

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

JUDITH A.M. LATHAM

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 10th of May 2017, this is an interview with Judith A.M. Latham; L-A-T-H-A-M. And you go by Judy?

LATHAM: No, I don't. I go by Judith.

Q: You go by Judith.

LATHAM: Yes, because I follow Shakespeare. He had twins, a boy and a girl who were named Hamnet and Judith. There is a fictionalized auto-biography by Grace Tiffany called My Father Had a Daughter: Judith Shakespeare's Tale, which was published in 2003. As you know, in William Shakespeare's time, only men appeared on stage. Women were played by young boys.

Q: Well Judith and I are both inhabitants of Goodwin House which is an Episcopal retirement home in Falls Church, Virginia. And we're in her beautifully appointed apartment.

All right. Let's start at the beginning. Tell me about your father's family. Where did they come from?

LATHAM: Okay. My father's family originally settled in the American colonies in 1632. They were Puritans named Williams who lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. My direct ancestor was the brother of Roger Williams, who later fled to Rhode Island and founded an Anabaptist settlement there. They subsequently migrated to the Deep South, to what local people called South Georgia. My father grew up in Vidalia, home of the Vidalia onion.

Q: In Georgia?

LATHAM: Yes, in Georgia. My grandparents separated when he was young and subsequently divorced. My father's mentor, Uncle Harry, was his father's brother, and was a plastic surgeon. At that time, men were typically paid for their week's work on Saturday nights. And in the African-American section of town, there were so-called "clubs," places where you could stop on the way home and have a few drinks. Those who actually got drunk would sometimes get into fights with their pocket knives and slice one another up. They might end up in the gutter, so to speak. My great uncle Harry, the surgeon, would stitch people up right on the street. My father, Wallace, carried his uncle's black bag and was fascinated by this experience. He was so fascinated by this concept of repairing people right on the street that he decided that he wanted to be a plastic surgeon, too. But the Great Depression hit the country during his second year of college and he had to quit school and go to work. The famous baseball player from Georgia, Ty Cobb, had seen my father play ball and convinced him he should become a professional athlete.

He was an inspiration to my father but had the reputation of being a rather unpleasant man in real life. My father got his start with the Texas League, in Galveston. My mother's home town was Houston. Her best friend's husband was later the mayor of Houston and her father's family actually owned the minor league baseball team my father was playing for. Not long after that he was discovered by a scout for the Philadelphia Athletics, a major league team. After his first year with the Athletics, he was named the most valuable rookie player in the American league. A few years later he was traded to the Chicago White Sox. I was still in school in Philadelphia, but my mother and I joined my father in Chicago during the summer season there. Later, my father played right field for the Boston Red Sox and they won the pennant in 1946, although they lost the World Series that year to the St. Louis Cardinals. I remember that somewhere around that time my father took me to the St. Louis Zoo, where animals were kept in their natural habitat. As a child I was crazy about animals and I remember meeting and falling in love with Henry, a three-year-old orangutan at the St. Louis Zoo. I have no recollection of this but my mother later told me that when I was about 18-months old we lived in an apartment building in the suburbs of Philadelphia. One of the families there had an Irish setter I was head-over-heels about. I apparently had thrust my little arm into the dog's mouth. Of course, he didn't bite me but, according to my mother, it illustrated my absolute trust in animals, especially dogs. Later on, that included even wild animals.

Q: I want to go back to your father's roots in New England.

LATHAM: The roots were in New England, but what happened was that during the Civil War one of my ancestors who was captured in northern New York State, was released from what was essentially a POW (Prisoner of War) camp of the Union Army and he walked all the way back to his home in Georgia. Because, I mean, that's what you did.

Q: Yes. Well, were there any stories in the family about the Civil War and-?

LATHAM: Oh, yes. Because at the time my father was growing up the experience of the Civil War was so real in their imagination. My father's grandfather remembered being told about the Civil War by his mother. And in our family, in what later became the Moses family (but then it was the Williams family), they alternated, I don't quite understand, for a number of generations, boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, girl. And what happened was that each of us seemed to have inherited the temperaments of our opposite sex parents. As a baby, I didn't look like my father, although photos show that he had been a towhead when he was little. He used to throw me into the air when I was about, oh, six months old, and catch me. I mean, it was easy. He threw a baseball into the air and caught it, so it was no problem. And he was being interviewed by someone from the newspaper and the reporter who was interviewing him caught a shot of the two of us. I'll show you a picture which I'll bring to you; it's my favorite picture of my father, actually.

Q: Your father's name, the family name at that point?

LATHAM: My father's baseball name was Wally Moses. But he was often called "Mose" for short but only Wallace by members of his family. That's my father and that's

the picture that was shot by the photographer. Now, here is another photo of my father as a little boy. He and my two-year-old granddaughter, Sophie, look exactly alike at the same age. And here's a picture of his mother, who had hair almost to her ankles, which she braided and wound around her head in the style of the women at that time. And it was her grandmother who had died at the age of 96. She had 16 children; she did not wear glasses and she had every one of her original teeth. So, I was brought up being told that this was my model, although I'm not going to make it.

Q: Well what, I'm curious about what happened in your area during the Civil War? I mean, what were you getting?

LATHAM: Well, their land was in the area of Sherman's march to the sea. So, all of the cropland was destroyed. And at that point there was a lot of sugar cane and there was a lot of tobacco. And my father's sister married someone who owned one of those plantations, inherited one of those former plantations that then became, you know, it produced willow trees and Spanish moss mostly and sugar cane - and peanuts. And it was not very far from Vidalia, in Swainsboro, Georgia.

Q: My grandfather was of German stock and grew up in Wisconsin. And he was with a German regiment and was an officer in Sherman's army.

LATHAM: Really?

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: Oh, so we were on the opposite side.

Q: Absolutely.

LATHAM: But now we're neighbors.

Q: Absolutely.

LATHAM: We are both residents of the same retirement home.

Q: Yes. Well, where did your mother and father meet?

LATHAM: They met in Galveston when my father was playing baseball in the Texas League. And they were introduced by my mother's best friend who was the wife of the family who owned the team.

Q: Well now, what sort of education did your mother have?

LATHAM: Well, she, as I say, she was born in Texas, not in Galveston, but in Houston. And she was born into a German family. And her family was split religiously. They were half Catholics from the Rhineland, the Alsace-Lorraine region, and half Christian

Scientists. And her mother was a Christian Science practitioner. And when she was sick her mother would simply read her the 23rd Psalm and Mary Baker Eddy. But they spoke German at home and of course English in school so English was her first language but- I guess German was actually her first language but English was her working language. And her mother's first marriage was to a man who had his own interior decorating business and she joined him in the business. And then she left Texas to go to Hollywood because she was hired by MGM Studios as a costume designer. One of the movies that MGM made was the story of the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. And my mother had a movie contract actually for bit parts, you know. And she had just flaming red hair and corkscrew curls that were so popular then. So, she and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. were in the same class at school and were friends, and many years later I met him here in Washington.

Q: Let's talk about your childhood. Where were you born?

LATHAM: I was born in a hospital in Germantown.

Q: Germantown, Pennsylvania?

LATHAM: Yes, a suburb of Philadelphia.

Q: And your father was-?

LATHAM: My father at that time was with the Philadelphia Athletics and he had been named the most valuable player in the league. And what happened was that he was in an automobile accident with a friend. He was driving his friend's Cadillac, a huge car, really solid, and a school bus cut in front of them. And my father tried to miss the school bus but his friend, whose car it was, pulled the wheel and they rolled over three times in a ditch. And my father said the only thing that saved his life was it was such a sturdy car. But until that time he had been riding motorcycles with his little brother, who was 13 years younger. And when he was 18 he had a terrible accident, and his little brother, who was five, was thrown but not hurt. And while my father was in a hospital in a coma his mother sold the motorcycle. So, I was taught this story that I was never to ride on a motorcycle or in a convertible, and I passed that advice down to my son. I said there are only two things I forbid - motorcycles and convertibles and hard drugs. Otherwise everything's negotiable. And I knew I had, in a way I knew I had to do that because he had a personality so like mine in that he might not argue with you but once he thought something he held onto it. And it was just his pursuit of the truth as it were, you know, of why things are as they are that topped everything else. And I think that's what ultimately led him into the profession that he went into.

Q: Which was?

LATHAM: Well, he's a clinical psychologist. And he is now in a special program to train psychoanalysts.

Q: Where did he get his education?

LATHAM: The University of Virginia. Well, Yorktown High School in Arlington, Virginia, and then the University of Virginia. And then went to Georgetown to the School of Foreign Service and was not happy there and dropped out and then went to work for a friend who owned a computer business. This was at the time that there were all these small computer start-ups and anybody who had gotten through college, or even through high school, had to be able to use a computer. So, my son was very good at it but his great love was art. He was a gifted and talented student in art but had a real struggle with learning to read, which was odd.

Q: Sounds like dyslexia.

LATHAM: Yes. Like Rockefeller's son. Well like Rockefeller himself, the governor, Governor Rockefeller. But it was not, it's not a function of intelligence; it's a function of-

Q: No, it's-

LATHAM: It's the way the brain is actually constructed. Constructed - I don't know if that's the right word, but essentially becomes....

Q: Wired.

LATHAM: Wired, thank you. There's a wonderful, wonderful psychiatrist at Columbia University who is a researcher. His name is Eric Kandel. And he's from Vienna. And I actually introduced my son to him. It was very, very exciting because he had been working for the Holocaust Research Institute with the Swiss commission that was trying to recover the art stolen during the Second World War. And he was fluent in German. The three people who worked for Dr. Sybil Milton, who was essentially the person running this program for the Swiss government, were all people who were bilingual. And anyway, I told you the rest of the story.

Q: All right. Now, did you grow up in Philadelphia?

LATHAM: I did. But we were in Chicago for five summers and that was when I was going to museums there. And then we were in Boston for three summers and that was when my father was on the same team as Ted Williams and Dom DiMaggio. When the Red Sox were playing in Philadelphia, my parents still had a place there, and they came to our home for dinner. And we played Chopsticks on the piano together, and Ted told me that his little girl wanted a baby elephant. So I spent the whole evening trying to convince him to buy the baby elephant that she had seen at the circus. I failed.

Q: What was your family like? Did you sit around the table at dinnertime or-? Your father was pretty busy all the time.

LATHAM: He was.

Q: So, did you have brothers or sisters?

LATHAM: No. I was an only child and I had always wanted to have a little sister but didn't. I said a dog would be very nice. That would be just fine.

Q: Dogs are better than sisters.

LATHAM: Well, I thought so. But I didn't get one of those either. So, I saw that as a somewhat deprived childhood, but only in the sense of companionship.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

LATHAM: I read continually from the time I first learned to read. And I remember when I was in the fifth grade we had a library in the back of our fifth-grade room and in it was a whole set of Twins books: the French twins, the Japanese twins, the Bobbsey Twins, you know. And I read every single one of them. I was reading the equivalent of a book a day and the teacher, who had required us to do 10 written reports on these books, said, "Let's just go for a walk and talk about them." And then I was reading so many books that she said, "We don't need to walk anymore." My closest friend at that time was the daughter of an OB-GYN (obstetrics-gynecology) doctor and his family used to go to Cape May Point. Do you know where Cape May Point is? He had a boat there.

Q: This is New Jersey.

LATHAM: Yes. And he loved his motorboat, and he and my father and Betsy and I would go out on the boat together. And then I would spend two weeks every summer with Betsy's family there. And they had something called Cape May diamonds, which were actually silica or sand, but they looked like opals. And they were prize possessions there.

Q: Did you spend an awful lot of time at home? I mean, being the only child staying in the corner and reading?

