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MARILYN HOLMES

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Monday, May 11, 1998. I am interviewing Marilyn Holmes for the third time at her home in Washington, DC. This is essentially a re-recording of Marilyn's first interview, much of which was destroyed by static caused by electronic equipment in her office building. Interview 2 was an informal conversation for text for the introduction to Married To The Foreign Service.

Tell me again what was your first post in the Foreign Service as a child.

HOLMES: My first post in the Foreign Service as a child was Paris, France. I was actually born there.

Q: So you were born in Paris. How nice! And went back to Paris later on!

HOLMES: I was born in Paris. My father was at the time working for Studebaker, but at the outbreak of the war in 1939 he joined the government in eventually what was to become the OSS. Because he had an assignment in Spain to try to deal with the Spaniards in limiting the advance of the Nazis if they got through France, he decided that ... he had a mission in Spain, had to leave us -- this was early 1940 -- and thought that he had better move us to Vernon, which was a city eighty kilometers west of Paris, the idea being that if the Germans came, they would come directly to Paris and we would have an eighty kilometer jump on them. He left us enough gas to get down to Biarritz, which is in the southern part of France and where we should meet him, and we were to join up with Ben Reese, the then consul general in Biarritz. With that he cheerfully went off and left us.

And I do remember going to school with a gas mask, and I remember the French soldiers running around in their uniforms with their puttees on their legs. It was a retake of 1918. It was absolutely extraordinary. Here we are in 1940.

Anyway, unfortunately, the Germans didn't think the way my father thought. For some bizarre reason they decided to loop around after they'd come through the boundary, and they decided to march into Paris coming from the west, coming through Vernon, which is where we were located.

I'd like to do a parenthesis here. When we first moved to Vernon before my father took off, we rented a house. And, of course, everybody was thinking the same way: they wanted to have a little time to get out of the way if the Germans came. So it was very crowded already. He found this idyllic little house, a charming little house sitting on a little hill. So he located us there. And during that first air raid we all went running for the air raid shelters, which we never did again because it was an experience beyond belief. People crowded and crying. It was just perfectly dreadful.

Anyway, we were sitting in this air raid shelter and pretty soon people started talking and they said, "Well, are you new here?" "Yes, we're new here." And somebody said, "Well, where do you live?" "Oh, well, we have this darling little house," said my mother, "on this hill." Dead silence. And we thought, "Oh, dear, what's going on here?" And finally this lady said, "Do you realize where you are?" And mother said, "No, we don't, but it's a very sweet little house." She said, "Yes, that's the munitions dump. You're sitting on top of it. That's why it was empty."

Anyway, that was the precursor before my father left us to the advancing German army which is looping back in through Vernon. It gave us a four hours' start on that, and my

mother took a mattress, strapped it to the car, took her four jerry cans of gasoline which preciously she had hoarded, put a yellow oil slicker on top of the mattress. Being a French lady she didn't want to have her mattress spoiled by the rain. We got to the gas station. The most horrendous part of the war for me, I think, was leaving my dog. That really was the one thing I remember more than anything else. We got to the gas station to fill up the car with oil and make sure everything was functioning, and the man said, "Do you realize you're a direct target with this yellow oilcloth? Anybody can drop bombs on you. You're a wandering bullseye!" [laughter] So we took off the oil slicker, Mother thinking, "Oh, my God, I'm going to ruin this mattress!"

We then joined something which was extraordinary, which was, as you know, called "the exodus." And the exodus was all the people from Paris and parts of Normandy and parts of Brittany with the advance of the Germans who were fleeing south in the hopes of being able to avoid the war. Eventually, as you know, the Vichy government was set up; there was a zone of no fighting; and Petain took over and so forth.

It took us three and one half weeks to go from Vernon to Biarritz. That's about less than 500 miles. You can imagine. We were crawling. Every ten minutes the Messerschmitts would come over and just machine gun everything that they could. And everybody would dive out of their cars, and we'd all jump in the ditches. And it was really unbelievably ghastly.

Q: Now, this was your mother with you. Did you have any siblings?

HOLMES: My mother with me alone. I'm an only child, and here she is with a six-year-old child.

Q: No maid.

HOLMES: No maid. No nothing. And no knowledge of where her husband is.

Q: Your mother's French.

HOLMES: And my mother is French at the time. Of course, married to an American, but never mind, she's French. And jumping into ditches, covering my body with hers all the time, protecting me. An extraordinary thing, Jewell. I think the most extraordinary thing in this whole story is that I saw things which most people would be scarred for life. I mean, people being massacred by bullets. Now granted, a child sees things a little bit differently, but somehow at the end of every day Mother talked it over with me, and somehow she made me ... I was able to put it in some context where I could obviously live with it. It's not something I've had nightmares about. It is not something which has impacted on my life. I mean, the horrors of war, yes. But my most fearful memories are leaving my dog behind and then the starvation that ensued once we got to Biarritz after this horrendous exodus which took three and a half weeks, Mother working every night with people who were old people who had no shoes left on their feet, who were bleeding.

Oh, it was really a dreadful scene.

We got to Biarritz and the consul said, “Cheer up. Probably you won’t see your husband until after the war, but that’s all right. You can make it over to Lisbon and you’ll be fine.” Well, that didn’t do much for her spirits.

Anyway, my father miraculously showed up with a beard and he hadn’t eaten in four days, but he did show up and he had accomplished his mission, which was to make the Spaniards stop the Germans at the borders. They couldn’t get to Gibraltar. So it was an exciting thing that he did and a very big piece of that European war.

We then went on to Nice where he took over the segment that was taking care of British affairs since we still weren’t at war. You’ve got to remember that this was 1941. Nice, in the south of France, occupied lightly by the Italians, totally devoid of food. I mean I’m not talking maybe a tomato. I’m talking no food. My mother would go out every day for eight hours. If she got rutabaga or turnips, three of them, we were lucky. It was real starvation. And I have pictures of us where we look like Buchenwald people. Every rib is sticking out. There is nothing. That’s the other horrible memory of the war: coming home like a child and I’m hungry.

Q: How long did that go on?

HOLMES: Well, until June 1942. So it’s a long time. We were down south from 1940 to 1942. The war was declared, as you remember, December 7, 1941, and what we did is we finally were told to evacuate in, I think, May of 1942, which is when the agreement was reached by the German government and the American government to exchange diplomats. We sent back all of our diplomats from Europe in exchange for all of theirs, and there lies a kind of interesting “fate” tale, too.

The Drottningholm was the name of the ship and you see it mentioned, by the way, in the Holocaust Museum. The Drottningholm, I think, is there, a picture of it. It bore enormous Swedish markings so that U-boats wouldn’t torpedo it. Anyway, we were supposed to be on the third sailing, and that was fine because it was an amazing escape out of France.

My father, who was by then the head of the consulate, got a moving truck, a literal moving truck, and there were about seventeen of us left that had not been evacuated before, and we all got in this moving truck. You can imagine: totally airless, no windows, no nothing. From Nice, France, all the way to Lisbon, which is a long haul, we were in that moving van. It was not a great trip.

But then we arrived in Lisbon and, of course, I couldn’t believe it: there was so much food! And I just remember “Food!” It was just absolutely extraordinary the impact that had on me. You could go to a restaurant and get food!

Anyway, that was amazing. We had been there for about a week, and we were perfectly

happy and were sitting around waiting for the next trip when the phone rang and my father answered it and they said, "Look. We've just had a cancellation for the second sailing. Do you want that cabin?" And Daddy said, "Sure. Why not? We're ready to go." We go on. And the irony is that there never was a third sailing. Everybody else who didn't make the second sailing was stuck in Lisbon for the rest of the war. I had a lot of my friends, as a matter of fact, who were still sitting in Lisbon for the rest of the war.

Q: For three years!

HOLMES: That's right. But, of course, perfectly comfortable! But nonetheless not what you really wanted to do.

The last kind of interesting thing that happened. The trip was relatively eventful in the sense that German submarines, U-boats, would come up and peer at us every five minutes; so people sort of spent their days counting periscope sightings. We got to Ellis Island and we thought, "Oh, great! The Statue of Liberty at last. We're home. We're free." Blah, blah. And before we knew it we were docked, and it was one day and it was two days and it was three days. And we couldn't figure out what was going on. Finally, somehow, the word leaked out. There had been a number of priests on board and we thought that they being in the sweep of things probably had been caught in the Vatican and needed to come back. American priests. Well, it turned out they were German saboteurs, whose cases of Bibles were filled with dynamite, and their orders were to blow up Boulder Dam. So we were quarantined for something like six days while they purged the ship and got every last defrocked priest taken care of.

But that was my war experience as a Foreign Service child. Extraordinary.

Q: That was quite a story. And you were six?

HOLMES: I was six. I was eight when I reached this country. I was eight years old.

Q: And you hadn't been here before.

HOLMES: No, I hadn't been here before.

Q: Were you bilingual?

HOLMES: I understood everything in English because my father had always spoken English to me, but I only spoke French. I went to school. In three weeks I was fluent in English. In a month, I think -- and this has nothing to do with me; it has to do with the French educational system -- I was boosted up two grades. That's because the French, of course, are far more advanced in the early years than we are. So that was my war.

Q: So you were eight years old and in the fifth or sixth grade!

HOLMES: I was actually in third grade. I spent the whole war here. My father was in Africa and that was really tough on my mother. We were the first to go back to Paris in 1945. By that time he was working for UNRRA, which was the precursor to the, of course, ECA/AID project, the Marshall Plan. It was a totally devastated France that we went back to.

We came back on an armored troopship, which was an experience by itself. Four to a cabin with meals served at eleven o'clock. No! Excuse me. At six-thirty, breakfast; ten-thirty, lunch; and four o'clock, dinner. That was it. We had about three feet of deck space to walk around in. We weren't supposed to walk because that would disturb the troops apparently; so we were just confined to the cabins. But there was a little PX [post exchange].

I had saved up all my money and my mother said we should buy some candy bars for our family because they won't have seen candy in five, six years. So I did. I had saved up all my money and I bought a box of Ping. You probably were much too young, but it was a substitute for marshmallow candy bars, and it was whatever you could spare that they didn't need for the soldiers. So I bought that. We got off the ship and drove up.

My mother's family was in Lyons for the war. I remember that they greeted us and you can imagine the extraordinary thing of seeing the family after such a brutal three years of separation. I remember giving my box and, oh, the oohs and ahs and so forth. And I was pleased because there were twenty-four bars. There were about ten or twelve family members. Everybody could have a bar. That was not the way it worked. I mean, it is so strong that feeling of what happens in war and in starvation that my grandmother carefully unwrapped one bar of Ping, which was all of three inches long, and carefully sliced it in twelve slices. She wasn't going to waste it.

And I remember Paris. We lived at the Crillon Hotel for a whole year because the economy was devastated. We Americans had taken over the Crillon. And they were amazing. They were already cooking extraordinary things with powdered eggs that we were giving them, all kinds of wonderful things like that. But I remember in August walking down the Champs Elysées, to show you how devastated the country was, there wasn't a car around. I walked in the middle of the Champs Elysées.

Anyway, that was France during the war, right after the war. In '47 we moved to Germany. Oh, utter devastation! Utter devastation! We were stationed in Frankfurt. Frankfurt was destroyed something like eighty per cent. It was rubble. And they couldn't move any of the rubble because there was a five-year period when no rubble could be moved because of the plague. They thought that if they moved it the rats would get out and suddenly they would have a huge rat population running around infecting all kinds of people with God knows what disease. So nothing was touched. And you'd see these walls and there would be a bathtub hanging from the wall. I mean, it was just so dramatic. And these people were so low.

The army gave us a house, and my mother, of course, my French mother, said, “Well, they deserve everything they get! I’m certainly not going to help them!” She was adamant. Well, two days later she had a bread line outside her kitchen door because, of course, she couldn’t do that. She was such a humanitarian, such an extraordinarily generous woman. I mean, she knew perfectly well these people were just ordinary people like everywhere and they were caught in this ghastly ...

Q: Victims of circumstance.

HOLMES: That’s right. These weren’t the SS Nazis. These were just hungry people, and it was tragic. We would hire a maid and regularly they would have to leave and be hospitalized because they ate so much when they reached our house where there was available food that they all got sick. I’ll never forget. I wandered in and our cook had a piece of rye bread, dark bread, and she had taken Crisco. I mean Crisco. Of course, they love lard. But Crisco! It was piled about an inch high and she was chomping down on Crisco.

