

Foreign Service Spouse Series

HILDA BRUHM LEWIS

Interviewed by: Robert Lewis

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Q: Today is April 18, 1987, and my name is Robert Lewis. I am interviewing my mother, Hilda Lewis, about her life as a Foreign Service wife.

LEWIS: It started in 1937, my first post. We were married in May, and our first post thereafter was in November.

Q: By way of explanation, you were married in Leipzig.

LEWIS: Yes. We married in Leipzig and we honeymooned in the States where, in California, I met Harrison's parents, his sister, his aunts, uncle and cousins.

Q: Where was your first post?

LEWIS: It was Calcutta, and those were the days of going by ship and rail. On our way there, we met Harrison's friends and colleagues. The Foreign Service was small and tightly knit then. We were always put up by friends as we returned the same gesture to whoever came through.

Q: From station to station, post to post?

LEWIS: Yes. We had returned to Leipzig and transferred soon thereafter to Calcutta. (We went) by rail to Rome where Johnny Jones was posted. He lives in Ashville now. Johnny took us around showing us the sights, the catacombs, all points of interest. From there, we went to Naples, and Homer Byington was there ... his favorite place. In Naples, we boarded a P&0 ship for the short trip to Alexandria and disembarked to await an American ship which we were required to use wherever such a ship sailed. That was ten days later. Our per diem cost the government a lot more than if we had just continued on the P&0 liner, but we had those wonderful ten days for Cairo, Luxor, the Valley of the Kings, even riding a camel to the Pyramids.

Q: What all did you see?

LEWIS: Those twenty to thirty foot high statues, the tomb from where Tutankhamen was taken in 1923 to be put into the Metropolitan in New York, the Sphinx, so large and mighty, the many different tombs and their hieroglyphics in the Valley of the Kings. The Pyramids' large-size stones surprised me. I couldn't step up from one to the other. How did they get them there? Hoist them? But maybe it was the camel ride there that I'll always remember most by its discomfort, its strange gait. I didn't know where to hold on. I was afraid I'd fall off. I could not adapt to the rhythm, the swing, the irregularity, and I guess I showed it. The little Egyptian boy holding out his hand, saying, "Baksheesh, baksheesh, baksheesh, and I'll make him stop." But the streets of Cairo were maybe worse with beggar cries of "baksheesh" and the awful flies which also wanted to get into our eyes.

Q: You took the ship through the Suez?

LEWIS: Yes. It was only later, three years later, that it was closed. It was a nice trip. We had been enroute a long time when we reached Bombay, the gateway to India: a month altogether by the time we got to Calcutta.

Q: Tell me how your impressions were.

LEWIS: Bombay, of course, gave us the first impression not only of the teeming masses of Indians, and by the way, they seemed a lot cleaner than the Egyptians. The American Consulate gave us a guide and they helped us get a personal "bearer" to lay out our nightclothes, clean our shoes, etc., all pomp and service we soon learned: the white man's privilege as imposed by the British Raj! We saw the burning "ghats," the vultures waiting, and after Egypt, much impressed us.

Q: How long was the train trip to Calcutta?

LEWIS: I think it was two nights, and we arrived on the third day. As it was not the hot weather season, we didn't have to carry our own ice for cooling the coupe. But I do remember we tried not to touch things to pick up a germ, so we thought, and each night there were clean sheets. We drank only boiled water, weak tea it was. I noticed stopping at stations along the way that Indians are excellent at squatting, sitting on their haunches, so they waited on the platforms. Only the foreigners stood while waiting for their train to pull in.

Q: And Calcutta?

LEWIS: We had our first night at the Great Eastern Hotel, definitely for "Whites Only" as was our coup¹/₂ on the train. Indians go somewhere else on the train, in other carriages. The Consulate General had hired a "bearer" for us, and already he asked where, in which suitcase, were my evening clothes. That was Doslan who was with us for half of our stay in Calcutta.

Then Hawley Oakes - maybe you remember his name, as we stayed friends over long years - asked us to come stay with him until we found a house of our own. Of course, Doslan came along too, but servants sleep in outside quarters, servants' quarters, or go home.

Q: What was his job? He was the Consul General?

LEWIS: No. The Consul General then was John Campbell White, and his first time at a consular post. You see, the Foreign Service was not always amalgamated. Diplomatic posts were quite separate from the Consular, and Treasury and Labor departments separate. Only later were the Services brought together. Calcutta was John Campbell White's first Consular post, and he said to all of us, "You've got to teach me. I've never been in this job before." And Betty White, his wife, is about 94 now (Mrs. White is actually 89 years old, living in Chester, Maryland) - and I've been in correspondence with her lately. She, as I was the only wife among the subordinate officers at the Consulate General, took me in hand, showed me around. She introduced me to officials and judges' wives. Wherever we called, I took along Harrison's cards as well to leave with mine ... his to the wife and to her husband.

During the time of the British Raj, Indians had no status. Surely, the real rajahs had their estates and their fine jewels in their headdresses and egret feathers, and the British went when they would entertain, but you couldn't play tennis with them unless you went to one of those mixed clubs, because that dark skin was not acceptable under the British Raj. It was very interesting, but we had very good Indian friends and invited them to stay with us in our house, and also they invited us to go and spend the weekend with them. They were in Benares at that time. That was how we came to know Benares quite well. The two sisters said, "You know, you're the first foreigners that have ever stayed with us." That's how little they mixed. It's extraordinary, that background, but we forget about that.

When Jack was born, I asked the Chief Justice if he would be my child's Godfather, and his wife, who was a British woman, then came to me and told me she had no objection to his being Godfather because she was British, but he was a Moslem, she said, and their belief was that if you take the name of a living person, you take his soul. They never gave the name, the same name, while that man was living. It would have to be a grandfather who was already dead or something like that. So he could not be our son's Godfather.

Our cook was a "Mugg". All good cooks were of the "Mugg" Caste. He was an assistant. He bought well and served fine-looking and delicious food. In an out building he prepared and precooked. Inside our house an oven kept food hot for whenever we'd return home for the meal. Cook kept careful accounts and daily presented his book to me, and I would settle with him fortnightly. During that fortnight, his daily expenses would mount bit by bit. Harrison, who had been posted in Singapore, knew these ways. He said, "Don't get excited when you notice the rise in cook's daily cost of foods. After the fortnight, take a deep breath and give a blast, telling him to keep his costs down. But don't get angry yourself. You'll see results." Surely, it was so. The following day, the account plunged, but gradually the performance was repeated. And so, over and over again.

One time, I thought I'd be even cleverer and go to market myself. That was exactly one time, as it cost me ten times over what the cook would put in his accounts and that even included his percentage. When you buy a spool of thread at the market, it takes considerable time to bargain it down to an acceptable price. Should that spool run out as it was one time when the "dursi" or tailor was doing a set of curtains, and I went back to the same stall for an identical spool, I couldn't just pay the same price. I had to go through the whole half hour of bargaining again to get the price to what I had paid the day before. That's about the only system to learn.

Q: Now, what about the British?

LEWIS: They were very superior.

Q: They acted that way?

LEWIS: They did.

Q: And they let the Americans know it?

LEWIS: Well, I don't think that we allowed them to think we noticed it. But certainly any and all foreigners were low in rank in comparison. Your father was 59th in rank. That's pretty far down.

Q: 59th out of ... ?

LEWIS: You begin at the top. In Calcutta, the Governor would be number one and so on through his governing body, heads of departments, etc.. Of course, the Viceroy, when he came to Calcutta, outranked the Governor. But what I had meant concerning Harrison's rank of 59th was that a lot of smallish government posts, British, of course, were ranked higher than your father's.

Q: How did the British system work?

LEWIS: As far as where we lived, though all landlords were Indians and they were a hard lot, there were sections and streets for such as us and the British. No Indians lived on our street. The reason I say Indian landlords are a tough lot is that if a tree falls, as one did over our driveway, the landlord would do nothing about it. We had to have it removed. A leak, we had to have repaired. However, when we wanted to make a tennis court on the expanse on the lawn on one side of the house, the landlord readily agreed. We improved the lawn and the property was enhanced. We had good games there. We organized the Consular tennis games at our place. Others from the German, French and our own Consulate came and watched. I still have the teapot we used when we served tea.

Q: And drinks?

LEWIS: Not for afternoon ... no, no! We had our alcoholic drinks, very diluted, but plentiful in volume in the evenings. There were always cocktail parties, maybe up to four each evening, and then later we might gather at the 300 Club. But what we drank were "chouda pegs," a one-fourth whiskey in a glass of water. And there were "pao pegs," a one-half in whiskey of the "chouda peg." We drank great amounts of fluid to replace all we had dripped off in the heat of the day. Also, during the hot weather time, we took salt pills. Our water was both boiled and filtered. When we grew lettuce, as we did in our last year, it was that same boiled drinking water that we used to pour on it.

Q: The weather and what else?

LEWIS: Perhaps the Caste System was brought home to us in our house among our servants. The cook was the highest paid; however, it was the "mali" or gardener, the lowest paid, who was a Brahman and the highest in Caste. It was at his gatehouse that the beggars came, the one-legged, the crippled, the lepers. There, they might wait until the "mali" gave a handful of his rice food into their upheld bowls.

The lowest in caste was the "sweeper": so low his cleaning territory was the floor only. He couldn't rise even to polishing the brass doorknobs. It came to be a crisis one noon when the "sweeper," having finished his morning's work, wanted to bathe, to cleanse himself before his meal. A large tank of water in the back compound supplies their needs. No one gets into it; it is withdrawn with a long-handled dipper, which you pour over yourself, of course, as many times as you wish. But the "sweeper" had to wait, as the "mali" hadn't yet come for his noontime bath ritual. Caste had to be obeyed, but the "sweeper's" desperation made him forget himself and he appeared before me without his turban on, his topknot hanging down. He appeared before me with his head uncovered! There he stood pouring out his outrage, his anger, his frustration. I told him I'd try and find a solution, not today, as I didn't know how to handle this, but for the future.

I took this domestic caste system problem to our friend, Torick Ameer Ali. He suggested to have the "sweeper" gain some dignity by buying him a pail and presenting it to him as his own. He could keep it filled with water to use, to pour over himself should a similar situation arise. The "mali," so elevated in rank, would never be insulted by the presentation of a pail to the "sweeper." Harmony reigned.

Q: How many officers were there at the Consulate General?

LEWIS: There were three vice consuls, one consul, and the Consul General. Visa applications, immigration questions, helping Americans with any problem or information on anything in the U.S. were, of course, the office duties. Wives entered into the picture in public relations and making friends.

Q: How did you get to see the country?

LEWIS: Both by using our leave and in the course of duty when Harrison went to inspect textiles, and we were in Cawnpore (now Kanpur), Allahabad, and towns like Patna, and, of course, on our way to New Delhi, we stopped at Agra. Harrison wouldn't let me look out of the train window for an early look at the Taj Mahal. Our trip had been planned by him to be there at full moon, and it was when it was darkening that we started off from the hotel in a horse drawn carriage, and I had to sit facing backwards. He wanted me to get the full impact of this greatest of all Moslem architecture ... all at once. No nibbling beforehand!

At the reflection pool's edge, we sat as it was darkening further, the moon not yet up and the great white dome slowly faded in the darkness. The four minarets had only their sharp rising tower points to show. Then the rising moon began its illumination and, as it came, it brought to light the great love Shah Jehan expressed in this memorial, this mosque where he also lies buried. We sat quite still and felt great beauty flow over us.

I'm sure wherever we went Harrison also looked into the economic conditions and what was made there as home industry or in workshops. In Benares, known for its fine silks and saris, the weaving of 14K gold thread into magnificent border of the saris, also made excellent thick piled woolen rugs. These rugs, plain or with clipped designs, are carefully cut as the rugs were woven. A great artistic people in their long traditions in weaving. Benares is also a city of temples, where I, as a woman, wasn't permitted to enter. Perhaps what people think of first in connection with Benares are the burning "ghats" on the top of a great rise of steps up from the holy waters of the Ganges. The steps go down into the water as people descend to bathe. We could see them going down to be waist deep in the water. We saw also two burning "ghats" and flowers or small objects thrown onto the body burning by the mourners.

Benares then was perhaps India's most holy city. Yet, Christian missionaries from Germany were there and at other places. Their gods gave them Cosmos. Today, I am thinking ... doesn't Jesus Christ represent the same? You can see I'm anti-missionaries, though they were all fine and dedicated people of God.

Q: What other trips did you have?

LEWIS: It was after the yearly bouts of dysentery when, as they say, a person is afraid to die, and if you have dengue fever, you are afraid you are not going to die, that we went up to the foothills of the Himalayas to Darjeeling. It's so high, we couldn't walk well because of the altitude. It took some days of adjusting, even then slowly and only ten to fifteen minutes was enough! When we did get about, it was for a look at the gay Tibetan banners at each small house, for good luck, or asking for such blessings. One morning at predawn, we walked to a place overlooking the far ranges to the East ... those high peaks surrounding Mt. Everest, (to) see the sun rise. It hit a peak like a sparkling jewel.

Q: What time of year was it so hot in Calcutta?

LEWIS: The nice months were November through January, after which it started heating up quickly. We'd start dripping down our back, off our elbows. I can remember it running down my legs into the heels of my shoes. Our house had very high-ceilinged rooms with large ceiling fans. Also over our beds, we had our high mosquito net about 20 x 20 feet, cut to have the fans inside. We'd run them all night. As I said, we took salt tablets to replace all we lost in fluids through so much perspiration. We were given two months' leave every year because of the heat, and one year we took a full month for a trip to Kashmir.

Q: You were on a houseboat in Srinagar?

LEWIS: Yes, arranged beforehand, and we took our own "bearer." Cook and "sweeper" came with the boat. Hundreds of such houseboats were moored side by side along the canal and lakefront. Real clubby if you wanted that. We stayed for some days going shopping ... wonderful crafts and handwork ... and seeing the local sights of Srinagar. But we really wanted to get our boat to an unfrequented spot. It was finally agreed that our boat people would arrange to get a team ... four it was ... to pole the boat up to Wula Lake. It was a three-day journey.

The men's chants, like the Volga boatmen, with their rhythmic "gee huh huh, gee huh huh," as they pulled the ropes and got themselves forward. Actually, we left the houseboat at Wula Lake and climbed twelve miles up to the first rest house, our "bearer" coming along too. Harrison wanted to shoot a bear. He hired a guide who had seen the bear's tracks, and each night they went out looking for the bear! I wrote poetry about what I saw and experienced. The mountain air was elixir. Harrison never got the bear!

Q: So, what about ... you had your first son in 1940?

LEWIS: In Calcutta.

Q: In March?

LEWIS: Yes. And it was, for the first time under the British Raj, we had a strike that, I mean, the "sweepers" that cleaned the streets. And so the muck and the garbage were left where they were. You couldn't walk in your own backyard, ... in the meantime ... the vultures had come in to eat in all those places, and you couldn't walk out on the street because you had to zigzag to avoid all those piles of trash and stuff. You couldn't go out in your garden. We couldn't play croquet or anything, especially not if you had a cookie in your hand, because one of those vultures would just come down and try and snatch it out of your fingers and maybe take a little skin along. It was then, however, that I walked out on the "maidan," and your father ...