LATHAM: No. I spent a lot of time at school because I went to school an hour earlier than everyone else and then stayed in the afternoons later to practice the piano. And then we had a May pole event that we practiced for, and we started doing Shakespeare plays. And I remember the first Shakespeare play I saw was when I was five years old. And the first scene I recall very, very clearly was the scene where the heroine's prospective suitors are actually choosing a box that contained her portrait. Her father had put her portrait in the least valuable box because he wanted to find out whether these young men were truly interested in his daughter or they were interested in his possessions. And Portia married Bassanio, the best friend of the Merchant of Venice for whom the play is named. Now, Shylock was from a Jewish family who lived in a ghetto, which was common at the time of Shakespeare. Shylock's speech about the experience of being

Jewish is essentially the play's most moving speech. Portia's most moving speech is in the trial scene where she is trying to explain mercy to Shylock.

Q: Yes. The quality of mercy-

LATHAM: "Is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven."

Q: Right.

LATHAM: And that so riveted me that I sat and talked with the girl who was playing Shylock. And she told me about the multiple layers of meaning in Shakespeare's works as a poet and as a playwright, and I fell in love with him. And our upstairs neighbor was also in love with him and when I went away to college she gave me my first prayer book, the Episcopal prayer book. When I was 8 years old, she also gave me my first Shakespeare, which had been hers as a girl. The edition was dated 1923, which was nearly 100 years ago.

Q: Well now, where did your family fall religiously?

LATHAM: Well, my father was a Baptist, continued to be a Baptist, but was sort of a bad boy as a lot of Baptists from the Deep South are. And so, everywhere he went he packed his Bible. But he also packed his bottle of bourbon, and on one of his trips the bottle of bourbon broke in the suitcase with his Bible and the pages were all stuck together. So, he couldn't pull them apart very easily. He gave me that Bible, and what he did after that was to get himself another Bible and a metal hip flask, a silver flask, so there would never be a problem of breaking a bottle of bourbon in his suitcase again. Does that give you some idea of the nature of his thinking?

Q: Yes. Well, where did your family fall politically?

LATHAM: Oh, my goodness. They were incredibly conservative. My father thought that Franklin, FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) was just a demon. I, on the other hand, did not. I grew up in a later generation, and in my school, I read Plato and Aristotle and Herodotus and the Greek playwrights and the Epic of Gilgamesh, and I thought what was really valuable was contained in those writings. And I can remember my poetry teacher saying to us; we had two semesters of poetry, and she said, "Well, your parents will probably ask you why you're doing this and I what I want you to tell them is that poetry is necessary to life." Well, I had enough good sense not to tell my father that poetry was necessary to life. He wouldn't have believed it. But he did believe that music was necessary to life and that faith was necessary to life.

Q: Well then, what were your favorite courses? Let's take elementary school first.

LATHAM: Well, I got perfect 100s in nature study, which was certainly college certifying. But in first grade, in gym and physical education I got an 84. And it said clearly on our report cards, which were from kindergarten to twelfth grade, the college

certificating grade was 85. Well, I was only in the first grade; I didn't realize that meant from the ninth grade on. And I went home and I was devastated, weeping, and my father said, "What is the problem?" And I said, "I can't go to college, I can't go to Duke," where they had decided I was going to go. And my father marched to school the next day and said, "You leave her alone. She's left-handed. Don't touch her." And I was very, very close to Sister Anna, who was the music teacher, and also to Sister Lydia, who was the head mistress essentially of the school. And-

Q: You were going to a Catholic school?

LATHAM: It was Lutheran.

Q: Lutheran?

LATHAM: Yes. German-Lutheran.

Q: Oh, yes.

LATHAM: In Germantown on School House Lane across from the Penn Charter School that William Penn had founded. It was very historical.

Q: Well, did sort of American history stick with you? I mean, were you getting a belly full of it?

LATHAM: I didn't so much care. It was world history I loved. And because of my interest in art, it was especially Italian history because I had seen and I knew the works of Leonardo and of Michelangelo, particularly his sculpture of David. I just fell in love with him. And I remember that the hands of the David were my father's hands, the same shape with - you could say the blue blood, you could see the veins. And I was just absolutely entranced.

Q: Music. You mentioned practicing and all.

LATHAM: Yes, I played the piano. I wanted to play the piano from the time I was three years old, but at the age of five, when I started school, my father wanted to enroll me, but I was the size of a three-year-old and my hands were so tiny that I could not reach an octave. So, the music teacher said, "Wait until you can reach an octave. So, essentially I would play other instruments, you know. I would bang on the drum, percussion instruments, and I remember the room where we all practiced, and we also did bells. There were portraits of all of the great composers of European music, most of whom were German or Austrian because that was the way it was. And I grew up not knowing, since I was also listening to opera on Saturdays, not knowing whether I really was more interested in the Italian language or the German language, and I actually settled on Italian. It was easier; it was very easy for me to pronounce. But I had the pronunciation, the continental pronunciation of German because I heard it every day at school although I

didn't study it formally until later. My husband was the president of his German fraternity.

Q: Let's stick to the school times. You were in Philadelphia.

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: Did you find- Philadelphia is full of museums and all that; did you go to-

LATHAM: Every museum in the city, I think, or nearly so. I remember particularly the Rodin Museum with the Burghers of Calais. There was a Science and Industry Museum that was very interesting to me. And I was really quite fascinated with railroad cars, and apparently I just knew I had to travel. But when I was taken to the museum where they had a harpsicord, since I already played the piano and the harpsicord, I waited until the person who was the, what do you call it, sort of like a docent in each room - well, they were guards essentially. I waited until he left the room and I sat down at the harpsicord and started to play it. Well, of course he heard me, and he came right back, grabbed my father, and my father was mortified. And after that, I remember that for years when I went to museums I would hold my hands like this, behind my back so I couldn't touch anything. I would watch. And that is an incredible memory. And my father was so observant about everything. I mean he'd been taught that way, and that was part of his basic nature - great eye-hand coordination which helped in baseball a lot.

Q: Oh, yes.

LATHAM: He'd started out as a pitcher and was a very good pitcher, but he was so fast running bases they decided he would be more useful as a batter.

Q: Can you think of any teacher that particularly struck you in elementary school?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, my music teacher, my art teacher, and my French teacher, who was a Russian. And then my next French teacher was Lithuanian and the next one was German. No, excuse me, was English; Latin was her specialty. And it wasn't until- I didn't realize how impressionable I was until I was in the museum of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, there in the capital. And there's a Stalin museum we visited. There were two tours, one in Russian, which I didn't speak, and one in French by a woman who was a native Russian speaker. And I took that tour, and I thought it was amazing I could understand her so much better than I could many of my teachers. And it was, I'm sure, because that was what I had in my head from the time I was a child. Apparently the really, really critical time for language they say is from 18 months to two years and then immediately afterward. I guess it's a memory issue; the brain is something like a sponge. And I'm trying to remember the name of the area of the brain, you can tell me, I think, where the memory is located in the frontal lobes. I think that's one of the reasons why there are so many gifted Chinese and Japanese string players. Especially Chinese; it is a tonal language and you have to train yourself to hear those different tones, and if you

don't hear them, then you have a great deal of trouble reproducing the exact sound. And in VOA (Voice of America) in our Chinese-

Q: Voice of America.

LATHAM: Yes, in Voice of America, they had two Chinese sections, one Mandarin and one Cantonese. And Mandarin is the one that was spoken by the students who were involved in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989. And I remember going to interview the broadcasters in the Chinese Branch at that time because I was working in the same building. There was one person in particular who had actually been there. And tears were just rolling down her face as she typed as quickly as she could the account that was being reported from Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Q: Well, we'll come to that later. Where did you go to high school?

LATHAM: I went to the same school where I had gone to Kindergarten. So, it was a girl's school, German-American, and the curriculum was essentially that of the German Gymnasium.

Q: How did you find, I mean these were Lutherans nuns, were they, or Lutheran sisters?

LATHAM: Deaconesses. They're called deaconesses.

Q: You know, one hears about how strict some of these orders are and all.

LATHAM: Well, they were, they were. But my father was strict, my mother was strict. I mean, I was accustomed to that; it was no problem. And I was incredibly neat, orderly, which was sort of next to godliness in the German- not in the German mind but in German cultural practice. So, it wasn't a hindrance in any way. And I had this wonderful, wonderful teacher who said Jesus Christ and Alexander the Great were the two most important human beings who ever lived.

Q: Both died when they were 33.

LATHAM: Yes. Well, actually Alexander was a little younger; he was 31, almost 32 and the thing that was important about that was that his son was born after his death. So, he didn't know at the time of his death to Roxanne, who was a princess for all practical purposes; he didn't even know he was going to have a son. But he did.

Q: Did you do much, outside of going to Boston or to Cape May, during your elementary, high school years did you do any traveling?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, all over the United States with my father.

Q: So, what were you getting from this?

LATHAM: Well, I was going to every museum and every old church and everywhere else that I could manage. And I remember meeting my father in Los Angeles because he was there at one point. He was coaching, and we went to the, what do you call it, Disneyland or rather Disney World. And there was a great tour called “Beneath the 20,000 Mile Reef.” And that was from the story of Robinson Crusoe really.

Q: Jules Verne-

LATHAM: Jules Verne, but it was-

Q: -20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.

LATHAM: Yes, right. But it was in Disneyland this boat that was a copy of the-

Q: The Nautilus.

LATHAM: Yes, exactly.

Q: Did you have much social life, boys, girls, and that sort of thing?

LATHAM: I had a very, very close relationship with friends who were girls. It was strange but my friends who had brothers, all of them had younger brothers, and the younger brother of my best friend was four years younger than I was....When I was 12 and he was eight, he asked me to marry him and I said “yes” so that I could become my friend’s real sister. He did not, as an adult, make the offer again, so he married someone else. And to this day, he works as a medical missionary even though he is now retired from medicine.

Q: Did you have dances and things like that?

LATHAM: Well yes, but they were square dances. They were, you know, the old folk dances. They weren’t-

Q: No hugging or-

LATHAM: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. But when I was a junior, what would have been a junior in high school but actually a junior in prep school, I was named prom queen. And I wasn’t particularly pretty, but I guess I was chosen prom queen because I was a good student. I don’t know. I was first in my class.

Q: Well, what about, were movies a big part of your life?

LATHAM: Only certain kinds of movies, those that were based on literature or history.

Q: “A Tale of Two Cities,” that sort of thing?

LATHAM: Yes, that kind of thing, and “Bambi.” Remember “Bambi”? And so, I think I told you I had a fawn that my husband and I found, picked up in the Vienna Woods and then took her home. And the first night she stayed with us in bed, but I decided by morning that was not such a good idea. And so, what I would do, I would just take her with me to every room and put her on a little carpet, essentially so she could stand on that and get some traction. It was a real production. The Austrian government later told us that what happens is that sometimes a mother deer will hide. She was a European red deer; they’re huge. And that’s probably what happened. So, when we got her in the car, we realized that she was covered with ticks, so one by one we pulled the ticks off. And then I called the nurse at the Embassy because we had no doctor at the time and she had her own dog so she was actually vaccinating, would you say, the dogs and cats to keep them from getting distemper. At that time it was really a vaccination, though, wasn’t it? Probably was.

Q: Probably vaccination, sure.

LATHAM: And her dog was actually a Basset Hound. Our desert dog was gorgeous. His name was Cerberus from Greek mythology, and he followed a friend of mine to our gate and I coaxed him to come in by feeding him. And I wouldn’t let him out until I’d been able to domesticate him. And then he would go out and play around with his girlfriends and come back with ticks again and we’d go through the same procedure. So, finally I stopped letting him out. And we were given a goat by one of the employees of the American Library, where I was working with the women students. He gave us a goat and the goat kept the dog company and was very happy. But he would get up very early in the morning, especially in the summertime when it’s light for 16 hours, and gobble up all these plants, a bit like the Morning Glory, that came out in the first part of the day. And then goats, like all cloven-hoofed animals, will throw up their cud and chew on it throughout the day. The only thing I ever found our goat could not eat was the pit of an olive, and those he would spit out.

