from being at Mount Holyoke.

Washington, D.C.: Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Office of United Nations Political Affairs (1986)

Q: Some people have said that [Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Alan] Keyes had a tendency to bring the whole staff together and give long lectures to people who knew far more of the subject than he did. It was a distraction and there was a pretty high giggle quotient through portions of it. Did you find this?

WEINLAND: At the desk officer level, he decided when he came, not too long after his arrival, that he wanted to have brown bag lunches with us so that we could brainstorm and he could pick our brains or something. When our day at IO/UNP [Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Office of United Nations Political Affairs], came, all of us trooped over to his conference room and we pulled out our brown bags and he told us all about his philosophy and everything for about ten minutes and then he said he would be happy to answer any questions we had.

Somebody actually had a question and brought it up, and he then talked for the next hour. We listened, nobody interrupted him, and then he looked at his watch and said, "Well, I guess we better all get back to work. Thank you so much for coming. This has been very useful. I have learned a lot." I looked at the guy next to me and I said, "Well, he did all the talking. No wonder he thinks he learned something." We all filed out.

Now a different side of that whole dynamic was at another point we were all summoned by the deputy assistant secretary working for him.

Q: This was the guy listening in?

WEINLAND: No, the guy listening in was the acting office director.

The deputy assistant secretary was an ambitious man who wanted to get an ambassadorship out of it. He called us all together and essentially the purpose of that meeting was to say to us something along the lines of, "I know it's really hard to work for Alan Keyes and we all have these problems working for Alan Keyes, but you can come to me and we can work around it" or something like this. I was sitting there thinking, "I don't think it is exactly appropriate for a deputy assistant secretary to be saying this to desk officers about the person to whom he, theoretically, is reporting. It was not a bureau that was very functional in the sense of people having a lot of team spirit.

Q: So how long did you last there?

WEINLAND: I only lasted about, well, of course I arrived in February but I didn't really take hold until maybe late March or April and I probably left in early September. Well, it would have been the end of September.

I was the person who was supposed to arrange the secretary's trip to the UN and so I know I stayed through the time the General Assembly opened. Just to give you some flavor of it, the president was also going to the UN, and so there were various meetings over at the White House to plot out the president's trip to the UN. The ambitious deputy assistant secretary decided this was another way for him to get good visibility among people who might be able to do something for him in the future, so he accompanied me as my babysitter to all the White House meetings, which I didn't find very helpful or useful. Anyway, I had to put up with it because I had to put up with it.

He was one of these people who never read his in-box until something hit the newspapers. So you'd send him a memo and say that something's brewing; we should head it off at the pass, this is what I suggest we do, and he wouldn't see it until four days later. Elaine Sciolino, who was the *New York Times* correspondent at the UN at that point, would have it on the front page and you would say, "Well, my memo is in your in-box." We have all worked for people like this.

My real issues were with the DAS [deputy assistant secretary] rather than with Alan Keyes, except for that one final fight. I mean, I was low enough down the pecking order that I could just ignore Alan Keyes but I had to go through the deputy assistant secretary. He did something

toward the end that just made me furious. He schmoozed with the staff assistant to the deputy secretary about this whole UN General Assembly attendance, and promised the assistant that IO/UNP would make up a guest list for the deputy secretary to invite to a luncheon. About a week after the DAS and the staff assistant had their chat over lunch, I got a phone call from the staff person saying, "We are waiting to get the guest list for Mr. So-and-So's luncheon." I said, "What luncheon?" I had never been told that I had a job to assemble this guest list. Of course, it was my job, but no one had said to me, "I just had lunch with So-and-So. He wants a guest list of twelve people." You know, it was just the complete of lack of anybody being in charge of anything that was absolutely impossible.

I think that that DAS was trying to ingratiate himself with the seventh floor against Keyes because none of the top management wanted Keyes in the building. So he was trying to work around Keyes to get Keyes out. The trouble was he wasn't in real control of anything that was going on.

Q: What sort of career did this DAS have?

WEINLAND: I do not believe he was ever made an ambassador. I was one of four people to curtail out of that office within a year.