Q: What's the "maidan"?

LEWIS: They are these huge green spaces that are the open parks where also polo is played in certain parts of it. It's the great open spaces. And when your father was riding his horse, which was always the late afternoon, I would walk then for hours because ... not having had a birth before, I felt I'd make this a little easier. I walked for one hour every single day, and on the night before Jack was born, I even stopped at a friend's, because I couldn't get all the way home. It was that big a load, and I thought, "Well now, I've walked until my last day and, by gosh, it should be easy," and so it was. It was a hot night, and we got to the Swiss Nursing Home: the Swiss Hospital was the nursing home. It was a pretty quick birth. All of a sudden, Dr. Hahndel said, "Congratulations, Mrs. Lewis! You have a fine boy!" I didn't even know it was a baby and I said, "Oh, I thought that was the crows and the vultures out there making that noise," (laughs) his first little cry. I said, "I thought that was a crow making that noise." So that was my first child.

Q: By the way, you can recuperate while I ask you what did it take to have an American child in India during those first months there? How long did you have to stay there (in the hospital)?

LEWIS: Well, first of all, at that time, you didn't go home the same day.

Q: No, so you stayed ...

LEWIS: So, I was at the Swiss Nursing Home maybe a week or ten days. Dr. Hahndel brought his own baby scales. After I was taken home, I think it was at least two weeks before I was allowed to walk the stairs, you can imagine. And this baby - we, of course, had then another servant for him, the "ayah" ("amah" it's called somewhere else), but the "ayah," who always addressed this hardly-born thing as "sir." We left India when he was about four or five months old. And, of course, we traveled with the "ayah" to Bombay and we traveled with the "bearer" to Bombay.

Q: By train?

LEWIS: By train. That's the only way you go. That's from one side of India to the other, you see, where the Continent is the widest.

Q: How long did it take?

LEWIS: Can't remember exactly. Possibly two and a half to three days.

Q: Several days.

LEWIS: Yes, possibly. I mean, there ...

Q: You were several months there?

LEWIS: ... were no Indians in our coupī½. Whites and Indians were separate under the British Raj.

Q: On the back of the train there were ... ?

LEWIS: On the back and in different places, yes.

Q: I see.

LEWIS: But none in our coupī½, and that was when we traveled in the summer also.

Q: It was hot then?

LEWIS: Yes. That was when we ... you took your own tub along. Ice at each station, maybe. If it was melted or semi-melted, you got another one. And also you took a lot of cloths, washcloths, along and you dipped them wet and then stuck them on the windowpane to make your own air-conditioning. As they evaporated, they would cool the air. So that was our form of air-conditioning.

Q: So, the train was very hot from Calcutta to Bombay?

LEWIS: Yes. The quicker the evaporation, the more cooling there is. And in Bombay, we had a few days to wait, but because of the "ayah" we could do all right. We could go out and go shopping, and that was when I got those lovely little 2000-year-old animals and figures. We went through the Imperial Gate of India that the British built there in Bombay. We were presented to the Governor General there at his great reception, and when the Viceroy came, there was enormous pomp and ceremony. It was really outdoing the Raj all the time. Everything was for how noble and impressive it could be. That was the point. The British were greater and more noble than any other people, etc.

Q: A lot of uniforms, color and pomp?

LEWIS: It was all done with great taste, but it sure was an enormous display. I mean, Hollywood couldn't have matched it.

And everybody said the British ruled by "divide and conquer." The Indians themselves had their own caste system. The fact that the educated doctors and lawyers ...

Q: They were Brahmans?

LEWIS: No, they weren't Brahmans.

Q: They weren't?

LEWIS: No, they were whatever way they were born. The fact that, though they were Sassoons of the Mid East, they were the financiers that had the big money and they were the ones that would - because India didn't have any avocado pears - would write to Florida and then tell me you could have a sixty male to one female avocado. Then they would show me how they planted them. They had money to play around with, things like that, but the fact that they were Indians did not allow them into your clubs, into the British clubs. But you can't say that was the conflict. That was just the British Raj that kept itself so elevated running this country. Well, It was a colony. I don't know if you want to hear more about India.

One time we took a vacation down at Gopalpur. It's called Gopalpur by the Sea. You know, I was raised at the sea in Long Island in the summertime. Like everything else in India, this superior person that we were as White people ... though we weren't as superior as the British ... nonetheless, we were White ... and because of that, we couldn't go around just any old way. We had, when we went to the sea, to have each one ... your father and I and Hawley Oakes, who was with us ... a personal "bearer" who would wipe your feet, hold your coat, and hold your hand as you stepped into the water. As I told you, I was raised at the sea, and no waves frighten me. They can be twenty feet high, and I don't dive through the middle of them. I'll dive under them. So, I said I didn't want him to be a guard.

That was the worst thing that anybody could have done. There he sat and lost "face," because I didn't take him in with me. The whole village would have reacted to this person who lost "face," because I wouldn't let him hold my hand as I went into the ocean. Well (laughs), I think we even had a delegation come to us that night to see if we would feel differently about it. I had a dream about it too, and the next morning I said, "Okay. I'll give in. He can come in with me, but he's not going to hold my hand!"

Q: There must have been a lot of little stories like that, too, that were different than what we were used to.

LEWIS: Yes. Well there were lots of hand weavers down there. Gopalpur is almost half way down to Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka. There were men we saw walking on the beach helping with the cording and the spinning, with one hand feeding the other that twisted the spindle as they walked. It was early September before - I think it was the invasion of Germany into Poland, wasn't that it? When Chamberlain first came back happily? And then, September 1st or 2nd, things were already very, very frightening.

We had among our friends a young von Richthofen ... you know, the Red Baron ... well, this was his cousin. This was Ossie von Richthofen. And our Indian friends, Bimala and Kay, liked him very much. In fact, Bimala fell in love with him, and Ossie had to tell her that he could never marry her. But he was our good friend, too, and we played tennis with him. We played tennis with Rasmuss, who was an old India hand of long ago, long before. Ossie came over to our house the day before war was declared and he came to say goodbye, because he said, "You know, after we're at war, it wouldn't be good for you if I was to come to your step, and also, they may ... (we then had kind of diplomatic status) ... we would have to leave immediately."

Their Consul General's name was Count Poderwiltz. When we dined at his house, we ate off of gold. But after the war began, people came to me and said, "You know, that wasn't solid gold. It was just gold-plated silver. Imagine! He just pretended it was gold." (laughs) So, that was the way we lived. But Ossie came to say goodbye. He gave me a rug to send on to a friend in the States after our return there.

Q: So what happened to you when war was declared? You were still in Calcutta?

LEWIS: This is what I wanted to say about that. Because we liked Ossie and Rasmuss, who was an old India hand, and Poderwiltz, who wasn't very interesting with his gold plates - he was nice, but not very interesting - one British woman came to me and said, "We feel so patriotic that anybody who has had a German friend, we are not quite sure if we would stay on the same friendship basis afterwards." Those were the passions of war. That is only one woman that came to us and said that. Then we left a couple of months later. Again, we went across to Bombay by train and a ship from Bombay. The Suez was closed then.

Q: Because of war?

LEWIS: Because of the war. And so, we had to go around via South Africa which took us past Madagascar and then on to the east coast of Africa around Cape Town. It was off East Africa that a plane came out of nowhere. All of a sudden it came over us, dive bombed us, flew off again, came back, dive bombed us. We had an American flag on back, top deck, so the ship could be identified. We were so frightened.

I know this is not going to be a very nice thing to say, if our former allies would bring that into today's life, but at that time we thought even a friendly plane might bomb us to make an incident so that the United States would become a partner and be pulled into the war. It was a long time later that we entered the war. And then, we went on around ...

Q: Nothing happened?

LEWIS: No, but it was three, four times that they dove down over us, and we were all there with plenty of heartbeats, I can tell you. Also, we didn't like the captain of our ship at all, because he was so darn proud of himself and he would ask for no assistance. When we came into Cape Town, he wouldn't have a pilot. He said, "Oh, I can make my way in." Well! He nearly capsized us! He didn't know about the currents, and we almost hit another craft.

And your brother there in his baby carriage, and your father and I were just taking it over the threshold to the outside, to the deck, and all of a sudden, I said to your father, "Why are you down there on your knees?" He said, "I'm not!" And then he rose and stood up, and then I was down on my knees! That was the rocking angle of the ship. Here we were holding the baby carriage between us, back and forth, as the ship nearly rolled over sideways, nearly rolled over to the other side. That captain!

Q: What kind of ship was that?

LEWIS: It must have been the American Line, Export Line.

Q: On the trip back, after you went around the Cape...

LEWIS: ... up the South Atlantic to see the great brown waters of the Amazon coming out into the middle of the ocean.

Q: Off South America by a hundred miles or so?

LEWIS: More. You never would think that the waters of the Amazon would go so far out into the sea. We saw this huge, brown stream which we sailed through.

Q: So, you went directly from the Cape across the South Atlantic to New York?

LEWIS: We had the one stop in Cape Town.

Q: Let me just ask you, how long did you stay and when did you get back to America?

LEWIS: We were three years in India.

Q: Right. You stayed in India for three years and then when you got back, Dad had a year or so before ...

LEWIS: He had applied for a year at a university, because we were ... he was interested in political economy. He was interested in furthering his study of economics. He received a year's study at the University of Chicago. We came by railroad in the summer at the end of August. Your father went ahead and got that apartment in the Flamingo apartments.

Q: In Chicago?

LEWIS: Yes. Sixteenth floor, yes: overlooking the lake. And as soon as he got that apartment, we followed by night train.

Q: And how long did you stay there?

LEWIS: Just the semesters. The semesters were two, not three, at that time. Christmas we came to New York to be with Uncle Hugo and my sister. Then, we went up there again, and your father had to study so hard that that was when I began writing and I wrote those two semesters on India remembrances. We went out only Saturday night, sometimes to the ballet, sometimes to a concert, and we walked out Sunday afternoons pushing the baby carriage. That was the only time your father took off, because he studied every single night.

Q: You left Chicago in 1941?

LEWIS: Your father got a temporary assignment at the State Department in Washington before he received his next foreign assignment, and that assignment was to Germany. The capital was no longer in Berlin. It was in Nuremberg. I was not allowed to go with him with the child. His sister came from California to get the baby. He was to be there a year and a half, and while she was with us, the assignment was changed. He was assigned instead to Bern. With this new assignment I said, "I'm not going to separate myself from this child," because I wanted the upbringing. And I, when the War was coming to an end, left Torick (Jack's nickname) with some friends in the middle of the week for three days to go down to Washington and find out if I could go over to Switzerland. It was already three and a half years that we had been separated while your father was in Switzerland. I got permission to go in the convoy. That was always postponed a little bit from January when I'd gone down and, finally, it was March 31 and Torick's birthday that we sailed.

Q: In 1944?

LEWIS: 1945. The Red Cross drove us to the ship at midnight. We never completely undressed at night. We always had a little bag ready in case we got torpedoed. We were in the center of a great convoy of some sixty ships. We were the ship of wives and children: the only wives and children boat in the whole, huge convoy, especially protected.

One time, we had rudder trouble and so we got left behind. (laughs) This was the great anti-Nazi protection! It was Ambassador Grew, you remember? His daughter, Ann Morrow, married Lindbergh [Transcriber's note: This is not accurate. Ann Morrow Lindbergh was the daughter of Ambassador Dwight Morrow, who was well known as Ambassador to Mexico before the War. Ambassador Joseph Grew had three daughters, all of whom married Foreign Service officers. The one connection between the Morrow and Grew families stemmed from their assignments to Japan and their use of the same Japanese amah for their children], and they were the ones whose child was kidnapped. It was Ambassador Grew who arranged for this ship to be so protected in the middle of the convoy. He's the one who, through the State Department's Mrs. Shipley, gave us permission to go. And then, as I said, when we had rudder trouble, we were just all alone, right there, two days outside of England, in the most busy sea lane where the submarines from the Channel could have just given us the one-two anytime.

And then, when we got to London, I think it was at the Shepherd Lane Hotel, there was hardly anything to eat. They had shepherd's pie! And one time, Ted Reynolds, a Foreign Service officer, invited us to the U.S. mess and we ate ... can you imagine? I'll always remember that. We became good friends with Ted and his wife. We were there at least ten days or more before I could arrange to cross the Channel and get to Dieppe to take the Dieppe train to Paris. The train was so crowded we had the children up on the baggage racks.

And when we got to Paris, we were put up at an Army hotel, which was very nice, and we ate very well. One time, I left my good ruby and diamond ring there on the closet shelf, and I remembered it afterwards when I had gone out for something or other, seeing to shopping and things. And coming back, I saw the room had been cleaned and the ring was still there! Can you imagine that? Where everything was in such poverty that that ring was still there?

And we ate on Army porcelain: we had coffee in big, white and thick porcelain or whatever. And, again, it took nearly two weeks to arrange for me to go to Switzerland via U.S. lines. During the middle of the night, we were there to board the train along with U.S. Army personnel, who hadn't seen a woman and child for a long time. They took that child. It was about ten at night. They took Torick, who was too small and wasn't used to a man, you see, because he hadn't seen his father for three and a half years, and they put him on a cot. One lay down next to him. He said, stroking him, "Now go to sleep, go to sleep, little boy, go to sleep." Torick was scared to death, but I thought it was more important not to stop him, because he hadn't seen a child for so long. And they hovered around me, but it was the child that was the thing.

And then, it was not a bad trip. A British courier helped me with our luggage. We were already with the American soldiers, were we not? They hadn't seen a child or an American woman for I don't know how long. They helped us. I had an awful lot of baggage because that was the only way of getting it in. So, I had to take summer things and winter things. Because of the colic of Torick's, I had to take powdered eggs and banana flakes so that he would get his protein food. And then, I had a lot of hand baggage, and these soldiers helped me. There was, in some way, either that we got into the same carriage or whatever, that these British couriers, two of them, helped me take my baggage out when we got to the border. One could take the courier sack and the other handed my baggage out through the window so that I could go ahead and stand in line and walk through the border patrol.

That was when, on the other side, I saw all the people waiting to see who was coming in and that I saw your father for the first time.

Q: In three or four years?

LEWIS: In three and a half years. And there, I took Torick and I said, "You see, you see that man way down the line that is saying, 'come, come, come, come'? You get under this rope and run to him," because he didn't have to go through that passport control and maybe then...the only other thing I thought then was...I didn't know how I would be greeting him (your father), because I was exactly as moved.

Q: Yes.

LEWIS: So that gave me a little time. Then we got through and we got on the Swiss train. That was in Switzerland.

Q: Let's regress a little bit, back to when you were in East Orange, New Jersey (during World War II and their separation).