Q: Well, you graduated from sort of prep school when?

LATHAM: In 1956.

Q: Then where did you go?

LATHAM: To Duke University.

Q: Why Duke?

LATHAM: My parents had chosen it for me before I was born, and they raised me with the notion that that was what I was supposed to do.

Q: Any particular reason?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, it was the best school in the South. And they hoped I would marry a Southern man, ideally a doctor or lawyer.

Q: I take it your mother and father were very Southern in their outlook.

LATHAM: Yes, they were.

Q: How did they approach race? This was before civil rights and all that.

LATHAM: My father was always courteous, you know, in public certainly, to African-Americans but he told me- I remember going to see "Showboat" and I looked over at him during the time that we were watching it and there were tears rolling down his cheeks. And I didn't say anything because he just, he absolutely thought it was unmanly, it was weak to cry. So I couldn't acknowledge that it had happened. But he told me later that a person with a one-eighth part African-American background is called an octoroon in the Deep South and there can be no acceptable social relationship in public between whites and blacks. And Thomas Jefferson, for example, had African-American slaves and his wife's sister, it is now said, became his mistress after his wife's death when they moved back from France. Maybe it was-

Q: His wife's sister's maid. I mean-

LATHAM: No, no, his wife's sister was a domestic servant, but she fathered some of the children of Thomas Jefferson and they now know that because of DNA testing.

Q: Sally Hemmings.

LATHAM: Exactly.

Q: How about your mother? I mean, what were you getting on race relations from home?

LATHAM: That we were superior to everyone else, that God was a perfect English gentleman, from my father's point of view. From my mother's point of view, she was anti-Catholic, of course; she was anti-FDR; she was anti-anything modern.

Q: This is a very-

LATHAM: This was, at one time, a respectable point of view. And as we can see today, just from what is going on in our own government-

Q: It's still there.

LATHAM: Yes. There is still a minority population that feels that way and that votes that way. And this has implications in foreign affairs that are truly scary.

Q: Well now at Duke; you went to Duke from when to when?

LATHAM: Went to Duke, from '56 to '60. And then flew from Durham - the day after graduation with my mother to Cincinnati, where my father was coaching at that point. And I immediately enrolled in a class at the teacher's college in the university's Master's program for teaching history. And I was there throughout the summer. And what I would do, when I finished my studies, was to walk to Hebrew Union College, which was the Reformed Jewish seminary, and I would read the books in their library. I had, of course, read the Bible many times, and so I was reading the Mishnah and looking at copies of the Babylonian Talmud which of course I couldn't read because it's in Hebrew.

Q: I want to go back just and cover things. Duke; when you arrived on the campus it was

_____.

LATHAM: I beg your pardon?

Q: When you arrived on the campus of Duke-

LATHAM: In early September of '56.

Q: What was it like in your eyes?

LATHAM: It was gorgeous. It was Gothic on the west campus. The most beautiful architecture in the world from my perspective is English Perpendicular Gothic. And the Women's College where I lived was all Georgian architecture, which was typical of the Federal period in early U.S. history. And our auditorium and library were very close to my dorm. We were practically across the quadrangle. And when I say "across," it was like being just across the street from the library where I spent a great deal of time.

Q: While you were at Duke did you live in a girl's dorm?

LATHAM: Yes. We had sororities but we actually lived in dormitories. And the person who was our guardian, in a way, was the Dean of the Chapel and he was Scottish, Scottish Presbyterian. And he would read "The Christmas Story" from his Scots Bible the night before we left campus to go home for Christmas vacation every year.

Q: What was social life like?

LATHAM: Well, it was a very social campus. It was a very friendly campus. Everybody spoke to everybody else. But you had to dress in a particular way and when you went off campus you were not allowed - the girls were not allowed to leave, or it was the tradition not to leave, unless you were wearing a hat and white gloves. That was-

Q: Of course, it's Boston, it's Puritan. The skirt was ankle length almost.

LATHAM: Skirts at that time were right about here.

Q: You know, it's half ankle-

LATHAM: Yes, right. They were between the knee and the ankle.

Q: I remember very well.

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: Were you getting-

LATHAM: But, I also must tell you because I was not gorgeous, I was not drop dead beautiful like my roommate, I had fewer dates, I think, than she did. But we were very, very close and her mother was the first cousin of the actress Elizabeth Taylor and Mary Frances, my roommate, looked just like Elizabeth Taylor; the same coloring, the same profile, everything the same, figure, everything about her. And of course, I was no competition for that. But I remember the first person I dated on campus was a man whose father was a Sigma Chi and he was convinced that was the fraternity he had to join, but he wasn't chosen by them. But I remember going with him to a program in the Auditorium and we were singing, and I realized he had the most glorious basso profundo voice as he was standing next to me. Later he became a professional musician and later he was very close to a friend of mine who was a professional cellist who was also the nephew of perhaps the greatest ensemble cellist in the United States....

Q: What sort of dates did you have?

LATHAM: Dates?

Q: At Duke.

LATHAM: Oh, well a typical date was to go to a game which in the fall of course was football or to go to a game later on in the spring which was basketball. And of course, the tallest players had a natural advantage, but the best forward was a fellow who was five-eight. That's about average and not tall. But he was a phenomenal shooter of baskets; when there was a penalty, he was just phenomenal. And I had played girls' basketball, but not particularly well, and also field hockey. So I knew the games very well. I just was not an enthusiast. I was a bookworm.

Q: Well, did you all go and have beer afterwards?

LATHAM: People went out and, in the case of my friend from the University of North Carolina Dental School, we would go to the Rathskeller in Chapel Hill, which was a restaurant for pizza and beer. And some people would take their own flask and order Coke. I didn't participate in that because I was not drinking in college. And I was not smoking.

Q: Because Duke was founded on tobacco money.

LATHAM: Yes, an irony.

Q: Well, what were your favorite courses? What courses were you taking?

LATHAM: A course in the Great Books. It was a history course. Also courses in poetry, music history, a course in logic and ethics, and courses in classical philosophy and political philosophy. I was essentially a dual major, history and English, but I didn't have the right balance in American studies because you could only take so many hours. I took the maximum number of courses and also audited others, and so I did as much as I could. But I mean the women particularly at Duke were very serious students and the president of our student body my sophomore year later married Bob Dole, the senator who ran for President of the United States. Elizabeth Dole she's called now; we knew her as "Liddy." She doesn't like that name.

Q: She later was a member of the cabinet, a political figure in her own right.

LATHAM: Right. She was very smart, very nice, and very committed.

Q: This was an era when you were going there where, correct me if I'm wrong, but for most girls going to university their main goal was to get a good education but basically to marry well. Did you feel that at all?

LATHAM: I felt that pressure from my parents but I was my own person. I was doing something else. Oh, I would have liked to have done everything. It was just that I couldn't do everything. I don't know. I guess I'm still, even as I sit here and talk with you, embarrassed about letting my parents down. And yet, at the same time, I'm very respectful of myself for pursuing my dream.

Q: I mean, at a certain point one has to, you know, you're your own person.

LATHAM: Yes. But you know, I guess because of this story about my great-great grandmother being 96 years old and my father always telling me he was going to live to be 100 and he would have, I guess, if he hadn't smoked so heavily, I just thought there was plenty of time to do everything. And you know now it feels different. In my case, I have a balance problem and I use a rollator and people say I still have beautiful posture; they can't imagine why I'm using the rollator. But I'm using a rollator because when I fell before I was not able to really walk like a normal person for eight months' time. And I never want to go through that again.

Q: Well one of the things that I look upon, I graduated from college in 1950 and the Korean War came and I got involved in that.

LATHAM: Right, because people did get involved.

Q: Well, how about were you, your interest in European affairs were you looking at the war, I'm talking about World War II, was this still-

LATHAM: It wasn't just European affairs. It was the belief that everyone in the world, from my point of view, whatever they believed, was a child of God, which meant that you had a responsibility to every other creature - as I saw things. And that was very much a part of the school that I went to, the Divinity School and the Women's College. And what happened was that during all the sit-ins, you remember at the lunch counters, the northern clergy, Protestant clergy, and Catholic, all the clergy who came down - their method was that of Martin Luther King, which was passive resistance. So, whatever happened to you you didn't fight back. But the peculiar thing, and I believed that, but yet when I had to go to a place where I had to learn to walk again and was in so much pain and had trouble doing things for myself, the nurse there, who was from Sierra Leone and tried to force me to take medication that I knew I couldn't take, and what did I do? I bit her. Now, that's what children do. And then she came closer and I had no way of defending myself so I picked up this thing that you use to get things down from way up high, and I used it like a foil, because I had fenced. Now, this is self-defense. It was contrary to what I believed in but clearly....

Q: You do what you do, have to do.

LATHAM: I was, you know, a caged animal in the corner.

Q: Well now, you graduated with a degree in-?

LATHAM: History.

Q: History. Then what did you do?

LATHAM: I spent the summer in a teachers training program at the University of Cincinnati and then in September I went to flight school for United Airlines.

Q: You went where?

LATHAM: To flight school. United Airlines, which was based in Chicago, actually trained all of their pilots and flight attendants -- we were called stewardesses then -- in Cheyenne, Wyoming, which was a saloon town in a sense. I mean, with the swinging doors that you walked through.

Q: A saloon.

LATHAM: Yes. And we rode horses. And I bought my first pair of jeans. And after I rode, immediately I washed my jeans and, when they dried, they were so stiff they actually stood up. They were not comfortable to wear after that but I hadn't realized it, since I knew nothing about sports attire. I was happy being a girl.

Q: Well now, you graduated from college-

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: -and you went to- then your first job was as a stewardess?

LATHAM: I had some summer jobs. My first summer job was in a place for investment banking, for stocks because my father's friend was the vice president of the company. And you know, I followed the lead of my parents as long as I lived at home.

Q: Well, when did you apply to be a stewardess?

LATHAM: During the summer of the year I was graduated from Duke and I was immediately accepted. And I think that maybe I was immediately accepted because the social qualities that I demonstrated in public were those that....

Q: Of course, I mean Southern girls really learned-

LATHAM: To cater to the pleasures of other people.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: And I just did that naturally. I remember having a flight with the Green Bay Packers and whoever the fellow was who was sort of leading them on the plane said to us, "Just set up the buffet and I'll be the flight attendant, and he went up and down the aisle pushing. You know, people were all over, talking with one another, playing cards, telling tales. And, you know, that's what we did.

Q: Well, how did your family feel? Because this was the era of, if you were a stewardess it was coffee, tea or me.

LATHAM: Yes, that's true. But that was our reputation. It was not, I think, the reality. But I do remember, when we were in Chicago, going out with a group of former Capital Airlines employees whose domain was Atlanta. I remember the two of us who were stewardesses went to a strip show, my first, with the pilots. Now, I must also say that the pilots and stewardesses did not drink alcohol. But it was very interesting to see the strip show. And then on a trip to San Francisco I went to my first gay nightclub with men who were impersonating women, and I felt that was not for me. But it represented no problem for me because of my positive feelings about the arts and my experience of having been friendly with people who were gay or lesbian or bisexual. At that time I didn't know anything about transgendered people. I mean, I just didn't know anyone who came out as a member of that group.

Q: While you were at Duke did race rear its ugly head?

LATHAM: There were no African-American students on campus. Yes, it reared its ugly head in the sense that white students got involved in civil rights activities outside the university. And then when they were taken to jail, what the administration discovered is that those who had been leading the movement were the top students academically. At least that was true among the undergraduate women and among the graduate students in the Divinity School. And one saw a marked difference in attitude from the freshman year to the senior year in the Women's College.