Q: Did you have problems getting out of there?

WEINLAND: Yes, I did.

Q: What did you do? How did you

WEINLAND: I went to my CDO.

Q: That's a career development officer.

WEINLAND: Right. He knew the personalities; he had worked for the guy who was the acting desk officer who was an absolute wipe out and he'd worked for the DAS. The CDO was a personal friend of mine; we were in the same Foreign Service class. He said, "We have to get you out of there and we have to do it before they are required to write you an OER [officer efficiency report], so it has to be fast."

So I wrote up a memo of all the things that I felt had not been done right and that were signs of bad management and concluded, "I can't work in this atmosphere for people who do not trust me to do my job."

Then I was sent to see somebody in the Office of the Director General (DG). I tend to be very emotional when I am talking about something that's either making me very angry or very happy, excited, or whatever. Of course, I was very teary during the interview, and I said, "I need to get out of there. Here's the memo, here's all the things that happened."

I had the feeling from the get-go the DG people wanted to use me to get at Keyes and not at the DAS, so they weren't all that impressed with my evidence against the DAS. The assistant director general with whom I met said to me that he would consider approving my curtailment if I would go and have a consult with the psychiatrist in the medical division. This is why I am cynical when people say to me that there is no such thing as discrimination against women in the State Department; I can assure you that no male officer would have been sent to the psychiatrist.

Q: I can assure you of that too.

WEINLAND: I was appalled, but it was clearly the only way I could win my point. I wasn't going to say to this ambassador-level man, "You're being a sexist and I'm going to grieve and I'm going to get AFSA [the American Foreign Service Association, the union in the State Department] after you." I mean, I couldn't, so I went to see the psychiatrist. The medical problem that I had had that had curtailed me out of Kigali was a serious problem with my liver, probably caused by the anti-malarial prophylaxis that we were advised to take. It had cirrhosed my liver. They diagnosed it first as hepatitis that had caused this. It's called toxic hepatitis.

So he said to me, "Oh, you know, you've had hepatitis. No wonder you are so emotional." I said, "That has nothing whatsoever to do with what I am talking about." "Oh, I can understand. I had hepatitis," and blah, blah, blah. Then he turned to me, and he said, "What do you really want out of this?" I said, "I want this person to be counseled on his management behavior, that he should stop shouting at people who don't do exactly what he wants and listen to them explain." That was another thing he did; if you hadn't done exactly what he told you to, he would shout at you before you said, "I could not do that because this was a better thing to do" or "I didn't have the right data and I had to wait until I did," or you know, whatever. He just looked at me and he just said, "Helen, you know that's not going to happen." He said, "I will approve your getting curtailed because I know you are still all emotionally screwed with the hepatitis. This will be totally confidential." That was the only basis on which I went to this guy.

So I went back to my office and was working and a day or two later the DAS came in and said, "Can we go down for a cup of coffee?" So we went down to the cafeteria and he said to me, "I had no idea that your health was as bad as it is." And I said, "And how do you know about my health?" I mean, obviously, the DG's office had told him what the shrink had reported and I said, "That has nothing whatsoever to do with you." "Well, isn't there anything we can do to keep you from leaving our office?" I said, "No. I'm sorry. I'm gone. I'm not interested in negotiating this anymore."

So I curtailed and I left. As I said, I was the first of four to do the same thing, so that is proof to me, even more proof that my hepatitis and my emotional behavior had nothing whatsoever to do with my inability to work there. The others were all men. They could see they weren't going to get anywhere working in that zoo so they got out as well.

Comments on Women in the Foreign Service

Q: Would you care to comment about the gender issue in the Foreign Service, your experiences? How did you see this? Because you were there during a developing period, sort of the overall picture. Would you like to talk about that a bit?

WEINLAND: We spoke a little yesterday about when I entered.

I entered the Foreign Service in 1974, which was a year or two after a major lawsuit against the Department of State brought by a woman named Allison Palmer. She had won her case. The basis of her complaint was that she had been discriminated against systematically in assignments, and, of course, assignments are what got you promoted so promotions, the size of her office, the duties that were given to her were all affected by the gender discrimination she suffered. It involved the whole range of things that had to do with her work environment.