LEWIS: That was in Maplewood, New Jersey, when the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) or their Intelligence telephoned me. It was because of the telegrams that I sent to your father on our anniversaries, when we had our engagement day, etc. I suppose it was begun at Christmastime that I said in a telegram how deep the snow was, that I was giving Torick a tricycle or whatever it was, that I could just afford it. I had bought it second-hand. There were always long telegrams from me, and your father would just send back a "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Anniversary" or whatever the occasion was. I would send these very long telegrams back.

When spring began emerging, I told about what was flowering and how it was. Then, I guess it was our Anniversary, and he cabled back "Happy Anniversary." Then it was "Happy Birthday," and I sent a rather long one in the meantime. When we got to the blackberry pickings, I was again writing about the time of the year, how I had to wear protective clothing so the thorns wouldn't get me. I don't know if I got that into the telegram or not.

Then the telephone rang this one time, and they (the FBI) said, "This is the FBI. You have been sending telegrams to Harrison Lewis in Bern, Switzerland?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I want to know about them."

I said, "Just a minute. I have to sit down. You're frightening me so. What do you want to know?"

He said, "Tell us about Harrison Lewis. We know all about you!"

I said, "Of course, my husband."

"We would like to have those explained. We want to know about your husband."

I said, "My heavenly days! You haven't any idea how the blood has gone up to my head by your telling me that. I feel faint. Please let me find a chair and sit down, so I can gather myself." I said, "It's just because we have no letters, you see. Mail goes by way of Bermuda, and sometimes I get a pile of six letters. It may be six months or more old. Then my husband doesn't write much anyway, and the answer is exactly the equivalent of his letters. His letters are short and very much to the point and never is anything revealed. I'm here where I grew up."

And he said, "We know all about you. You don't have to tell us about yourself. You have been very carefully investigated before this."

(laughs) I said, "Well, I'm glad I'm sitting down."

And he said, "We want to know about Harrison Lewis."

I said, "There isn't anything to know about him. He's a Foreign Service officer. What is there to ask about him?" You know, like he's above ...

Q:... above suspicion.

LEWIS: ... above being asked about. "He's a Foreign Service officer." And he said, "Well, tell us a little about him."

I said, "All right. Born in California ... can look it up ... went to the Foreign Service School, etc."

He said, "Okay. We just wanted to know this. Don't tell us about yourself, because that we know." (laughs) I thought I had to say that my father had been born in Germany and all that. So that was, more or less, that little episode in New Jersey when I was living there alone and tried not to be too lonely.

And then, I think I've already said we were up there in the summer and came back again when I got permission to travel to Switzerland. The only thing that I haven't mentioned on board the ship was that it was a ship made for troops, even though it was now for wives and children. It was equipped for troops and, therefore, it had no railings at all. There were no stairs, but only kind of ladders from one deck to the next. All the sailors made harnesses for our children, so we always had the children in harnesses. They were tied onto the inner railings of the midship so they wouldn't all of a sudden slip and go off the deck where there was only a wire or a handrail or something. These children, when they got tired of being tied on where they were, very carefully untied themselves, carrying their harnesses along, and went to another place and tied themselves on again, by themselves. So I thought that was rather cute.

And then, when we came into Southampton, the crew gave us hard-boiled eggs and food to take into England, because they knew there was hardly any food. There were two dozen hard-boiled eggs that they gave me. When you boil them you have to chill them, but they put the hot hard-boiled eggs into a sack and gave them to me then. What a waste! They were sweethearts, those sailors, but they didn't realize that a hard-boiled egg doesn't keep that way.

Q: Then, London must have been a city of some turmoil and difficulty in 1945. Was this after the close of the war? Or was it still going on?

LEWIS: It was towards the end of the war. We were on board that ship (the S.S. Marine FOX) when Roosevelt died.

[Transcriber's Note: Hilda and Robert Lewis erased part of the tape at this point, but it resumes with a charming story of how Torick wandered off in Switzerland when he was five years old and of the family's search and discovery of him.]

LEWIS: There was a train there. We walked across there and went through the woods. We did everything. We were three and a half or four hours looking, and all of a sudden, we found him. Simone had her mother staying with her, and she got on the telephone and said, "You're sure gonna have to spank him!"

In the meantime, I had your father there, because we were so worried. After he was found, we didn't show anything. We were just saying to Torick, "Was it nice? Where'd you go? You still have your bicycle?"

And he said, "I went up here and I saw the railroad tracks and I thought I'd go along them. The bicycle was difficult. You can't ride across that, so I left it here. And then I walked with Jimmy (because Jimmy, the dog, was gone too), and then a train came, so we got off the track and walked a little bit. And then, the tracks weren't so interesting, so we walked in the woods there."

I said, "You remember this?"

He said, "Of course, I remember it."

And I said, "Well, show us."

And he said, "Well, we walked down these woods here and then after I'd been walking awhile, I thought I'd try to find my way back. It wasn't so easy, but I found my way back and I found my bicycle."

So that was when he was a little over five years old. He had his adventure!

Q: Was there hardship in Switzerland?

LEWIS: No, but there was certainly very careful rationing. There was absolutely no black market as there was in Vienna and Hungary.

The Swiss are so proper that one and a half eggs ... if you weren't married, you didn't get three. And for months, everything was absolutely rationed. I suppose I should recall those things about the Palace for you.

Q: Was there beauty in Switzerland at the time, still?

LEWIS: What kind of beauty?

Q: The natural beauty.

LEWIS: Well, Bern ... in Bern? There had been no bombing in Switzerland.

Q: No.

LEWIS: No, nothing was destroyed there. There were all the old things of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. They would ring the hours and quarter hours on their old bell towers. Twice a day I believe little figures would come out around the clock and march in a circle.

Switzerland's beauty has always been. Around Bern, nearly making an island of that old city, flows the Aare, its waters icy even in the summer. I know because we swam in it! It was so swift that we had to know several places where we could get out.

Because of the gasoline shortage during the war, only doctors and some officials could use automobiles. Everyone else bicycled, and so did we, even on long weekends to Lucerne and Interlaken. We didn't take Jimmy, the dog, along then. Otherwise, for day picnic trips it was Jimmy along with us. Torick either on an extra seat on my bike or on Harrison's. We walked up hills!

Q: Did you return to the United States before you were re-posted and assigned to Budapest?

LEWIS: No. We went from Switzerland by way of Germany to see my parents in Leipzig, whom I hadn't seen all those long war years.

Harrison, upon the assignment, had gone on to Budapest, and when he found a house for us, he came back to drive us there.

We drove up through Southern Bavaria to see Uncle Alfred's youngest brother, Walter, and son who had come to them during the war. That visit was just terrible. They looked awful with sunken cheeks. They seemed to have little food even though their home was out in the country, a chicken farm it had been. Their clothes were in tatters. These once so nice people were completely demoralized. Walter showed me his child's mouth and said, "Look at his rotten teeth, and this boy is only six years old. He has no toothbrush."

"Well," I said, "Why don't you get a twig, split end fibers and use it as a scrubber for that child's teeth?"

And what Walter did with trousers! He pegged each trouser leg with a clothespin. I suppose to tell himself how poor he was. Their spirits were broken. Everything there was just so awful; their attitude frightened me.

Q: Do you think that's the way it was around Germany?

LEWIS: That upset me so. All I could think of was how I would find my parents. Of course, I'd been writing to them and we sent food packages - only one pound packages were allowed at that time - and I would send to them and many others. Often I had made twenty or more one pound packages of whatever I could get readily in Switzerland. There was some regulation also about how often packages could be received by the same person.

For Uncle Alfred's we drove northwards until we came to the last outpost of the American zone. The American flag flying like at the end place of the world! It was one mile from there, rather a kilometer from that last American outpost to the Russians and their zone of Germany. Leipzig was in the Russian zone and so it is still to this day. At the Russian border, four soldiers stood with open bayonets. As we drove up and came to a stop, the soldiers surrounded our car. Harrison, Torick, and I were sitting up front. The back of the car was packed to the hilt. The soldiers peered at us most greedily.

Harrison, with our diplomatic passports, went into a small wooden hut where we had seen an officer leave his chair to go inside. The soldiers around our car, first one, then all of them, made gestures of drinking from a beaker in their hand and saying, "De mann hat wein?" ("Your husband has wine?") This continued all too long and no reappearance of Harrison. I slid over into the driver's seat thinking, "I've never back[ed up] for a whole mile, but should I have to do something, I'd try to get back to the Americans. Could I get to back up at all?"

I talked to Torick as though I hadn't a worry. Then, finally, Harrison came out of the hut. He, as he neared, gave me a wink. We drove off, Harrison saying, "Whoever, whatever he is, Major or what, he didn't acknowledge my diplomatic passport. He'd never heard of such a thing apparently ... or they wanted a bribe, if not a chance at taking some of our things. But, oh no! Not from this poppa!"

Going through the first village on our way, people stopped and stared. They couldn't believe the car, and so it was at all the following villages. Out past one, on a little road, we got a flat tire! I don't know if we thought this a little thing compared to what was or might have been, but we looked at each other, wanting to laugh. The back trunk was as tightly packed as we could get it and had to be cleared enough to get at the spare tire and all tools, too, and the jack. Once Harrison got the tire and lowered the jack, the tire had lost its air. It was flat! Harrison, dear man, pumped and pumped and finally we could be on our way again.

By mid afternoon we reached Leipzig and their apartment, and I went off alone to ring their doorbell, many times. No response. No electricity, as I had heard no buzz or ring. Harrison had to stay with the car while I walked around the fully lined block of houses to find a back way in. About half way around, I did find an alleyway. There, in the center, were all the little carefully tended vegetable plots. I had no idea from that inside space which was my parent's apartment. I knew it was on the ground floor. Windows were open in this good summer weather.

I began "yoo hooing" to the astonishment of those out tending their little plots. All of a sudden I heard my father's voice. I was nearby their window. "Pop!" I called. And mother came to the window, too. She said, "Goodness sakes! I haven't combed my hair yet. We're just trying to set up a cot." I laughed with pleasure. After all my terrible worries as to how their spirits might be, my mother says, "Wait a minute. I haven't combed my hair. Let me comb my hair quickly." There couldn't have been anything better. Nothing wrong with their morale.

Q: You are pleased that you found your parents after the war in 1947, that they were well.

LEWIS: And their spirits as elated as ours at our getting together again.

Q: Had their place been bombed?

LEWIS: A bomb had fallen out on the street, and the repercussion had smashed all their windows. My father's Forwarding Agency was bombed heavily because that was situated at the railroad station. We could see where numerous places had been bombed, at the big square, the opera, the museum, and the central post office. They had been bombed and not rebuilt when we saw them in 1947. Streets were in sad condition. There was very little food and that (was) poor. The bread was sour and most of its weight was in wettish dough. Mother used the half hour electricity permitted in the morning to dry out slices of that dark, wet bread in the toaster. We had brought coffee and tea and even green apples bought along the way in Bavaria. As we unloaded the car, one of us always stayed outside.

Mother began saying with whom she would share some of these items. Among what we brought were three bars of soap, and mother said, "Ahhh, I'll give poor Nannie, the poorest of the sister-in-laws, one piece, and I'll go over to Dr. Weigele, the dentist" (who remained in Leipzig because of his patients, who'd not had anyone to go to otherwise). Dr. Weigele stayed on at least another year or so. Most of the doctors had fled to get out of the Russian zone. So mother, the day after we gave her the soap, walked across town to give Dr. Weigele a bar of soap so he could wash his hands properly between patients.

We, of course, had to register with the Russian authorities that were there. It so happened Harrison had a friend, a colleague, with the High Commission in Berlin who was friendly with his Russian counterpart. So there was no difficulty for us with our registration.

Q: How long did you stay in Leipzig?

LEWIS: Only a few days. We had to be in Budapest after the weekend. It was a long necessary trip to get there. Seeing them furthered my own spirit. They had only the smaller half of their apartment. Because of censor, I guess, they had never written that a Russian major had been given the larger half of their apartment. He had the larger rooms, the bathroom. They had their bedroom, a side room which became their sitting room, a lavatory, and the kitchen, which as they said, the Major never used. They also had that little room through which I'd heard my father's voice, as they were trying to set up a cot for one of us. We three, Harrison, Torlck and I, otherwise slept on the living-room floor. They had pads, and it was all right. The major who quartered with them, they said, was nice. He often gave them a bottle of vodka.

Our parting was very emotional. Mother and I had always responded completely to each other. However, the Monday morning when we left, my father said to let him out at the nearest point to his business. He didn't want to be driven there. When we opened the car door to let him out, he ... otherwise so stoical ... broke down and cried in such breaking sobs. He wanted us to drive on so he could recover himself.

When we drove out, to and through Czechoslovakia, we found it was at that time better off than the Russian zone of Germany. We bought a jar of jam there and remembering that, when we returned, as we told my parents, "We'll be back for Christmas," on that way back, we bought jam and whatever else was still available there. When that following Christmas did return, we bought coke for their tile stove and we bought a small Christmas tree. Our trip, however, then through Czechoslovakia, starting off before 8 a.m. to get my father to his business, got us to Budapest by that evening: Torick, brave boy, already asleep when we arrived at the house Harrison had rented furnished for us.

Beds or cots not quite ready for us when we arrived that evening, and we put sleeping Torick on the chaise lounge. Later, when I went to sleep, we lifted Torick off to a place with a blanket and sheet onto the floor, and I slept on the chaise. Next morning, I saw Torick awaken. He looked up at me and asked, "What hotel is this, Mother?" I guess I should have said, "Home, but you'll have a bed. We all will soon."

The Budapest house was furnished with, as we learned later, requisitioned furniture. Lovely crystal glasses. I do remember we got out to Budapest our own furniture because I remember my uncle's high slender silver vase on the piano. Some of the crystalware, the chaise lounge beautifully upholstered in fine silk, all requisitioned, confiscated, however, which the Communists had taken from people. A high chest of drawers which we found had belonged to a man who had gone on to South Africa. We took that along when we left. His friend, whose name was pasted inside one of the drawers, said, "Send him \$25; otherwise he gets nothing."

Q: What was Dad's job?

LEWIS: He was Counselor of the Economic Section. Selden Chapin was our Minister of the Legation. It was a very pleasant and [friend]ly relationship between wives and all posted there: also with those of other foreign missions. We bonded together, perhaps the more being in a Communist country.

Conditions in Hungary were bad in 1947, but food was more available there than in Vienna. While in Hungary, all the roads from the country went to Budapest, and whatever food there was, found its way more readily. Also, Hungary was a more agricultural country. As for us, we had a commissary as well as a PX, but we used the local market, too.

Politically, the Russians were pressing hard to seal off Hungary in their Communist system, behind the Iron Curtain. They took from Hungary what they needed, but hadn't made as much progress as in Romania and Bulgaria. The Hungarians were a spunky lot, their culture much more European, through the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, they remained uniquely Hungarian.

Those Hungarians who became our friends were a grand and courageous lot. We gave many parties, inviting Hungarians, and among those who didn't have a car, was the former Agriculture Minister. He had been fired for not being a Communist, and they didn't want to take a taxi or maybe couldn't afford one. They took the streetcar some blocks from our house and got off one stop before to throw off anyone watching.