I'll tell you another story that sort of illustrates the way life was at Duke. In the dorm on my same floor, very close to where my suite mates and I lived was a young woman who was a pre-med student and she was a member of the Jewish sorority, which regularly earned the best grades on campus. And she was studying anatomy and was working with alligators, baby alligators. Their bodies are about....

Q: About six inches.

LATHAM: And their tails are about the same length. And so what she did, wanting the baby alligator to feel all warm and cozy, was to put him in one of the bath tubs and she locked the door of that stall. But, of course, there was enough water in the tub so that he was able to get out of the tub and slide under the door and disappear. And when she discovered that her alligator had disappeared, there was an announcement over the public-address system – during exam period, mind you – informing us that her alligator was on the loose. And I think every girl in the dormitory went looking for the alligator. And eventually the alligator was discovered underneath a heating unit. And so, it was later reported that the alligator was returned to its home in the Duke Gardens. That was unlikely, but I don't know what actually happened to it after that because, you know, I was graduated from the university. But the point is that there was tremendous concern over the baby alligator. I mean, does this seem strange to you now?

Q: No, it doesn't at all. I mean, in the first place when you say alligator people don't think in terms of little baby alligators. They think this thing's; an alligator is an alligator.

LATHAM: Yes. And then later on, when I went to Africa, to East Africa, there were crocodiles there and I remember the hippopotamuses and the crocodiles in the little river beside the camp where we stayed and where all the men on the tour wore pith helmets. We were all in Bermuda shorts and I remember being eaten alive by the mosquitoes.

Q: Well, I think this is a good place to stop. And we'll talk more next time. We'll pick this up. Let's talk a bit more about your career as an airline stewardess and all.

LATHAM: Okay.

Q: And then we'll keep moving on. Great!

LATHAM: That's fine. And then I will get to meet your cats.

Q: Yes.

Here we go. Today is the 25th of-

LATHAM: May.

Q: -May 2017 with Judith Latham. And I think we left, you've finished at the Library of Congress.

LATHAM: If that was the case, then I was probably talking about working on my thesis at that time. And I did complete it.

Q: Is this out of George Washington?

LATHAM: No, no it wasn't. I had been in Chicago as a flight attendant for three years after I was graduated from Duke and essentially what I wanted to do was to travel and save enough money to go back to school and get a Master's degree and then a doctorate and to teach at the college level. And so that's what I was involved in doing.

Q: Okay. I wanted to ask you, let's talk a little about being a flight attendant in those days.

LATHAM: Okay.

Q: This was from when to when?

LATHAM: From 1960 to '63.

Q: And what airline?

LATHAM: United, which was headquartered in Chicago, and was at that time, I think, the largest of the airlines. Or I guess American, United and TWA were probably the three largest airlines, but of course TWA did not survive.

Q: Well now, what was it like being a stewardess then?

LATHAM: Well, for me it was interesting in the sense of my being able to travel to cities I'd never seen before. During that time and afterwards I went to all 50 states. I'd traveled quite a lot before, but there were many other places I wanted to see. For example, because Chicago was the hub of our airline, we flew in all directions from there. So, I flew essentially to every city, except Honolulu, to which United flew. The trips to Hawaii were covered by crews from California. And it was my initial intention to work for three years, first in Chicago, then in New York in San Francisco. I wanted to see more of the country and then quit and go right straight through and get a doctorate in European intellectual and cultural history. However, I met someone in graduate school who had similar goals. He had majored in Classics at Dartmouth. We were exactly the same age.

And our initial intentions were to teach at the university level. He decided during his graduate study that he was really more interested in the Foreign Service. So, he took the Foreign Service exam and passed it. And then in May of 1966, he was invited to join the Foreign Service.

Q: What was his name?

LATHAM: Ernest H. Latham, Jr. And he had gone to a prep school.

Q: Which one?

LATHAM: He went to Andover, where he had a very fine classical education. He was most interested in the Greeks and the Romans. Ernest's graduation from college marked the time when people were beginning to be inducted into the various armed services because the war in Vietnam was gearing up. He spent a year at the University of Chicago in Syro-Palestinian Archaeology. His father had died and he decided at that point, since he thought he might be drafted, that he would choose his own service. So he went to OCS in the Coast Guard and worked for three years in Chicago while continuing to take graduate courses in the evening. And we sat next to one another in a course in 20th century American history. Ernest occasionally missed a class because of his work with the Coast Guard and, when that happened, he asked if he could borrow my notes and I said, "Sure." And when he returned my class notes, we had coffee together. Then we started seeing one another and discovered that we had many interests in common, and eventually we got married. But his choice of the Foreign Service as a career was different from what I hoped to do, although it was of interest to me because I had been an internationalist from the time I started school.

Q: Well what was your Masters and potential doctorate, what were they?

LATHAM: Well, I was particularly interested in the Renaissance and Reformation periods.

Q: Chicago was a good place to do this?

LATHAM: Well, the reason was because there was one particular figure, the philosopher Pico della Mirandola, in whom I had a special interest. His work seemed to cross all the different philosophical schools. Some people considered him a Platonist, others an Aristotelian. He was very interested in the religious beliefs of groups around the world. He was sort of a Universalist in orientation, and I think that was the thing that appealed most to me - that everything that had ever taken place in human history was of interest to Pico.

Q: Well now, your husband, you were married by this time?

LATHAM: No. I was still in Chicago; I needed to finish up there. Then I went to Boston where I taught school for a year while Ernest taught classes at the college level. That was

during the time when he was applying to the Foreign Service. Then we got married in July 1966 and drove to Quebec and then returned to the States where Ernest started his Foreign Service training in Washington.

Q: Why Quebec?

LATHAM: Well it was located in the closest foreign country - exotic to the degree that it could be. We didn't have much time.

Q: So, your honeymoon.

LATHAM: Yes. Essentially, we went to Quebec City and to Montreal. We were married in Boston and then drove to Andover and then to Dartmouth and then to McGill University where Ernest's father had been in medical school. Then we looked at churches in Quebec City and drove back to Boston. All of our stuff had already been packed, so we met the moving van down in Arlington, Virginia. And the next day Ernest officially joined the Foreign Service.

Q: How was it when you went there? Were wives taking the course too?

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: What was your A-100 course like?

LATHAM: Well, I didn't really have an A-100 course because there were some courses that Foreign Service wives were encouraged to take. There was a general indoctrination for women on how the Foreign Service works. And then we went directly into area studies, and Ernest was assigned to learn Arabic. As I recall there were 60 or 70 people in the Foreign Service training program and they were assigned to posts all over the world. I think the reason that he was chosen for Arabic was because he was a good language student. He had already studied Syro-Palestinian Archaeology and had a strong background in classical archaeology. Arabic was considered a "hard" language, and so he seemed qualified to study it. And so, we immediately went out to Lebanon where the Arabic language school was opening a new course of study.

Q: Did you take Arabic too?

LATHAM: I did take Arabic. Do you know Beirut at all?

Q: Very slightly.

LATHAM: Well, at that time, which was in 1966, we arrived exactly six months before the beginning of the Six Day War, and everyone expected that it was coming. At that time, the American Embassy was located in the area called the Corniche. Essentially it was shaped something like a cushion; there was water on one side, and then up in the hills was the Embassy, and then right behind it were the American University of Beirut,

the main part of town, and the commercial district. We could simply walk to the Embassy for our language classes. The American ambassador's residence was out of town in a more residential area. And so, I threw myself full-time into the region.

Now, it didn't seem strange to me by any means because I'd also been interested in ancient history and from my theological studies I already knew a lot about the area. On our way out to Beirut we stopped for 10 days in Rome. Ernest had never been to Rome before, but I had. And so, we essentially became tourists in one of the great cities of the world, and because it was at the time of Vatican II an order of Dutch nuns had moved into a palace near the Piazza Navona and were using it to host people who were observers of Vatican II as well as conducting art tours of the Vatican. For us it was a way to explore the history and art of a region in which both of us were deeply interested.

Q: Well in Beirut, was there, this was after the first sort of civil war or something, was there much tension in the city?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, quite because this was 1966 and '67. In 1947 and '48 the Israeli state was established. What that meant was drawing borders for the Palestinians on one side and for the Israelis on the other. And of course, the land had been Palestinian or at least Arab, pretty much since the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70, so most of the people at that time who were native to the region were Palestinian and spoke Arabic. But because of the history of the Second World War and the fact that the Jews of Europe had been targeted by the Nazis, there was a tremendous push to have Israel declared a "homeland" for the Jews, which had actually begun with the Balfour Declaration in 1917. And there was a great effort to move people who had been caught up in the devastation of the war to a new homeland. But, of course, the people who were already settled in that area were resistant to the idea. So, it actually set up the conditions for another conflict. After the First World War, the larger nations of Europe had carved up the rest of the world into their own areas of colonial influence.

Q: Well, could you really travel around Lebanon?

LATHAM: Yes, we could. And we went to every city of any size in Lebanon. I'm a passionate sightseer and it was a history that we had a real opportunity to observe for the first time. And one of the most interesting things that struck me, when entering the Archaeological Museum in Beirut, was that the very first thing you saw as you walked in the door was a huge map of the former Phoenician Empire. And that gave you a sense of the attitude, I guess, of all people, which is to glorify their greatest extent of empire. And of course we knew what was coming; when it would happen was a different matter. But when the Israelis seized Sharm el-Sheikh it was just a matter of days before there would be a larger war. And the Arabs at the time were quite confident of their ability to win because there were about 100 million of them against about two million Israelis. But, of course, they were two million well-armed Israelis as opposed to 100 million people carrying placards, pretty much. And the Israelis very, very carefully planned to take out the Egyptian air force right on the ground at the very beginning of the war. So, it was just

days before it was a total rout. And then the rest of the world settled down to a new reality on the ground.

Q: Well before we come to the- what happened to you all then, do any of the people that you studied or were in the group that were studying Arabic at the time stick out in your mind?

LATHAM: Yes. Because virtually all those people with whom I was in language classes, in some cases it was with men or with women, they were doing a more intensive program that included learning to read the Arabic language. I was just concentrating on the spoken part, but I was a good student because I had studied a number of languages. History was my passion but it was the first time I'd had an opportunity to read the Qur'an in English translation. As you know, theoretically the Qur'an cannot be accurately "translated" into any other language. It first came to be in the Arabic language. But since I couldn't read the Arabic, I had to study it in English transliteration, and so that was interesting. I learned as much as I could about the area; I was fascinated by everything I saw. And then subsequently we were sent to Saudi Arabia for a second tour.

Q: Well, let's talk about the class first. Did any particular people stick out in your mind?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, people who subsequently became ambassadors who were at that time- this was 1967 so we were in our mid-20s, and many of the Foreign Service officers were about the same age. Joe Twinam, I don't know if that is a familiar name to you; he became an ambassador later. Ed Djerejian. John Countryman. I'm trying to think now because we were subsequently posted to Europe. Just about everybody who was studying Arabic went on to important positions in the American embassies in the Arab world. Now, there was also a school for people studying Western Arabic, which is the Arabic spoken mostly in North Africa, west of Egypt. Shall I go into the Arabic language?

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: This is the way I describe it to myself. It has never been described to me this way but I think it is a pretty good analogy. If you could imagine that Latin continued to be spoken and written as it was at the time of the Roman Empire, then there are five languages that classical Latin developed into, which are modern languages and also literary languages. They, of course, are Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian. I'd studied five languages by the time we ended up in the Foreign Service, so adding another language was really a matter of fascination for me as well as a way to enter a new culture. I found the people in the Arab World quite fascinating and extremely hospitable. I had always loved anything historical, and we had ample opportunity to travel outside of Lebanon. We went to Syria and we had intended to go to the Holy Land and to all the other Arab countries. That became a bit more complicated after the Six Day War. As you know, it includes an area that represents the origin of our own Western civilization if you add to it the Sumerians and the Babylonians and the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans. This is the way we still see the world. So, the literature of the ancient

world is also that of our own world and it helped to shape the way we understand ourselves.

