

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

**MARGUERITE COOPER**

*Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi  
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[Note: This interview was not edited by Ms. Cooper.]

*Q: Marguerite Cooper was a founding member of the Women's Action Organization (WAO), Department of State, in 1970. She was recruited by Barbara Goode and brought into an informal board of directors when WAO had arranged to meet with Deputy Under Secretary Macomber on the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage, which Mildred Marcy had gotten Macomber to commit to.*

COOPER: I came into that meeting for WAO because Alison Palmer dropped out. She was part of the quasi steering group and decided that she was taking a different route -- to sue the Department; she felt it wasn't worthwhile to work within the Department of State. The suit was successful, incidentally. She won on grounds of discrimination and received \$70,000, which she turned over and reinvested in a class action suit, something we just don't want. (Class action suit was successful.)

Those who were most active and influential in WAO at that time were career employees, so our focus then was getting women simply the right to be married, which we did not have. This situation applied also to secretaries, who in addition were not permitted to have dependents. This stricture was not in writing, it was, rather, the way in which regulations were interpreted -- i.e., you had to be available for worldwide service. By extension, then, (was the interpretation) you couldn't qualify if you were married. If you married at post, you lost your allowance, and there was a possibility you might lose your American pay, on the assumption that you remained at post of your own volition, not for the needs of the Service.

In August we got Macomber's agreement that obviously it was against the law to require that women be unmarried when it was not required of male employees. We worked through that problem during the Fall. During this period spouses came to us saying they wanted the right to work abroad, so fairly early that became part of our agenda. My recollection is that several months later, probably about the Spring of 1971 -- I departed in June or July '71 -- some young women went to the Open Forum Panel and said, "We want to have removed the regulation that now allows comments on employees' families to be included in Efficiency Reports."

As I remember it, the Open Panel Forum came to WAO and asked if we wanted to co-sponsor the meeting on this problem. We did. The women presented their case.

Standard operating procedure would then provide that the Forum would pose the problem to the Secretary for consideration. So at that point to a certain extent all we were as facilitators. So far as I know that was the only thing that we did. What was accomplished was that wording of the directive that went out in 1972 over Macomber's signature declaring that spouses of employees were not themselves employees and were to be treated as private individuals. About that, others are more knowledgeable than I.

*Q: What I'm really looking for here (referring to files) is light on the Task Force compiled by Dorothy Stansbury while she was Director of family training at FSI. The Task Force developed the Guidelines which were released as Management Reform Bulletin #20, which caused the uproar that prompted Carol Pardon to write her article and which certainly prompted the Open Forum meeting that led to the '72 Directive. I can't find any names of the women who were on the original task force (Fenzi subsequently found the names in a 1971 article in State magazine), and there were 27 of them; nor do I find names of their spouses. (they begin identifying people from some photographs)*

COOPER: That's Mary Olmstead, the caption stating that in 1972 she was "receiving the Presidential Management Award for WAO from President Nixon." In Summer of 1971 I left for overseas, so I can't be useful to you after, say, August '71. I came back in July '72, went out again in December '72.

*Q: That's what's happened with all of us -- none of us was here for the whole thing -*

COOPER: This is the crucial paper I mentioned that Macomber signed off on -- the airgram "Implementing the Policy on Equal Opportunity for Women and Employment Abroad of Dependents of Spouses."

The other thing that may not be in your recollection or files is the Ad Hoc Committee on Spouses that finally led to the creation of FLO (Family Liaison Office). That was while I was president of WAO. My recollection is that Hope Meyers, Priscilla Becker and others who were members of the American Association of Foreign Service Women (AAFSW) wanted to create a committee to work on a whole host of family concerns within the Foreign Service, which they felt were not receiving attention because of the earlier policy on wives and spouses being "private persons." The women wanted to put their complaints before Management. WAO said, "That's fine, that's the way that we and WAO work all the time. You must research your complaints, put them down correctly, and that will be fine; you can use us as your umbrella."

I do remember that I worked with the group on the draft of their first meeting with the Director-General of the Foreign Service, Carol Laise. Hope Meyers and her committee had come up with a fairly long list of things they were concerned about. I tried to work with them on how to put their concerns in the form either of an Information Memorandum or an Action Memorandum, and to help them structure the presentation so as to get maximum attention for their ideas.