Across the street from our house, behind a tree, stood a man to see who entered, but he didn't know from where our friends had come. So, everyone who came to our house tried to be careful. Many who had been our guests had to flee, also those who had been employed at our Legation. When hardly a year after we had arrived, Harrison was declared "persona non grata" and assigned quickly to Vienna, all those who later fled came to our house in Vienna and we put them up. Some stayed several weeks. Some stayed as long as two months to arrange where they'd go next.

We didn't learn Hungarian other than how to count and a few friendly greetings and expressions. Other than the peasants, Hungarians spoke several languages.

Q: What about the poor?

LEWIS: There were no beggars, no real poverty to be seen. Streets were well kept and Hungarians had a flair for style and mostly did well. The saying, "An Hungarian can do business on a rusty nail," is pretty true. I had never lost anything through a pickpocket, the way it is in Italy. Yet, we were definitely stolen from by our own neighbors. I suppose you could count them among the poor, yet they lived well enough.

The neighbors lived in the caretaker's house which was connected by the cellar to our house. Ours was the gentleman's house; theirs formerly, I suppose, the caretaker's or gardener's house. They still had a large vegetable garden. They brought us roses from the bushes, surely cultivated by a farmer caretaker. Our connecting cellars made it very easy to take an apronful of coal daily. I had seen our neighbor with her apron full cross the street one day to sell that coal to another woman. But what hit me harder was that a blanket, used as a lap robe against morning briskness at breakfast time and left out on the porch, got snatched and it was a hand-woven one that I liked. That and, again, a second one, so we should have learned!

We lived on the Buda side, the residential side where also the Palace was. We visited that bombed out Palace, nothing repaired, sagging roofs and half walls. In one room, a white piano was on its knees, a reminder of the former elegance. Up the hill from our street, a nice half-hour walking climb, it was open country and where a lot of the fighting between the Germans and the Russians had been. In that year of 1947, we saw many a German helmet and also Russian uniform buttons on the ground. We took a few of the buttons, but left the helmets.

The Russians were still there, still in Hungary, and their soldiers still in Budapest. Often a Russian soldier would walk down our street, but not on our side. He crossed over as he passed our house. That was because we had the most intelligent of all dogs. That was the Hungarian Puli, who was the guardian of our house. Muzzi was his name. He belonged to the house, and we had inherited him when we rented the house.

In Hungary, they say you can tell a Puli in long, fifteen word sentences to go around to the back door to wipe your feet before coming into the front door, so fine is their intelligence. Anyway, Muzzi had apparently been told not to let a Russian go by. There was iron-barred fencing, a big locked gate, and Muzzi who couldn't get out. Yet, Russian soldiers crossed to the other side when they passed our house. Muzzi was rather old when we came there and had only one eye on one side and one tooth on the other.

Q: You were saying Romania and Bulgaria were under much stronger Communist control than Hungary?

LEWIS: Yes. And Yugoslavia, too, under Tito who was so pro-Soviet. To investigate that, Harrison with another officer from our Legation took a several weeks' trip touring those three countries mainly to learn at what pace Hungary would become more Communist. Their trip resulted in our getting a Romanian sheep.

It was a fun and bravado thing to do, as Romania was in such poor economic condition that it disallowed the export of lamb as meat or sheep alive or even its pelt or skin. Russia there took what it needed for itself and, therefore, imposed that restriction for others. On their trip back, near the border to Hungary, Harrison and the other officer passed a market and paid the farmer selling his sheep one package of cigarettes for the sheep. The farmer helped tether it and put it in the back section of the car.

They were held up for a bit when they got to the border while their passports were being cleared. Harrison and Phil were joking and laughing away. "Baaaaa" came from the sheep, so Harrison and Phil began "haaaa haaaa-ing" to cover up the "baaaa-ing" of the sheep. It worked. They got through, the sheep still "baaa-ing" as they drove on.

Harrison got home at eleven o'clock that night. We were waiting up for him: Hugo, Olga, and Therese of the staff and, as I remember, small Torick too. We, of course, knew nothing about the sheep, but Harrison with a sly smile said he had a surprise in the car. Hugo helped Harrison haul out the poor beast and untie its tethered feet. It could hardly stand. The two dogs were there ... Muzzi, the clever Hungarian sheepdog, and our Jimmy, the spaniel. The sheep was soon running, and the surprised dogs chased after it around the house. As the sheep came around, we tried to form a chain, but it went right through and on and around. Finally, we did catch it and shooed the dogs off.

Our back garden was very deep, and we led the sheep down there. Hugo got a rope. We tied the sheep to a tree. It, of course, ate through the rope, and next morning, all the young growth of the flowers we had set some days before, were eaten off. Then we wired off the back end of the garden with no better results. It was a big sheep, and we learned that when it stood on its hind legs, it reached eight feet. That was up to where the foliage of bushes had been eaten!

I'd often go out to keep the sheep company, sat on the grass and did my knitting. The sheep liked a little company, stayed close to me and came over for some back patting. That also had its consequences. When the sheep got over the fence wiring, it just rocked its way over and up the porch steps and soon found me. It was almost the story of Mary and her little lamb, except that this was a very sizable, big sheep.

Q: What did you do about school? I mean, for the children?

LEWIS: We established a school - the French, the British. The foreign missions got together and rented a two-room apartment. Actually, it was more like the little schoolhouse in early pioneer days with all age children together. There were about ten children. One excellent woman taught English and math and some history, and the French mission was glad its two little girls were getting English. Also, someone from among the French came periodically to give French. They learned songs and were given poems according to their age to memorize.

Q: The Howard Hiltons, who are still your good friends, came to Budapest where Howard was assistant in economics to Dad, wasn't he?

LEWIS: They did. When we learned that Mary, after two days in a hotel, was ill, we asked them if they'd like to use our box-spring-only couch bed (no mattress on top) and bath to be shared with Torick and the cook and her sister, the maid. The latter was an Army officer's family. They jumped at it, and Howard too had begun to feel queezy from the bad food at the hotel. It was nice having them, and they stayed until they found a place of their own. Mary spent much time reading with Torick.

Q: What was that Thuransky story that hit Time magazine?

LEWIS: He ... Thuransky ... was a naturalized American who had come back to visit his native Hungary and his village from where he had emigrated as a young man. He threw his weight around, saying how well he had done and how terrible the Communists were compared to the United States. He was saying everything bad he could think of about the Communists. He was clapped into jail. That happened the weekend Harrison was in charge (both Selden Chapin and Homer Bigalow were away). Your father had word of the Thuransky arrest and that Thuransky had already been brought to Budapest and put into the infamous Andrassy UT 69 (prison).

Mrs. Thuransky was outside the jail when your father drove up in the official Legation car. Mrs. Thuransky was frantic. Harrison went into the jail to see Thuransky, but the police had already taken him from his cell to move him somewhere else, supposedly where nobody could find him. He was being led handcuffed between two policemen out the same passage Harrison had entered. Thuransky saw his wife and was able to run to her. The Legation car door was open, and he managed to partially slide in, when Harrison heard his name being called: "Mr. Lewis! Mr. Lewiss!" Harrison remembered taking off his glasses as he turned to run out and he saw the two policemen standing almost nonplussed.

The Legation car was American territory, so Harrison - still running - got to the car, folded in Thuransky's legs, and, as he got himself into the car, he yelled at the driver "To the Legation!" I can't remember Harrison's account of it, if Mrs. Thuransky followed by taxi or if she was already in the Legation car. But Harrison's story followed by when arriving at the Legation, he pulled Thuransky up the high entrance steps by his handcuffs. Once inside, I'm sure all stopped for breath. The next anti-Hungarian government act was to saw off the handcuffs, "no easy thing," I believe Harrison said.

It didn't take long for that story to be passed around among our Hungarian neighborhood and friends. Harrison said to me, "Don't talk about it," but everyone talked to me about it!

It wasn't too much later that Harrison was declared "persona non grata". It was summertime, fiscal poor year time and easiest nearest post for Harrison to be assigned to was Vienna. He was given a week to leave. He took the car packed full of his things and whatever else of house stuff we could think of. Our cat had had kittens, but Harrison balked at taking them, although I found a U.S. pilot who took them to Vienna. Harrison, I'm sure, was grateful. The ESSO Company loaned him their company house, occupied only on the third floor, the top story. I was loaned a jeep, and it was rather a cute thing, I thought, driving it in long evening dress. I learned also not to take a curve too sharply. The jeep was top heavy and wanted to lift its outside wheels.

I packed up the house and, with Torick, followed within a month. That was when I found out about the chest of drawers which we still have and also when the movers packed our things. I had put the crystal wineglasses, etc., into a closet, saying "These don't pack. These are not ours." In Vienna, when we unpacked, those requisitioned or whatever they were from whatever family, those glasses were there. Some were five of a set, some seven and eight. I wrote back about them. They said, "Send us ten U.S. dollars." That was all.

Q: Let's go back a bit and fill in some gaps. Perhaps mainly why the Hungarians, in your estimation, are such a vibrant people.

LEWIS: They dress that way, stockings made of thread when net stockings first came in, and they had no money. The dress houses were, I think, next to Paris in their taste and style. As they said, they sew while the French hardly hold material together. There I had the best clothes I've ever had anywhere in the world. Their gestures, their taste, the way they shook hands, everything about them was an expression you could almost call a national "gloria." We must have noticed it very quickly, because we had only a year there.

Q: Why so?

LEWIS: I suppose they thought all Hungary was Communist. We didn't find them well informed. Hungary followed us to Vienna, the friends I have already mentioned who came and stayed, and also we got Hugo back. Hugo, the cavalry officer, who had been working in the Underground helping people out, had stayed on with the British couple who took over our house.

It's a rather exciting story, although it doesn't cover my remembrances in the Foreign Service as a wife. But, nevertheless, I'll tell you about Hugo.

Hugo was also driver and chauffeur for the British couple who succeeded us in the house, and one evening when the authorities, the police, got wind of Hugo's Underground activities, they went to nab him at a line up of cars at some cocktail party and got the wrong man, wrong car. Hugo sensibly didn't go home to his mother's apartment, but to our former house, which was now under the British flag. He got there. He had escaped them.

The following day, the Hungarian Government demanded Hugo's release. They posted soldiers across the front, all the way down the long length of the back property. So the situation was. Perhaps it was on the third day as the story unfolded that an escape was planned for Hugo. Cocktail parties! One went from one to the next and so, first at this house, then at another. And as groups went to the home of the British couple (our former house), dressed in black tie, it was decided to have Hugo exchange suits with someone whose build was like Hugo's. When the guests left, they had Hugo among them, dressed in black tie. Hugo told us this story when he reached us. He had taken devious ways out, first going westwards by train, then eastwards to the Lake Balaton, which was so carefully guarded. At 4 a.m. between patrols, he went out into that Lake and swam to the Austrian side. From there, he went to the American Legation. So, he carried his trousers, too, in his hand.

We were hardly in Vienna one week - Torick and I reunited with Harrison in that ESSO house - when we had our first guests, the first Hungarians to come stay with us. They were the Fodors family: father, mother, son and daughter. He was an electric engineer. We borrowed Army cots for the children. They stayed only a few days, maybe a week. Miklos Fodor went into town the next morning and not only came back with the best political jokes, but also the exchange from the black market. As I said earlier, he was an example of an Hungarian who could do a job on a rusty nail.

Within a year, when his connections got him to England, he was director of five companies. He had placed his children into the schools where they grew up and they would know the right people. Five years he gave to England and had become director of five companies in that time. He was traveling north and south. After those five years, he chose to emigrate again, to be a refugee again, and he left for Canada as a place of greater scope for his talents. Elizabeth, his wife, was his secretary to save costs. They had a two-room apartment to save what little money he had, also to save costs. Gradually, Miklos rose and over the years, we visited them in their Florida apartment, their sunshine place.

I could speak and write further about other Hungarians. They prevailed long in our lives. Those who fled and came to the United States were as plucky in making something of their new lives as they had been in Hungary in their opposition.

A small example of that was a small group who'd like to go out for quail and pheasant shooting and who invited Harrison to join them. They were a group of four. At one point, a group of Russian soldiers came upon them, also with guns. It was Steve Vajta, who is now in Florida, who walked up to the approaching soldiers and with the back of his hand waved them off. He went farther by touching one, saying, "You go back where you came from, and we" ... touching himself ... "will continue on in the opposite direction." With that, he turned his back to join his own group. Harrison said he definitely had his finger on the trigger of his gun, just in case!

And, by gosh, they turned around. That is the kind of character that the Hungarians are or what Hungary is, and they had that spirit throughout, very positive spirit. I'm sure the dressmakers that made me those beautiful dresses had that same spirit. Our neighbors, everything. I could mention that, also, that there were absolutely no doctors, no medicine, hardly a disinfectant, anything, nothing there.

Q: But for you, not for them?

LEWIS: We got it through the Army, but it was Torick that... We were playing tennis, and he got tired of being there, so started to climb the fence, which had a barbed wire top. He hooked his arm on it. It was a deep thing that could get a bad infection there. I ran immediately with him and asked the Hungarians with whom we were playing tennis where there's a doctor. They said, "Oh, just up two streets, there's one." I went there. That man said, "I hardly have a thing. All I can do is cut it a little bit and make it bleed and get the fresh blood out of it."

Well! You can imagine the screams we had there! But he said, "I can't do a thing for you," so he had to cut there and bleed it and bleed it so that it would flow out. So that was the situation, similar to the Russian zone where the dentist didn't even have a bar of soap.

Q: How were you supported by the American Army in Budapest?

LEWIS: We had Marines, I suppose, and we had something there like a commissary and all the facilities. It wasn't a regular PX like in Vienna or a commissary like in Vienna, however. Maybe it was sent in from there. Probably it was sent in from Vienna, because I don't remember ever going. We didn't have any building or anything like that, so it must have been sent in from Vienna. Otherwise, I would remember.

Q: So, all right, back to Vienna. We've gotten to Vienna.

LEWIS: All right. And we've had the Fodors.

Q: Let me ask you about this ESSO house. Was it common for American companies to support State Department or the Foreign Service that way?

LEWIS: No. This was that the house wasn't occupied and maybe the Legation knew about the empty house and telephoned the man in charge, the manager or something, and said how about putting up this family, because they haven't found a house yet. And then, when we did find a house, it was perhaps among the most exceptional ... well not exactly, but a very exceptional house.

This house had been requisitioned - no, it wasn't requisitioned. It was the house that we found was owned by an Austrian Jew. He and another Jew owned this house. This Austrian Jew had a French wife, who was connected with the Renault automobile makers. This Jew had himself got French papers as though he were a French subject, and he had his friend who was also an Austrian Jew get French papers so that the house would be under the protection of the French flag. Then the Russians could not take it, requisition it, confiscate it, whatever it is, and they no longer lived in it because they got out. But we found out about it, and they had an agent from whom your father rented it. They had a caretaker and his wife, and they told us how the Russians were, how they took them down and they killed their canaries out of their cages and wanted to shoot the dogs and things like that. The Russians were absolutely awful. The Russians themselves did occupy that house for a little bit, but then, when that French protection thing was arranged, they left. And that was the house we got.