Q: Well, what happened during the war for you?

LATHAM: The war was very quick. It lasted only six days. The seizing of Sharm el-Sheikh as I recall was 10 days before the actual beginning of the war. So, the assumption was that it would start when the armies began to move. And we at the Embassy certainly expected the Israelis to end up on top because they had the better military preparation. And that's exactly what happened. But the problem was that it created another massive flow of refugees to other Arab countries. So the sense of injustice and horror of the so-called *Nakba* was deepened by that experience. What also happened at that point was that for the first time, I would say, in many European countries and in the United States, there developed a tremendous awareness of what had happened to the Jews as a result of their treatment throughout their history. And certainly it was understood that what had happened in the Second World War, particularly during the Nazi era, was a horror. But, instead of its being redressed on European soil where the horror had actually occurred, it was redressed on Middle Eastern soil where the Jews already had a sense of "homeland" and a desire to return, as well as a fear that, if they were unable to run their own affairs, they would be treated badly again, which history had already confirmed for them.

Q: Well-

LATHAM: What I saw as an outsider, as an American, as someone steeped in my own history and in the Bible, was a tragedy – people who in a way because of outsiders had been victims for hundreds or thousands of years in one way or another. This is the way human beings tend to behave toward one another when land and property and resources are available, but are not perceived to be sufficient for everybody. So it came as no great surprise. Of course, the intention of the U.S. Government was to keep things as stable as possible. We had experienced enough problems with a resurgent Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War.

Q: Well, did you sense a feeling of the students studying Arabic-

LATHAM: Are you talking about the American Foreign Service?

Q: Americans, yes. Biased towards one or the other?

LATHAM: Yes, I did. I'm going to make this very personal. In 1948, when Israel came into being as a new nation, it seemed to me as someone brought up in the Christian religion as the return of a people to a land that was promised to them. I was, after all, a Christian whose faith is derivative of Judaism. I certainly knew more Jews than Arabs, but I also knew - because of my own personal experience of being educated in a German-American school - that not all Germans were Nazis by any means. Furthermore, there was a case to be made for all peoples, and it had all the makings of a tragedy. It was going to end up with people being thrown out of their homes, and it was going to be done

by people who had arguably the worst human experience of any group that had suffered from genocide. A worse experience than, let us say, the Armenians. So, my sympathies by the time I got out to the Arab world were for both sides. What I discovered is that those people who were Arabists often felt that the United States and other European countries were so pro-Israel they felt that there was a bias, and one could argue that.

Q: There is. I mean, quite as you say, in the United States, for example and most of Europe there's a strong Jewish influence and a sympathy for what happened and there's very little appeal for the Arab plight.

LATHAM: Well, the irony of it all is that, as I was growing up, there was tremendous prejudice against Jews. At the same time, many Americans felt the Jews had a right to their homeland in Israel. But there was little enthusiasm for encouraging European Jews to come to the United States. Of course, many Jews wanted to live in countries outside the former Nazi Germany; some went to England, but they feared that no place in Europe would be ultimately safe for them. They also wanted to preserve their way of life and their traditions, and the best way to do that - or so it seemed to many - was to have a state like Israel that was designated as a "Jewish state." But there were people on all sides of the issue, depending on what their own experience had been. I saw the problem as one in which both sides had a point of view that needed to be accommodated.

Q: Well now-

LATHAM: But then, I think by nature, that I'm a peacemaker.

Q: After the war ended how long did your husband's training last?

LATHAM: Well, we were there from December of 1966 to September of 1968 and then were reassigned to Saudi Arabia. My husband was the cultural affairs officer in Jeddah. And what that meant was that the main part of his work was at the American Library. The American Library was in downtown Jeddah and, when it was open to men, it was closed to women. So it was open to men five days a week and open to women one day a week. And I ran the women's program. Just a year before we got there, the Government had opened up Abdulaziz University in Jeddah to women for the first time. So those were the students whom I was meeting. Instead of reading English language books in their own university library, the women came to the American Cultural Center. And so, I had an opportunity to meet all these young Saudi women, most of whom at that time were the daughters of Saudi men and Arab women from other countries. So, they were better educated than most Saudi women would have been. Saudi men attended separate classes because that was the norm for social behavior.

Q: What were you getting from the Saudi women at the Cultural Center, your contacts there?

LATHAM: Well, Friday as you know is a day of rest in the Muslim world, and so the days off were actually Thursday and Friday. Work at the American Embassy was done on

Saturday through Thursday, beginning at daybreak. And they were simply doing what college students do in a library. That's where most of the English language books were kept. The young Saudi women were expanding the list of those books they had in their own campus library. And because I was then in my late 20s, I found these young women very interesting. I would say quite a number of them were people who were not 18 or 19 but a little older and highly motivated. It was a particularly interesting time because life for women was so very restricted, so I had an unusual opportunity as a person living closest to town of any American family in Jeddah. Remember, I was a woman who had wanted to be a teacher of college students, so I found them a fascinating group of people and they totally accepted me. The women would be brought in cars by a driver, dropped off for several hours of study at the library, and we would help them. There were a couple of other volunteers but I ran the program. And then it was also interesting because this was 1968 when women's skirts were here.

Q: You're pointing to skirts just about thigh level.

LATHAM: Exactly, that was the European fashion. All of the Arab women had these long black abayas [or full-length cloaks] that they wore over their short mini-skirts. So, when they came in, and it would be just women; they'd take off their black cloaks and the covering over their faces and they'd be like any other college students anywhere else in the world. And then we had a few occasions that were social events. For example, the person who actually brought the students to us was a professor of English, and she was a friend of mine. Her husband worked with the airline. So, I got to know them because we socialized together in one another's homes. They came to my home at a time when they knew no men would be there.

What I thought was very interesting about the Middle East is that one went from being a total stranger to being a welcome member of the family - almost in five minutes.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: And particularly in Saudi Arabia since all activity took place in homes. When you were invited into a home you would have coffee, or maybe dessert. It was just women with other women, or perhaps women with women and little children. And so, you had a sense of really being part of a community. There were American women at the American Embassy who were unmarried and who were secretaries. But those of us who were married to Foreign Service officers socialized with all the other foreign diplomats and their families. There was an American school, but a good many of the students, by the time of ninth grade, were going to schools elsewhere. There was a British school as well. No one was allowed to bring a non-Islamic religious book into the country. So, I had my Bibles and my prayer books (because I travelled on a diplomatic passport), but no one else ever saw them. They were buried as it were. There were a few services in people's private homes, but for all practical purposes the only operating religion was Islam, and that was practiced under very strict rules because that was how Wahhabi Islam was preserved.

Q: Well now, in a cultural center was there a screening of the books for women or for men?

LATHAM: No, I wouldn't say so. I would say in the American Cultural Center what you had were mostly history books and literature - the same kinds of books that you might find in any library anywhere, except there were a lot more books about the Middle East written in English, obviously. That's the only thing that might be considered different. I found the Arab employees who worked in the library very gracious and very helpful.

Q: Well, did the woman who came in, was there a control over the books they would read?

LATHAM: No. No.

Q: They must have devoured the magazines, particularly since there's so much fashion and something.

LATHAM: Well actually I don't think there were huge numbers of magazines. My recollection, and now we're going back almost 50 years, is that most of the books were history and literature, just the same kinds of books you would have in any library. Not so many magazines.

The one thing that was very, very important that happened while I was in Saudi Arabia in 1969 was that the Americans landed on the moon for the first time, and the moon has special significance in Islam. So, there was enormous interest in the moon landing and there were huge parties. So there was probably a lot more literature on the shelves about astronomy than you might have found at another time. That was all the rage. I myself was getting books from the library too because I wanted to learn more about the region. I've always been a person who just devours books so I was reading everything that I could find.

Q: Were there, I mean we had lectures and people coming in-

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: -now, were there lectures that were specifically directed towards women?

LATHAM: No. Because most of the people who used the library were themselves students, those lectures would be taking place in their classes. This would be different today, but the year before we arrived in Saudi Arabia, they had opened the university to women. So the people I met were all freshmen and sophomores with the enthusiasm of any college student - maybe even more so because they had a sense of being very special people. Now, a number of these girls already had families so to go to school they would leave their children with their grandparents or with other family members and then they would go to class and do everything a normal student does. But they were also expected

to keep up with the social life of their families so they were very busy. But they enjoyed a wonderful sense of being given a great opportunity.

Q: In the first place, the people you're talking about had studied English.

LATHAM: Oh, the person who was the Dean of Women Students at Abdulaziz University had a PhD from Columbia University in New York, so this was the caliber of student involved. The girls themselves were the daughters of very rich men from families that were well respected.

Q: Well, did you find was there a sense of discontent there?

LATHAM: No. Except- the best example I know of - I think that people in general, at least in my experience and I'm thinking mostly in cross-cultural terms now, accept what they grow up with. I mean, the normative thing is what you have experienced. So, if you are an American student in a private school that's the experience you have; it doesn't seem weird and it doesn't seem all that different. I certainly never had a sense of being a terribly special person. The only thing I had a sense of being was a terribly diligent person. And you knew that you would have a profession. You might get married and have children but women had professions.

Q: Was there frustration over women not being allowed to drive?

LATHAM: No, because they just didn't. There was frustration among the community of people who had driven before they got to Saudi Arabia and who were then not able to drive. But the embassies provided bus transportation, like we do here for people who can't get to the grocery store on their own.

Q: When I was in Dhahran in '57 to '60 our Consul General was able to get from the emir of the Eastern Province permission for the women to drive. And-

LATHAM: Well, the difference-

Q: American women.

LATHAM: The difference was that so much of this was a function of the fact that the diplomatic capital at that time was in Jeddah. The capital of the country was Riyadh, but most international events that went on took place in Jeddah. Jeddah was the port city for Mecca and Medina. It meant that most of the people coming into the kingdom from outside were going through that port. And it was like New York; it would be as if New York were Jeddah, if Washington, DC were Riyadh, and if Los Angeles were Dhahran. You know, there were different climactic conditions in those places, too. And a lot of life was shaped by those physical conditions.

Q: You say you and your husband were invited to homes quite often.

LATHAM: Oh, yes.

Q: What would you do? I mean, what was entertainment?

LATHAM: Dinner.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: Not cocktail parties because alcohol was not served. In fact, it was served among the diplomats, but you never served it to the Saudis.

Q: Acknowledged.

LATHAM: It was never acknowledged. You know, every now and then the ambassador's office would get a call from the dock saying, "Mr. Ambassador, your furniture is leaking," which meant that in the six-month supply of liquor that had been ordered, there was a leak.

Saudi Arabia was the most oil-rich country at that time. The point of the two governments operating together was principally economic. And many of the brightest young men from Saudi Arabia were going to universities in Texas or Oklahoma to learn about oil. I mean, oil was what made Saudi Arabia a rich country and it was a peculiar situation in that the royal family, having married into all the major tribes, controlled so much of the country and there were so many members of the royal family and they were quite wealthy. There were, in addition, people who came from outside the kingdom who helped build things, such as airplanes. But the idea was for the country to become rich on its trade. It was a very important Muslim country because the two most holy places in the religion, Mecca and Medina, were there and those were cities that were exclusive to Muslims.

Q: Did you get any concern about the stability of the government when you were there or not?

LATHAM: Well, I certainly thought the government of Saudi Arabia was stable. I mean, it was an absolute monarchy.

Q: Yes. Well you know, back 60 years ago when I was there we were talking about will the government survive. But this was the time of Nasser and all this.