So the Department of State had lost this lawsuit in '72 or '73, so presumably that should have changed things. Yesterday when I was being taped I said that when I was seeking my first assignment, I was offered the choice of three jobs for my first posting. This was when I was still in my introductory orientation. I chose one of them, to go as a consular officer to Medan, Indonesia, where we had a consulate. I was turned down by the panel. At that time, the "panel" was supposed to be a secret process, but I learned subsequently from someone who had been a member of the panel that the argument against my assignment had been that was I was a woman, it was a Muslim country, I could not be effective, even as a very junior officer, so I didn't get the job.

Not too long after that when I was looking for a job coming out of Zurich I remember that I went to see someone whom I knew in the support staff for the Secretary of State. He knew all the people who worked on the seventh floor [of the State Department], and there was an opening for a fairly junior staff assistant in the Office of the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. My friend, a male, called the person he knew and said, "Helen Weinland is in town and she would like to come around and talk to you about this job." The other man said, "Oh, we've had a woman in that job and we are really not interested in having another one."

So that is actually when I went to the Ops Center [or Operations Center, the State Department's crisis and communications management center] and so that was that.

Not too long after that I was stationed in an office where I was actually sexually harassed by a colleague, not one superior to me but one who was equal to me, and I complained about it on my officer efficiency report. I said this had affected my performance to some extent because it was very upsetting to have all these sexist jokes being made in my presence and being constantly quizzed about whom I was dating and where I went to pick up men and all this kind of stuff. I kept saying, "Cut this out," and it just kept on.

I actually was blamed for complaining in my officer evaluation report for having said that. I think it affected subsequent assignments.

Q: Yes, because these things hang on.

WEINLAND: And they get out in the corridors and when the promotion boards are meeting. You know, "I've heard she's hard to get along with."

At some point a new group formed to bring another class action suit against the Department of State, I think in the late '70s, early '80s. To my everlasting shame, I opted out of that class. I cannot tell you now why I did that. I had even taught women's studies when I was at Ohio State, and I should have known better. Anyway, I did opt out of it, but the class action was successful even without me! The department was ordered in the mid-‘80s, I think, to undertake remedial actions such as including women on promotion boards and in other ways that there would be an equal treatment of female employees. Of course, certain kinds of actions that were now illegal under federal law were also ruled out, so that you couldn't say to somebody, "You can't have this job because you are a woman."

The most egregious thing that happened, and egregious because it happened after this lawsuit was settled, was when I was again looking for reassignment in the summer of 1988. I wasn't due out until the summer of 1989, but during the summer of '88 I was going around talking to various people about jobs that were coming open. By this time I had quite a bit of experience in Africa, both in Washington and out in the field. The political counselor job was coming open in Nairobi, and I wrote to the ambassador in Nairobi, a woman, and I introduced myself, saying, “I've had this experience. I would like to bid on the political counselor job in Nairobi.”

She designated her deputy chief of mission to speak with me when he came to the department for consultation.

So I made a date with him and went up to the office where he was working. I went in, said, "Hi, I'm Helen Weinland," and sat down. The first thing he said to me was, "I hope you didn't write to Ambassador Constable about this job because you are a woman and you thought that would give you an inside track." I said, "I wrote to Ambassador Constable because I have a lot of experience in Africa and I think I would do a good job for you."

This gives you some idea of how the conversation proceeded because among other things he said, "All things being considered, we would really rather have a man in that job because there are already too many women in the embassy." I have never heard anyone complain about too many men in the embassy.

I don't react very quickly to these things. What I should have done was open the door and ask one of the secretaries sitting outside to come in and ask him to repeat what he had just said to me, but I didn't. I did go subsequently to both the deputy assistant secretary in the bureau, who was responsible for personnel issues and to a woman deputy assistant secretary, also in the Africa bureau. I told them what had been said to me. They were sympathetic but it was clear to me that they were going to do nothing to help me or to chastise him, although the personnel DAS [deputy assistant secretary] said to me, "George told me he said that to you and I was really surprised to hear that." The one thing I can say is that he failed to get a renewal of his contract the next year, so he was selected out. It could have been that those kinds of issues were fairly rampant. He did say those things to me.