Anyway, it was a rather terrible time in many ways. I guess we don’t talk about it much. But there was a great deal of black marketing going on. The Americans, I mean. You had a little bit of everything in an occupation army, a little bit of everything. But this was really ironic. We had a chaplain whose wife died. I was in school with his daughter. His wife died rather suddenly and very tragically, and as a result they had to pack up and leave and he wanted to go home with his daughter to be with the family and what have you. They went into his basement and they found two baby grand pianos, seventy sets of Meissen china, Meissen vases. I can’t tell you. He had been trading on the black market. A fortune! A fortune. This is a chaplain. There are so many tales of nobility in a war and so many tales of ignominy because I saw wonderful things going on, people doing extraordinary things to help people rebuild their lives in a totally shattered economy; and then you saw things like this where greed took over. And, of course, you’ve got to remember that this was an occupation army. We were not allowed to fraternize. We were not allowed to talk to Germans. We were not allowed to go into any shops. We had scrip.

Q: Was your father part of the HICOG [High Commission in Germany?]

HOLMES: Yes. The Joint ... [Interruption]

Q: Your father ... Was he at the consulate or was he part of HICOG?

HOLMES: Yes, HICOG or ... He was JEIA, which was Joint Export Import Agency. It was again the precursor to the official Marshall Plan or that was the name they gave it, I think, during that period.

Q: It started out as Point Four.

HOLMES: Point Four. Exactly.

Q: In Greece, and then became ...

HOLMES: Yes, became all these different things, the Marshall Plan and so forth.

Q: And then AID.

HOLMES: The Germans were just ... You couldn't find them they were so low. Karlsruhe. We moved down to Baden-Baden in the French zone in 1949, and it was just extraordinary. Karlsruhe, there was nothing left. I mean, when I say nothing I don't mean a building. I mean nothing. There was nothing there. When I went back to Germany some two years later, it was totally rebuilt. Totally rebuilt. The people were dressed, back into power, back in the seat. It was just a transformation which you have to attribute to Truman.

Q: And Marshall.

HOLMES: And Marshall, of course. Amazing, amazing transformation.

From there we went back to Paris in 1950, and then I went back and went to college. That was 1953, I guess.

Q: Back to college here?

HOLMES: Yes. At Wells College. I went to Wells College. And then in 1954 I went off with my parents, but independent of them, so to speak, to Cambodia, and got a job with USIA as a films officer. It was a fascinating period. We were there at the period where Norodom Sihanouk was still king. He abdicated while we were there in favor of his father, which is one of those rare things. You rarely see that. I was the person who hired a film crew from Manila and actually filmed the entire coronation, which was straight out of the "King and I." The uniforms. It was absolutely breathtaking. I think most of us in college, in high school, did not in those days get any kind of a viewpoint about Asia. I think the only thing I knew about Asia was Genghis Khan. And even then I probably would have been hard pressed to say when he lived or what he did. And suddenly, this whole world opened up and it was really, truly extraordinary.

We served with a wonderful team of people. Rob McClintock was our ambassador, a very flamboyant ambassador who did not necessarily make great points with Sihanouk. Carleton Coon, who was a great anthropologist was there to look at the kuprai which is the last of prehistoric beasts, and there are only 500 of them and they happen to live in Cambodia; and he [Coon] asked for an audience with the king. He got an audience with the king, and the ambassador introduced him in the following fashion. He said, "Sire, I wish to introduce Mr. Coolidge [sic]. Mr. Coolidge is as interested in four-footed Cambodians as I am in two-footed ones."

Q: What was his name? Carleton ...

HOLMES: Carleton Coon. His son was in the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh, okay.

HOLMES: Remember?

Q: Okay, because the Carleton Coon I knew had been ambassador to ...

HOLMES: That's his son.

Q: Oh, so that's his son. Okay.

HOLMES: Yes. And he's also, by the way, I think, a naturalist. And anthropologist, I believe. Utterly fascinating.

So we had that. Then he [the king] abdicated in favor of his father. We had a lot of terrorism during that period. There was a fair amount of terrorism. There were shortages of food where you really would go down to the marketplace and all that was handy for yum-yums was bats' wings and rancid butter and stuff like that had been imported. We were very lucky. We had an attaché plane, as most people did in those posts, a DC-3, and it had to go to Hong Kong every week. So rotationally we got to go to Hong Kong.

Q: What year was this?

HOLMES: 1954-1956. We literally came in at the end of the French war and before the beginning of the American war. So what we knew was a period of interim peace. An extraordinary evening I spent with three Foreign Legion captains who had been taken prisoner, all three of them, at Dien Bien Phu. They had parachuted and been caught on the roof of a Buddhist monastery up near Dien Bien Phu. And all of their buddies had somehow landed inside this atrium-type place. And what they told me I couldn't repeat to you because I've tried to banish it from my memory largely. It was tales of such horror, of such ghastly torture. And I guess the most interesting part of that, certainly not to subject you or Sally to what they told me: one was that they had to spit it out, which fits in with this whole business we were talking about about how trauma needs to be excised by talk; and the other thing that they told me which I thought was fascinating is they let the women do it because women are so much better at torture.

Q: Oh, great!

HOLMES: I mean, their stomachs are better at it. They can just take more time and are more refined in their approach to this particular sport. Pretty awful. Cambodia was, I think, other than the fact that I wasn't married and I've certainly adored my life, in a way perhaps my favorite post. We served with wonderful people. The

Cambodians were wonderful people in those days. To this day, I don't believe in the Pol Pots of this world. I never saw it. They were wonderful Buddhists who spent unbelievable hours at Angkor Wat. It was a very good time and these were the most gentle, most pacific people I've ever, ever seen in my life. And then suddenly, this ability to have a bloodbath the likes of which has rarely been seen except during World War II. Or actually today, in Rwanda.

Q: Bosnia.

HOLMES: Yes, Bosnia. Genocide.

So that leads us to '56. I came back to the United States. I then, of course, started my career in films, working for Byron Films Incorporated and then later for the Encyclopedia Britannica Films; and it was then that I met my husband, Allen Holmes, who had just been taken into the Foreign Service. I mean, when we met he hadn't received his orders. Then he received his orders that he was going off to Yaounde, Cameroon. He was absolutely thrilled. And somehow I think he'd read the post report, which said, "There's not much to do there." So I think the advice was if you could get married, that might help. [laughter]

Anyway, be that as it may. He proposed much more rapidly than would normally have been the case, and we got married and immediately sailed off for Yaounde, Cameroon. It was our honeymoon. Well, we arrived and, of course, ran into Sally Cutler and Walt, and they were fantastic. And we spent three of the most marvelous days of our lives, absolutely unquestionably. It was a laugh a minute, I think hysterical on the side of Sally because she was so anxious to get out, and she thought, "Oh, my God, thank God, they're liberating us!"

Never in my Foreign Service life, never in my life, to throw a few kudos, have I ever seen anything better prepared for somebody to move in. It was so spotless. Every shelf was relined. Every hanger was in place. The servants had been trained in a terrific ... Well, actually, there were a few little things that you'd forgotten, Sally. But it really was an amazing turnaround, and we were just sitting in heaven. And Sally kept thinking, "Oh, these poor suckers. Here they are thinking this is so wonderful."

Anyway, they left and suddenly we were faced with reality. Basically, I cannot tell you that we loved it. We had our first child. We did also have terrorism. I seem to be plagued with a lot of terrorism and wars, but we did have terrorism. I guess about a week before we got there, there had been a rather brutal killing of some Frenchmen on the ... Well, there was only one street with shops. The rest was just kind of bush country. And Douala, which is the port city, was a big city, but Yaounde was really a little village more than a city. Anyway, this had gone on and more or less for the entire two years we were there there was terrorism around. We had a person killed I'd say about six feet from our window in the elephant grass that grew wild out there. We had no telephones. Basically, if I'd been smart, I guess I would have gotten a tom-tom drum, but I didn't think of that.

We did have a telephone installed and I did try to call my parents, who were then in Morocco, to tell them that I was pregnant, and what came through was they thought we'd adopted a puppy dog; so I don't think it worked very well. [laughter]

Anyway, it was a lot of fun. Again, I think largely we made very close friends. I think you do in places like that. The wonderful thing about small posts -- I don't think people who've served in the very big posts understand this -- you build relationships that are real because there is nothing there to sustain you except yourself. There's no veneer. There's nothing to hide behind. You're you. If that's good, that's good. And if it's not, it shows. And I think you're facing a sometimes hostile, sometimes difficult, sometimes an atmosphere in which you really have to develop yourself and your own resources. And I think for marriages it makes them or breaks them. I really do. I don't think it's as exciting today, probably, to go to these places because they're huge now. I mean, a place like Yaounde has got over a hundred people. Maybe in the Stans, Tajikistan and those kinds of places you still have this feeling of discovering the place and setting the American flag there and letting your presence be known. But in those days it was very exciting.

Cameroon was the first country to become independent on a list of twenty-seven in 1960. And the sleepy little burg suddenly had to galvanize itself into existence because we had five named ambassadors arriving in our delegation for the independence of Cameroon, and that was headed by Henry Cabot Lodge, who had a very big ego, as you may remember, and his demands preceded him. And they included certain types of toilet paper and certain kinds of Arkansas spring water, which was going to be just swell because when you're sitting in an ex-French colony, getting Arkansas spring water isn't the first thing on your list. Toilet paper would come in nasty little squares of sandpaper, I swear; so how were we going to do it? I don't know what we did. Somehow we contacted the Danes, and the Danes relayed the messages. We got something that was doable.

Anyway, suddenly out of the blue we got this incredible delegation. All kinds of delegations were flying in. The British had John Profumo, whom you may remember. Yes, Mr. Profumo who, had I known, I would have put on my black boots and danced with him. And who knows what I would have gotten? [laughter]

Mrs. Profumo was a movie star called Valerie Hobson. I love this story. And she arrived with her tiaras, and the British ambassador and his wife, very amusing people ... The British ambassador would sit at the airport to welcome people. You kind of went to the airport because there was nothing better to do. And she [wife of the British ambassador] would welcome people and say, "Welcome to the armpit of Africa," which really got you off to a nice start here. Anyway, she, Valerie Hobson, arrived, and she was ushered into her room, which was the best anybody could do. There were twelve rooms in the Relais Hotel, which was the only hotel there; so the rest of us were putting up people and doing all kinds of things. She [Hobson] said, "I need a three-way mirror to put on my tiara." I mean it was just all so unbelievable. Who's talking about tiaras in this hundred-degree heat?

Meanwhile, our consul general's wife, who will remain nameless for a lot of reasons, had decided that we were going to wear long white gloves to all these events. Long, white leather gloves in a hundred-degree humidity? I ask you! So I cabled off to Paris to get these darned gloves, and she carried on and carried on. This woman was absolutely extraordinary.

The first call we made was to Mrs. Betayene, who was the wife of the foreign minister. I guess we had a two-way radio at that time. Mrs. Moore called me on the two-way radio and she said, "All right, Marilyn, you've got to wear a hat." And I said, "Well, Mrs. Moore, I don't have a hat." And she said, "Well, make one." And I said, "No, I don't think I will. Thank you." So that battle was vaguely won. She picked me up in the car and we tooted out and here we were with our little white gloves on. I didn't have a hat. She had a hat, no veil. And we arrived. And Mrs. Betayene lived in a thatched hut! And torn formica was on the floor, and the chickens were all running around and the goats were browsing about munching quietly. And into this sweeps Mrs. Moore with her calling cards, which she gives me and says, "Drop these somewhere!" Well, you're not looking for silver salvers in a hut where there isn't even a chair. I mean, there was a crossed stool! Mrs. Betayene spoke not a word of any known language to man, whatever she spoke.

Q: What was her husband?

HOLMES: He was the foreign minister.

Q: Oh, the foreign minister.

HOLMES: Oh, yes! And he was a terrible wolf, and I'll tell you another story about him where I really blew it. But anyway, so we sat on these little stools like camping stools and here I am with my cards. Where could I put the cards? There was no place. I mean, I couldn't feed them to the goats! So Mrs. Betayene gets out three highball glasses -- I kid you not -- and produced a bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label out of God knows where, and says, "Wishti!" [whisky] and holds out these glasses and we each hold a glass and say, "Yes, thank you." And she fills them right to the brim! In this hundred-degree heat with white gloves and these damned cards in my hand and she's saying, "Drink!" I'm looking at Mrs. Moore for guidance. It was unbelievable.

Q: So did Mrs. Moore drink?

HOLMES: She drank. We did not down it. I was reeling by the time I got out of there. It was totally unbelievable.

Q: What did you do with the cards?

HOLMES: Stuffed them in the glass. There was nothing else to do! I just thought this was ridiculous and I just popped them in the glass. [laughter] Since this woman obviously couldn't read anyway, what was the use? Maybe the goats would enjoy them! I probably

would have done better giving them to the goats.