Q: What was the address there?

LEWIS: Seven Gerhardt Gasse, and it was right at the edge of the Vienna Woods, right there, lovely location, and a huge property. We could play croquet there on a bit of a very fine lawn. It had a swimming pool. It had a stream. It had the fruit trees. It was lovely there. That was actually where you, to whom I am speaking, were born.

Q: Yes. So, again, what was the social life in Vienna? Different than or was it typical in 1948, 1949? Was there activity?

LEWIS: Well, I have to recall that. It's not right in my mind's eye. I do know the conditions in Austria were much worse. The food conditions were much worse than in Hungary. And when we arrived, we were told not even to buy a few apples on the local market. We should buy nothing on the local market.

Q: Why was that?

LEWIS: Because I would be depriving the Austrian people. About a year later, things had improved so that we were allowed maybe to buy potatoes and a few things as they became available, but at first, we brought in our own things. And the social life there ... I don't remember too much about it, because as I have already said, you, Robert, were born there. In order to keep from miscarrying, I had to spend an awful lot of time on my back, and the time on my back I spent reading Russian literature, so maybe that has influenced your character. (laughs)

However, one time, towards the end and while I was on my back all those months, I became quite a rotund person. But towards the end, I was allowed to get up, and we did have dinners in our house, in this fine house. And this time I was allowed to get up. We had twenty at the table. We had pulled out the table, and I know at one end I was, at the other was your father. We had the American Ambassador there, we had ministers there, things like that, and I was a pretty round figure at that table. I don't know, but maybe I stayed up until they all left. I can't remember. But I don't know too much otherwise about the social life, because I was not cocktailing and going to dinners and things like that. But certainly your father went out. I do know that after you were born, I met somebody who had seen me at that dinner and he said, "So that's what you look like."

Q: What was the schooling like? Torick would have been nine years old, more or less. Was there an American school there?

LEWIS: There was, undoubtedly, must have been, because we didn't have any private tutoring. We had set up the school in Budapest, but we didn't set up any school in Vienna, so undoubtedly there was some Army arrangement there.

Q: Was there an American Army in Vienna or was there British?

LEWIS: Yes, both, because - look at - my parents were in Leipzig in the Russian zone, and after you were born, we wanted them to come and visit us. It was a very complicated affair. I know they sold that big, fine rug to use the money to drive and pay for a guide to lead them across fields to get them across the border. And then, they went out by way of Munich, and we arranged in Munich to pay for their flight to Vienna.

Q: Train or airplane?

LEWIS: Airplane. And when your father and I went to meet them at the airport, we had to go - you see, Vienna was divided into four zones, so we were in the American zone, there was a British zone, a French zone, and the Russian zone. We had to go to the Russian zone to get to the airport. Your father had a pistol on the front seat there between us, and he said, "If I get your parents and there's trouble, I'm gonna shoot," because my parents were coming out "black." We were worried about my parents. And the thing was, they'd gone through, across the fields, with that guide, mother losing her shoe and not going on until she'd found her shoe in the middle of the mud, then the darkness of night, then this flight. And as I was when I first saw them on our way from Switzerland ...

Q: Two or three years before ...

LEWIS: Yes, so I was just as nervous about how they were, in what condition, mental and nervous and that. And when we met them, the plane was late, and the later it was, the more nervous I became in my fear for how they were. When they arrived (laughs), I said, "Are you all right?" My mother said, "Just think! Our plane went to Prague, and we had Prager Schinken there: Prager, the famous Prager ham there!" And then we got back without any incident.

Q: What kind of car did you have then?

LEWIS: I can't remember

Q: An American car?

LEWIS: Probably. A Buick, as I recall.

Q: How long were you in Austria?

LEWIS: Well, that was the summer of ...

Q: 1949?

LEWIS: No, 1948. You were born in 1949, and you were about four or five months, six months old, when we left taking Ezerbet with us on the Queen Elizabeth.

Q: So you were there about a year and a half?

LEWIS: A little over a year. Year and a quarter, year and a third, something like that, whatever. And, otherwise, the only thing that would interest Penne Laingen was that was the first time that one of the Foreign Service wives said, "I am a painter, and I don't see why I should do anything but follow my own interests instead of an official position that my husband would otherwise demand of me." It - He was not in an elevated rank, and that was the first feminist rebellion that I came across in the Foreign Service. [Transcriber's note: Hilda's reference to Penne Laingen's interest in her "feminist rebellion" alludes to Laingen's research and authoring of the 1985 Role of the Spouse in the Foreign Service. Hilda is a very fine artist who, by the time Laingen met her in Malta, was exhibiting her works at the National Museum of Fine Arts. Further on in her transcript, Hilda describes her lessons in Japanese painting.]

Q: About the help and the staff that you had in Vienna?

LEWIS: Well, we had Hugo, as I said, who had to come through the lake, and Ezerbet, who had originally been a seamstress, and then did the upstairs and later took care of you, the baby. Of course, at first, I had a nurse as one does, but then Ezerbet helped and was okay. We had ... no ... we did keep a nurse throughout the time, excuse me, and she was there when my parents came.

Q: How did your parents go back to Leipzig after that?

LEWIS: Oh, we had all these arrangements of how they would let us know. You know, "much love" would mean that they got through easily. Just "love," they had a little bit of trouble. If they just said "greetings," then it had been darn hard. But, of course, they forgot all about that.

They just took a bus back. They went... We flew them to Munich, then they went up northwards a bit, and they got on a bus. All these complications, and they just got on a bus and took a bus to Leipzig. I mean, money they could get from the Legation which we would supply and things like that.

Q: In Leipzig?

LEWIS: No, in Munich, for their trip. Then, whatever expenses there. And that was all right, but all those fears and problems ... they just got on a bus! And they didn't write anything. It was just, "We got home. We took a bus and it was very nice."

Q: Was Vienna divided by borders?

LEWIS: Not barriers, but they were there as zonal points.

Q: You had to go through checkpoints to get through Vienna?

LEWIS: I don't remember it, but certainly there were different zones where each of the four countries was in charge, had the authority for those zones.

Q: You recall the Russians in certain areas?

LEWIS: The Russians were between the area in which we lived and the airport. And, in Vienna, there was ... since the Middle Ages ... Vienna was the crossroads of Europe, from north to south and east to west. Then Vienna grew out of this crossroads. In the Middle Ages, there were monks there who lived way down underground that gave haven to travelers. It was down three or four levels underground, called Urbani Keller, spiraled down, down, down, and then it became a place where you could go and drink wine.

I can tell you, when you had a glass or two of wine down there, which was perfectly all right, but you got up into the air, you were so lightheaded you were absolutely as though you'd been having six bottles. Urbani Keller is the very center of Vienna, where these monks gave haven to travelers ... east, west, north, south.

The center of Vienna was still pretty chic. They still had the riding school, the white horses. What are they called?

Q: Lipizzaner?

LEWIS: And when, during the war, they took those horses out to Salzburg, the American Army did, and when we were there, they'd been brought back and they still had the "dressage". They did beautiful exhibitions, and you would sit around there and watch. They were excellent, their performances, with these beautiful white horses.

So Vienna was then already... The opera had not yet been rebuilt, but they had the opera in another old theater. So we had music there. We had concerts there. We went to the Weiner Wald for the new wine, in Grinzing, that little place was called. And where we lived wasn't too far from the edge of that Vienna Wood where that Grinzing was. There you would go and drink the new wine. All that had been rather reestablished by the time of our second half of our term there. I guess I was all right after you were born, because I went to all those things afterwards. I guess you would say that was normal, as against when we arrived, when there was abject poverty and nothingness.

Q: A lot of poverty then?

LEWIS: Yes. And then, we first got the cook in our house with Hugo, and Ezerbet was a large woman and used to eating. She hadn't eaten for a long time and her skin hung on her. When she came to us, she asked for hardly any wages at all, because we let it be known we were looking for a cook. She said it was really not a matter of going to a house without enough food. "I knew you would have it," she said; "I didn't want to work for such low wages."

I said, "The only reason I hired you was because you were so low and all the others wanted more." (laughs) That was when she told me the reason that she asked for so little was because she knew I would have meat and lots of meat in my house. So, that was how conditions were when we first came as against later. Then everything was reestablished.

Q: You didn't have any chance to visit the Viennese coffee houses or any of those places?

LEWIS: Oh, sure: Zacherstorte and others, and, of course, I went to the art places. I went to Alpertina, where they had all the original drawings. There was a Leonardo da Vinci drawing there - all those things I saw.

Q: Vienna wasn't too destroyed, here and there?

LEWIS: Yes. But by that time with all those zones, it was the people of the zones, I suppose, that helped restore the necessary places. The opera was perhaps not that necessary, not in that - at that - time. Sure. Yes, of course, I saw all those wonderful things, and we were allowed to handle them and that was fun.

Q: The da Vinci paintings?

LEWIS: Yes. It wasn't your father as an official, I mean. It was me and somebody else.

Q: I see. There wasn't much "Kudoz"?

LEWIS: I can't remember it. There wasn't any "blossoming". It was still in a reaction. It was not like... What I did not mention when we were in Bern was that we heard that there was a new renaissance in Germany, in Berlin, a new outburst of thought, writing, painting, everything. We heard that in 1945, 1946, and 1947 from people who had been there and come down to return to Switzerland and from the woman that was teaching and giving us French lessons there. She had been up there and she had that news too - a very literary person. And she said, "You have no idea of the burst that is occurring of expression up there, after those years of Nazism and the war."

Q: But you didn't see that in Vienna, because Vienna is a more romantic type of place?

LEWIS: There wasn't anything like the "Expressionis" or "Kudoz" or anything like that, no.

Q: So, on returning to America from Vienna, how did you return? How was the way?

LEWIS: Leaving Vienna with you about four months old or so and Ezerbet with us, we went by train. We went by way of Switzerland for some reason, and why we stopped there I don't know. Can't remember that. But I do know that there we stayed. There your father learned that we could buy dollar notes, one-dollar bills at twenty-five cents a dollar, something like that. I think he paid \$3000 for the \$10,000. He bought \$10,000 single dollar bills and, I think, paid about \$3000 and had them in a little suitcase. Then we left Switzerland on the train to go to Cherbourg to pick up the ship there.

At the railroad station, your father walked around to see those who were seeing us off, or another friend was coming, and he'd go forward to meet him. And there stood that little suitcase with these \$10,000! I said - and then I ran over and stood by the suitcase. The same way on the train itself. You'd go out and forget or you'd go in the diner or whatever it was, and I'd say, "How about that suitcase?" Then we got to Cherbourg and go on the ship.

But let me finish with those \$10,000. When we got to New York, I said the first thing we should do is go to a bank and deposit them or let them give us a check for them. That was downtown. We walked into a bank, and they said, "Where did you get this?" They could hardly believe that your father had gotten them legally in Switzerland, but it was just that much paper that the refugees or other people were paying on the black market and dumping it on Switzerland. The Swiss didn't know what to do with them. So that's the story of those notes.

It was the Queen Elizabeth that we went on. Ezerbet had come along, and we had paid \$500 for her passage. Your father's passage and mine were paid for by the government, but we took Ezerbet first class to take care of you, the baby. But Ezerbet got sick, seasick, and I had to - not only you, but Ezerbet as well - take care of you both. Otherwise, it was a fun ship.

Q: When was that? Was it 1949?

LEWIS: That was, yes, the same year. Your father was assigned to the United Nations, which was out at Lake Success at that time.

Q: In New York? Lake Success?

LEWIS: Yes, at Great Neck. I know Long Island very well, because we used to summer there, but we summered long ago on the South Side. I mean, nobody today - that's riff raff now. So, the North Shore, Great Neck, why we went also, like in Vienna, we found a beautiful house. I know we went there and did the real estate offices.

We separated, your father and I, and went to different real estate offices. We didn't have much money to pay for the rent, but we had Hugo and Ezerbet, so it couldn't just be a little house for you and Torick and ourselves. It had to be a bigger house, because we had Hugo and Ezerbet. We didn't have the money for it. And now, if I may, the final real estate office said, "You're not Jewish, are you? You have a great background. You're a Foreign Service officer. All right. There's the Louise Grace house: you know, the Grace Lines, the Grace property. This is Louise Grace's property at Great Neck."

Louise Grace was still alive, but she had become sort of semi-non compos mentis, so she wasn't in the house. But the house couldn't be sold, couldn't be disposed of because she was still alive. There stood this fine house with nine acres of woods and roses and Persian lilacs and trees she had imported from China and things like that. A house with a Jacobean fireplace and a Louis Seize dining room, octagonal, with the sterling silver candelabra - not candelabra, but what do you call it? The arm brackets? Maybe you call it candelabra. I think it had maybe five fireplaces and eight or nine different bathrooms and had its servants' quarters. It had a 500-foot driveway.

Q: What was the address of this house?

LEWIS: I'd have to - it was 100 Beach Rd. 100 was this main house, the number of it, on the Beach Road. I'm not sure of that. But the number of this important property was 100. Great Neck Road, maybe. So Dad went to work at the United Nations at Lake Success. And very shortly after that, the United Nations moved into where it is now in New York City. Then your father had to commute all the time, but we were in that house. The first thing we did was clear the driveway. We gave that to Hugo, although sometimes your father would go out and help. We had to rake and rake and rake. There was a great oval U thing, coming in one side and out the other: very fine driveway. We made nice friends there, too.

They were nice people, so we had friends right there in the neighborhood. We knew the French UN representatives there, too. Everybody had gone to the United Nations, because it was originally at Lake Success.

Q: How long was Great Neck? A year?

LEWIS: Just about. No, no, you were already three-quarters of a year old when we stopped in Philadelphia. I took you there to the Bussers, who had been in Leipzig when your father and I married. She remained my friend throughout her living life. Her sons also, who are older than we are and who are gone now. When the house was ready for us ... that was before we found a house that we were there in Philadelphia. You were there in Great Neck until you were two and a half, so that was when we were recalled to the State Department from Lake Success.

The cute thing about being assigned to the United Nations was that there was a new thought in the Foreign Service for its officers, that they mustn't be assigned abroad all their lives. They must have American roots and they must have a feeling for the country, America. So they wanted us to have grass roots, and I said, "What are you going to do with your grass roots (laughs) when your grass roots are with the United Nations in New York City?" I thought that was just lovely. That the way to get American grass roots was to be in New York City with the United Nations. Our grass roots we then got in Washington, DC. Yes, that's where we got our grass roots. That was very nice.

Q: That was in Silver Springs?

LEWIS: No, no, we never moved that far, but others did.

Q: Chevy Chase?