The relationship between the Ad Hoc Committee under Hope Meyers and WAO was very,

very loose. I'm not able to be informative on what happened under Hope Meyers. Later, when Cynthia Chard was leading that group, I know that we were very helpful. She also began the Data Bank. I know that her group, the Skills Bank, went down and lobbied individual members of Congress and got into the appropriations bill on two successive years, as I recall, money to create either a skills bank or a data bank or what eventually became FLO.

My recollection is that the earliest focus of that effort was the idea of using the data resources of family members for employment in the Foreign Service; not other educational and family issues. I wanted to make that clear. Cynthia was our vice president of WAO for State. That would have been in 1976, when I was president. These are the matters that I wanted to outline that I think have gotten lost or distorted over the years. Well, you see, your issue is our issue!

*Q: Well, I just really recently discovered that you had had as much input as you did in directing the AAFSW.*

COOPER: Frankly, at the time my own personal feeling was that I expected at some time to marry.

*Q: And you did.*

COOPER: I was in my 30s and I wanted that to be something that I would want to be as a Foreign Service spouse. That was the first thing, my personal motivation. In addition, I felt as a matter of policy that you would not want a Foreign Service consisting only of bachelors or of persons whose family concerns were a very low priority to them. Because we didn't feel that represented American values. We thought that it would be very bad if that came to pass.

*Q: Let's talk about the 1976 task force.*

COOPER: That was the task force that Macomber set up that finally was published in "Diplomacy for the Seventies" series. It was totally employee-oriented, to the best of my recollection. As a matter of fact, it had no concentration whatsoever on female employees. That was one of the ways that WAO first got organized and energized, because when they could not get Macomber and the task force to consider -- for example, at the time women had problems with housing and household effects; all single officers, men and women, did. But all women had to be single, therefore it affected every woman, virtually. Every female Foreign Service employee had the problem that the limit on their household effects was about 50% that of a couple. That's outrageous, because a single person had to have a kitchen, pots and pans, dishes and all the rest, so the incremental amount for two people living together is not a full 50%.

It was those kinds of concerns, plus marriage and some others, that WAO brought to Macomber. We were trying to get the task force to set up specifically subcommittees on women. Jean Joyce and Mary Olmstead will know more about this, but my recollection is

that what the WAO wanted was appointment of separate committees, or the existing committee subject matters with a separate subcommittee looking specifically at how a problem, whatever it was, impacted on women. And Macomber and staff said no, they weren't going to change their organizing for this task force.

*Q: Do you have any idea how Dorothy Stansbury was chosen to head the Wives' Course?*

COOPER: I believe that she was chairman of the Wives' Course in 1970 when WAO was formed. If you want to know how she became president of WAO, you should ask Mary Olmstead, because Stansbury supplanted her. My recollection is that Dorothy had been a career officer, perhaps of USIA; that she married in Africa; and that she continued to work off and on, mostly off; and was forced to resign when she married. From time to time, when assigned to an African country and they needed someone to do something -- "needs of the Service" -- I think she did something. As I recall she spent quite some time in Paris working for UNESCO or whatever, I've forgotten where. I have a feeling that she was the kind of case in which the Department of State had some sort of humanitarian responsibility for the wives of the fallen. You know, there were officers who had died and the wives obviously needed to take care of themselves. If you could give them a good job, the wife was bright and had had experience before her husband died and she could do this.

I believe that she worked in Paris after she was a widow, because we got into a conversation about how can you give dinner parties. She said, "You give them consommé first, you give them roast beef, you give them baked potatoes, you give them peas. And then you follow up with a good salad with a very good quality blue cheese dressing." I forget what dessert would be -- I'm not a dessert person -- "and you give the same menu to them all. And you're able to do it as a single person. You're able to entertain as much as anybody else, because you don't invite the same persons back to your house more than once a year and they're going to forget what they ate at your house the last time around."

*Q: She seems to me an odd choice to put in charge of a group of women, a group of wives who were going overseas to do really just the opposite, almost, in those days --*

COOPER: Oh, certainly.

*Q: -- who found their identity in their representation. It seems to me a strange personnel assignment.*

COOPER: Yes; I think that may be true. On the other hand, she knew how the system worked, and that was the advantage of having someone like her.