The independence ceremony. At one point there was a ball and it was quite extraordinary because it was a black-tie affair. Well, Yaounde had never even heard of black tie, and there we were and everybody was in white jackets. And Mr. Betayene, the foreign minister, was a terrific wolf. I mean, he was known to love the ladies. And he was dressed all in black. He had a black tuxedo, which was very rare in the tropics. And I had a long white dress, the first time I'd ever been in a long dress in the Cameroon, with huge black bows. He asked me to dance, and we get out on the dance floor and it was an almighty struggle! This guy was trying to really move in, not for my charms; it was he did this with any woman. I think you could be ninety with warts on your chin and he'd try to do something. Anyway, I was struggling, he was dancing, and finally I was desperate and I couldn't think of anything to say. All words flew out of my mind. And I suddenly realized, oh, he had a black jacket! How unusual! Everybody else was in a white jacket. And I said, "Oh, Mr. Foreign Minister, we go very well together, black and white!" [laughter] Well, I tell you he dined out on that story. He said, "You'll never believe this!" It went halfway around the world. When we were stationed in Paris, people told me about this funny story of this young woman down in Cameroon who had danced with the foreign minister, and brought up this particular instance. It was very funny, I must say. It wasn't funny then, but I thought it was funny afterwards.

Q: [laughter] Oh, that's funny!

HOLMES: The other thing I have to mention was the Israelis had sent Golda Meir down. It was really very impressive! And one of our ambassadors -- there were five ambassadors with the rank of ambassador who were named to this delegation -- was B. O. Davis. His father had been the first black Air Force general ever and he was a two-star general. And I was assigned as his control officer. So I took him around and I did all the translating for him and that went fine. And then there was a second evening after the fateful first evening of the black and white; and the second evening was an independence mechoui. They would dig big pits and roast whole goats or lambs and stuff them with rice and people would dig into the insides. It got a little messy, a little unattractive, but very colorful. And so all of this was going on and all of us again were dressed to the teeth, and out of the blue they decided to have a Miss Cameroon contest.

Now, I can't begin to tell you what this looked like. These ladies were stuffed into latex bathing suits. Do you know what happens to latex in the tropics? Everything kind of droops. Well, there you were with the breasts sagging and the stomachs cascading on the knees. It was kind of a downward ripple effect.

Q: How old were they?

HOLMES: Oh, God! They ranged in age, I think, from eighteen to fifty. I've never seen anything like this in my life. I guess they had seen one movie of the Miss America or Miss Whatever contest. They had three steps leading to this little podium, and they would

get up there and do the bump and grind, which was absolutely beyond belief! The people were convulsed! Not the way they should have been. But anyway, they were convulsed. And the panel of jurists was led by none other than Golda Meir, who was probably the most brilliant, but certainly not the most beautiful of all people. [laughter] Well, I'll tell you what was really funny was B.O. Davis and I were obviously sitting together since I his escort officer; and at one point, he leaned towards me and whispered -- and you've got to remember this was 1960 -- and he said, "You know something? I don't think we're the same race!" Very interesting. Very interesting.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: He really didn't wish to be associated with this.

Anyway, all of this dazzle went on for three days and it was a non-stop event, and then suddenly everybody flew off and that was it. It's interesting to note that when we arrived in Cameroon, there was no malaria for thirty square kilometers all around the capital. Totally, absolutely. You didn't even have to take quinine pills. There was nothing. By the time we left a year and a half later, it was all back.

Q: Is that because ... ?

HOLMES: They stopped doing the DDT. Cold.

There were scary moments. We were living in a country where there was one doctor in Yaounde, a guy called, oddly enough, Armstrong, a French doctor. Wonderful guy except he did drink a lot and he was having an affair with the ambassador's secretary. And he always operated with Bach and he would allow anybody to assist in the operation who wanted to be there. It was kind of a communal event. But when he was up-country, you were really stuck.

I remember Allen, who has terrible asthma, but had never had a really bad attack until ... He had one when he was in the Marine Corps, but he had the second one in the middle of the night when the doctor was out of town. Thank God we had some adrenalin in the house. I had to give him an adrenalin shot at two o'clock in the morning. I don't think I've ever been so scared in my life. But that's the kind of thing you were up against.

And having a child there was wonderful in many ways. Granted, I devoted twenty-four hours a day to her care. Everything had to be boiled six hours. I would boil the bottles and then the first time I walked in, Michel, our house boy, came in with a finger in each bottle and he said, "These are ready, ma'am. Where do you want me to put them?" [laughter] So back to the boiling pot. There were a lot of things that got missed and I'm sure Katherine strengthened herself on a diet of margouilla, those little lizards, droppings. I would see her little hand peak out and before I could do anything about it, it was in her mouth. She thrived, absolutely thrived! Never had a cold, never had anything wrong with her. There seems to be an auto-immunization process that's absolutely extraordinary, and we were

extremely lucky. We and the Mooses.

Richard and Margaret Moose had come and we had children exactly the same age and had them in the same playpen. So it was really very exciting. It was very nice. We really enjoyed that. As I said, you make the kinds of friendships that you really find nearly impossible to make at the biggest posts, and I know about that because I've served in the bigger posts.

Q: But don't you think your Foreign Service experience helped a lot in the beginning, in a situation like this?

HOLMES: Oh, undoubtedly! By that time I had seen so much, lived through so much. I think more than anything else it's sort of a tribute to my mother who was an extraordinary human being. But she shaped me ready for anything in life.

Q: How did someone like Margaret fare who hadn't been abroad before?

HOLMES: She had a very hard time. She had a very hard time. It was a big strain. It was very lonely. She didn't speak French at first, so that was a hardship for her because if you didn't speak French, you were really up against it. You see, I'd seen it all in Cambodia. If you haven't been to an African marketplace with the flies buzzing all around and the cow dung and the meat is perfectly disgusting ... Wonderful fish, but you had to have the stomach to go and find it. You knew about those things. I think that kind of culture shock is just devastating. I think she had a very hard time. But I think in the end she really did enjoy it because she really did get into it, but it takes you about a year to feel that you're in some kind of control. In a place like that you never felt you were in total control. You weren't. You never are.

Q: Same way with Sierra Leone with me. I didn't speak French at that time and I'd think, "Thank God I'm doing this in English!" Because if I weren't, I'd be like Margaret: I would have really been up against it.

HOLMES: No, it's tough. And Sierra Leone's a very tough post, I think in many ways tougher than Yaounde. Yaounde had one advantage for me, as Cambodia did: there was no starvation. Having been in countries where there is starvation and seen it as a child, it's something that haunts me. There were lepers on the street corners, and I'm sure you had them. But there was no ... I mean, the emaciated, the bloated-bellied children. What you see in the Sudan, what you see in Somalia. All those kinds of pictures didn't exist. People were getting appropriate proteins and actually not a bad diet: manioc and lots of fish, that dried cod, all that kind of stuff. They made out all right. And that really makes a difference. You were not living in an impoverished community riddled by disease. You didn't have that hopelessness as you do in so many other places around the world. The children all were very happy and they were fine. Makes a big difference.

Q: There was something about air-conditioning.

HOLMES: Yes. Well, those were the days -- I'm not sure they're over -- where ambassadors ... We finally got an ambassador. We were obviously a consulate general until independence. Then came independence and we got an ambassador. Although I've slipped with the other name, I'll try not to slip with this one. This ambassador arrived.

Q: It's a matter of record.

HOLMES: It's a matter of record. All right. This man, suffice it to say, had been the number two in the administration that did about the Japanese internment camps during the war. That tells you something about him right there. They arrived, and actually I had known them in Indochina when I was in Cambodia, so I literally had met them before. They had two children, and they moved into the new residence. And one thing I told you was that I brought up my daughter with no problems, and I did; but we were warned by our wonderful Dr. Armstrong that there was one disease called "acetone" which is a liver disease, which a lot of babies do get from what happens with the fat in the milk. If you don't have air conditioning and a stabilized temperature, some children are very prone to get this liver malfunction. So he recommended that the Moooses and ourselves -- we both had eight-month-old babies at that time -- get air conditioning. Well, as luck would have it, four air conditioners arrived. And so we were thrilled! We said to Leland Barrows, since it's on the record, I think, we would like the air conditioners for our houses. And he said, "What do you mean? I need the air conditioners."

Q: All four?

HOLMES: All four. "You want one for your den?" He said, "Yes, and my guest room." And we said, "But our children!" And he said, "Well, next shipment."

Q: How many guests did they have?

HOLMES: Oh, probably four. I mean, max! When I look back I just can't believe we did that. I just can't believe we didn't just, say, storm the warehouse and take the air conditioners. And I don't know why we didn't.

Q: Because you just didn't in those days.

HOLMES: It's a different era. Let's face it.

Q: No, I think it's amazing what we tolerated in those days.

HOLMES: It is amazing. It is amazing. We heard the stories about Japan, with the ambassador's wife getting absolutely furious with her cook and hurling a platter at his head, at which point he had a heart attack and died.

Q: Was this Mrs. Grew?

HOLMES: No, it was Mrs. Meyer.

Q: Oh! [laughter]

HOLMES: Wahwee MacArthur, another dragon lady. Those ladies existed and people took them seriously.

Q: Did you ever serve with any of the ... We might as well name them. Mrs. Armin Meyer ...

HOLMES: Oh, well known!

Q: ... and Mrs. MacArthur are right up at the top.

HOLMES: Right up at the top. I knew Mrs. MacArthur, and, believe me, she was a dragon lady! I mean, short of fire coming out of her nostrils she was something.

Q: Mrs. Loy Henderson.

HOLMES: Mrs. Loy Henderson.

Q: Mrs. Henry Tasca. That was later.

HOLMES: Oh, God! Unbelievable. Yes, we used to call her Mrs. Garbage because she was the daughter of a great garbage collector. No, we were very lucky. We served with Freddie and Solie Reinhardt in Rome, which is our second post. And Allen was the ambassador's aide. And although Mrs. Reinhardt was anything but a dragon lady in the real sense of the word ...

Let me just explain to you, a kind of snapshot of arrival in Rome. I have two children: one three years old and one four weeks old in a little sack. I arrived in Rome. I didn't speak a word of Italian because I hadn't been able to get to the Italian classes at FSI. It wasn't very sure that there would be room for me anyway. I was supposed to speak Italian because I'm going to be put on the firing line right away. We arrived in Rome and called and checked in at the embassy, and they said the ambassador wants to speak with Allen right away, and I am told to make thirteen, thirteen calls in the next twenty-four hours. I couldn't believe it! What am I supposed to do? Dump my children and rush out and corner cards all over the place, putting whatever those little initials you put in whatever corner and drop cards everywhere. Because I was smart enough: I did have my cards with me. But that's the kind of insanity that we were subjected to and did.

Q: What did you do?

HOLMES: Well, I was really lucky. They had two little apartments for new arrivals, and

in one was, if you can believe this, a Brooklyn-speaking Italian-American woman who had lived sixteen years in the United States, spoke perfect English with a heavy Italian accent, and was the original “mama mia,” and all she needed was a wooden spoon and some tomatoes and she was it on the pasta label. And she was fantastic, and she said, “Ah, che bambini!” I didn’t even know what “bambini” meant! But I could leave them with her and I did. We were replacing good friends from the same Foreign Service class, and Howell Draper was fantastic. She took the children and then worked it out with Inez, this wonderful maid. So it worked out. But I did thirteen calls in two days.

Q: Were these Italians?

HOLMES: No, no. They were all Americans. A huge embassy!

Q: Why was it so necessary for you to call on Americans?

HOLMES: That was the protocol in the day. Get this! I’m an unpaid spouse. Right? I arrive. I should be my own person. Correct? I have two small children to bring up. God knows, that is responsibility enough, especially in a place where I don’t speak a word of the language and I’m supposed to shop and do everything, look for an apartment and settle myself and make a home and so forth and so on. But! My husband is the ambassador’s aide. Therefore, I am Mrs. Reinhardt’s aide. Here’s the hitch.

Q: Oh! What year is this?

HOLMES: This is 1963. And I am to call on the thirteen country team spouses because those are the people she deals with and since I am going to become her porte-parole. In other words, whenever she wants to communicate something, who gets to communicate it? Me! That’s why I needed to make thirteen calls. Somebody else might have gotten off with four or whatever number. No, there were no Italians in this! We weren’t even allowed to go anywhere near Italians.

Q: But your husband was a junior officer.

HOLMES: Oh, very junior! He’s a seven. Just made seven, and we’re still little bunnies hopping. Our tails are very fluffy and we want to do right. So we find out that the Reinhardts are ... They’re an extraordinary couple. She speaks excellent Italian, which immediately puts me in a terrible position because I don’t speak it at all. And [she] rattles it off right and left. We are immediately put to work. We have to start “working the line,” which means that at every reception you stand on the right of Mrs. Reinhardt and as she greets people, you take them “off the line” and hustle them into someplace and introduce them to somebody, preferably American from the right point of view and interest. So you’re fairly busy running around introducing them and trying to remember the names and the titles. Italians like titles. So it’s never “Mr.” It’s “avvocato,” the lawyers. Or “inginiere,” the engineer. Or “dottore,” the doctor. Everybody’s a “dottore” because if you’ve got a college degree you’re “dottore.” So that’s easy. But you could be a

“professore,” so you have to be pretty careful. And it was just beyond belief.