LEWIS: We went to Coquelin Terrace, which was that semi-circle development, one street built all, and everybody moved in at the same time, and everybody was everybody's friend. We moved into just about the middle of that circle in Coquelin Terrace, and as soon as we moved in there, first of all, we had too much furniture. Most of it had to stay down in the cellar, because it... All the neighbors came over to welcome us if we needed anything, any sugar, or if we wanted to know where anything was, and take us or anything. There was an enormous welcome. On that street was Huey Long's son, who was with the government; on our street was Hubert Humphrey, who later became the Vice President; on our street was the Belgian Agricultural Attaché, subletting; on our street, next to us, were the Nefflins that became awfully good friends.

Q: The Coustries?

LEWIS: The Coustries were the Belgians. Then there was a banker and there were the Tamms, the FBI Tamms, under Hoover.

Q: Assistant to J. Edgar Hoover?

LEWIS: Yes, except when he decided he was going to leave. You know, Hoover then became a little difficult. That was when Quinn Tamm left.

Q: What was it like to be in America for that time with Dad working in the State Department?

LEWIS: Oh, I loved it. I had three or four shirts a day to wash and iron: didn't mind it at all. We had Jimmy, the dog, with his long spaniel hair shedding all the way down the stairs on the rug. I cleaned it. I cooked for everybody.

Q: What was good about Coquelin Terrace?

LEWIS: Well, I didn't mind working. It was the first time I really worked, I mean, household work. We paid your brother, I think, three cents for every wastebasket that he emptied, and we paid him so much for cutting the grass. He got \$200 to \$300 dollars. We didn't pay him a penny, but he earned three cents a wastebasket, which is pretty good. All went into his bank account.

Q: 1953?

LEWIS: I mean, to pick up a wastebasket and empty it when it hardly had a scrap of paper, he could still get three cents, you see. He also kept his own account. The neighbor boys came over and welcomed him and showed him where the school was. He was not a boy that had to go through an initiation. Every one of us was welcomed.

Q: It was all a new neighborhood?

LEWIS: It wasn't new then, but it was to us. They had a neighborliness spirit. In back of us was that little train that went around Washington, maybe to Bethesda from Silver Spring, but it went once in the morning at noon, back and forth, and then last again at night, so it had four times it passed. And it was a nice thing, that little train.

Q: Now, about Tokyo, Japan, which was 1954 to 1956.

LEWIS: Yes, and because your father had been kept in the United States because of your illness, your kidney condition, we went from the New York hospital with Meredith Campbell to Lloyd Lewis in Washington, also a very eminent pediatric urologist. From there, it was what posts your father could accept where he, Lloyd Lewis, would know a good urologist. One of the places was where his own nephew was, in Tokyo, who was the urologist. His nephew, Erin Lewis, was with the Army in Tokyo, and the Tokyo Embassy post was open, that is, it became open after a bit. We were sent over in July to Tokyo, as I remember.

We went by two different means. We divided family. Your father and, by that time, we had begun calling him Jack, went to see his mother, your grandmother. She had come to see us in Washington, and the three of them drove out to California together. You and I, you, Robert, and I, flew by way of Europe to see my parents, meeting them in Southern Germany in Bavaria. And then, we went on to Rome, you and I, and then we flew around the world the other way.

Q: How do you recall it? We flew from Washington to Munich and then to Switzerland and then to Rome?

LEWIS: Took a train to Rome and then we were with the Mags in Rome for a bit, for two or three days, and then they put us on a plane and we flew then, with various stops, to Tokyo. One of the first stops was Tehran, I think. Anyway, it was the Near East, and there were a lot of women in "purdah". You, as a five year old, had never seen women with this white stuff hanging across their faces. You went from woman to woman and lifted the veil up and looked underneath. They allowed it. That was something like 4 a.m. that we had an overnight there, and we went to the hotel. By gosh, I was dead, but you weren't!

Then, our next stop was Singapore, and from there we had another stop in Hong Kong. From Hong Kong, a nine-hour flight to Tokyo, where your father and Jack met us. There we didn't have a house yet. We went to an Army hotel called the Nonomia which was filthy, dirty, horrible. As soon as we could, we began looking, then out in Shibuya, which was this very nice, little part of Tokyo, but a distance out, we found a house that was semi-western. It had a kitchen, dining room and living room. Upstairs, it had the "tatami" flooring, the one western room, the one western-style bedroom, and a nice enough little yard.

We inherited the staff there. The cook stayed with us and the butler who did not stay with us, because he wanted to run it the way the people before us had run it, particularly when I gave a luncheon one time. Now, the American woman before me took the head of the table. I gave the head of the table to your father, you see, and he said, "But that isn't the way that you do it." Then he found it was better to leave, because I said, "That's the way that I do it." And I got somebody else. We got a new man, that great, big, huge man, you know, that was very nice. That was more or less our household.

It was within a Japanese neighborhood and, very soon, you wandered off and made friends next door and wandered around all over. We got you a little Japanese "yukata" and the "zoris," things like that. The whole thing. And then, I said, "Then, you are learning to speak Japanese." And you said, "Oh, no, Mother, they're learning English." (laughs) That's all the visiting you did for us.

Q: Talk about our experiences of culture in Japan ... the esthetic in Japan.

LEWIS: It was, first of all, before we went to Japan that we were given a lot of books to read on present-day Japan so that we would not retain any remembrances of how they were - had been during the war with American prisoners. We were told to have an absolutely clear mind in our attitude towards them. We were given books by Lafcadio Herne, the legends and that kind of thing, and by various people, such as Anderson, who gave us Japan as it was then. It wasn't exactly western, but it had some of our influence. They said at that time, the westernization of Japan was like the tablecloth over a table. Structure was still themselves in their forms and politenesses. It was mainly that you...that they wanted to be polite to you and you were polite to them.

If two Japanese were parting, and it was near the curb of the street, they bowed themselves across the middle of the street. You didn't drive until they finished bowing at each other. Now, the only time that that little bowing thing became purposeful in a different way was when we had to go and meet somebody at the airport. We were fairly far up front in line and we found two women being so polite that they bowed to each other all the time, using their little elbows when they bent over to bow. Gradually, they got people out of the way until they were right there in front of the line. So their politeness then was a method. (laughs)

Otherwise, your father associated with the Japanese much more than I did, because it was a man's world. When we were included as wives, it was in the evening and it was mixed things where there were more foreigners besides ourselves. The Japanese cannot take drinking wine or saki very much, but they are never condemned by it. If you read Lafcadio Herne: If there is a driver that is drunk and he drives zigzag along the road, everybody is amused by it. They think, "Isn't that funny?" You see, instead of saying, "You mustn't drink that way." Otherwise, we called them if they drove too crazily in those three-wheeled things we called "kamakazi" drivers. So, you had to watch if you had one of those "kamakazi" coming toward you and then see that you didn't get a scraping in your car. That was more or less the daily scene for me.

And the only other thing was in our own neighborhood where young neighbors that bothered to practice their English, a brother and sister, that would come over and sit on our little terrace there and talk to us. The father of this brother and sister had gotten killed by being run into by a car just when he was coming home, more or less, right on our street corner. When he was killed, I asked about the form, that is, how I take care of it, because I knew the boy and the girl: eighteen and nineteen year olds. And Yumamwra San, the cook, told me exactly the size of the flower bouquet, not a wreath, that I would have sent to them. He told me what to write and how to write it, so that it wasn't too little and it wasn't shamefully out of taste by being too much. When after ... I don't know if it was a week or so after the death that I had sent the flowers, mother and daughter came to call to return that gesture of ours.

It happened that your father was there, too, and we had already had lessons at the Embassy on the background of the Japanese and how they try and spare other people any emotional sadness or anything like that. We'd already heard how a condolences call either that we make or that they return is done, and it was exactly as we had practiced in that class at the Embassy.

It was a "tee hee hee hee, oh yes, thank you very much, tee hee hee hee," just so. And when the mother and the daughter came to our house, and we thanked them, we bowed to them, they bowed to us and said, "Oh, how sweet of you, tee hee hee hee," and the daughter would go, "hee hee hee hee," and this went on a half or three quarters of an hour. Then we showed them to the door and they left. Your father said, "Well, they certainly didn't allow us to feel any sorrow, did they?"

So it was exactly according to their form that they did that. That whole background of the Japanese in that form is because of the smallness of the island and how close they have to live one upon the other. Maybe ten people live in a tiny little Japanese house. If they would be emotional, you couldn't stand it. It is only by their great discipline that they are able to preserve a harmony within their house.

They sleep the same way. They don't toss about. A girl is taught exactly how to lie down: never to turn over, never to spread her legs sleeping, never hardly ever to curl her legs up if she were sleeping on her side. And they have these little pillow cushions, a hardly thing, that they put in the nape of the neck. That began because of their fancy hairdresses, so they wouldn't have to do their hair every single day. A lot of the generation still at that time that we were there had that hair form. If I would go on more into the background, I could perhaps talk about the New Year's reception at the Imperial Palace when, before this, we were first of all told (the women) what to wear, what not to wear.

We were told not to wear white, which is their mourning color and not to wear black, because it wasn't celebrating the happiness of the New Year. It had to be a bright pleasant color. The skirt had to go down to the ground. The sleeves had to go down to the wrist, all the way, and the neckline had to come up to your neck and then that was okay. Besides that, we had to have a head cover, so we had to wear a hat with this thing.

When we Americans met together, before we went in a group to the Imperial Palace, we sure were a sight! There was a pink evening skirt, which had a pink evening dress, and over that she wore a pink sweater, anything like that. You didn't wear gloves, but you wore a hat, so our outfits were quite a put-together thing according to what the formalities were. I think maybe the other nationalities had dresses made in time for themselves.

Our entrance to greeting the Emperor on New Year's Day was according to the seniority of the Embassy, and whoever had been there the longest was the senior. I don't know when our Ambassador came, but it is by the ambassador's arrival that the seniority is established. Maybe we were third or fourth or whatever, I don't remember. The first person taken in, of course, is the ambassador and, following him, his wife, and so on through the counselor of embassy and ranks all the way. Always the husband first and the wife thereafter.

The great hall in which they were, there was a kind of dais, not quite like a stage, a narrow thing that ran along the whole side of the hall. The Emperor stood there and the Empress was at his left, the Princes at his right and the Princesses on her left, going on. The area of this great hall that we walked through - a door towards rather the back, not quite the back, but the near side of the hall - we walked then diagonally to in front, say, twenty feet in front of where the Emperor was. The man would bow to the Emperor and then, walking sideways, he would bow to the Empress. And walking back to the same diagonal place, he would be walking backwards, sideways, and so it was.

Then your father bowed and then, when he walked over to bow to the Empress, I was then in front of the Emperor and I bowed. You bow by putting your hands on your knees and bowing, gracefully, as deeply and entirely as you can. And as I bowed, I found that the hat I had pinned on with long hair pins, gave a little "swootch" and a little tiny movement, and I thought, "Good gosh." When I walked sideways to the Empress, I was very careful to half lift my face so that the hat would not fall off on the floor, which would not have been ... I mean, it would probably have been more amusing to them than I thought, because when I looked up, I saw the Empress had a very friendly smile on her face. Then I followed with this hat, backwards, sideways, to the exit.

From there we were led into the New Year's Reception where all the foreigners were then, and it was more or less chest high tables, because we didn't sit down. Each place was laid in one thing of all the auspicious New Year's things, in little dishes, and a little thing of saki cup, a little thing of saki, which poured into it. You were supposed to take the saki cup along as your remembrance. And also, everything that you ate was fine, but you ate very sparingly because that large napkin was there to put all the other food on to take home to the servants at home as coming from the Empress's table. So we all walked out, the men with their high hats and mourning coats with the white sack of Empress's food in their hands. It was quite a scene!

I took the - I didn't understand it. It was only the saki cup, so I have two Empress's dishes still that I put in there. The next year, I knew that's what you shouldn't take, but I had already had that the year before, because somebody saw me and said, "Oh, you don't take those. You take only the saki cup." So for the two New Year's receptions, we had twice the saki cups except that your father, in carrying one out after he got home, dropped one. One broke and we had only three saki cups.

Then, we were on another occasion at the Imperial Palace when they performed the ceremonial dances, the traditional dances. I had a sketch pad along, not too big a one, and I did some of the drawings there, which I later colored. One of them is called "Old Rats". Their kimonos had rat designs. It was sort of a yellowy-orange and they had rats all over. I'm not saying that quite right, but there were rat designs a little bit scattered around it. Then, there was a thing in green and there were always two or three dances that would be performed in rhythm. Back of these dancers, they would have a man beating on a gong to give the rhythm. They had some other little melodious thing, not too obtrusive, and I'm not sure if that was in connection with the Emperor's birthday or whether it was a springtime thing, because we were also on the grounds and then we could see how carefully the grounds were kept.

You don't clip a hedge, you form it. Everything is done according to the way you learn the Ikebana. If you took Ikebana lessons, you had a "heaven, man, and earth" as a fundamental form. Then there were further lines, of course, if you wanted to fill it out. So that was how your growing shrubs were trimmed and how we tried to in our place, too.

Those were the shrubs. We gradually got... We certainly looked at all the paintings, brush work, of the Japanese which fundamentally were taken from the Chinese. The Japanese opened their doors three times in history from the 8th-9th Century, the 11th, and the 14th-15th, and each time brought back a further Chinese influence. The great difference between the Chinese painting and the Japanese is that the Chinese tend to fill out their picture the way western painting is, and the Japanese use space as part of their composition, the importance of what they want to say.

There again, they use one great directional line for "heaven, the man, and earth" and the rhythm. They think very much about the number three and again about the number seven. They don't use number four because four is synonymous with the word "death". And so, the numbers of their lines or whatever is kept in mind. Every big department store in Tokyo had on its top floor an art floor of paintings or flower arrangements or whatever it was that from time to time would be changed. I would go to all of them all the time until I became more and more influenced as to how the Japanese feel and express and the sensitivity of their utterances through the brush and their Ikebana. I didn't go into the Bonsai very much.

I can't remember exactly where I went for the Ikebana.

Q: You started collecting Ikebana things?

LEWIS: Oh, surely, wherever, because I ...

Q: Tell me a little about what that meant. The value of those collections.

LEWIS: That comes from the part in the Japanese house called the "Takemono". There is an area in every Japanese house in the living room where the family would do its remembrances or, if an honored guests came, that is where they would sit. The honored guest, the most senior of whoever it was, would always sit nearest to this "Takemono" area and then the others according to their seniority would go and finish the circle.

But the "Takemono" always contained three things, and these were seasonal or in honor of some guests or something like that or an ancestor. That was the "Takemono," which was the hanging, the scroll, the painting. Then there was the Ikebana, the flower arrangement, made in accordance to giving back the rhythm according to the scroll, that was made either high or low, and offering it to it. The last was one little material thing of jade or a block or whatever it was that would be appropriate to those other two. Those were the three things of "Takemono".

Because the Japanese house has absolutely no storage space, in every village or section, there were places where you would put the unseasonable things and you would never have them in your house. That, they wouldn't know, there was a period of dampness when everything would be taken out and aired to make sure that there was no mold getting on anything, but you didn't keep any of those things in your house. You always changed and brought out that which was appropriate to having that period in the "Takemono".