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: But there were no signs that it wouldn't. It was just that a wave of military reformists was going throughout the region.

LATHAM: Yes. Saudi Arabia, I think, did not have to worry very much about that at that time because it had its religious police. Its constitution was theoretically the Qur'an. It

was an absolute monarchy, and the laws were quite clear. Other people came there because they wanted its oil. So, they had something to sell that people needed.

Q: Well, what was your husband doing?

LATHAM: Well, he was the cultural officer so he was in charge of the library.

Q: Were there any sort of incidents or problems that you can think of with the library at the time?

LATHAM: No. I don't think so. Because we had gone there right after the Six Day War, there was a great deal of irritation among Arabs throughout the Middle East toward the United States because it was assumed that since the Israelis won that war it was with the help of the British and the Americans.

Q: Well, supposedly we had used our air force to take out their air force which was absolutely not true.

LATHAM: No. But it's also the case that when you have a major embarrassment you make up stories.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: It's not so different from today.

Q: Yes. How did you find the Embassy? I mean, working with the Embassy; this is your first time.

LATHAM: Well, there were five officers who did not live in the Embassy compound and we were among those five. Two were USIA (United States Information Agency) and three were CIA. And their activities were outside so that people could come to them without problems. So, it was a slightly different set-up. I found people quite cordial. I tried to be the best hostess I could be. I was at that time working on my thesis. Because nothing fit me - I was small by Arab standards - I made all my own clothes. I was having a great time with my eight animals, six cats, a dog and a goat. And I was reading continually. I can't say that I liked Saudi Arabia. I found it very interesting, and because I spoke Arabic I could go down into the souk. When they had the embassy bus, I could go into town any time I wanted to and shop.

Q: Souks being the Arabian market.

LATHAM: Yes. And to me that was interesting because I find handwork, and particularly the silver, quite fascinating. And I spent a great deal of time in the area where materials were sold because I had bought a Red Chinese sewing machine that I could operate without electricity, you know, by hand, and make things. And there was a lot of activity with other women. Like most foreigners, I thought that the requirements for

women were absurd, but I also recognized them as being part of that culture. I was careful when I went out not to give offense. I never went anywhere where a woman had to cover her face. There were a couple of times when there were opportunities to go to places like that and I simply refused to do it because it was a matter of principle. I was not going to be a non-entity. I didn't mind being modest, I didn't mind a veil over my head but I was not going to block out my face.

Q: Were these villages basically?

LATHAM: Yes. And what happened was that my husband and two other Foreign Service officers - one of them, actually, a CIA officer and the other a political officer - went into the desert with a guide who was a Saudi, you know, with a long sword and they went from place to place, and I guess part of that was on camelback. What they wanted to do was to see more of Saudi Arabia and what it was really like on the ground. At that time the three wives were invited to go but we turned it down. And I would have gone if the others had gone, but I was not going to be the single American slave, frankly. And I definitely was not going to cover my face.

Q: Well, I thought, not in the villages but I thought the nomads, one, the women sort of ran the show and two, they didn't do anything about the veil.

LATHAM: Well, I think that's true. You know, how life runs in a city is very different from how it runs in the countryside. Women did not go out alone; they always had a chaperone or a male member of their family accompanying them to whatever they were doing. And there wasn't a lot to do. There wasn't much entertainment apart from dinners.

Q: Movies?

LATHAM: Oh, no. No restaurants.

Q: Not even the old-

LATHAM: No. At that time there were no restaurants and no movies. Entertainment was just in people's homes.

Q: There was an article in "The Washington Post" just the other day saying that they're having a real problem because they've got this very large group of young people and it's boring; they're still bored. And so, they've spent billions of dollars getting the hell out, to go out and have fun in Europe.

LATHAM: Well, I think the difference is that Saudi Arabia at that time was a much more exotic place and you weren't there unless you had a reason to be there. So, you might be there because you were with Aramco or with one of the airlines or with one of the embassies so you had a function. Your style of amusement was not of any particular problem to your Embassy and the only women who were single lived on the compound and never went beyond those walls. Well, I'm sure it's true in all places that are very,

very restrictive and conservative. I mean, if you were in Afghanistan, it would be the same thing.

Q: Well, you left there when?

LATHAM: I left in December of 1969.

Q: And what did you go on?

LATHAM: Well, we went back to the States for home leave and then we went to Vienna, Austria.

Q: And you were in Vienna for how long?

LATHAM: Three and a half years. And it was wonderful.

Q: What was your husband doing there?

LATHAM: He was the assistant press officer. Vienna was a huge embassy. Beirut was a huge embassy. Beirut was the listening post for the Middle East. Vienna was the listening post for Central and Eastern Europe.

Q: What were you doing?

LATHAM: Well, when I first got there, I went to German language classes and tried to learn the language as quickly as possible.

Q: Well, your German must have been pretty good anyway, wasn't it?

LATHAM: Well, the languages that I actually studied formally were - first of all French and then Latin and then Italian. I knew some German because I sang in German and because many of my classmates spoke it or spoke it at home. But I didn't study it formally because I was studying so many other things.

Q: How did you find the Austrians? I mean, they're a different breed of cat than the Germans in a way. I mean, they've got their own history and-

LATHAM: I loved everything about Austria. To me, Vienna was the most congenial city in which I'd ever lived. That was largely because it was a city of music, and my great passion is music. I worked for an intercultural council that arranged music study programs and choir tours. I was working with a group from Duke University; my own university was there for a Renaissance festival. We lived in the heart of the city; I could walk to the opera in 10 minutes. Our apartment was directly over the American Library. The American Library was on the main square of the city, just opposite the town hall, the Rathaus. The architecture was beautiful. I couldn't possibly have had a richer cultural life.

I was getting paid by that time. In 1972 the rules changed, and American Foreign Service wives who had not been allowed to work for pay were then allowed to do so. Within one week I had a job. But that was easy because I had made many connections.

Q: What was your job?

LATHAM: I worked for an intercultural council, an Austrian intercultural council. There were two of us who were Americans and all the rest were Austrians. So, I did letters and translations and actually made arrangements for students coming to study violin or piano, or whatever their instrument was, with Austrian musicians. It was a very specialized thing.

Q: Were you helping students, I mean were you pointing them toward particular schools of music?

LATHAM: Well, what happened was that in the group I worked for, there may have been a dozen of us in the office. It was headed up by an Austrian who was a music lover, and in Vienna throughout the year there are all kinds of musical performances and events. I think there are four major music schools in the city so I mean music is at the heart of Vienna.

Q: Sounds like a clam at high tide.

LATHAM: Yes, it was. I had a connection with the Embassy and knew a lot of people and I was also very active in the Anglican Church. And the two most active people in the church other than the rector were the British Ambassador and the American Ambassador.

Q: Who was the American?

LATHAM: Hines, John Hines. You probably don't remember but in my living room there's a rose, a gilded rose. It was a gift from the ambassador and his wife when we left. And since it was nothing but a dust collector, I had it mounted on velvet and put on the wall.

Q: Well, Austria's role in World War II was sort of subdued, I mean the knowledge of it, subdued for a long time but then it started to come out, particularly Colonel Waldheim.

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: Was that during your era?

LATHAM: Yes. When we were there, we arrived in 1970, the first Jewish person of real importance had been elected and it seemed as if Austria was redoing its earlier history. There was still some anti-Jewish feeling, but I think maybe if I tell you this joke it

illustrates the culture at that time better than anything else. This was a joke that was told to me in 1970, but the story itself takes place in 1945 – in the Sacher Hotel. Does that mean anything to you?

Q: What?

LATHAM: The Sacher Hotel.

Q: Oh, yes, Sachertorte.

LATHAM: Yes. The Sacher Hotel was directly across the street from the Staatsoper, and it's where the Emperor Franz Joseph often ate. And it was the most elegant place in the city. And in this joke people went there for dinner. They went there for coffee and Sachertorte; they went there to sit and read their newspapers. And in this joke a man goes into the hotel and orders coffee and says that he would like Kaffee mit Schlag and a Sachertorte and the "Völkischer Beobachter." And the "Völkischer Beobachter" - what do you call the papers that are not the size of real newspapers but they're about half size?

Q: Journal?

LATHAM: Yes, that size. The "Völkischer Beobachter" was the Nazi paper during the Second World War. And so, the waiter comes back and puts the coffee and cream down with the Sachertorte that the man had ordered. He says again, "I would like the "Völkischer Beobachter." And so, the waiter goes out and comes back and says, "There is no "Völkischer Beobachter." And the man who'd come in for his coffee and cream said, "Please go look again; I'd like to read the "Völkischer Beobachter." And then, in a much shorter period of time the waiter, who is beginning to be a bit frustrated by all this, reappears and says, "There isn't any, and I've told you that three times." And he says, "I don't understand this." And the man sits up very straight, and he says, "I know, but I can't hear it often enough!" Don't you love it? It gives you a sense of the way in which Austria was changing.

Q: Ah. Well, did you get any sense of the spy versus spy game that was playing in Vienna?

LATHAM: A bit, yes, a bit. The thing that was interesting was that because we were in Vienna, if you applied for a visa early enough, it would take about three weeks to get one for Hungary; you could do that. And we had friends at the American Embassy in Budapest so we did that. We also went to Prague. So, we were able to travel to those countries that were still "behind the Iron Curtain." And there were a number of trips to the former Yugoslavia, although that was a special case because Yugoslavia at that time wasn't really under the Soviet thumb in the way that-

Q: Oh, very much not so.

LATHAM: Romania, well Romania for its own set of reasons wasn't either. But these were communist countries, these were socialist countries and so it was very interesting to visit them. My interest in them was a historical one so any time I had an opportunity to travel I took it. And that was just wonderful. I love old buildings, I love libraries, I love churches, and I love museums. I mean, the old cities, the old coffeehouses, just everything about Central Europe was of enormous appeal to me personally.

Q: That whole area is awash with history and it still plays out. I was in Yugoslavia during that part of the time and you know, 800 AD stuck in mind; that's when they divided up the area between orthodox and Catholic.

LATHAM: Yes. And I think the other thing is that because my own ancestor was Charlemagne, who crowned himself on Christmas Day in 800 AD, I had a real sense of belonging.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: And we were right in the city so we could go anywhere and I took advantage of everything I possibly could. It was glorious for me. I've studied four instruments and I sing but I'm not a gifted musician by any means, but to just be there and to be able to partake of it was in some ways the most glorious period of my life.

Q: Were there many Americans involved in opera? Because my impression is that there isn't much opera in the United States and aspiring American opera you have to be in Europe.

LATHAM: Yes. And for German opera the Staatsoper in Vienna is just like Paris is for French opera and like La Scala in Milan is for Italian opera.

Q: Italian.

LATHAM: Yes. And since I had traveled a lot, went to a lot of places and visited every continent, I don't know that I've been to every major opera house in the world, but close to it. I mean, this is a burning passion for me. And I grew up in a city that had wonderful music, in Philadelphia. And at the time I lived there Eugene Ormandy was the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and I was very involved in the youth concerts at that time and wrote program notes for them. Music was just a very important part of my early training.

Q: Another important part of your life, did you have children at any point around when we're talking?

LATHAM: Our son was not born until we came back. We came back in the fall of 1973 and Tyger was born in January of 1974. So, he was actually born in Washington, DC.

Q: Well, did you have any contact with the Soviets?

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: Because Russia has tremendous music.

LATHAM: Yes, we did. Well, what happened was that we had an opportunity not so long after we moved to Vienna to go on a tour that was sponsored by the Austro-Soviet Friendship Society. It was a tour from Christmas through New Year's, which is the least desirable time to be there in terms of the weather. So, this tour of six days cost \$120. It included airfare on Aeroflot. It included all meals, hotels, the Russian Circus, the opera, museum tours, a trip in a troika, the whole schmear. But it was arranged for people, for Austrians principally, whom the Soviets were trying to lure into their political camp. But, in fact, a few Foreign Service officers in the American Embassy found out about the tour, so we applied to join the tour. Later the Society changed its guidelines but we were able to go. And for me it was just....