*Q: The same with Mary Vance Trent being an officer, she knew how the system worked. She was extraordinarily clever in setting up the Wives' Course, going straight to Mrs. Johnson, who was then the Vice President's wife. You were president of WAO at the time that the appropriations were --*

COOPER: The Department's appropriation bill included creation of the FLO, as a result of

Cynthia Chard and her committee who went to the Hill and lobbied Congress directly. I think it started out that they got money to start the Skills Bank. The next year's appropriation bill was a bit broader and included more language training for spouses and some other spousal --

*Q: Well, Cynthia did all the groundwork, then dropped out of sight. Did she go overseas?*

COOPER: What happened was that at the time she had -- I forget whether it was called for in the legislation or if this was the way the Department responded to that legislation -- she wanted to be the contractor to develop the Skills Bank on spouses. She had already begun that for us -- not for us: she began it, to my chagrin my board would not fund it.

*Q: I can understand why your board might not fund it.*

COOPER: The thing is, what we wanted to do, we knew that -- I mean, if you asked a spouse to pay \$2, just the processing cost, you could have recouped your money. But in the beginning, my recollection is, somehow I made certain that Cynthia Chard had \$200 and I've forgotten whether it came out of my pocket personally or whether I got it out of WAO's budget. I was so mad, I was then so chagrined that she wouldn't have the money to Xerox, to buy stamps --

*Q: She was working on this as a spouse, right? Wasn't she working in the Department too?*

COOPER: I don't know whether she may have had some contract work with the Bureau of CU. She developed the Skills Bank concept.

As a result of Alison's two suits, including citation of hanky-panky with her personnel file and some other aspects, the essence of a later suit that she instituted was that the Department of State's discrimination against women in the Officer corps "is systemic and systematic". Systemic meaning is not a matter of an individual grudge or bias against an individual. It is just the result of assumptions about what women do and do not do and what women want to do and don't want to do, what women are good at and not good at. Gender and gender identification. You know, how many female GSOs have you ever known in your life? How many female administrative counselors have you known in your life? How many female personnel officers have you known in your life?? Why are women supposed to be so good at personnel and not at security?

So that's gender identification. And it really holds true from the time that they do or do not recruit you until when they select you out for failure to be promoted in every aspect. So that's the systematic part of it: systemic and systematic. So that was the class action suit. It has a very checkered history. It was remanded back through the administrative procedures before it comes back as a lawsuit. And it was at that point that Alison got me to file separately as a class action. So there is a separate suit, under the name of Marguerite Cooper v. James Baker, Secretary of State. At that time my name was King and the suit was against Kissinger. But that was a fluke, a technicality.

Finally, when she and, I think, three other co-plaintiffs had exhausted their administrative remedies, then they were permitted to refile as a suit. Finally we got them to accept us as a class action. Several years later we got them to agree to consolidate the two suits. In the development of the case we had to be specific about what our grievances were. To a certain extent that itself influenced the nature of the legal claim. It was inherently difficult to show what was, for me, terribly important -- discrimination in assignment by function and by geographic region. In those years you were discouraged in going to Latin America because men only respect nuns and their sisters, anybody else would be fair game for sexual harassment. You didn't go to Africa because it was too dangerous. You didn't go to the Middle East because women were looked down upon. You didn't go to Eastern Europe because if you were single perforce, you might be entrapped and blackmailed. You didn't go to Southeast Asia because women were looked down upon. You didn't go to the Far East because the Japanese --

*Q: That left you Europe. (she laughs)*

COOPER: And even Europe was by/like race. It really left you working in the Department. I was personally interested in that issue because I think it affected my career more.

*Q: What were you able to do after you were married? Were you able to be tandemly employed at the same post?*

COOPER: Well, there was not a vacancy in Lahore when my husband was Consul General there. So I have a letter signed by Arch Blood that gave me leave without pay for the duration of my husband's assignment in Lahore. Actually I requested reassignment some time during that first six-month period there, assignment as close as possible to Lahore. There was one opening I could have taken as Cultural Affairs Officer because the Cultural Affairs Officer was leaving and I would not have been in the direct chain of command of my husband. I didn't do that because it had been my experience that men put women in cultural affairs assignments because they doubted their ability to deal with other political and security issues, and I was afraid I would pay for it the rest of my career if it were in my resume. So I didn't. But when the deputy position in the Consulate General came open because of a medical problem -- I had let Howie Schaffer, our Personnel Officer back in the Department then, know that I would like it very much. At that point there were very few tandem couples. Howie and Tezi Schaffer were one, Carol Laise and Ambassador Bunker were another. There were maybe ten, and we didn't really know what was the problem.