Q: You got to like the Ikebana very much?

LEWIS: I like the Ikebana very much, but I didn't study it so intensively, because I wanted to go into Japanese painting. I had, of course, studied painting for enough number of years, but I had never done the Japanese brush. So I began asking around, how and where and how do you do this and who's the person and how to find that person. I heard about a Miss Ota or Ota-san, and she was giving lessons to somebody I knew. It was arranged that one of those times I would be there and, therefore, she would see me and I would bow to her, but it couldn't be in a hurry. I was dying to start right away, but, oh no. It had to wait another month before I could do that again. In the meantime, she would nod to me and then it was the third month thereafter, which was ... you know ... she came in July and this was in December for the very first time that she came to my house.

I met her at the little local station, train station, stood there, and when she came out, she bowed down low, I bowed down low. I went up to her, we bowed again to each other, the way two women going across the street would bow to each other, real close, bowing down. Then I guided her to the car, opened the car door. She bowed again. I bowed again. She got in the car. She bowed through the open window of the car and then through the closed window of the car. Anyway, I walked around my side to drive her home. We had to do the bowing again in the car. Got home, exactly the same thing getting out before I got her up to the front door. There she left her "gettas." There were the "soji," weren't they called?

Q: "Tabas?"

LEWIS: I don't know. At the room where she was going to give me the lesson, there was a bowing again and then, of course, she kneeled on the floor. After we got her and me to kneel on the floor, why, again, we had to bow, and I was told to get an ink stick and an ink stem and some brushes and rice paper and so forth. We bowed, she pointed, and the thing is, like everything in Japanese, you don't get at it immediately. You have a period of gathering yourself, because your brush is not to be really guided by your hand. It is supposed to be an elongation of your arm, and through yourself the spirit comes into that arm. So you don't jump at your painting, you quiet down and let the quiet more than meditation, just nothingness and openness, to receive, to enter into you. So that was part of the first day.

Then, we had a little dipper and put a tiny bit of water in that, put it on the ink stone, and moved the ink stick gradually, gradually, slowly, not to be in a hurry, not to disturb what we had in the meantime possibly received within ourselves. That was the first day. Just the outer form of it. No painting lesson.

The next time, the mixing of the ink stick on the ink stone, exactly the same thing, and then finally the brush was dipped into the water. And besides a cloth, you had a white plate in which you drew that brush to make sure that it's coming back to the fine point that you wanted, because you used not only the point, you used the heel of the brush. But that second lesson was only drawing lines, so that I would learn how much ink to allow to be in that brush and so that I would know the content, the fluid content, of the brush. And altogether, I had a half a year only of lessons. She would thereafter bring paintings, learning paintings, that she had made or she would do one in front of me and then I would copy it. It was all by rote.

Q: What was the experience out in the natural Japan, in the indigenous Japan? What did you learn about Japan from there? You took walks?

LEWIS: Yes, we walked every single weekend. We went "Japanese." We stayed in Japanese inns and we went very often to the Isu Peninsula when the weather allowed bathing there. We would take our picnic and would stay in Japanese inns and we would sleep on the "tatami," on the floor. We roamed and walked and looked. And a certain time of the year on the Isu Peninsula, the azalea time, each one of the little valleys had ridges that came from the hill with possibly a little stream in each one. Each one of these small valleys had a different colored azalea from the pale yellow to the deeper magenta and then a reddish brick one. As I remember, there were four, each one.

We didn't always stay together when we went there for these long sessions, because we had our picnic and stayed there over lunchtime, took our own beach umbrella. If I found something real nice for my Ikebana, it went back in the car. Sometimes I kept it and sometimes I didn't. That piece that I still have that is a kind of semi-petrified bit of root with beautiful ridges, I found when I wandered off in one of those azalea groves there. All the way down, I saw this thing still in the stream bed half covered up, but I found a tree that I could hang onto that was young enough to bend over. I bent over and got over the stream and pulled it out. Maybe I got one foot wet.

Q: On these walks, did you pick up an eastern sensibility or what did you learn on those walks?

LEWIS: I learned that you, who were five or six, would happily - not quite happily, but semi-happily - tag along if we'd got you a bag of "sembis" for both pockets. Now, your brother was brought up as a walker, and what he thought, I don't know. I don't think we really talked too much, except maybe to look at a scene that was particularly impressive or something like that. From that Isu, we could also see Mount Fuji, and we saw that practically every time, because as soon as you went around the other side of the Isu Peninsula, Fuji was seen from there.

There was also this great Buddha there, that huge outside Buddha. Across Japan, we went to many different places and saw temples and shrines and buildings of antiquity and all the sacred areas. There were the three religions, really very comfortably also within each household. There was a buddha and, of course, outside there were buddha stupas. Then, their ancestral worship, the Shinto religion, that is also in the same house next to the Buddha, and the third one was perhaps the crucifix, where Christianity was absorbed all within the family. That is the Japanese thought, that nothing is unrelated, everything is part. They do not, I mean, if you absorb Christianity, that doesn't deny that you're not going to worship your ancestors or that Buddha might have had a certain influence and thought brought into the country. I remember we went to lots of different temples and found there is a book where you used to get a stamp from each temple that we filled several of these books.

Q: Tell me about your recollections of these.

LEWIS: The most interesting of the temples were the Shinto ones, and no matter where we went or what temples we observed, we took our shoes off before we went in. All over, you had one of these little Japanese books that you pull out. Looks like an accordion as you pull it out. Wherever you went you had a "chop," a stamp imprint, so that you would commemorate your visit there. It was how many of these, and each one was a beautifully cut thing. I had a "chop" too. In fact, I had three "chops" for my paintings. If I may regress now from the temples, I'll come back to them.

Ota-san said that she must give my name so that I would have it, and she first gave me a beautiful name of Peace Blossom. I said, "I'm 47 years old and that's too young for me." I said, "I need something more autumnal," so then she gave me not the "peak," because I wasn't high enough for that, but she gave me the "ridge" of a hill. It has to be phonetically combined with her own name, Ota, so I have that "chop."

Then your father had taken a trip, and he said he had to give me a name, so he didn't call me "the girl from the golden West," but he said, "the girl from the East", because I came from the United States, California, which would be east of there. So he gave me that one. We bought an old "chop" and had a jade one. Your father had that cut on it and then, in the end, I had my own name done in the old, classical language of Hilda Bruhm Lewis, you see. So I have three "chops." Wherever we went, we had a "chop" put, and each one of us, I think, had one. Jack had his anyway, had his own little Japanese accordion folder. And, of course, from the temples there, we were up in Nikko where I also got that wonderful bark from their trees. We got our stamps up there.

Then we went down to Kyoto and next to Kyoto is the Nara, very famous, where the old Emperors had gone and where there are deer roaming around all over. The entrance to Nara had individual lantern stands and a long, long entrance to that temple. And the deer were in between, all over.

Q: You remember the cat and the monkeys?

LEWIS: You mean "See Not, Hear Not, Speak Not"?

Q: "See Not, Hear Not," and the cat were on the same ...

LEWIS: Yes, there was a cat, an all-seeing one.

Q: What was the cat?

LEWIS: An all-seeing cat and the three motifs: "Hear Not, See Not, Speak Not," and that was in which ... well, that was down there.

Q: In Nikko?

LEWIS: No, that was in Nara.

Q: Okay.

LEWIS: Where, I'm not going to say. I don't remember exactly.

Q: Do you get a composite feeling from these temples and places of antiquity? Is there any particular ... ?

LEWIS: First of all, you respected the place. After the war, it was still when the Japanese were in their bowing and kneeling before the place of worship. It was a buddha. And we tried to be not disturbing them and we bowed, so they wouldn't think we were so stiff-backed that we wouldn't accept their places. Down there, in that territory by Nara and Kyoto, we also did a lot of walking in the fields there, the faraway place.

But I want to say that Kyoto - I was saying before about the numbers, the threes and sevens. Kyoto was built at that time that Japan had opened its doors to China at one period. Kyoto was built on exactly the opposite of what I was saying: four by eight. The fours were double streets, close together, which crossed the eight great streets of Kyoto. And the fours were divided between, but there were always two and two and two and two. So Kyoto is built on an entirely geometric, Chinese influence at that time, which the Japanese never would have otherwise used.

There was a very interesting temple and, for the moment, I can't ... we might interpose its name later ... can't remember the name where the monks lived and had their meditation. I think they were monks that couldn't speak. They observed silence. But this center of this surrounding monastery building - there was an entrance for us to get in and there was a kind of small walkway all around - and in the center was this very famous garden, if you can call a place a "garden" with no plants.

This area of seven stones, beautifully placed, each complimenting the other in some way, made a rhythm altogether. The sands surrounding these were carefully raked so that they were always raked in a flowing design as though it were the water, giving a rhythm to it, and ending up, of course, where the raker would get out. I mean, he raked over his own receding steps. We'll come back to the name of it another time and you can stick that in. There were many such, very impressive things.

Q: How do you recall the beaches? Remember the beaches there? Some ... there was a black one and there were regular sand ones?

LEWIS: It's like all over. We have white beaches; we have dark brown beaches. That place up in New Hampshire had dark brown sand. And maybe, if it was a black one, it had maybe some of the lava that had gone into the sea and kept washing up. I'm not geologically versed like that. (laughs)

We spent every single weekend out. Even our summer vacation, Instead of going to a nearby place, like Isu, we went across to the western side of Japan to a place called Kashi Wasaki. When we went there, your father combined it with looking at the Worthington steel factory. They couldn't pronounce the "th" at all, so they called it the Washington plant. Anyway, through his going there, the mayor and the head of the factory had some underlings assigned to us. We were never free to do anything without his tagging along. Each morning he would come to the little inn where we were staying and he would be wearing this same white shirt, because in the pocket it had a pen in it at one time. And every single night his wife washed that shirt so that he could wear it, spic and span again the next morning.

That was Kashi Wasaki. We thought when we would go over to that far distant place, where there were no tourists, that we would see Japan by ourselves, but it wasn't that. (laughs) We were the monkey in the zoo! We were called on all the time. We hardly had a free moment. You couldn't have a meal without somebody coming in. Every time we wanted to go to the beach, we were already in our bathing suits, putting our bathrobes on, our "yucata" over ... and someone would come.

The Japanese. This is part of their form that whenever you are not appropriately dressed to see them, you are invisible, so-called invisible until you go and put on the right receiving gown, clothes, whatever. However, we did manage to go to the beach quite a bit, but you couldn't be on the beach alone. Oh no. This was, of course, summer and there was vacation and certainly enough times when we were on the beach, we were surrounded by these girls - a dozen or more of these school girls - and then they would entertain us. You know the "Row, row, row your boat?" How you take it from one group to the next? Well, they took it from one group to the next, but since they didn't have the "th" and can't pronounce the "r" either, it was "Low, low, low your boat, Genly down the steam, May, may, may, may" instead of "merrily" and so forth. They would entertain us. However, we could get into the sea a little bit.

Q: I remember in Kashi Wasaki the man and little boys with the dragonflies and how they would get a thread. There were grasshoppers in the cages, but the dragonflies would go six, eight, ten inches across, huge, huge, dragonflies.

LEWIS: And they would let them fly.

Q: And they'd tie a little string to their backs that was a dragonfly on the string. There was a little four-year-old boy or whatever who would be given this dragonfly on a five-foot string.

LEWIS: I think you came home with one one time. I don't remember which one it was.

Q: And they gave me a little grasshopper in a house cage as a gift of departure.

LEWIS: That was like the Chinese too. They have these special singing or chirping grasshoppers and they kept them in their kimonos. The story I like to tell about Kashi Wasaki was when we ate in the inn and they would bring the food.

Q:... bring the food into the ...

LEWIS: Yes. And each ... there were always these delightful little bowls, and each one ...

Q:... was wrapped or packaged ...

LEWIS:... and everything was all new to us. All its tastes were new. Its forms were new.

Q: ...raw fish. Horseradish. All those things ...

LEWIS:... particularly raw fish, you see. So we learned to eat raw fish. Then you were five or six, and it came to the hot steamed towel. This was one of the first days. They brought the towel, and you said, "What's in here that I have to eat?"

Q: "Do we eat it here?"

LEWIS: Yes. This was the steamed towel, because you eat with your fingers. There was always a basket of fruit on the table. We went to the silkworm factory, remember that? Where we were given a tour? All around were the trees, into the chambers where the silkworms would progressively ...

Q: The mulberry trees for the silkworms?

LEWIS: Yes, because that was the mulberry which they ate.

Q: The cocoons and the silkworms.

LEWIS: And then, of course, we also did pass where they washed their kimonos. They unstitched them and they became long clothes and they dried them. They dried them on boards on which these kimonos were put, the right width and length on which they would be put out in the sun to dry smooth. They didn't iron. And one of the ... in Kashi Wasaki towards the end, before we left ...

Q: How long did we spend there? Was it ten days?

LEWIS: Two weeks altogether, because we had come on a Friday and, I suppose we stayed through until two weeks later on a Sunday. We'd gone by train. Anyway, towards the end of our stay, there was the O-Bon Festival, which was the ancestor worship festival where those that they knew, remembered, the departed husband, grandfather, would come back. At the entrance to each house was a bowl, basin of water, with a dipper for that soul to cleanse itself before it came in. The members of the family were dressed in their most festive kimonos so that the return would be a happy event, the remembrance for the one who was returning and for the families to carry on throughout the year until the next festival time. We saw O-Bon while we were in Kashi Wasaki and we were invited to share it with one family, possibly that was the Mayor's son there where we were invited, and you came along with us.

We were included in that circle in front of the "Takenomo" and were given the festive food. Also the conversation - well, we didn't speak Japanese. We had taken enough Japanese to say a few polite things, but we couldn't really converse - was in things that would please the returned ancestors or members of the family. When after three days, which I think it was altogether, that the spirits would return, why, it was a little lighted candle that was put in a saucer. Now, as Kashi Wasaki was at the sea, that was put into the sea, and when that candle would tip over that would be when the soul of that person would return to the Place of the Souls. If they had no sea, they put it in a little stream bed, and then the same thing was observed.

When the time came for us to leave, it was exactly the same going back as it had been coming, because we had to change trains. We took a train from Kashi Wasaki to the mainline that went east and west and from this so-called Worthington or Washington Steel, that same man that had met us at that station to accompany us, took us back to the mainline as a form of courtesy. I'm sure we could have managed to find that train to return all right, but this was, as you leave, as is also the European form. I have kept it, when you have a departing guest, you not only go to the door, but you take a few steps down your driveway or all the way to that person's car. And if my neighbor comes over, I walk all the way down to the street with her, because it is part of that same form that the Japanese have and the Europeans have in saying goodbye to their departing guests.

Q: Tokyo?