Q: Beautiful.

LATHAM: Oh, the museums. I can remember going into the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and being on the second floor, which is where they had most of the 19th century art and walking around and stopping in front of a portrait of Dostoyevsky, and saying, "Yes, that's Dostoyevsky." The guide said, "How do you know?" And I said, "Because when I first read 'Crime and Punishment' that portrait was on the frontispiece of the book." And she didn't want to believe me. Most of the medieval stuff was under wraps. What they really wanted you to see was the, what do you call it now?

Q: The realistics-

LATHAM: Yes, Soviet realism.

Q: Or, you know, Ivan and his tractor.

LATHAM: Exactly. But there were also scenes from the forest with people on horses and, you know, it was a great gallery. And we spent a long time there. You spend a long time waiting in lines and stamping your feet when it's cold in the wintertime. And we went to various metro stations. It was my first trip to Russia so it was just fascinating. We flew in at night and we flew out at night so we really couldn't see much. But nonetheless I imagined what it must have been like for the troops of Napoleon as they were retreating from Moscow.

Oh. And the opera that we saw was "War and Peace." And what to me was fascinating about it was that the greatest, what shall I say? "Enthusiasm" in the audience was when Napoleon was defeated. It wasn't the highlight of the opera in terms of music; it was Russian nationalism. And what I also remember from that night is I saw a lot of people come in, because it was the very end of December, in heavy coats and they would take off their coats and the clothes that they wore underneath were shabby.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: But it was very easy to buy a ticket because all of this was underwritten by the government. And we were staying in a hotel that was directly across the street from where the opera house was so that was very nice. And I love Russian folk music, so I could stay up all night listening to the balalaika.

Q: Where did you go from Vienna?

LATHAM: Back to the States. And my husband and I separated.

Q: You separated?

LATHAM: Yes. And you want to know the reason?

Q: Well, what the hell.

LATHAM: I don't know whether this should be in the report or not, but he was having an affair with a friend of mine. And I was pregnant.

Q: Well, that's not the greatest-

LATHAM: The woman was an Austrian and a great music lover. And her husband was British, and he was in a mental institution. It was messy.

Q: It sounds messy.

LATHAM: It was very messy.

Q: So, what did you do with yourself? I mean, what did you do?

LATHAM: Well, what happened was that we were sent back to the States to learn Greek because the next assignment was Nicosia. And Ernest had studied Greek, ancient Greek, so that was a new language that he wanted to learn. And while we were in language school, our son was born and very, very shortly after that Ernest was sent to Nicosia. But Nicosia was having an uprising so on the way out he stopped in Vienna for a week. He was officially at the American Embassy while he was waiting to go on to Nicosia. But he was actually living with my Austrian friend who had two children of her own. And I had an investigation done which I arranged through people in CIA and its Austrian counterpart, and that was the end of that. There's more to this ugly story but...

Then I got a job because he refused to support our son. And eventually his salary was garnished, and I stayed here in the States and worked for the U.S. government.

Q: Where did you work for the government?

LATHAM: Well, I worked as an editor at with the Department of Agriculture and then later I switched to Voice of America which was a much more interesting place for me to be. I was the assistant editor of the principle magazine that VOA was producing for its overseas listeners at that time.

Q: That was-?

LATHAM: “The Voice.” And what happened was that it was mostly sent to people in Africa which was very expensive. It didn’t cost so much to produce the magazine, but it cost a lot for the postage. After the dramatic changes of 1989, the government started eliminating a number of its overseas publications. I subsequently moved from editing into broadcasting.

Q: Well, let’s talk about the magazine first.

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: Did you have any feel for- what were you producing?

LATHAM: Well, I was hired in the middle of a cycle. So you know, I essentially got back the proofs that someone else had worked on before me. And the first story that I read was about Masaryk. It was then the 20th anniversary of 1968 uprising in Czechoslovakia, which I remembered well because we were in England during that time and had been able to follow the news of the Warsaw Pact invasion very closely. In the fall of 1988 I started writing articles for our VOA magazine and went around to the various language services and interviewed people there so I could better report on those topics that would be of interest to a VOA audience. Later I was overseas and came back from a month’s vacation in East Asia only to find that I no longer had a job because VOA had eliminated the magazine. So, I was sent up to the Newsroom to see if I could fit in there and make my way – and I did.

Q: This was part of Voice of America?

LATHAM: Yes.

Q: The Newsroom.

LATHAM: I mean, I’d been an editor and I had all of this foreign affairs background so it was a very easy change except for the fact that I’m not all that quick with my hands, and it took a while to learn how to edit tape. Now, of course, it’s a different process altogether.

Q: Yes.

LATHAM: But I loved it. I loved almost every minute I spent at VOA.

Q: I think this probably is a good place to stop. I like to stop at a particular thing. So, why don't we pick this up with your time as an editor, news editor with Voice of America. Is that right?

LATHAM: Not exactly. At the time I first started, there were almost 50 foreign languages, and I was in the English Division because you broadcast in your native language. I was made the educational editor so I was writing about education in the United States – from cradle to grave. Subsequently I went on to other things.

Q: Okay. Well, we'll pick this up then.

LATHAM: That was the really interesting material. And I got very much into the area conflict resolution – especially in the former Yugoslavia.

Q: Yes. Oh, what a place. Okay.

Today is the 30th of May 2017 with Judith Latham. And Judith, we're talking about the time you were with the Department of Agriculture, which is when?

LATHAM: I started working for the Department of Agriculture in 1976 and worked for them for 12 years. During most of that time I was an editor and worked with publications in economic research and development. But when I first started working in that area it was really with foreign students who came to the United States from overseas and who were pursuing programs principally at the Land-Grant Universities. Let's say they were writing research papers on better means of farming in a particular area. And it was mostly in economics and statistics. Essentially I was taking very dull material and making it into readable material. Virtually all the Americans with whom I worked already had their PhDs in agricultural economics. I don't know if you've done much reading in that area but it is less than sparkling. My real interest continued to be in foreign affairs, but I had the editorial skills and agricultural economics is where the opening was. And one of the highest considerations when I started to work was that my son was two years old so he had to go to daycare. Later he went to public school and took part in an extended day program. So, I needed to do something that fit into his hours. And then in 1988 I became aware through a friend that a position was opening up at the Voice of America. That particular friend was my son's godfather and he had been a VOA correspondent in Beirut at the time we lived there but was now working in the Washington office. We were essentially preparing materials on U.S. foreign policy for overseas distribution. At that time we had 45 to 50 foreign languages, and our listeners were mostly in Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and other places where we wanted to develop closer relations with host governments. I was particularly interested in the work of the groups in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East; those were the areas that I knew best from personal experience. And so, I simply went to the various language services, interviewed them, talked about what they were doing and incorporated that information into a magazine that was published every two months. And then it would be sent out to various people in embassies or in American libraries who were interested. At that time

the greatest demand was in Africa and I think that's probably because Africa was looking to the United States to develop better business practices and to increase their GDP (Gross Domestic Product). And of course these were countries that were also interested in democratizing. It was 1988. The year after I switched to this position the Central and East European countries began to break away from the former Soviet Union. So, it was a fascinating time politically, and it was also an area in which I had an enormous interest academically.

Q: Well tell me, I mean you had interviewed so many of these people who were doing the broadcasting, coming from various parts of, particularly Central Europe but also elsewhere, how did the- what was your initial impression of these?

LATHAM: Well, the particular journal I worked for promoted the various programs that VOA offered to listeners around the world in their own languages. For example, in the case of Europe, the principle languages besides Russian and the other languages of the former Soviet Union were those in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the former Yugoslavia. They were all areas that I knew something about and in which I had an interest. Some of these articles were given to us and I edited them; some of them I wrote after talking with various people in the language services about their current projects. Does that make sense?

Q: Yes, but did-

LATHAM: Do you remember "Amerika" magazine?

Q: Oh yes.

LATHAM: In the case of VOA, it promoted radio programs that were available from the U.S. Government.

Q: Well, before the great change in 1989 and all, did you find this was a group that essentially was chafing at the bit to do something more or were they a pretty contented lot or what?

LATHAM: Well, as I said, I started in 1988. The election that year was that of Bush 41, which of course continued the work of the Reagan presidency. Certainly, there was enormous interest in opening up to the former Soviet Union and to furthering the rapport between the United States and Great Britain and Russia under Gorbachev. So, this was a period of experimentation. There was an interest in muting conflicts around the world because peace is always an aid to national development. There was an ugly period after the Second World War of the resurgence of communism. Both the former Soviet Union and China were in the communist camp, while we were in the democratic camp, and we were rivals. NATO was strong and we were interested in promoting democracy around the world, particularly in those countries that formerly had been part of the European area of influence, let's say, in Africa and the Middle East and East Asia. These were countries after the Second World War that had become independent on their own.

Q: Well now, with Gorbachev in there, this was again before the final break-up-

LATHAM: Yes, the final break-up was in 1991 when....

Q: The Soviet Union-

LATHAM: ...the Soviet Union dissolved into its component republics.

Q: Yes, but during this interim period, particularly with Gorbachev, were we sort of going at the Soviet Union with an almost different mindset than we had before?

LATHAM: Oh, I think so. At that time the two largest VOA foreign-language services, in terms of the numbers of people working for them, were Mandarin and Russian. There was a lot of interest in the Solidarity movement in Poland, for example, and in similar types of movements in Central and Eastern Europe. And the one thing I haven't told you is that all of my work was not in the political sphere. At the time I began to work for the English service as a broadcaster, there was no educational reporter. The person who had earlier been the educational reporter was by then my editor, so I took over her prior job. Essentially, I did a series of programs on American education, and I simply started with education for preschoolers and worked all the way through adult education and even programs for retirees. At that time an American university education was considered the best in the world, and there were many foreign students who were coming here to learn about the sciences or medicine, or whatever their field was. And then there were concerns about how students from poor families could get a higher education and share in the decision-making process. Does this make sense to you?

Q: Yes. What happened to the broadcasters while the Soviet Union was falling apart?

LATHAM: Well, of course, a major concern involved what was going on in the military and in the intelligence communities. And it appeared that the United States and its allies were becoming stronger as the former Soviet Union and its allies were becoming weaker, partly because their governments were not run efficiently and partly because of the enormous corruption that was well known. So, it was a matter of promoting the American way. It was in a sense an extension of the work of the State Department.

Q: Were you able, or were we as a government able to get much response from the audience?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, very much so. In the case of Eastern Europe this was the period of the Solidarity movement in Poland. Our largest European language program at VOA was in Polish. Then maybe the next largest was that of Czechoslovakia although it was separated into two languages, Czech and Slovak. Of course, later on the two language services separated when the country itself broke into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The question was, after the end of the Second World War and the Cold War, how would these nations be reconstituted so that the goals of democracy were furthered.

Q: Well, did you get involved in any of sort of the programming?

LATHAM: Well, yes. Typically, I chose a topic of interest at that time, something happening in the United States, depending upon whether it was in the field of education, which was initially what I was covering, and then later on a major concern became what was going on in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia. That was a matter of tremendous interest to me and was an area where I already had some connections. So, I interviewed people in the government and also journalists from all these countries about developments during this period. And then two years later, in the summer, in August of 1991, the former Soviet Union itself came apart. That was the beginning of a hope among Western Europeans and Americans that some of those countries that were formally communist would in time move toward democratic development. But as all of us who are students of history are aware, people are motivated not only by what is good for them but by what is profitable for them. For example, if you have a job, one of the important things is to be able to keep that job. And so, depending upon your area of work, whether it is in manufacturing or, in today's case, in developing alternative sources of energy, this is where emphasis is placed. Of course, that also includes military expenditures. It is considered essential that the United States continues to be perceived as the primary economic and military power. And all major countries promote their own news and propaganda.