So I argued that we would be able to get around the problem of bias, that is, the necessity, the expectation that as a deputy principal officer my husband, the principal officer, would write my Efficiency Reports and the problems of bias. So I wrote Schaffer what I thought about that. They decided that even if I was the only Foreign Service Officer available at the time qualified by language, grade and area of specialty and functional specialty, that they would. They took George Griffith who was posted in Islamabad and moved him down to Lahore and moved me up to his position in Islamabad. He was a grade below me; he also didn't have a language. But he was a fine officer, he did a good job.

*Q: Just for the record of our Spouse Oral History Project, while you were on leave without pay in Lahore you obviously were the spouse of the Consul General. How did you fill your time?*

COOPER: There was a lot to do. First of all, there was a great family need. My husband, Gordon King, had lost his wife the year before and his daughter had been killed in an automobile accident. He had a child, a young boy of 17, who was going to school and having, frankly, emotional problems at the time. So just being the wife and mother was an important function for me. The second was that because he had arrived at post just six months before, he was still decorating the house. So I got into some of the reupholstery. At the end I think there was about \$500 left, maybe \$300, left for doing something for the family quarters. So I had to figure out a way to do that inexpensively that would be cheerful, personal, intimate, because the house was so formal, otherwise.

There was a gardener and we had three indoor servants and three outdoor servants. There was a lot of supervision, a lot of parties and all of that sort of thing. I had hired a secretary to come and work for me for four hours a day, three or four days a week, just putting papers in order, also writing my creditors to inform them of my change of name and address. My relationship to, say, the American Women's Club was that I refused to be their president, although it was in their constitution. I asked them to change that and substitute "elected." This is my recollection, though I'm not certain it's accurate. They 'd had a habit of always meeting in the Residence and I asked them if they'd rotate it, and I'd be glad to take my share of the rotation. In addition to which, obviously if the Club had a big function it had to be at the Residence. But if you were talking about where should 12 women meet, I didn't want it always to be in the Residence and feel that I was responsible for shepherding them around. I felt that if the organization fulfilled its immediate purpose, the women would volunteer themselves. We all had servants in Lahore, there was no reason why anyone couldn't come up with tea and cookies.

I also remember that I was troubled by my relationship to such groups as the Girl Scouts, Red Cross and others. Someone told me their constitution had me as a member of their board. I did not want to discourage them in any way from having a strong tie to the American government through the Consulate General. I did not want in any way to convey the feeling that I didn't think what they were doing was terribly important and valuable. Everybody in this life makes their own priorities, and even though that was not my priority -- I chose a career over volunteerism -- I didn't want there to be the barest sniff that that was my feeling. So in writing to them I said I was grateful for this and very honored to be on the board, or being your president, or whatever, "I have no objection whatsoever should you wish to use this on your stationery in some kind of a symbolic way that shows symbolically my support for you. But as a career officer I could at any time be recalled to duty and you will understand that I would then feel that I was not able to carry out my responsibilities to your organization. So I will greatly appreciate it if [whatever position it was that was mentioned] be ex officio." That was the way I tried to handle that. Because I do think that those things are terribly important; I know that they're important. And I know what it feels like to be a senior wife and younger officers not being willing to help.

*Q: Let me ask you: Were they not willing to help or did you just feel that you could not ask them to help? Or was it a little of both?*

COOPER: I didn't have enough experience with that to be able to tell you when I was in that position. I was in Lahore as a dependent spouse only six months. And because another person was president of the Women's Club, things were done that way. The Consulate General was so small that you were only dealing with three or four officers. The Consular Officer was unmarried, the Deputy Principal Officer had medical problems and had a wife who decided that I was after his job and who would virtually forbid him to come to our house. Behavior verging on the insane. So obviously there was no question that I could ask her to do anything. The Station Chief's wife then kind of stepped down and did some things that I needed done, such as with the big Fourth of July Reception and when a ship arrives; that sort of event. She would be a kind of official hostess and do the kinds of things that you needed. The young unmarried Consular Officer was a diamond-in-the-rough, she didn't know protocol enough to know what she was supposed to do. She probably would have been willing to do it if your manner had not sounded bossy when you asked. I find that there's just a lot of variation.