So we have four of these receptions, at least, a week. Four. Then we’re dragged into all the luncheons where we’re supposed to supply the small talk, make sure that the tables are properly set, make sure the place cards are in place, make sure the cook hasn’t gotten drunk in between times, make sure that the wines are correct. I’m doing all this, and am I paid? No! It was a full time job. We traveled everywhere with them as the lowly ...

Q: Bag carriers.

HOLMES: ... bag carriers. Exactly. Actually, Allen disgraced us because we were invited ... The Reinhardts loved to hunt. They were plugged into the very wealthy. And Mr. Necchi of Necchi sewing machines had a beautiful estate in Pavia. He invited us all. He invited the Reinhardts who said, “Well, we’ll bring our flunkies,” to Pavia. So we flew up there.

I didn’t check on Allen, what he was packing, which was a terrible mistake. Allen -- I don’t know what he was thinking about -- packed his own bag. We get up to Pavia and I can’t tell you how swell a deal this was. It was Abercrombie and Snitch [sic] all the way. Everyone was in their loden greens with little pompoms and wonderful stockings that matched their wonderful shoes, tweeds with grouse falling out of your pockets. Couldn’t have been chic-er. Elegant dinner. Mr. Necchi was a porcine individual, but certainly ran an elegant table. We had all kinds of contessas and principessas. Nobility was running wild.

The next morning, which was hunt morning, we get up and Allen dons his attire. I don’t know what he was thinking about. He thought he was back in the Marine Corps. He has taken along his Marine Corps fatigues [laughter] with GI boots, which he carefully laces up, looking like some hick out of God knows where [laughter].

Well, we got downstairs. I said, “You’ve got nothing?” He said, “I can’t wear a suit to this!” So it was either what he was in or a suit with a tie. Well, neither seemed appropriate. We slunk downstairs. I was slinking, anyway. He didn’t seem to mind. He said, “I’m setting the fashion!” Well, he didn’t set the fashion. It was so bad that when we were got to the ... We were all driven in these extraordinary cars with liveried chauffeurs who looked so much smarter than my husband. [laughter] And they looked at him and they decided he was worse than a liveried chauffeur or a beater! Beaters all had little crests with the Necchi estate crest all over them. And so, they didn’t give him [Allen] a beater. I was his gun carrier. I had to carry his ammunition; I had to do everything because they just thought he was so lowly they couldn’t imagine *what* he was doing out there! [laughter]

Meanwhile, I remember Freddie Reinhardt was absolutely wonderful. He’d broken his arm and it was in this enormous cast with his arm propped up in this body cast, but he had just had it shaved off so it was just a half-cast. And in an act, which was just beautiful

Italian bravura, at the last minute when it was time to shoot he slung off the cast, used his arm to swing up the shotgun, and fired right into all this. Mind you, there were so many quail in the sky ...

Q: He couldn't miss! [laughter]

HOLMES: I mean, they were all drugged, I'm convinced, because the beaters would go right up to the limit. Oh, a shame. The guy in the hunt seat next to us literally had his gun trained on this poor little female quail who was trying to make it across the road. She'd figured out if you fly you get shot. So she was walking across, and he was going to blast her on the ground. I gave him a filthy look and I must say I did save her life, momentarily. So that was the Pavia disaster.

Q: What were you wearing?

HOLMES: I was dressed in appropriate ... I think I had a Scottish kilt, I remember, and a little whatever, jacket that was appropriate and a gray sweater. But Allen's fatigues! Crushed! I mean they'd been in a duffel bag somewhere. They weren't even properly pressed! [laughter]

Q: Oh, great! [laughter] So, how long did this go on?

HOLMES: Well, Allen was the ambassador's aide for a year and a half, and it was a very trying year and a half.

Q: Because you had a tiny baby.

HOLMES: We had this tiny baby. We were very lucky. We found very appropriate help. We'd made a pact that since we were having children, we owed them two nights in no matter what: every week and every Sunday. So that was going to be hard with the Reinhardts who ... Freddie was older than Solie and really enjoyed social life and so he always wanted to be doing something, always wanted to be with somebody who he could talk stuff over with, not with his children.

They had four children who ranging from seven to twelve at that time. And we took them under our wing. And then, Solie was a wonderful person and we became very good friends despite all this work that was generated. What I figured out was -- and she adored it -- get them going on a picnic. So nearly every Sunday we had a picnic with the Reinhardts, and all of us with all the children would go out. And Freddie could talk to Allen and that was fine, and then we could romp with the children; so we were all together. So everything worked out very nicely.

There were a lot of ups. I've talked about the downs because now, as I look back, it seemed weird that we did all of these things. You know, we were on call for so many hours. Basically, I had no time to myself other than the religious two hours that I spent

learning Italian every day, which was absolutely essential.

Italians do not speak anything ... If they're not diplomats, they don't speak anything but Italian. You really need the language. And I really *hated* Rome, I think, and that's a difficult thing, you know, to be in places like Paris, Rome, or London and not like it. You can't say it! Everybody says, "Oh, aren't you lucky, lucky to be here in Rome?" And I wanted to say, "I *hate* this place!" I really did.

Q: Where did you live?

HOLMES: We lived in Parioli, literally spitting distance from the residence because we were spending most of our lives there at the residence. Then Allen moved out of that job and moved into the political/military section, and that really made all the difference. By that time we spoke Italian, we had real Italian friends, and we were on our own timetable rather than the ambassador's timetable. That made it fantastic and then we really did adore it. We have what we call "the Italian disease" and we'll never recover from it. Once bitten, you can't do without it.

So it was a very happy period and a very productive period, and I think our children certainly loved eating pasta and have never gotten over it. My son doesn't consider it a meal unless he's had pasta. They both learned Italian, so that was good.

Q: How long were you there altogether?

HOLMES: Four years. It was a four-year tour. We came back to the United States in '67. We were supposed to go to Libya. I had some health problems. Our assignment was broken. We stayed here two, two and a half years, and then we went off to Paris in 1970.

Paris was beginning ... Paris was an even bigger post. [Interruption]

Now, where are we? We were just going to Paris, just going to Paris.

Q: Because you didn't go to Libya.

HOLMES: Didn't go to Libya, which I've always been sorry about. Paris was a very weird place. It's a tough post.

Q: You'd been there before as a child.

HOLMES: I'd been there before as a child. I'm bilingual. That certainly puts me in a very different category than most people, who have to suffer the slings and insults of the French, who are all too ready to dish it out big time.

But, oddly enough, being half French works for you and against you. This became very evident because you've got to remember 1970-74 when we served in Paris was at the

height of the Vietnam war. And it was the time of the devaluation of the dollar and the enormous break in NATO when the French pulled out.

We were loathed in France. We were not adored at all. Americans really were looked down on. And what would happen is I would be at a dinner table and people would be mouthing off and voicing their discontent with our policies and our insanity. They were particularly upset with the Vietnam war because they felt, "Hey, we did it. We got burned. Why don't you learn the lesson from us? You are going to get just as burned." And we weren't listening. And we were being quite arrogant. And they were very upset with us. It's a love/hate relationship we have and I guess it always will be.

But what would happen to me is they would voice their opinions, thinking that I was French. And then somehow I would ensure that they knew that, indeed, I was not. I was an American. And suddenly they felt betrayed. I was a traitor. First of all, how could you be French and choose American citizenship? That's the first traitorous act. Then how could you masquerade as a Frenchwoman? I wasn't masquerading. But they really saw it as a way of enticing them to say things they probably wouldn't have said to a foreigner. I mean, but people say, "Oh, but how lucky!" [that you speak French] And it is. You're so much better prepared for the cultural part and you are certainly more able to swim in the waters very easily. But you hold a very strange position in that society because you're a half-caste.

In terms of the role of spouses ...

Q: That was to be my next question.

HOLMES: Yes. Well, it was still very hierarchical. Now, you've got to remember the Forum or AAFSW had already been making noises under good leadership. I was a very active member in those days. And we had been saying, "Hey! It's time to change all of this." Particularly, obviously, the whole business of being reported on [by post inspectors]. I mean, we were the revolutionary ones. We were the ones who said, "Stop this nonsense! You don't have the right to judge how I make a cucumber sandwich!" I mean, the fact that there was a paragraph written about us, and whether I drank or didn't drink, or whether I went with Allen to parties and how I behaved, the kind of parties I gave ... Hey! Who was checking up on us? This was intolerable. So there was a lot of that stuff already percolating back here in the States. It was not being translated out there in the field, believe me.

I was under the thumb of the wife because Allen was in the political section. He was taking care of internal political affairs, serving with an autocratic couple. You know, you called on them and you did all the right things and you minded your p's and q's. You arrived at parties ten minutes before [they arrived] and you left ten minutes afterward [they left], and you were always on the lookout for what you should be doing to be helpful. Some of the spouses just prior to our arrival had to do the ambassador's personal Christmas cards. They had to make out all the envelopes. I mean, absolute garbage that

today you hear this stuff and you say, I don't believe this is possible. Hey, it happened! Believe me. We went through that.

So, it was still a very rigid structure. The plus side of that, of course, is that you had far more support within an embassy community, even in a disparate place like Paris, which is so huge, and where the embassy has got so many people and people live all over the place. There's no compound. Well, there are two compounds where you could live, but they really don't accommodate that many people. And so, there are a lot of people who adore it and then there are a lot of people who suffer quietly.

I think it's very tough. You don't really send people out if you don't at least give them the opportunity to get the language skills. That was another thing we were fighting for was language skills for spouses. The male employees, largely, in those days, they go and basically it doesn't matter whether they're in the State Department or in an embassy abroad. They're basically doing the same work.

Q: And they're taken care of.

HOLMES: And they're totally taken care of and they're filling in the same pieces of paper and everything is done in English.

Q: And they have an interpreter.

HOLMES: And they have an interpreter if they need it. Meanwhile, poor old spousey-poo is running around trying to figure out what an "hecto" of anything is or a kilogram. It can be very, very difficult. They have no language skills. Nobody's helped them with anything. People are not helpful in these countries, necessarily. And it's real hell.

The cost of living by that time had become pretty bad. It was a time when we literally didn't go to restaurants -- I'm not talking restaurants. Excuse me. I'm talking bistros -- because the dollar had fallen to something like 3.71 francs to the dollar. And you couldn't afford a hot dog! It was really tough. So don't think people were enjoying two-star restaurants. The only thing in those days the museums were free. But that was about it.

Q: We were in Rotterdam at that time -- Guido was the economic officer -- and we came to Paris for several conferences; and we stayed with his counterpart in the economic section. And I thought, You're not in Paris! You're out in the suburbs. What do these women do all day? Where is the American school? How far did the children have to go? It did not look nice to me at all. And it wasn't so nice for the officer, who, when we drove into the embassy in the morning, had his Screwdriver on the floor shift box -- whatever that is, orange juice and vodka or gin; and he had that, sipping that as he drove in to the office in the morning. He drank all day and all night!

HOLMES: Well, I think there's a lot of depression in the big posts. Frankly, I don't see

why we have posts that size anyway. I don't think we need them. And I think that that's a dying phenomenon. I think that part of the Foreign Service is dying out. Attached agencies are largely ...

Q: I know.

HOLMES: I did a tape on that. "The Embassy of The Future" I called it. Actually, I did it on Rome. There were 275 American employees in the embassy in Rome, and guess how many Foreign Service officers there were in the 275 employees there.

Q: Twenty-two?

HOLMES: Thirty-three! That's including communicators and secretaries. Thirty-three. There were seventy-five Justice. Seventy-five! That's DEA, Commerce, etc. etc. I mean, when you put all those things into it. Fifty-five CIA! Now what are we spying on? In Italy?

I think it's all going to go. But what are all these people doing? Are they doing a lot of things which we don't need any more? The Cold War is finished.

Q: Right. And what I want to ask you is what are their spouses doing? Because when you and I were abroad, our husbands were Foreign Service officers and we had a diplomatic purpose.

HOLMES: Oh, very definitely! A role, I would say.

Q: A role. Do the DEA people have a diplomatic role, the wives? Do the Justice women? Do the trade ... ? What are those women doing over there?

HOLMES: That's a very good question. Well, a lot of people are not going any more, although, you know, when I was director of FLO and I was doing studies, you can't make absolute statements. I learned the demographics change as rapidly as the years go round, and a post will have no spouses and suddenly, all spouses. You really can't make extraordinary statements about what's happening out there. Some spouses are extraordinary at always finding something to do with themselves. I call them the swimmers of this world. And then you have the sinkers of this world, who, whatever happens, they are always miserable. And that seems to go on.