Q: Well, let's talk about, let's take the Polish section. I would imagine there would be all sorts of divisions because of personalities and outlooks among the broadcasters. Did you find this?

LATHAM: No. Obviously people had different points of view because they came to their work from their own specialties. I mean, their interest might be in medicine or law. There was also a lot going on in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union among people who were religiously active. So, there was considerable interest in what was being reported in these various places by their own journalists or by government media.

Q: Were you getting feedback from the governments themselves? I mean, were they complaining or-?

LATHAM: No, because the work of Voice of America was an extension of the work of the State Department. We were not involved in negotiations. Essentially, we were reporting on what was going on.

Q: But sometimes reporting, I mean, I assume you were reporting on things that basically the governments, say the Polish government, didn't want reported.

LATHAM: Well, that's true. I guess the clearest example might have been the Russian Branch. In 1990-91, I was working in English but I was also interviewing people who were working in other language areas. And the question was the degree to which the

American view was being disseminated in the formerly communist areas of Central and Eastern Europe.

Q: George Soros, for example. He was mostly Hungarian, wasn't he?

LATHAM: He was a Hungarian banker who had gone to Britain and then to the States. His main office was actually in New York at that time. And he was supporting the work of democracy, the work of journalists, for example. Soros had been caught up in that period when Hungary was very much under the thumb of the former Soviet Union. As a political liberal and as an anti-communist, he was eager to see American-type business practices adopted in countries that had been under the domination of the former Soviet Union. I guess that was one of the most interesting areas in which I began to work because I was so intrigued with what was going on in Yugoslavia where each of the former republics was disintegrating into its various ethnic enclaves. Maybe that's an exaggeration, but the primary loyalty of people in many of these countries seemed to be to their own ethnic or religious group. So, for example, in the case of Serbia, the Serbs saw things very differently from the Croatians, from the Slovenians, from the Bosnians, from the Macedonians, and so forth. And so, it became a way of fostering ties between liberal movements within Western Europe and the United States and those states that were trying to form their own independent governments.

And then, of course, there were two very ugly wars that dominated the '90s. One was the civil war in Rwanda and the other was the war in the various republics that had made up Yugoslavia. And VOA had a contract with the Carnegie Corporation to work in that area. And I was one of three people who were assigned to that program.

Q: Well, I would have thought that the broadcasters in particular Bosnian and Serbian and Croatian and then probably Macedonian, would be very partisan, and it must have been difficult to keep them in the same broadcasting area.

LATHAM: Absolutely. English, of course, was the mother language of our broadcasting network. But each of the VOA language services was broadcasting to its own audiences in Serbian or Croatian or Bosnian or Macedonian or Albanian. There were issues of religion and issues of ethnicity, and people were killing one another in the name of their religion or ethnicity, which was quite a horrible thing. The United States was not fully invested, I think, because the U.S. president and his government were reluctant to commit military troops on the ground because that's both expensive and potentially dangerous. As journalists we were concerned with reporting the views of all sides. We talked with various people in the media and in government to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Q: Were there problems of keeping the Serb broadcasters, Croatian broadcasters on script?

LATHAM: Well, certainly the way in which the news was reported in each of those language services was different because many of the conversations were with people in the government or in the military or in the intelligence services. And people saw things

from their own point of view. For example, the strongest of the Yugoslav groups was that of Serbia. It was also the least democratic. Slobodan Milošević and Ratko Mladic were considered war criminals because of some of the activities that the Serbs and their government had been involved in during the war period, especially the genocide in Srebrenica.

Then, as time went on, the really big political issues around the year 2000 had to do with the Middle East. And I had also been working in that area. The question was to what degree did the United States support Israel or support the various Arab countries with respect to bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. And of course, these countries all had different goals.

Q: Can you think of any particular instance that you were involved in with all these- this turmoil going on in your area of the world?

LATHAM: Well, my job was to speak with people who were specialists in these matters to get as clear an idea as possible of what particular governments were doing and what their goals were and to what degree the United States and Government X were on the same page. And then everything changed in September of 2001 with the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon. Then the primary issue became terrorism, and we went into Afghanistan and ultimately into Iraq. And the question was to what degree the United States intended to be involved in changing the current government - for example, the government of Saddam Hussein. And was it sufficient to defeat Saddam Hussein or did we need to go all the way to Baghdad and actually replace him with someone more in line with our goals for the region? Of course, in the case of the Middle East and particularly in the case of Iraq and Iran and Saudi Arabia, the big issue involved oil. How would the military situation on the ground affect the ability of those countries that needed oil to purchase it from the major producers? How could the economic interests of the United States and its allies be best protected?

Q: Well, how did you find our reporting on- were you involved in the reporting on Iraq and all?

LATHAM: Oh, yes, absolutely. That was a large part of what I did.

Q: Did you feel you were in competition with CNN?

LATHAM: No, because Voice of America is part of the U.S. Government. It is not a commercial network that advertises anything for sale. So, it's paid for by the U.S. Government. All the salaries of the people who work at VOA come from the Government. Its function is one of information distribution. VOA does not broadcast within the United States; it broadcasts only outside. This is a distinction, say, from the BBC, which broadcasts both within Britain and outside. But our broadcasting at VOA has everything to do with the activities of the State Department and its associated agencies.

Q: What about, say there were groups that were opposed to our involvement in Iraq.

LATHAM: Well, of course. The wisdom of our military involvement in Iraq was very much a matter of dispute. And so, of course, we spoke with people who felt that the U.S. government, in that case the government of George W. Bush, was pursuing it in the best way and then with other people who thought it should be pursued in a different way. This is not a perfect analogy because I was certainly not working for the Voice of America at the time we were fighting in Vietnam. At that point we were both in the Middle East and in Europe; those were our geographical areas of responsibility.

Q: Well then-

LATHAM: The important thing was to get accurate information out. And that is done by sending out reporters to various areas. The rule is that two independent sources have to report the same thing for you to have confidence that a fact is accurate. And so, what I was doing mostly was talking to reporters, maybe someone with a Russian connection, maybe someone with a German connection, maybe someone with a French connection about Issue X, whatever Issue X of the day was. And then it was up to the listener to decide which account was the most accurate.

Q: Well, this brings me to another point. It wasn't your particular field, but what about the events in China during Tiananmen Square?

LATHAM: Ah, yes. Well, I did do some reporting on that, as a matter of fact. That was in 1989. And it came together at the same time as the loosening of Soviet ties with their empire and in the Warsaw Pact countries. The other huge VOA broadcast service was in Chinese. We broadcast both in Mandarin and in Cantonese because the written language is the same but the spoken languages are very different. Essentially most people in China were getting their information from the Chinese government, and those people who were listening to foreign radio or television were getting a somewhat different set of information. And the really dramatic moment was, I'm sure you remember it, when the young student stood in front of the tank.

Q: Oh yes.

LATHAM: And this represented, more than anything else, the confrontation between a government that we in the United States regarded as belligerent, and its people's push for democratic government and for information that could be obtained outside the Chinese body politic.

Q: Well, I mean, in many ways this was the time when the Voice of America was really making the news rather than- I mean-

LATHAM: Well, it was making the news in the sense that we had journalists in those places where things were happening. And we were picking up their reporting and broadcasting it outside the country. That meant not only broadcasting it to China but broadcasting it to all the other areas where VOA broadcasts are heard.

Q: Were you getting, again this comes back to the overall thing, what sort of reaction were you getting from say the Polish government, the Soviet government, the Chinese government through these activities?

LATHAM: Well, are you talking about the 1990 period?

Q: Yes, I mean that whole period.

LATHAM: Okay. The period of the relaxing of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and its being beefed up elsewhere. Well, what was happening simultaneously in the former Soviet Union is that there was a president who was regarded as more liberal and as more willing to criticize what earlier Russian leaders had done. So, there was a hope that military arms might be reduced and thus the world would be safer for everyone. I mean that was a critical factor. There was also a question about who represents the good and the desirable. And of course in most countries, most citizens believe that their own countries are on the side of the right and that's the news they follow. And the world at that time was quite divided between communism and democracy in its varied forms.

Q: Well, were you getting reports from our people in the field who are going out and talking to people and what do they have-

LATHAM: Ghosts.

Q: Were there areas that you found that we just weren't making much impression?

LATHAM: Well, what was successful, what worked was often a matter of who had the most powerful military. So, the idea was to advance one's own nation whether you're talking about getting rid of the Taliban in Afghanistan or getting rid of dictators in various countries and especially in Africa and Asia - or, for that matter, in Latin America. I did not have Spanish as a working language so I rarely worked on stories having to do with Latin America. That's because people who were far better informed than I were following developments in Latin America.

Q: When did you leave the Voice of America?

LATHAM: I retired in 2010. And I retired for health reasons. At that time I worked part-time with an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) here in the States whose major goal was to bring about a two-state solution in the Middle East. And because I had lived in the Middle East and was very concerned about the region, I was volunteering with an organization that was working toward a peaceful solution to the conflict. I think maybe you met Hussein Ibish when he was here.

Q: Who?

LATHAM: Hussein Ibish.

Q: The name is vaguely familiar.

LATHAM: Well, he was, at the time, with the organization for which I was working, but he's now with the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. And so, the hope, of course, is that war would cease and people would work out their various disagreements around a negotiating table rather than-

Q: You're talking about the Israelis and the Palestinians.

LATHAM: Yes, particularly because that conflict has been going on for some 70 years. It has been especially difficult in the last 50 years since the end of the Six Day War of 1967. That was of great interest to me because I had lived in the Middle East during that war.

Q: Well, what was the name of the organization you worked for?

LATHAM: The American Task Force on Palestine. It was an organization that had raised money to broadcast information, what it regarded as accurate information, about the issues in the Middle East. And the person who founded the group was a man whose family was from Jerusalem, from an old family in Jerusalem. He was a doctor and he had gone to the American University of Beirut and eventually made his home in the States, as have many people who had to leave the Middle East during the various wars. His wife was very involved in the organization as well as many other regional experts whom he knew. He was retired from medicine and was involved in trying to bring peace to the world in which he had grown up.

Q: What were you doing?

LATHAM: I was working in the office, working with the young interns and making sure that the news got out. It was just general office stuff.

Q: Were you, was your organization making many inroads into the two governments?

LATHAM: Well, the years that I worked for them were from 2010 to 2013, immediately after retiring from VOA. I had initially thought that what I wanted to do was to teach English as a second language. But in the last few weeks of my working for VOA I went to a meeting in the Rayburn Building at which one of the members of this organization was the spokesperson. And I was so impressed by what I heard him say that I went up to him afterwards and said, "You know, I'm retiring from VOA and I am going to be doing volunteer work, and I'm wondering if there is any place that I might fit into the organization for which you're working. And he said, "You know, come in next week, and we'll talk." And that's how it started.

The way it ended is that I had a serious accident in the Metro station and was not able to walk for about eight months, and since that time I've been somewhat limited physically.

And I have moved into a retirement home. So now, I continue to read in the areas in which I have an interest; I continue to talk with the people whom I knew who explore those issues. But I'm not being paid. I haven't been paid by the Government since 2010. I've been retired. But I had a full career, and I live here in Goodwin House and am able to pursue those things that are important or that fascinate me.

Q: Well, I know when we have current events discussions that you're always on top of events.

LATHAM: Well, in certain areas, yes. There are also areas where I lag.

Q: Well, Judith, I think this is probably a good place to stop. And I thank you very much.

End of interview