I could have made a fuss about it except that the position was ranked a grade above my personal rank and I was not promoted in that cycle. Thus, I could not make a strong case to get the job. I was caught in that bind and wasn't really able to make an issue out of it. Fortunately so, since I went to Berlin in that assignment cycle and am glad I got that job at that time.

One final note: you know, they are always fooling around with the evaluation system because the department, in all its wisdom, never can quite come up with a system for evaluating people that corrects for the fact that most evaluations are inflated. You usually inflate what you are saying about anybody unless you really think he or she should not be promoted. Mostly, you like the people you are working with, you get along with them, you think they are smart, you think they should be promoted. So you try to write them as nice an evaluation as possible.

When I was in my last post in Kaduna, a cable came out from the department to all posts that said, "We are trying to think how to revise the evaluation system so that there is no disadvantage to women in the way the evaluations are written." It said, "For example, very often we see in evaluations of women officers that they are praised for being charming, for being pleasant and other kinds of soft virtues that are more usually ascribed to women, and they get fewer comments along the line that she is effective in putting her point forward, she drives for good results" — that is, all these aggressive sorts of things that are more often put into men's evaluations — “so we would like your comments on this whole problem, and here are some ideas we have."

They were talking about establishing a system in which people would be identified by number. At that time, you would write the evaluation and say, "Ms. Johnson is a very effective political officer, her writing is clear, succinct, she meets all her deadlines," you know, all these wonderful things. So with the proposed change, you were not going to say "Ms. Weinland" or "Ms. Johnson" or "Susan" or anything that would tip the promotion panel off that this was a woman. You wouldn't use the pronouns, "she" or "her." Instead, you would refer to this person as, say, "276." Everybody would be numbered and so you would say, "276 is an effective officer because 276 does this, that and the other." You couldn't use "his" or "her." Maybe they would permit you to say “their” and “they” as a neutral kind of pronoun construction.

There were a couple of other examples of what might be done and I thought, "This is the stupidest thing I ever saw." It is hard enough to write these things. When OER time comes around, I was the principal officer by this time, and so I was going to have to write about six of these things and the thought of saying "276 this and that" was just ridiculous.

Over my entire career I had seen many cases of male officers failing to be effective because they lacked charm, cultural awareness, an ability to work interculturally, an ability to be an effective host at representational events, all of these things that were considered female virtues. So my suggestion to the department, which I do not believe was ever even passed on to the next person, was that I thought men should be evaluated on the "female" virtues of collaboration, intercultural working effectiveness, being charming and gracious and so on and so forth. This is obviously not a set of virtues that is recognized by some in the Foreign Service.

You have to be watching all the time when you are talking to people. You have to be careful, for example, not to tell jokes or to be ironic about things because we are Americans. If an American employee made a joke to me, I would know the context it was coming from, but if he or she was in an Arab leader's office and was trying to get him to agree to do something, or explaining an American policy and made some sort of ironic, offhand remark, the Arab leader is not going to pick up on it. I have seen a lot of people do that in the Foreign Service. It builds a wall between you and the person you are talking to.

Q: I have heard people comment that William Rogers, as secretary of state, sometimes would be speaking with a leader, say from the Arab world or somewhere, and telling about his golf game. If nothing else, it was wasted time, but it also raises the question of why Rogers thought the leader would have the slightest interest in his golf game.

WEINLAND: Yes, but that's the way guys bond in the [United] States, that's a guy thing in the [United] States. It's perfectly acceptable within our culture.

Q: You can write an efficiency report by saying, "George is a very aggressive promoter of our cause," but if you say, "Helen is a very aggressive promoter of our cause," it's, "Oh, my God. She's one of those radical feminists." It's a real problem.

I don't know. I've been out of this game now for over twenty years, but as I am interviewing more and more women who have reached senior ranks my impression is that the Foreign Service is becoming more, I won't say feminized, but more neutralized or something, that perhaps these things are no longer as much an issue. I don't know.