Sure, the "representational" role I don't really think anybody's doing that. There is a lot of it still left at the ambassadorial level, the DCM level; but I think at the lower levels people aren't doing it. They can't afford it, for starters. Whatever small amount of money they have for representation they'd much rather do a "principals only" lunch. Certainly that's what I did to cut costs when I was an ambassador's wife. I found lunches got us a whole lot further. And that way I did a lot where Allen could have one-on-one lunch, which is a really useful thing. That's the way you build a good bond.

Women. I think it all depends. I think in today's world the whole issue of the '72 Directive is one that will be fascinating to review fifty years afterwards to see where it left the people, largely women.

Q: Yes! But I think it's fascinating now that AAFSW, an organization whose members were most principally affected by that, had no voices.

HOLMES: That's interesting.

Q: When push came to shove and they had their forum ...

HOLMES: Yes. The forum report.

Q: ... the AAFSW board could not come to a consensus. They had no part in it. You weren't here then.

HOLMES: No. We were overseas.

Q: Well, I wasn't here either, but I've done enough interviewing to know that the Directive, that that policy was written mainly by mid-level officers and one very feminist woman. There were five or six of them. Only one, to my knowledge, is still married. All of the others were divorced. One of the women came in herself as a rather, I think, successful Foreign Service officer. The one spouse disappeared. She was divorced and I don't know where she went. Carol Pardon was her name. And Rick Williams, I think, was one of the officers. Bill Milam was one of the officers.

HOLMES: Oh, I know Bill Milam.

Q: And he's very proud of having this role because those young men were saying that we can't go abroad under the present circumstances because our wives won't go and our wives need freedom from these restraints. And this policy was written by young males and Macomber, who was a political appointee.

HOLMES: Well, he was married to a great feminist, Phyllis Macomber.

Q: Yes. Well, I talked to her and she was supposed to send me an interview that Warren Unna did with her, and I said, "Well, will you come down for this presentation?" I didn't know what day it was: it's the fifteenth of September. And Sally will be on the Silk Route, so she won't be with us. Mette will be with us. I'm trying to get Phyllis to come. And Mr. Macomber did say two years later in his book, The Angels' Game that one of the -- tragedy wasn't his word -- but one of the losses of the '72 Directive was the loss of recognition for spouses. But it took him two years to put that in writing. So, Janet has often said that it could have been done incrementally, and I think it probably could have, over the years, and maybe preserve something for the traditional spouse of our

generation. I don't know. It's interesting, but you're quite right.

HOLMES: I can tell you that as FLO director, of course, I did a great deal of research about what other foreign services did about their spouses. And it was everything from remuneration, I mean literally paying people, which the Japanese Foreign Service does, to supplying uniforms of the day. The Singaporeans do that. We surveyed over thirty-four countries who did *something* in one way or another.

Q: Sweden.

HOLMES: Sweden, yes. But none of this was really something that we wanted, that any of us could buy into because particularly the Swedish system or the Japanese system was pegged on the employee's salary. In other words, it was a percentage of that salary. Well, you might be doing forty times more work than your spouse. You may be doing all the entertaining for the political section. But your spouse is an FSO-6 or something, so you only get twenty percent of that "0-6" salary when, in fact, you were doing a great deal more work. So it didn't seem to be equitable. Also, I don't think we've ever seen a Congress that would really go along with this.

I worked with the AAFSW on this: where do we go from here, how do you recognize spouses?

Q: Twenty years ago, and we're still wondering! [laughter]

HOLMES: Well, let me tell you that Maryann Minutillo, when she was the FLO director and I was working in the State Department for diplomatic security as a maker of tapes, we decided to look again. My husband by that time was working in the Pentagon and he was always absolutely overwhelmed by the extraordinary degree to which the military really recognized the spouse during the farewell ceremonies. In other words, when an officer is leaving, retiring ... [Interruption]

Q: Okay. You were talking about security and Maryann.

HOLMES: So Maryann was the director of the FLO and then, actually, Kendall Montgomery then took over; and by that time I'd asked my husband to bring me home the package the military used. He did, and it was wonderful. There were certificates of recognition; there were plaques; there were pins. Of course, there were roses and all kinds of wonderful things. And we started thinking, All right, how are we going to apply this? This is wonderful! This is what it should all be about. This is what should be done at the retirement ceremony, and blah, blah, blah, and so forth and so on.

I'll tell you, Jewell. We started looking into it. We looked at the pros and cons. Well, we're not the military. We don't do it. You see, there's an assumption in the military if you're going to be the base commander, you are the base commander's wife. You still today do that role. We don't do that any more. So, how do you start recognizing

somebody who doesn't go overseas any more, but is staying home for a perfectly good reason? Their child is finishing college or high school and about to go to college. They don't want to tear him out of school. You've got an elderly relative. You don't want to do that. Perfectly good reasons to stay at home! I mean, not for reasons of selfishness, "I want to get ahead in my job, therefore, I'm not going overseas." These are "noble" reasons. And again, you're passing judgment on what's noble and what's not! So you have all of those difficulties.

Then, how do you judge because so-and-so serves canapes better or does it more often at post than the lady who is doing the Brownie packs and taking care of the Boy Scouts, who's actually doing more for morale at the post than the lady who's doing the canapes? What kind of judgment are you ruling? So you go round and round. We called a number of panelists to sit on panels to discuss all this, and we got to an A-100 spouse, young spouse, about thirty years old, one post under her belt; and we said, "What do you think about all of this?" And she said, "I think you're crazy! I think just forget all this. We do our thing. The sense of commitment is very different. Most of us are not going to come in thinking this is going to be a lifetime thing. Most of us are going to come in because we're attracted to changing cultures, to different things, different places. We're interested. We're going to do six, eight years. When we start having families or job problems, we're going to quit and go out and do something else."

And you know something? Maybe that is the future. Maybe you're talking about a contractual corps, which will see people coming in and out of the Foreign Service for six-, eight-year periods. And people will go to post and those who enjoy doing these things will do them, and those who don't, won't do them. And I certainly can tell you that in the last two posts that I served in before we came home definitively, women really were doing very little, very little. The spouses were doing the entertaining at lunch, in restaurants largely, and saving their money to do that. And it worked out a great deal better. And the spouses would do whatever they did.

Now, I will tell you some funny stories when we get to the whole Portugal side of things, some of the irony that comes out of this particular problem of what is the role of the spouse. The role that you and I played in the past, I'd say up to 1976, really, when we felt the full effects of '72, was a very tight one. I think it needs to be well diagrammed for people to understand exactly how much a part of the whole mosaic of diplomacy the usually female spouse was. But that really, little by little, has crumbled and you're seeing a very different profile, and I think that needs to be documented. And I think what you're doing is probably going to document that very accurately.

Q: One thing, when you and I were young and came into the service, we were still in the shadow of the pre-War people who a) had lots of money, which they needed; b) had been career because they could afford to be career. People like Joseph Grew were there for forty years. And we were in the shadow of that Foreign Service and a lot of that carried over into our early years.

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely!

Q: And it was only, I think, with the turmoil of the 60s -- we came in in '56 -- that the service changed. Because people like our husbands, who didn't have a great deal, but they had fine educations and they had fine families behind them, and they had a little something to drift into the Foreign Service with. But that all changed even while we were coming in, and people with no extra resources came in, and the service had to change to accommodate them. Because the people with money, like the young Kennedys, all went into politics. How many of them became diplomats after their father? Nobody!

HOLMES: It's just amazing that in our generation we have none of our friends' children who have gone into the Foreign Service, whereas my husband is a Foreign Service brat; I'm a Foreign Service brat. We could speak of quite a few that you and I know who were Foreign Service brats.

We play auntie and uncle to a great many children, as one does in the Foreign Service when you are home and looking after other people's children. And I remember at a Christmas party asking a group of these kids, "Did any of you ever consider the Foreign Service?" My son was the only one who looked up and said, "Yes, for half an hour!"

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: They just simply are not interested, maybe because they themselves were byproducts of being torn up. And I know my son and daughter, who adored their life and really would not exchange it in any way, would not want to live overseas in a permanent fashion. They love going back for trips. They do it all the time. They travel a great deal, but they don't want to live overseas for a long time. My son is not married, but is in a relationship right now with a young lady who has a career that would not allow her to do that; and my daughter is a teacher married to a movie director and certainly a career that would [not] allow for that. So, as you say, the society has so fundamentally, radically changed everything that I think this is just a natural outcome. I don't see that this is all very extraordinary. It's just I think the whole '72 thing was never resolved, and I never thought of it the way you put it. I didn't realize it was made by these five guys.

Q: It was. Do you know Bill Milam well enough to ask him about it sometime?

HOLMES: Oh, yes I do, as a matter of fact, because I interviewed him at length on a C Street tape that I did. Yes.

Q: Well, ask him about it.

HOLMES: I will.

Q: Because he's very proud of it and felt that he did the service a huge favor.

HOLMES: Well, for some people I think that they really felt released. As I say, you asked me earlier did I serve with the dragon ladies. The answer is no, I did not. I mean, my mother-in-law was, I think, one of them. Well, not a real dragon lady. She was a very nice person, but she really thought protocol was important. She lived and died by the book. That little etiquette book, that social usage book was her bible. I remember her letters were simply just full of who came to dinner and what was served and who used what finger bowls. I mean it was all that kind of stuff. Of course, I was always a rebel anyway.

Q: Well, Ann Long, Ann Alling Long, you know.

HOLMES: No, I don't.

Q: Well, her mother was also Mrs. Foreign Service. She never saw her mother in slacks. Her mother's stocking seams were always straight.

HOLMES: Yes, absolutely rigid. Yes.

Q: And Ann just at one point rebelled and moved out into rural Maryland and was happy as a clam. She never saw another calling card or another white glove.

HOLMES: Well, I have to admit, to be very honest with you, I feel pretty much that way. I wouldn't go back to that. I mean, I adored my life in the Foreign Service. I had a wonderful time. But, boy, am I glad it's over! Allen's still in the Foreign Service, but, thank God, he's at the Pentagon; and I don't have to do the role, which I would continue doing because you're born and bred with baggage. You do not shrug it off so easily.

Q: Not that easily.

HOLMES: It's not easy to suddenly become -- presto! -- somebody else. Now, I've fought all those things. I do not believe that you can impose these things on people that were imposed, which were absolutely ludicrous. Honestly, however, I'm not a total idiot and I do think that a lot of the relationships that we did form because of dinners or luncheons or events of some variety that we gave in our homes did, in fact, matter.

I remember once in a quasi-war situation we had to get an immediate, four-o'clock in the morning okay for our planes to land for refueling in Italy because they were going out to this war zone. Well, I mean, they forgot to tell us in time and the planes were ten minutes, or I guess twenty minutes, out of Italian air space when the word finally got to Allen who was then DCM in Rome; and he had to call the prime minister and get his okay. Well, if we hadn't been buddies, it would have been very difficult. But the fact that we were buddies and that I had a link with his spouse and that we had worked together on a project to get kids into a social program for the summer and we got along extremely well, it allowed him to call this guy up at four o'clock in the morning and get an instant okay. But, you know, if he'd never met him or never seen him socially in any other context but a formal call, that wouldn't have existed.

So you can't just throw it out. You can't just say it doesn't matter. It does matter.

Q: It does matter. Yes.

HOLMES: So where do you come out on it? Like everything in life, I think if you handle this in moderation and if you're in those roles, I think it's certainly going to be useful for the relationship.

Q: But I think from the spouse point of view that certainly [there should be] some form of compensation -- and I don't know what it should be -- for the ambassador's wife and the DCM's wife if you expect career people to stay with it.

HOLMES: Pretty hard to do.

Q: Pretty hard to do.

HOLMES: Pretty hard to do. As I say, I have literally worked on this problem since 1980 when I became director of FLO. Probably the best you can do is to give them Social Security, something like that.

Q: Yes, but I don't think you can get Social Security unless you've had a job.

HOLMES: That's correct.

Q: Maybe they should ...

HOLMES: You have to classify this as a job.

Q: ... classify this as a job and pay them a dollar a year.

HOLMES: Yes, something like that.

Q: And Sally had an idea, too, that why not give them education credits.

HOLMES: Well I worked on that. I worked on that. I tried to float that. Of course, you've got to remember, it depends what year you're walking the halls and pounding on the doors of people who make those decisions. If you're in a bad budget year ...

Q: We always have a bad budget year!

HOLMES: Well, actually, no. Madeleine Albright got us more money this year.

Q: Oh, she did?

HOLMES: Yes, she did. But the money isn't going to go to that. There is so much needed.