*Q: What year was this?*

COOPER: It would have been between January 1st and July 30 of 1972. The branch PAO's wife, Jeanie Miller, was down to earth, it all came naturally, you never had to ask her to do anything. She was the kind of person you'd go to and ask, "How do you want to divide this up? What should you do, what should I do?" You just sat down to talk to her, you divvied it up and that was it. So it really never came down to a point where I had to test how to do that.

The DCM's wife in Islamabad attempted to do a bit of arm-twisting on behalf of the Ambassador's wife. For the international bazaar in which you raise money for local charities, I was asked to provide some canned goods, cookies, whatever, and I did it. It was absolutely easy as pie for me to do, I wouldn't have thought not to do it -- married, unmarried, man or woman, it wouldn't have occurred to me not to do it. Whereas another woman of my same rank, who is now a senior officer of the Department of State, called me up and was insulted that she'd been asked to bring cans of pork and beans, or whatever; food that could be sold or given (I forget which) to the needy. It seemed to me that that was ungenerous of spirit, regardless of the situation! I suppose that in that sense I was "insensitive" because it had never been a problem to me. Just as I was very insensitive to women's desire to use "Ms." It didn't bother me. I knew that people needed to know your status, so my first sets of calling cards read "Miss" so that people would know how to address me when they sent me a letter. It was only after I had been married, then divorced, that changing your name back seemed to broadcast on short wave the fact that a major tragedy had happened to you and was something that you believed on a personal matter. THEN I understood why women wanted to use "Ms."

To regress, I just was not sensitive to the problem that a senior wife would find younger wives resistant to taking direction, because frankly I had not served in positions where

senior wives had thrown their weight around. I think that there were such women. The wife of Ambassador MacArthur in Japan, Meyer in Iran; you can name names, you know who they were, who were so outrageous in the extremity of their demands. And also their lack of relevance to getting the job done. That was part of it. The other part of it was, I think more and more young women came to feel that their responsibility to their children had as great legitimacy as their responsibility to promotion of their husband's career. And that seemed a change in two vital values.

After all, think of it: a hundred years ago, children did not speak unless they were spoken to. You know, all this business now about smothering and mothering and developing your children's potential, et cetera, if you think of how your grandparents' parents were brought up, and your mother and father were brought up, and how much attention was given to them, things change; expectations change.

*Q: Do you know Rick Williamson? Do you know where he is? He worked on the directive.*

COOPER: Well, you see, I worked for Ambassador Williamson who also was "Rick Williamson." (Fenzi agrees not the same person) I have no recollection of the one you refer to.

*Q: I was going to ask about his wife, who was very instrumental in the events leading up to the 72 Directive because she had an experience in Munich -- [tape cut off here for some interim discussion, then resumes]*

*Let's back up: your husband accompanied you to Islamabad and that was OK. Then you came back to the Department for five years, then you could go as DCM to places like Khartoum or --*

COOPER: The thing for me to do in terms of career progression at that point was to show that I could be a broad gauged manager. There were very few DCMships at the old O-3, currently O-1, level. A lot of them were in the jungle or in the desert in Africa or some god-forsaken places, where he did not want to go. He said, "I have put in my 27 years with the Foreign Service, I have spent my career in the jungle and the desert, and I am 60 years old and I don't know how much longer I'm going to live and I want to live well. I'm going to just go around the world like a hippy, fancy-free, and do my own thing." He also did not like being a "house husband."

I had a particularly hard job in the Department of State. We were trying to prepare the Secretary of State to appear at the Vance-Brown-Brzezinski early morning breakfasts where they would thresh out where there were differences of agreement between State and Defense over our policy. We often would not get what the Defense Department was proposing to discuss until four o'clock of the preceding afternoon. Then we had to run around and find out from people at the other Desks what should be State's policy. And I had to sit down and write that up in understandable English, brief very concisely for the Secretary of State for him to use as his talking points in the meeting next morning with Secretary Brown. There's probably one night a week, if not more, when I did not get home

at 6:30, perhaps not at 7:30.

I remember one evening I came in and Gordon was standing there, a scotch in his hand, looking I thought a bit tipsy, which for him was very strange: he didn't drink very much. "Lib must be laughing her head off in Heaven." Lib was the name of his former wife, who always complained that he was married to the Foreign Service and not to her. As I saw it, what he was saying was now he was getting it back. And he didn't like it at all. He felt that looking after the house was somehow a degrading thing. I asked him, then how was it that he could have asked a woman that he loved all those years to have done that for him? It went totally over his head, it was not comprehensible. So I have always said that my former husband supported the women's cause, it was only its effects that he didn't like.