WEINLAND: I don't know, either. I hope so. I think both sets of virtues are important. You do need to be aggressive. If you have been told by the Department of State to go in and talk with somebody and tell them why we want them to vote our way on some issue in the U.N. or support us some other way, you need to be direct and forceful. You need to be able to say we really are counting on you for this and it could have these kinds of effects down the line in our relationship.

On the other hand, you catch more flies with honey. I always felt a good slathering of honey was a useful thing to put on the bread.

Robin White

Entering the Foreign Service (1973)

Q: What was the group in you're A-100 basic officer course like?

WHITE: Our class was a large one for that time, about fifty people and quite a few women. One notable person was Eleanor Constable, who was coming back into the service after being forced to resign when she got married. That archaic rule had just changed and she was one of the first to come back. It was a very congenial group and some people remain good friends thirty-some

years later. I think the A-100 process is a terrific thing because it leads to bonding that continues throughout one's career.

Q: I don't want to dwell on the gender issue, but you were there at an interesting time. Did you have the feeling that the Foreign Service was learning how to accept women in the full role and not have all the qualifications that they used to?

WHITE: As far as I could tell, none of the women who came in about the time I did had a sense of constraint or limits. We assumed that we were professionals and that we were going to do well and be treated properly. It was a healthy way to start, but I can't, of course, speak to how all those careers developed. Several women became ambassadors; in fact, the first person to make ambassador was Maryann Casey, who was ambassador in Algeria.

Washington, D.C.: State Department Board of Examiners, personnel bureau (1991-1994)

Q: Was there any particular push to get more women in?

WHITE: It was pretty much an even playing field. There was no sense that we needed to put a thumb on the scales or give anything extra to women candidates. In the oral exam, the pass rates were proportional to the male/female ratio of candidates. Where that issue was controversial was in the written test, and that is one reason I stayed on an extra year.

In my final year and a half I spent a lot of time going over the questions with the people who produced the written test in Princeton. We were responding to a class-action lawsuit that had indicated that there was a failure rate for the written test considerably higher for women than men. The question was whether certain questions were biased. On several occasions we got sample questions from Princeton and I called together a group of junior Foreign Service officers. I gave the test to them and then we looked at questions where there was a dramatic difference between the men who got it right and the women who got it right. I don't remember details, but we emailed those who took the test to ask why they thought there was such discrepancy. We deleted those questions whether or not we could figure out why it happened. My sense at the time was that it was simply that the male students were taking courses that tended to be a more in the political science and economic field, whereas the women candidates were more language and humanities majors.

I had joined one of the lawsuits, not because I'd ever had problems myself, but I was so struck by the disparity in statistics on promotion and assignments. I was deposed by the lawyer at one point. She took a test from a recent [exam] and went through question by question, finding examples that in themselves didn't seem important, like what is the capital of Burundi. She would ask if that was something you really need to know to be in the Foreign Service. I answered that such specific knowledge wasn't needed, but the range of questions together indicated a breath of knowledge that is relevant. We went through forty questions, with her asking the same thing and me giving the same answer. At any rate, we did work very hard to try to get a fair test.

Q: By the time you were there, you felt that you were getting a good representation of women then.

WHITE: My sense was, yes, that it was pretty well-balanced, perhaps 30-40 percent women entering. We seldom had days with just male candidates. One time the group was all women and they all wore navy blue suits, which was kind of amusing. When I did the introduction, I joked that they had heard about the uniform.

Getting back to the question of background and preparation, I was often asked by students what they should do to prepare. I gave my own view, which was that political science was not necessarily the best discipline because it could be more theory than reality. I recommended history, government, constitutional law, and economics. I also said they should read the *New York Times* and strongly recommended *The Economist*.

The other thing I recommended was that people shouldn't necessarily be professional students. I suggested that after undergraduate work they should take a year or two off and go teach English in Japan or Spain and maybe go on for a master’s, but said people shouldn't spend time just in one school after another. Work experience really improved chances of passing the test.