And then you get into the very big questions about diplomacy. Do we need these extraordinary villas that we keep up? I lived in a villa in Portugal. I had ten servants. I had four gardeners. Do we all need to live like that, and if so, should we not maybe do something like what I hear the Japanese are thinking of or doing, which is running the residence like a club? That is, your residence, you own the third floor, which is the livable floor, usually, certainly in the villa in Paris, and in Rome it's the second floor which is yours. That is sacrosanct. But the bottom floor, which is the representational floor and is huge is open to the public, *i.e.*, at the beginning of the month the ambassador says, This month I'm going to be giving seven receptions, fourteen lunches, and twelve dinners; and the rest is open for whoever wants to use it.

And so the staff gets to use the residence appropriately since there's government money going into that. The space gets used. And you don't have to house these people in these big apartments because they're going to be doing their entertaining in this residence.

So I think that's a palatable. But can you imagine the egos we're talking about in doing this? Of course not. They will never put up with it. I can just see these people, particularly the political appointees, who will go, What? I'm allowed this! I'm doing all this splendid work! I'm sacrificing my salary of God knows how many million dollars a year in order to take this crummy job!

Q: I'm going to turn two floors over the hoi polloi? No way!

HOLMES: Exactly. That's what would happen. But we have untold millions sunk into these places for the benefit of maintaining ... Well, we're one of the most powerful countries in the world and you can't be represented by living in a hole in the wall, in an apartment. But these are big issues that we really haven't come to terms with, and nobody else has either. So it's complicated, very complicated.

I agree with you, The compensation thing? I don't know. I've come to the end of my rope. I've looked at everything [laughter], everything under the sun; and I don't see a recognition that's admissible. I think the only thing that I came up with over this last study that I was telling you about was recognition at the post for what you've done, whatever that may be. And that can be everything from ...

Q: Well, now we have those pins, those Secretary of State and FSO pins.

HOLMES: That's right. Now we have those. And we have the awards like the Avis Bohlen financial award and those awards. And so there are a few things. But really I don't know how to do it any other way. Having looked at that, I couldn't believe because here we had this whole package in hand that the military did. We actually had made out the certificate. Beautiful! With all the flags of every nation in the world. And we couldn't

come up with something that would do. The spouse is out there once and comes back here and then goes back. I mean, works once, doesn't work the next time.

Q: But how about the inequity in the situation where you have a bachelor chief of mission or a bachelor DCM. He has an allowance to hire more than a housekeeper, really, sort of a social director/housekeeper. He's replaced by a married man and that spouse is not entitled to that? That is so inequitable!

HOLMES: Well, yes and no. I have to admit to you part of it is I was lucky enough to work for the bureaucracy before I went out to Portugal as an ambassador's wife. That gave me the knowledge how you write up a position description, better known as a PD. When I got to Portugal and I found out that I was going to have to weigh everything that I was going to serve for dinner and report on everything and make out endless lists about how many Babo cans I used in the guest bathroom as opposed to my bathroom and how many pieces of bacon I served to my guests ... [End of tape 1, side B; Begin tape 2, side A]

Q: All right. Now you were saying that in the ORE ... Well, actually we didn't identify it. "Official residence expenses."

HOLMES: What I did, as I say, I realized that I just didn't want to do all this bookkeeping, keeping separate books of what you served and how much it cost. In those days you still could average out to something per head. Nowadays you can't even do that. You've got literally to say how many lettuce heads you're buying for any given dinner. Anyway, as I say, the Babo cans, and you had to say which one was used in the guest bathroom as opposed to what was used in your own bathroom and so forth. I refused to do that.

So I wrote up a position description that describes somebody who ran this house no matter who came, a bachelor or a non-bachelor. I needed somebody who I could talk to in the morning who would deal with all ten servants who had innumerable problems, everything from cousins who needed jobs to having a leg sawed off. I can't begin to tell you. It was a two-hour job every morning to listen to their complaints, their needs. If nothing else, just to give you an idea, at Christmas time I wrapped 95 packages as gifts, every Christmas, which I did myself because I was giving them out and I didn't want the poor servants to have to wrap them. Anyway, so I wrote this position description and I got somebody. I was allowed to hire somebody to fill it. So that really was extremely helpful.

And I think that in any relatively decent-sized embassy they will allow, if you're smart enough to go to the admin counselor or know enough to go to the admin counselor. You've got to remember that I worked inside the bureaucracy. I know a lot about it. So, in a way I have an unfair advantage. Well, I had an unfair advantage.

Q: But you couldn't get that to be standard operating procedure for other posts?

HOLMES: Again, I don't think anybody's ever made that kind of a rule across the board. I don't think anybody has ever brought this up to "M." First of all, I don't know whether they're still doing the one to four post description, the very large posts being Class 1 posts, saying all Class 1 and Class 2 posts are allowed this, but if you run into a three- or four-man post you don't necessarily need a housekeeper, obviously. So it's very difficult. What you do need there is probably the spouse is going to have to train whatever cook if you can get *any* cook to do whatever, to boil the local cabbage into whatever you can make out of it. So the trials and tribulations are very different according to the post.

Q: So then you came from Lisbon to the FLO.

HOLMES: No, in 1977 we went back out to Rome. My husband was the DCM, and that was a very interesting experience because that was the creation of the FLO office in Rome, which I spearheaded by that time. Of course, I'd been working with the forum group and so forth. Of course, it's all very hotly contested whether Rome or Bangkok was the first FLO. Molly Whitehouse is an old friend of mine and she swears they got it going. I think Cairo was in there, too. Maybe Yemen decided they did it. There were about six of us who did early FLOs.

Q: Early CLOs.

HOLMES: No, we were FLOs then. We were not CLOs.

I ran an office of twenty volunteers and we all took roles and we got it going, and then I got on the blower, was on the phone with Janet Lloyd every day for about six months trying to get a position. Finally got a position, and then we finally got a wonderful person installed in that position. Peggy Ward was our first FLO. And in a place like Rome it really was an effective tool. The wife of our ambassador was a very -- a political appointee, but very professional -- was very busy doing her role in Italian society and it was very broad brush. I mean, they really did look at labor and politics and the intellectual. They were all over the place. They traveled a great deal and they certainly did not have a great deal of time. I felt my role as the spouse of the DCM was to take care of the American community and I devoted my whole time to doing that. But again, because the ambassador was gone a third of the time and Allen was chargé, I had to take over "quasi" those duties.

In fact, we had popes dying while I was there. So, just as a control officer I had Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy to take care of and Mrs. Rosalynn Carter and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, just to give you an idea that this was again this unpaid person because I spoke good Italian. I was the interpreter, I was the control officer, I was the escort office, whatever. I did all of those things perfectly happily.

So you really did need that FLO position because you had a huge embassy of over a thousand people to deal with, living, again, all over the place. We had poor communications and poor transportation, public transportation. It was very, very helpful

to have a very good welcoming system because our personnel system wasn't very good at welcoming people. And we found this made a huge difference in employees' morale. We worked a lot at post morale. And we had a big contingent of Marines; we had twenty-two Marines to take care of, and I felt very strongly about working with them. So I worked hand-in-glove with the FLO. And I think together we really did create a pretty good ambiance, as good as you can get in a post that size.

Q: Say a little bit more about ... I mean, two Popes died.

HOLMES: Two Popes died.

Q: One of them in August.

HOLMES: Yes, the first Pope died and, let's see, that was August. You don't do anything in Italy in August. I guess this was an Italian Pope. He should have known better. But he did choose to die in August. The ambassador and his spouse had gone. They had left the Villa Taverna, the residence, totally empty. All the servants were gone and could be reached God knows where. There was no master list, nothing. The Pope died. The next thing we know we're told that Mrs. Carter, wife of then President Jimmy Carter, is coming as representative of her husband for the Pope's funeral. And she doesn't want to stay in a hotel; she wants to stay at the residence and she wants to be totally cloistered because she doesn't want to be run down by reporters and so forth and so on.

Within something like eight hours I'm supposed to people this residence. So I took my entire staff -- I guess I had five servants -- and got them into the residence uniforms, which had gold buttons with eagles and things. And then I rushed around and got all the security guards, stuffed them into uniforms and said, "Guess what? You're this and you're that. You're a butler. You're this." I was like a drill sergeant. I really drilled them. And, by God, in eight hours we got the silverware out of the coffers. We moved mountains. And we did actually open the villa, and when Mrs. Carter arrived, there we were ready and rolling for action.

She was a charming woman, very thoughtful. Had her picture taken with every one of these people who had worked so hard at making her visit a success, and personally signed it and sent it back to me, which I think is extraordinary.

We jogged every morning together. I must say she's quite an impressive woman. At least she jogs with make-up, which is something I can't do. [laughter] And two, she talks a blue streak while she's jogging and described to me every move on the Hill and how her husband should do this and how her husband should do that. Obviously, she should have been running the White House because she knew a great deal more than her husband did about, effectively, how to run Congress.

The only thing she wanted to do was have a coffee with the Cardinals, and we did that, and that was very nice. And then the rest of the time we were really screening out. The

wife of the prime minister was very anxious to get in there and make hay with her, and that was a little bit of a diplomatic thing. It was hard to do, but we managed to get her in there. It was a very successful visit.

Subsequently, that Pope died. And then the second Pope ...

Q: That was in a month or so!

HOLMES: Yes. And actually she [Mrs. Lillian Carter, aka Miss Lillian] came. I'm sorry. She came for the funeral of Pope John Paul I. Vice President Mondale came for the coronation of John Paul II. I don't remember who they sent out for the funeral of the first Pope. Anyway, all I know is we had Mrs. Carter, we had the vice president, and then, finally, for the funeral of the second one, they sent us ... For one they sent us the aunt, Jimmy Carter's aunt.

Q: Not his mother?

HOLMES: Then the last one, for the funeral of the last one, they sent the mother, Miss Lillian. And she gambled all the way back on her plane because she wanted a whole bunch of nickels so she could play all the way back. [laughter]

The aunt was a character. They arrived and we were told what to do about them. Again, Allen was chargé, so we rushed out and let the prime minister know that this was happening. The prime minister's wife was really quite a piece of work. She immediately said, "Oh, yes, we're giving them dinner!" And, by God, in about two hours she organized a twelve-person dinner! And we were sitting down and somehow I ended up on her left, I guess, which was bizarre, but with twelve that happens sometimes, two women together. The prime minister was a rare case; he was Amintore Fanfani, and he was a poet and a painter and a Renaissance man and he showed us all of his Renaissance skills during the meal. It was like a Charlie Chaplin movie. He kept hopping up and down and reciting poetry and running to the piano and playing a little something and then whipping out a portrait. It was really quite something.

Then, as we got to the end of the meal, the dessert came out, some magnificent ice cream shaped in a beautiful mold of molten spun sugar and it was all very glorious. Mrs. Fanfani said, "I hope she'll like this; it's a peach dessert with raspberry sauce." And I said, "Oh, I'm sure she'll like it. That happens to be the state fruit of Georgia." I hadn't finished those words, I mean, they weren't out of my mouth and she was clinking away on her glass to make a toast and she said, "And for you, magnificently I produce the peach dessert for you in Georgia. Yes." I mean, this woman wouldn't let an opportunity go by. So it was so impressive that she said, "Now we call Jimmy and tell him what a lovely meal you've had!" So, by God, prime minister Fanfani gets on the telephone and before you know it we're talking to the President of the United States, and he insists that everybody come and say hi! [laughter]

Well, I got on the phone and I said, “Hi, Mr. President.” And he said, “How’re you doin’?” And I said, “Just fine. Your aunt’s doing very well.”

Well, she left. She still owes us thirty dollars for stuff we had to send. [laughter]

Q: Good luck!

HOLMES: Yes. Good luck in collecting that.

Q: Tell him you’re not going to buy any of their Habitat for Humanity address labels.

HOLMES: Well, I tell you, Mrs. Carter herself, Rosalynn Carter, really made up. She really made up for it big time.

The only other one I had, which was quite extraordinary, and actually that was in my first incarnation in Rome, I had Mrs. Kennedy. I was escort officer for her and that was quite something. That was about a year after the President had been shot. She was going to Cambodia. She stayed ten days, a lot of work and a very interesting story in itself. But that’s another story. We don’t want to get into that.

It’s much more interesting to talk about spouses.

Q: I’m wondering ...

HOLMES: Do you want to directly go to the FLO job.

Q: No, I’m just wondering how we can use all of this wonderful material, whether we can edit these and put together some kind of video. I don’t know. Let’s don’t put that on tape now. We’ll think about that later. But now, director of FLO. You took over from Janet?

HOLMES: I took over from Janet Lloyd. Actually, I took over from Mette Beecroft. I became the deputy director and then became the director subsequently.

Q: Oh, okay. All right.

HOLMES: So I was deputy for eight months and then became the director after that. It’s utterly fascinating. In a way, it’s great that we’ve had this opportunity to kind of redo this interview because now I have much more perspective on it than I did when we originally interviewed.