*Q: (laughing heartily) Well put!*

COOPER: When Jean Joyce, Iris Rozell and others in WAO, the earliest formation of WAO, went to Macomber's staff and said, "Women have grievances they wish to be taken into consideration as the Task Force looks at the problems of the Foreign Service"

*Q: "Women" being employees or wives, or both?*

COOPER: I'm not certain but, based upon who those members were, that they were talking totally about employees.

*Q: I would think so too.*

COOPER: Macomber's staff person said, "Well, who are you? You're just a bunch of women. And furthermore you're not even Foreign Service Officers." I don't know how explicitly that came out, but "you're not important, whom do you represent?" So the women said, "Aha, OK, we have to show them whom we represent." So Jean Joyce, Iris Rozell and others went out. They found a high-ranking woman Foreign Service Officer who could be their front person -- that's Mary Olmstead. Mary did not mind being used, just as I didn't mind being used by the class action suit because I believe in its cause but I knew they were using me to add respectability to what they were doing.

At first these women were rejected by Macomber. So then, if a bunch of spouses come in and say to a Macomber staff person, "We've got these grievances and you'd better do what we say or else. Because we represent thousands of women out there." They might have said, "Well, God, you know we were wrong before, we'd better pay attention to these women."

*Q: Very likely.*

COOPER: That is pure hypothesis --

*Q: No but it's very likely, I think.*

COOPER: This is the way that various ambassadorial wives coped with the changed circumstances and their inability to just direct spouses to do what they wanted. We just mentioned one that was positive, which was the Neumanns in Afghanistan, which I heard by hearsay because I was in Pakistan. There was negative feedback from something that Carol Laise did when she was Ambassador to Nepal. The person who reported it to me didn't like it, but as I understand it her policy was: if she gave an official entertainment and spouses were invited to attend or free to attend, the spouse was free to come or not come. But if they came, they had to work.

*Q: That seems fair enough, because she wasn't inviting them because she liked them -- I'm not saying she disliked them but --*

COOPER: Right. This is not a social occasion, this is a business occasion. I don't know why this person was offended, because very often in these situations it's the way -- the intonation, the way you word it, the way you're holding your mouth, what's already happened to you 20 years ago -- God knows... It could have nothing to do with Carol Laise, let's say. That seemed to me to be a reasonable thing. Sometimes Gordon would come to things that I gave, sometimes he wouldn't. Normally he would come unless there was something else that was more important to him.

*Q: As my husband said, "What else did you have to do in Sierra Leone?" (she laughs) What do you think is the solution for tandem couples? Maybe not so much tandem couples as just the Foreign Service wife. What is the solution as we move further and further into a society where you almost have to have two incomes? Unless (she laughs) the State Department wants to double the Officers' income. And women's expectations change -- perhaps that's more important.*

COOPER: Well, as I left, what people were saying is that more and more of the wives of officers coming in are highly educated, trained professionals in the kinds of occupations which are very difficult to pursue abroad. Such as lawyer and doctor. So the PIT (part-time, intermittent, temporary employment) solution doesn't work anymore.

*Q: It's interesting how quickly that PIT solution was outmoded, in my estimation.*

COOPER: Well, you see the reason that people thought that was the perfect solution was in everybody's mind, women were secretaries. (Fenzi concurs) Even the housewife, you know, was (imitating stridently domineering voice) back down there somehow a hidden secretary, you know. (both laugh) So, I don't know. I think that what we need to do is to constantly be -- there's never any ultimate solution. You have to keep growing, and changing. Your first position could be radical, but it's overcome by events in two months.

I remember we took a position that we were going to permit discrimination in assignments where in certain situations assigning a woman would harm U.S. national interests, and there would be a board set up so the Department wouldn't be sued if they failed to send women to Saudi Arabia. Then a legal decision was made that it doesn't make any difference if it harms national security, it's still illegal. So then we went back and looked at

it and said, "How harmful is it?? Let's go back ...." And then we found examples of women working in Muslim countries in which "nothing happened." So, you know, what is great today may be no good tomorrow. What I think we need to do is go to professions in the United States that have elements in common with the Foreign Service and to find out how they deal with this problem.

*Q: I thought they came to us to see how we deal with the problem.*

COOPER: Well, we all learn from one another. There's no use going to Sweden to find out how they solve the problem, because the culture is so different and their expectations of the relationship between government and family life are so different. But we can learn from our Canadian friends, for example, and we may learn from our Swiss friends, for example. What banks do, and what corporations do when they assign their employees a lot. I think we have to keep working at it.

You know, pluralism is something we think of as a great value that we have, and I think that's what we're talking about for women -- the right not to be pigeonholed, to say, "I want to be a homemaker and that is my occupation." And that's fine. All women are not nurses or teachers or secretaries or whatever. That's the main thing, to increase the opportunity to let every individual rise to the maximum of their potential without having to lose something along the way. Alison Palmer, who was so brave -- I'm not sure how smart she was -- has really ruined her health over the years. She has arthritis of the bone marrow that doesn't allow her to stand or to sit very long but over the years she has just fought like a tiger. But the strain of it has virtually destroyed her as a person able to contribute to a regular profession. And I think that the reason for that strain is that she was rejected, she was betrayed, she was vilified. And that's where we need to go in the future -- to greater tolerance for a variety of what is acceptable in people's lives.

That was the reason I liked what the Neumanns were doing in Afghanistan, because it appeared to me that it permitted an orderly framework -- human beings need an orderly framework in order to know how to behave -- I thought it provided what appeared to be genuine freedom of choice. You could participate, or not. Now, I don't know how that got implemented. I always got along well with the Neumanns because I was quite accustomed to being the child prodigy, you know, who was always so bright, and Neumann responds very well to that. But I would suspect that he could also be a dictator and that some people might be intimidated. So that it might be that a system of voluntarily having these meetings once a month was not perceived to have been genuinely neutral in its career implications for some younger employees. One doesn't know. But I think that's the way we have to move.

Another thing is that we need to insist that we get the money out of Congress for representation that is required. And if not, maybe we ought to stop giving fancy parties and give tea and crumpets -- give things within our means.

*Q: My husband and I never had any trouble with representation. We always were reimbursed, especially in Brazil; because no one else was entertaining, there was plenty of*

*money. Why weren't they entertaining? They just weren't, even the heads of Sections in Brasilia would give one huge -- I don't know, perhaps Brasilia is unique, I don't think it is. Brasilia had zillions of missions, zillions of diplomats from every country, and only a finite number of Brazilians. So they'd give receptions and 200 Americans and diplomats would come and, truly, four Brazilians! I felt sorry for them, really. So maybe that's why they didn't entertain more, but they didn't entertain in small dinner parties.*

COOPER: That's crazy.

*Q: It seems to me that would have been the way to go.*

COOPER: Yes. In Lisbon, when I was inspecting, the employees gave luncheons in midday, took their contact to lunch, and they gave as rationale that they lived a 40-minute drive away from Lisbon, whereas the Socialist government people all lived in town. They didn't really want to go out at night, they wanted to be with their families. This arose in relationship to the question of why do we have these big representational homes, that (1) aren't functional for that purpose, and (2) they're going to expensive restaurants, why are they spending so much money in restaurants? And it was frequently one on one. And they needed to train other staff members, the heads of Sections; they needed to include a junior or middle-grade officer so that they knew how to do it in future. So I know there are many places around the world where entertaining is not functional. But part of this is just ignorance of good management practices in the Foreign Service. If you know what your goal is, and you know what your target audience is for a particular objective, then you know who it is that you need to get on with and be entertaining to.

*Q: But what kind of saving would it be if we really took a hard look at this and started cutting down on some of the big Residences? When we were in Trinidad, we were paying \$5,000 a month rent for the DCM's house. And he was within walking distance of the office and yet he sent for a car every day. So we had to have, I guess, more cars, more drivers -- (she laughs) I don't know, but it was just an ostentatious waste, really. He did use the Residence, he did entertain, but we didn't need to be paying \$5,000 a month rent. I think we finally told the owners we weren't going to pay that any more and they were so afraid they'd lose us that the rent was lowered significantly.*

COOPER: Yes, the thing with representation is a genuine problem, but it's changing in the sense that more and more entertainment is going on out of the home rather than in the home.

*End of Interview*