When I look at the issues that we were dealing with back in 1980 when the FLO office, when Janet and Mette worked so magnificently in setting up this office, it was a very hard-boiled bureaucracy, as you know.

Q: As they both mentioned.

HOLMES: Oh, sure, because if you think turning these guys around was easy, it was not! And these women had never worked in an embassy. They didn't know what a memo looked like. They didn't know what a telegram looked like. They had to learn from scratch. And nobody was out there to help.

Q: Janet said that Wingate was invaluable.

HOLMES: He's very supportive.

Q: Yes. Supportive, and just helped her immeasurably.

HOLMES: If we are happy people today it's because we had highly supportive husbands who, even if the government wasn't recognizing us, I feel very strongly that my husband always recognized me. He was always very supportive and always felt that everything I did was something he was grateful for. And that was really nice! I didn't ask for that.

Q: It just worked out that way.

HOLMES: But I really thought it was a great partnership. It worked as a partnership. How about that? We get into NATO.

Anyway, the issues when I became director of the FLO, other than getting established and getting the respect of these men, largely men. You've got to remember there were very few women in that building.

Q: Well, and even some of the women ...

HOLMES: Yes, some of the women were worse than the men.

Q: They were in a man's world.

HOLMES: That's right, and they were tougher than the men. But we had good allies, I'll tell you. Joan Clark, now there's a woman who really was an ally, and Mary Ryan, two absolutely extraordinary women Foreign Service officers whom I had the highest respect for and, boy, were they ever supportive and helpful at the time that we needed them.

But you know, the biggest issue at the time for FLO ... You've got to remember there was very little linkage between the overseas efforts that were going on and the home office and there really isn't that much even today. I mean, there's some, but not a whole lot, and it's largely with jobs. But the issue when I did this thing was really largely the divorce, the pension issue, and most of our clients were direct, walk-in clients who needed help, who needed counseling, who needed to basically unburden themselves and talk, and did. And I won't tell you the kinds of things that I saw and heard, and I'm sure Mette will have told you the same thing.

First of all, the number of people who I thought were leading impeccable lives and it turns out were not leading impeccable lives or anything but; and really, some pretty horrible, scabby details. And I think a terrible situation was males largely were leaving their spouses after twenty-five years, thirty years, and dumping them for young popies who lived with him, whatever. I mean, I'm not being judgmental about this, but I'm just saying that the thanks that they were getting was not a cent. And this new person, who usually was a lot younger, was suddenly getting all the benefits for having done nothing!

As you know, the classic and most awful case was that of Jane Dubs, and that was actually scandalous. Here, this woman, for twenty-five years supported her husband totally.

Q: When he was going to graduate school.

HOLMES: Exactly.

Q: The problem there I have been told was that she was an alcoholic.

HOLMES: Oh, really.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: I didn't know that.

Q: ... And he was a very nice man. Everyone liked him. On one hand you hear that he was really generous with her and did what he could, but it was his life and so he went off with Maryann, who never went to post, or if she did, she was in and out. But that's another story. But I have heard on more than one occasion that Jane Dubs was an alcoholic.

HOLMES: Yes. I would say maybe half of the people had an alcohol problem. And that was one of the problems with the Foreign Service. I really don't think it is today any more, but in those days we did not have any support system. You weren't given language training and you couldn't do anything but suffer in silence or do something if you could do something. So I think a lot of women who went out there for a lot of the reasons we've mentioned earlier in this interview -- an inability to communicate or because you were in a place where it was very difficult to do anything -- turned to the bottle. And you've got to remember we're in a business where there is a lot of booze!

Q: A lot of booze!

HOLMES: And it's available ...

Q: And very cheap.

HOLMES: ... at ten o'clock in the morning because you're going to a coffee where they are as likely as not to serve you a sherry at eleven o'clock, and at noon you're already starting that cocktail hour and so before you know it it's the six o'clock cocktails and you go to three of those, and then you're going to dinner where there's more cocktails and more wine and an after-dinner liqueur. All this was going on big time when we were in the Foreign Service. Booze was cheap. It was cheaper than water! I remember Scotch was two bucks a bottle or a dollar-fifty a bottle at the commissary. Everything helped you become an alcoholic. It helped you relax. Inhibitions as far as your language skills are concerned diminish rapidly when you're having a couple of drinks. It's amazing how fluent you get! [laughter]

So it's a social order that nearly throws you into alcoholism. I really think that. I think today it's just fascinating to see. It is generational. When you go to a cocktail party and there are younger people, anybody under forty-five is going to be drinking wine or spritzers or Perrier water or Evian, and the older people will be drinking hard liquor. But believe me, under forty-five you never see anybody drinking hard liquor.

Q: No.

HOLMES: It's just disappeared. So it's kind of interesting, but certainly, yes, in my day there was a great deal of it. I saw a lot of it, people who were literal alcoholics.

At FLO we tried desperately to address ourselves to that famous issue, divorce, and, of course, it was the AAFSW that did the heavy-hitting stuff. We had to make sure that we could give them all the support they could get in the building to make sure that they were signing the right pieces of paper and we could go forward.

My biggest concern, of course, has always been children and therefore I put a lot of emphasis and did create the education counselor as a position. It was a partially funded position. The FSW really funded most of it; Bernice Muncie ran it. But I hired the first real education counselor and turned that into a position I was very proud of. This is something you really need to be able to go to somebody who can give you the full panorama of what's available out there for your child. Suppose there's a problem. Suppose you have a child with a learning disability. Suppose you have a particularly gifted child. Suppose you have a child in his last year of high school. What do you do? Where do you go? What are your options? Plus we did fight very hard to unmarry the allowances.

If you remember, we used to have to send our children to Department of Defense schools. We didn't want to do that. We finally fought and we finally won that battle, but you have no idea. I mean, you can say that in one sentence, but it takes you two years to do it, or seven years to do it. George Vest is the man, by the way, to ask on that issue because I think he did more, he and the Hartmans did more than anybody else to make that divorce happen.

Education. Jobs, of course, was very much of an issue, but certainly not anywhere near the issue it is today when we're talking about sheer necessity. I think most people today are in the economy not because of the women's lib thing, but because they really need the two incomes. If you look at college and you're looking at the District of Columbia, you have no options. You're going to have to send your child out of state unless you're lucky enough to live in Virginia or Maryland or belong to a state where there's a good university system. But you're looking at many thousands of dollars a year for education costs.

Q: A friend said it's like taking out another mortgage.

HOLMES: That's right. It is exactly that. Janet had gotten the first bilateral work agreement (with Canada) that allows reciprocal country spouses to work in this country so we can work in that country. By the time I left after two years ... I felt very strongly about leaving after two years, by the way. It is now a five-year job. I think it's too long. I think you become a bureaucrat by five years, and you really are supposed to be an advocate. We had fourteen [bilateral work agreements] by the time I left, which was not a bad average because, believe me, a lot of those were really hard to get. We had to go through union talks and all kinds of things. At first, you can't imagine why it wouldn't work very easily, but there a lot of things that were thrown in our way. And then examining all the other possibilities within an embassy and the family member program that we started and so forth, the consular program. So we really ransacked our minds.

And I did the first mental health conference where we addressed mental health needs.

Q: The Kabul incident?

HOLMES: Well, it was right after the Kabul talks, and it was largely because of that and I had Elmore Rigamer at my side. As a matter of fact, as you know, we were partners for many years, writing a number of scripts together on the effects of terrorism, trauma, move changing, raising children, all of those issues we covered on tape. And those are all part of the FLO library now. I think they're good tools.

Anyway, we had the first mental health conference. Actually, Mette Beecroft set it up in Bonn, and I think that's the first conference on that subject that ever happened in our history. Then I went around the world for the first time with Susan McClintock, who was my employment counselor, and that was extraordinarily interesting looking at the problems that were so different as we went from one post to another.

In Beijing there was not a whole lot FLO could do except the admin counselor and I had a whole day's talk and basically they couldn't breathe! I pounded the doors of the executive secretary when I got back to make sure that they had adequate machines in their homes to filter the air. I couldn't believe it.

There was a young couple -- actually she became a CLO in Beijing, Pam Indall. She took

out her filter, which had been clean in the morning, and washed it out in the bathtub for me. And she had an eight months' old baby. The baby's breathing this air. The entire rim of the bathtub was black with soot, with one day's take, because they burn brown coal. It's absolute death. You walk in the street and you can't breathe.

Q: Ankara was that way. Sao Paulo was bad. I was sitting in the embassy in Mexico City once and looked around wondering if I was the only one who couldn't seem to breathe. Terrible!

HOLMES: Yes. Of course, again, these are new issues that are being recognized today, but they were not recognized then.

Q: Well, we were fortunately never assigned to a place like that, but I remember people weren't getting any hardship pay for that.

HOLMES: Yes, and being properly equipped with the right equipment. At least give them the minimum, basic that you could get away with! Don't get me going because I have some really terrible stories. I was head of FLO when Chernobyl happened and we knew that cloud was going over Warsaw and we didn't advise them. I can't believe that we didn't do that!

Q: We didn't get our people out?

HOLMES: No. We did not.

Q: Do we see any results from that now?

HOLMES: Depends who you talk to.

Q: The people who have it or the people who don't. [laughter]

HOLMES: That's right. If you want to talk about inequities of the Foreign Service vis-a-vis personnel Marianne Stoessel.

Q: You know, I tried to talk to her years ago, and she refused. Maybe she'd be more communicative now.

HOLMES: I mean on the subject of this radiation. I mean she's convinced that the Russians killed him [her husband].

Q: Perhaps you could talk to her and to Sheila Platt.

HOLMES: Oh, Sheila's no problem!

Q: And say that I would be most interested in talking to them.

HOLMES: Well, remember, Marianne is not our generation. She's that older generation we're talking about. She's ten years older than we are, or you're much younger than I am. So you'll get a very different picture.

Sheila is very much a today's person with her own identity.

Q: But that would be interesting!

HOLMES: Yes. Yes. They're very, very different women. And Marianne Stoessel, I'm sure, really has the perfect flower in the finger bowl and the lace doily.

Q: Still?

HOLMES: I'm sure. Most of my guests eat at the kitchen table.

Q: Well, I don't have an eat-in kitchen, but I serve in the kitchen. And I remember the first time we did that, the first time guests in the kitchen, I thought, Well, I really have conquered the Foreign Service! It doesn't bother me at all! [laughter]

HOLMES: I love it! And I'm just so happy that I don't have any finger bowls around any more. It's a funny reaction. It is not one of bitterness or anything like that. It's just thank God, I don't have to do this garbage any more!

Q: And I thought, Why am I clearing the books and the photos off of the table in the little downstairs -- we live in a townhouse -- downstairs living room, taking all the food in there, closing the little louvered door to the kitchen? Why am I doing this? Because I've learned a lot from my children's entertaining. My daughter lives here.

HOLMES: Aren't you fortunate?

Q: Yes, I really am. And so I've gotten more and more relaxed.

HOLMES: So have I.

Q: And I entertain that generation a lot, too.

HOLMES: Yes. Well, the only people I entertain are the ones we like.

Q: Yes. That's all we have to do! Right! [laughter]

HOLMES: We don't have to put up with all of those others.

Q: Right! Right! Exactly. So how are we doing on time?

HOLMES: The only thing left really is Portugal. The role of the ambassador's wife. I can do it in five minutes, if you like.

Q: Okay. I don't think that's on the other tape. I don't remember that it is.

HOLMES: Well, I have made a few references, so that might help. And then we could pick up any questions that you have.

Q: What years?

HOLMES: Portugal was '82 to '85.

Q: So the Directive was ten years old.

HOLMES: The Directive was ten years old.

Q: It didn't make any difference in the lives that you led. [laughter]

HOLMES: Certainly not in the life I led! Well, yes, it gave me the thrust of getting my own person to run that house.

Q: True. True.

HOLMES: I knew better than to get railroaded into that. Utterly fascinating. I leave Washington. I've been the director of FLO. I am ... I wouldn't say a feminist really, but, boy, I'm full of "wim" and "wigor" and I'm out there for spouses and, boy, I want equal opportunity for them to work and for them to get compensation and all of these things, which, as I now tell you, I'm pretty irresolute about. But I have all the answers now. I have all the answers. I'm FLO director. I'm invulnerable. I'm quasi-infallible.

So I go out there and I do all the right things, supposedly. The first couple of days we have two receptions. We have everybody in the house. I mean everybody: the gardeners, the whole works. And back-to-back receptions and so on. Then I invite the country team spouses for lunch, all women, fifteen women, and I invite them to lunch. And I say, "Look, I'm going to be straight with you. First of all, it's a new era, a new Foreign Service. I used to be the director of the FLO office. I'm now here. I'm here to tell you that we can all do what it is we want to do. Nobody's got to do anything. Nobody's got to worry about anything, and I'm sure if you just tell me what you would like to do in the way of work, I'll see if we can hurry up this, get this ..." (because we had not signed an agreement with the Portuguese; we were still working on it) "... and I'll try and do something about that so you can work for the local economy." And I went through this whole spiel and all these women are looking at me as though I'd lost my mind!

Q: Who is this? [laughter]

HOLMES: And who is this creature? Where is she coming from? What rock did she crawl out from under? So I paused after a while because I don't feel great support here.

Q: You're not getting through! [laughter]

HOLMES: I'm not exactly getting good vibes! So I stop and finally one of them gets the nerve and speaks up and says, "You know, we all used to work back in the States. And it's so nice here in Portugal. We all have maids now, and we all play golf all day, and you know something? We love that." And shove it, lady, was what they were really saying. Get off your schtick about work. We don't want to work. We're thrilled! We don't want a job. We've all been teachers, or whatever they were, and they were all thrilled. They were living in this place which, I must say, Jewell, the one thing I adored about Portugal -- and there weren't many -- was the fact that it was at the time a very democratic post. And by that I mean everybody from the communicator to the ambassador could stay in a five-star hotel for thirty-five dollars a night, every meal included, for a weekend. It was heaven on earth and everybody could enjoy the same thing. There were no disparities that we've talked about in the big posts like Paris and Rome where if you've got money, and you've certainly referred to money, too, that makes a big difference.

Well, this was a great post in that way. And all these people were having a fabulous time doing their thing. They were playing golf. Wonderful golf courses. They were going down to the Algarve. They were running around. They were collecting port wines. They were doing whatever they were doing, but they were enjoying it.

So -- this is where you're really going to get a laugh -- so Christmas comes around, my first Christmas, and I thought, well, we're going to have a big Christmas party and I will bake all these Christmas cookies and isn't this going to be nice. We're going to have a big Santa Claus and we'll really do this up. Of course, in Portugal they don't grow fir trees; you have to make them. You bind all these fir branches together. The residence was enormous and you needed a very big tree. So we give this huge Christmas party the first year. And you won't believe this: after the Christmas party, a group of the country team spouses comes to me and they say, "You know, we're really hurt because you didn't ask us to bake any cookies."

Q: Oh! [laughter]

HOLMES: I said, "Excuse me?"

Q: Am I hearing this right?

HOLMES: Am I hearing this right? You want to bake? Oh, yes! We want to help. We really want to participate! We really want to help you! So you know what I ended up having to do? In the end, I had to give luncheon parties so they could come over and bake cookies in my kitchen, and I had to send my staff out of the house so we could take over the kitchen. It was a hideously complicated arrangement!

Q: Made it more trouble for you.

HOLMES: Far more trouble! And everybody came to the lunch.

Q: Why didn't they bake cookies at home?

HOLMES: Because the fun was to do it all together, and I must say it was a lot of fun and we got a lot of giggles and people were throwing dough at each other. It was a cozy arrangement. It was a great team of people. But "why won't you allow us to bake the cookies?" I thought, Oh, God, this is it! You guys don't want to work. You guys want to bake cookies! What's wrong with you? [laughter] I mean you're the opposite of everything I've ever read about; every profile tells me you're all wrong.

The role of the ambassador's wife. It certainly is a role. Yes. There's no question that I think I did fulfill a role. It was one of those very lucky things. As I told you earlier, of course, I'm fluent in French. My Portuguese is lousy. I have to tell you right away. I was never very good. I could communicate perfectly well. I just didn't like it, and I was scared of losing my Italian. But Mrs. Soares had had her exile [in France]. You know, he was exiled, Mr. Soares was exiled, for many years, a Socialist. He was prime minister when we were there for most of the time and I became very close to Mrs. Soares. We had been to the same university and had shared some of the same professors; so that helped a lot. She spoke perfect French and we discussed a lot of ideas and then she asked me to do something which I suppose I really shouldn't talk about, but I did.

I gave him some hints about how to use his ... He didn't know how to project on television at all. And because I'd worked in television I could be helpful. And then she and I together worked and designed a program on how to change Portuguese nutritional habits. They are the world's absolutely worst eaters. They eat scads of all the wrong things: yellow of egg, sugar in quantities, salt in quantities, oil quantities, saturated fats and so forth. Unbelievable! We designed an interesting little program, got some help from a wonderful company that was doing "The Visible Body" and that was utterly fascinating. I do think that that made a big difference in Allen's relationship with Mrs. Soares.

The burdens of that kind of job certainly got home to me. In the three years we were there we had a total of eight state visits. By that I mean either the Secretary of State or the President either going there or coming to us. I just can't tell you how tiring they are and how much extra work and how much wasted work there is, work that really shouldn't be done.

Before the President, in our case, Reagan, arrived, they had three advance visits. One hundred and ten people flew in ten days before the President did for a forty-hour layover. The visit itself cost five million dollars. We had to build a bed for the President. He's only six feet tall. I had two beds in my house that were built for the then ambassador Tap Bennett who's six-two. No, that wouldn't do because Nancy likes a double bed. So they

had to build a bed. They came with their own china. I can't tell you. It's an imperial presidency. I think people don't realize.

Q: They came with their own china?

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: The crested stuff wasn't good enough for them?

HOLMES: I guess not. I guess not. We want the bulls-eye-red stuff. I don't even remember when we used it. I'm not sure we did. I was told to never be in the picture with Mrs. Reagan, only the interpreter and whoever she was meeting and greeting. I had to make up her whole schedule, I, the spouse, this unpaid creature. And whenever she screwed up and that happened because she would fall behind in time, I was the one who also had to make up excuses for why these things happened.

Anyway, we had four Presidential visits and four Secretary of State visits, and I just can't tell you the amount of work. The amount of work starts with what should the president of the United States be giving in tribute to the president of Portugal. What do you send in? Well, you really wrack your skull, and I really did think of some interesting stuff because he was a hunter, so I thought a good rifle; he was a rider, so I thought a Western saddle. All these brilliant things. And, of course, they show up with a Steuben bowl! [laughter] Why bother, please, if you're going to go and buy Steuben, go and buy your Steuben, but don't bother me with your wretched telegrams!

We had to go and evaluate whether he could do the miracle of Fatima, you know, where Fatima did her thing; but then it was decided that somebody had to do it on their knees and I didn't think the President would want to do it on his knees; so Fatima was taken out of the picture. It wasn't a good photo op.

You know, there are so many funny angles to this job that in a way, as I look back, I wouldn't have missed any of it. I laughed. I remember we had a lunch here. This was Shultz. This was, I guess, for the President. And Lucky Roosevelt was the head of protocol and I bet she wished she hadn't been. It was a huge luncheon up on the eighth floor, and it was full, 120 people, something like that. At every center of every table was an epergne, which is this long thin thing that goes up and has all these branches that go out and you have all these flowers. Well, the point of fact is you look ahead of you and all you see is this thing staring at you, and people are peering on either side of it.

Well, Shultz had a horror of this. It absolutely drove him crazy. So when we sat down, he knocked on his glass and a huge hush fell. We thought he was going to start the toast. And the butlers were already there with their platters upheld and ready to go on the signal. And he said, "Remove these things from the center of the table!" So these poor guys had to put down their platters and come rushing out, and it was not easy to do because there were beautiful trailing vines all over the place, getting around these things and they were

falling all over the place. And, of course, then we were all staring at each other crisscross. And poor Lucky Roosevelt. I felt so badly for her.

You have all these funny moments. So, it really was highly entertaining. But what I'm trying to say is a lot of work, a lot of hard work. Everything from thinking about what the 110 people who were there for ten days before -- they had to be taken care of. You had to give a party for them. You had to feed and water them because they were called in from all around the world. And it was just an amazing mechanism the likes of which I don't think exist anywhere else.

It was interesting. The British ambassador was a very good friend of ours. She [his wife] was a very good friend of mine. They had the Queen. Yes, a couple of weeks after we had Reagan. They didn't have a quarter of the amount of fuss and bother! They had a food taster, but other than that, they had far fewer problems!

Q: Did she come on her yacht?

HOLMES: She came on her yacht. Yes.

Q: That makes it easier.

HOLMES: And she lived on it. Yes. And she was very discreet about it. And other than the food taster, that's about all. But I mean, I can't tell you, it wasn't a quarter of the fuss! It worked out very well, by the way. She gave me all of her staff for my visit, and I gave her all of my staff for her visit. That's what you call an entente cordiale. It worked very well.

Q: What happens to the non-career, the political wives when they suddenly find themselves in this situation? Do some of them rise to the occasion?

HOLMES: Well, they do. I think some absolutely adore it.

Q: For a couple of years. I had one tell me that she did.

HOLMES: Well, the ones I've served under were largely women who were basically very socially oriented to start with. Some of them had some background in this kind of world. Others didn't, but loved the title and loved doing this, loved rubbing shoulders with the mighty.

I must say there's a wonderful thing when you are an ambassador. Somebody thinks you're a big deal even if you don't. And you can go down a list and say I want this writer, I want that painter, and I want this cellist. It was fun to organize fun dinners. Where else in the world can you sit down and be sitting next to Fellini or Leonardo Sciascia or ... I mean, great writers, great thinkers, great painters. I'm not saying -- don't misunderstand me ...

Q: That all dinners were that way. [laughter]

HOLMES: Oh, my God! For every time I sat next to one of those people I sat next to a fat, balding general who was trying to tell me how many airplanes didn't run or how many bombs he was short or whatever, if I was lucky enough to get that much out of him! But you do have these opportunities and they can be fun.

On balance, in the end, would I do it again? I'm glad I don't have to do it again! But I certainly don't regret a day of it.

Q: Everyone says that. Everyone is glad they did it, but they wouldn't do it tomorrow.

HOLMES: Oh, I wouldn't either. There's no way.

Q: We're older now.

HOLMES: Well, that's right. It's time to do something else, and I'm thrilled to be doing something else. But I feel it was a very rich ... And I mainly feel pretty good about the fact that it did not warp my kids. They're great. They feel good and they feel very American.

Q: Exactly. Mine the same.

HOLMES: Because I have very close friends whose kids are not. If that had happened, then I'm not so sure I'd say that phrase about I feel good about it. I would not have felt good.

Q: Yes, but I think that speaks directly to your home life and your attitude towards the service.

HOLMES: I think that's true. I think it speaks directly to the spouse, the employee spouse, who really did understand the importance that home life was really more important than whatever they were doing at the office despite the extraordinary pressures put on them. They were serfs. They were serfs. I mean, when Allen was an ambassador's aide, he was a serf.

Q: And you were a serfess. [laughter]

HOLMES: And I was a serfess. Absolutely! Unpaid serfess! [laughter] But when I look back, I don't regret it. I can't say I look back with regret because I don't. I really don't. But it was a different time, a different era, different expectations. I didn't feel that anything was being denied me. And I have to admit I'm an extremely lucky woman because just at the right time because of my AAFSW relationship I had been following all these things in the forum report, got into FLO. That allowed me to get back into video. I

didn't really know video -- I'd done film before. But it opened that door and allowed me to go on and do video productions. So I didn't miss out. I was really lucky. A lot of people haven't been so lucky, so I can really understand where for some people it wasn't that great an experience. I have a lot of sympathy for them. I recognize I was a very, very lucky person. But I just feel I've been very lucky all my life.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Henry Allen Holmes

Spouse's Position: Political Officer/Counselor, DCM, AEP, Assistant Secretary of State, AEP at Large

Spouse Entered Service: 1959

Left Service:

You Entered Service: 1959

Left Service:

Status: Daughter of AID Officer; Wife and Daughter-in-law of FSO

Posts:

1959-61	Yaounde, Cameroon
1961-63	Washington, DC
1963-67	Rome, Italy
1967-70	Washington, DC
1970-74	Paris, France
1974-77	Washington, DC
1977-80	Rome, Italy
1980-82	Washington, DC
1982-85	Lisbon, Portugal
1985-89	Washington, DC

Date/Place of birth: Paris, France; April 14, 1934

Maiden Name: Marilyn Janet Strauss

Parents:

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald M. Strauss, FSRO (AID)

Schools: American School of Paris, Sorbonne, Wells College, University Gregoriana

Profession: Television Writer/Producer

Date/Place of Marriage: Washington, DC; July 25, 1959

Children:

Katherine Anne
Gerald Allen

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:

A. At Post - NO PAID POSITIONS/Full time spouse with representational duties;
Advisor for health campaign to wife of Portuguese president; Italian language teacher;
French language teacher; Planned Parenthood Volunteer; AAFSW Officer and Member,
etc.

B. In Washington, DC - ALL PAID/Director of the Family Liaison Office, Department of
State; Film Editor; Film Producer; TV Writer/Producer

Honors (Scholastic, FS related): Superior Honor Award, Department of State

End of interview