LEWIS: In Tokyo itself that was our only vacation, because we had only that year there. We left when Erin Lewis was being transferred. He told us ahead of time, so that was our only vacation. However, in Tokyo itself, I was an Embassy wife. And all the wives were on welcoming committees or visiting sick people or in some way contributing either to embassy forms or in another way taking over one of their interests. They knew that I was taking painting, so I was given not the great job of being on the welcoming committee, that which would only be with Americans and new arrivals, but I was put on - which fitted in rather well with my painting - I was put on looking after the "rag pickers."

Now, this is the lowest of the scum. The "rag pickers" are like in India, the "sweepers." These are the scum that go over the dumps and pick out of the dumps. That's why they're called the "rag pickers." These are the ... well, they don't belong to any community or anything. They gradually moved in among themselves and they built shacks and sometimes, if they were there longer, the shack was not quite so shabby, but had a little more form and foundation.

We took food out to them. I was taken out there and I learned through somebody else who had already done it and I learned ... I mean, so that they got to know me. I went into their houses. They came at one meeting place, always when I came with a huge sack of food. How I got that food was through Embassy donations. I think it was contributed. We all contributed. I think you did ...

Q: Toys?

LEWIS: Yes ... whatever it was, either food or whatever from our house - clothes, everything. And then, that first period, I learned. The second period, I took over entirely by myself. During that period they had an epidemic of impetigo. Those are those awful, facial running sores where, out of the eyes, the corner of the mouth, all that yellow gummy disease comes. That was when I was doing it alone, and I can tell you, when I came home from the "rag pickers," I didn't just leave my "zoris," I left practically everything I had on, except, I suppose, I kept on a pair of underpants and went on into the house. And I dropped those as fast as I could into some tub and showered so that I wouldn't bring that into the house.

Among the "rag pickers" was one where a GI had been rather friendly, because she had a GI son, sweet child. He was six years old, and I felt so strongly about that boy that I was considering - I think I spoke about it at home - if I would adopt him. Then, everybody said that would be awful for that child, because he had been raised differently and he wouldn't feel at home with me. No, he's already too far, they said, but I loved that boy. I liked so many of them. I don't think... We certainly bowed to each other, but I didn't touch them because that wasn't the Japanese form. In our last period, I got another Embassy wife and showed her the way around, and then she took over when, pretty soon, we had to leave.

Q: Tell me how you found these houses? What were these houses like, these shacks?

LEWIS: They didn't live with the garbage dump. I mean, that's where they got their name.

Q: But were they ...

LEWIS: They were "rag pickers," but I didn't feel... I drove my great big Buick in there every single time. At first, I was ashamed and then I wasn't ashamed, because I drove in and out and I could go there at night. I could go anytime there. I did go at night, too, if I had something. It was near where Jack took his Judo and that might have been the reason, because he took his at night after school, might have been the reason I went in there at night. They would have protected me if there had been any reason, because I had been accepted by them.

Q: What did you do with them? What activities?

LEWIS: Only food or anything they needed or if there was a disease or a scratch, and then, I would ask the doctor. I don't remember if I brought a doctor or not, but I got all the medicines for them for that impetigo.

Q: How did you communicate with them? Did they speak English enough? A lot of gestures?

LEWIS: I knew enough for that. I mean, I didn't converse, but I knew enough for that.

Q: Was it a very large area? Right in town?

LEWIS: Yes, yes. It was.

Q: In Tokyo?

LEWIS: It was at least a square mile, if not bigger, and as it grew, of course; they added to the periphery. Then there was something that I talked about to them or about them, to get a number of them away into a new community and to build new structural houses. I think I turned that over to the other woman. It was the beginning of that thought, because here and there it was beginning to get a little crowded.

Q: Yes.

LEWIS: But that was a very interesting background. Here was the absolute scum of the scum, and for me it was perfectly all right.

Q: Let me just ask you - we each learned Japanese in our own way. You recall Jack would go to his Judo at night and you'd let him off at any subway?

LEWIS: That was because we vacationed at the sea or on a hill or even Yokohama I think we did for a weekend one time, because that wasn't too far away. Our Navy was there, and we looked at Yokohama and stuff like that, but we came back Sunday nights and we came back in time for Jack to have his Sunday night Judo. And no matter from what side we came to Tokyo, to the first subway or trainway station, we let Jack out. He had learned from coming from the American school at home. First, we guided him. Then we took another run after he knew what station to get on. We did it two or three times to make sure that he would remember, and then he learned the calligraphy and he had to make a change to get on our line in Shibuya. So he learned that calligraphy so that no matter where we left him, he knew the calligraphy of the station that he would get off to get to his Judo. And he got as far as to pass the black belt.

[The following papers were sent to the Foreign Service Family Oral History Project to be attached to Hilda Lewis' interview transcript. They are her recollections of Malta, the Lewis' last post in the Foreign Service.]

MALTA Recollections of Hilda Lewis

When Harrison was up for reassignment after his Bremen post, he saw that Malta was available. It was a much smaller, less important post than Bremen, but he said he'd take it. There was a strong likelihood that Malta would soon become independent. Great Britain at that time (1963) was offering Malta independence. In fact, Great Britain was bargaining with Malta to accept independence. The Maltese, like all Mediterranean folk, were pretty good bargainers. This Duncan Sandys (the Foreign Minister) learned as Great Britain gave in more and more to Malta's demands financially, in commerce and protection. After independence, the small American Consulate would become an Embassy, and Harrison found the prospect interesting. In the end, we stayed in Malta fifteen years altogether, staying on after Harrison's retirement in 1965.

We drove down from Bremen as far as Naples, leaving our car there, and flew on from there to Malta. That was October 1963.

Hardly some weeks later, Kennedy was assassinated on November the 22nd. Catholic Malta had a special feeling for him as our first Catholic President, and our country perhaps the more because of him.

The period of our mourning was a month. Condolences and expressions of sorrow came in daily. We had a tree planting ceremony in his name. At home, I received neighbors and the wives of officials who came to call. We ourselves went to no public place and, of course, cancelled all social engagements.

That was when Harrison and I began to walk the Island. The heat of the summer had passed, and Malta's dry arid landscape lay in a beauty of its own. We learned its history and saw its shrines and monuments, its caves and prehistoric sites.

At Ghar Dalam are the remains of extinct animals dating from the time Malta was the joining part of land between Europe and Africa. Their bones had washed down to be caught in the deep cave (some 250,000 years ago). Time was to be well documented in Malta from those prehistoric times and onward.

The Hypogeum, a megalithic underground temple cut from the live rock was unearthed only at the beginning of this century. It has several levels with burial chambers and a very imposing entrance to the "holy of holies" for worship to the great Goddess of Life and Death. At this early period of mankind, it was 'woman,' the Goddess, who controlled the great cycle of life on this earth. The small, famous statue of its sleeping Goddess (the Goddess certainly of fertility also) is smiling as though in a trance to receive and answer. In one of the chambers is a corner where acoustically a whisper is transported to quite another section, perhaps as an oracle.

Of a later period and standing above ground is the Mnajdra Temple, the huge upright stones forming the walls and chamber divisions which are pocked and eroded. However, its Trilithon Alta is preserved to a fine degree.

Many of the Neolithic temples command a fine view. Hajar Qim is on a high plateau on the cliffside of Malta overlooking a wide expanse of the sea. The front of this temple is concave and is referred to as the gate of horn, the horned beast being the sacrificial animal.

If the cart ruts were made by these people, it hasn't been answered yet. There are cart ruts to be found in Sicily, and Harrison even went across to Northern Africa to compare those there. Malta's cart ruts exist in super abundance in relation to those of these neighboring lands. How were they made? In the years of our walking the Island, we were always looking. The answer should be found! We walked the cart ruts. We walked where there were double sets and we walked where they crossed.

One day Harrison picked up a smooth wedge-shaped stone some seven-eight inches long and flat at the bottom. We could see it fitted what we had been looking for, a runner to be stropped onto a shaft.

Knowing better what to look for, we found several more, but not such good ones. I guess they had to be pretty far used before they were discarded.

Harrison made a small model of a cart. Then he made a cart with shafts the distance apart to fit the approximate 55 inches between the ruts. He sat children on the brace between the shafts, and as there was no evidence of a beast of burden, he had their elder bigger brother pull it. It made a fine photograph.

Malta's land is like a table with two of its legs sawed off. It slants down from its high cliff side to the sea and its bays on the other side. The cart ruts run down, too, and even into the sea. The Mediterranean had either risen or Malta's low side had dipped deeper!

From the Roman times there exist many fine examples of their carved cornices on buildings and beautiful statuary and also a Roman bath site.

Malta also has its "Hill of the Jews." On one side of the hill they dwelt and around on the other are their catacombs. They were Greek-speaking. In one catacomb, a ship is grooved into the side wall. The ship has an oar also. This ship is to take them to the Beyond and has a Greek inscription. Next to it is the Menorah. Early Christians used the same catacombs, adding the crucifix and the lamb.

When St. Paul was shipwrecked on that cold January day, the people of the Island gathered and stood watching how those men might get ashore. The rocks against which that hapless ship had been crashed still loom up dangerously today. Paul had said, "If you will have faith with me not one of you will be lost," and so the people watched as each man came ashore. Runners had gone to Publius, the Roman Governor of Malta, to tell him of the miracle. Paul had been brought to him and the old father who was lying in high fever was saved. The fever broke when Paul laid his hand on him. Publius allowed Paul to remain and to preach. Nighttime, Paul was shackled as a prisoner, but Paul preached, and Publius became the first convert. Today, Malta claims to have become Christian from that time.

Even Malta's language is a document of its history. It is Semitic based, and anyone having learned Arabic can understand it. Its grammar, however, remained archaic. There is no future tense nor interrogation. "You are going tomorrow" is expressed by the lilt of the voice to imply the question mark! Today's Maltese has absorbed Italian, Spanish, and English words ... also a few French from the time the Aragonese came across from Sicily to conquer Malta.

As so many other countries on the Mediterranean, Malta was a bird shooting and a bird netting place. Across from where we lived, the farmer kept his captive birds in very small cages stacked up under his shed. We would pass them on our little walks to the lookout tower, our usual evening walk, during the hot weather period when the air had cooled down a bit. That land, those fields, a center place for a fountain and the pavilion tower had all belonged to the Villa Remigio, but now was based to the farmer.

Twice a year the migratory birds would appear in the sky and come down on Malta. It may have been school spring vacation when Robert was with us. He and I were taking that little walk to the tower and when passing the farmer's fields, Robert saw the long nets. He reacted in such passion: he kicked the nets and kicked them again and again in his anger. Robert was fourteen then. The next day, the farmer sent his wife to say we would henceforth not walk along his fields. He was no worse than the others. They all did it; and when it wasn't their nets it was their guns. Harrison, who was a good marksman, felt such revulsion that when a group of men, who were friends (but also bird shooters), asked him to join their skeet group, he refused. The reminders of the shooting and netting remained on the fields the year round. These were the small mounds of stones on which the caged birds, as lures, would be put.

Before living in the Remigio Villa, we had had a few years renting a small palazzo up in Buskett. That palazzo, built by one of the Grandmasters, was the supposed hunting lodge for the Knights. During their time, Buskett, a thickly forested area, was for keeping game for the Knights' pleasure. Later, probably under the British, Buskett became a bird sanctuary. At the palazzo, which took the name of Grandmaster Pinto, when I'd hear gun shots, usually at the end of the day when, during the migratory season, the birds had come down to roost, I would go out and confront the men, those with guns. Maybe they smiled, especially if there was a policeman among them. But one time, I wasn't so sure, when I turned to go back that a pellet wouldn't come my way.

These same farmers brought in excellent crops. The most famous up in Northern Europe, Switzerland, the Low Countries and Germany were their potatoes. They managed three crops a year, and the first in early February was the one these Northern European countries called the Malta Potato!

Malta's earth was of different textures and color. Where it was that deep reddish brown it was most beautiful in its newly plowed state. They plowed to the contour of how their fields sloped; a horse usually pulling the plough the farm guided. During earlier times, all ships coming to Malta were required to bring a ballast of soil. That was the precious thing the Maltese needed to cover the ground rock. Soil continues to remain precious. If a man builds a home, he must first remove any soil. Soil not being used was for anybody's taking. That is how we got our soil for the vegetable plots we wanted to start on the sloping rock in back of Remigio. After finding a local man who had a truck, we told him we'd like that rich colored soil. When he brought the first load, he told us he had searched the Island for it. Across the far side of the Island he had found it. We paid him for his labor, his truck but not for the soil. The soil was free.

The Valletta Market, quite similar to the Washington Market in New York with its abundance and types of stall, differed perhaps only in one thing and that was that the vegetables were picked that morning. I soon found two vegetable stalls I liked, and they were run by brothers! I usually went to the smaller of the two for the young egg-shaped zucchinis. I also saw thieving at that vegetable stall. A large coated woman would slip into her great coat pockets those small zucchinis while the man was waiting on me. I had observed her before and finally one day I told the vendor. He shrugged, meaning, "she needs it." So my extra pence supported that! A balance like in ecology?

Perhaps what we were most spoiled in was the bread. We had never experienced anything like it before, in body and taste and crust. When we had lived up in Buskett, our shopping area was in Rabat. There I was told about the "Family Baker." In the course of the years I had watched it being kneaded, a small part kept aside when the round loaves were being formed. That bit of dough was the germ of life for the next day's batch. It would carry forward the fermentation, the rising, becoming the staff, if I may use that word, of the bread to be. After we came back to the United States and to this southern area in North Carolina, the one thing we missed most was Malta's bread. No gourmet shop, no fancy "Southern Seasons" could supply us with bread, the type of bread, we liked. I began baking and have tried all the natural and even mixing with some whole grain flours. My bread is called by Robert "Mama's Bread." Anyway, it's not Malta bread. I could never equal it.

After Independence, the British who had come to live in Malta had come for the climate and perhaps also to avoid high taxes in England. Mainly they lived quite separate lives unto themselves. Their Britishness, we found among many, kept them from associating or seeking out Maltese. As in the years we were there, more and more came, villas were built at choice spots overlooking the sea. When we had first moved to Remigio with our own view of the sea, there was only the farmer's family just below us. Then the villas were built and there were a few restrictions, to not cut off the view of the sea from the house above. Well, the sea is wide, but bits of these new villas were always edging into the view.

Because of our initial period of walking the Island, Harrison would suggest historical sites for our picnics with our friends and former colleagues, the German Ambassador and his wife and the Italian Ambassador. Sometimes they'd bring one or another and soon it became a group. Harrison wrote his guide and walks and his ancient Malta! The 'group' grew and became a Saturday fortnightly affair. Harrison would lead off and I would bring up the rear. Once we were over a hundred, winding up over the rise of a hill and down into a valley. Our dog, Nicky, would run between Harrison and me, from Harrison to me at the end as though gathering the sheep flock into a controllable unit.

Over all this were the political confrontations between the Nationalists and the Labour parties. When Harrison took his post in 1963, the Government of Malta was Nationalist. Mintoff, the Labour Party leader, had had a short session about ten years before. The Nationalists were supported by the moneyed, by the 'well born' families and by the Church. Harrison knew that the Nationalists were secure. Their Prime Minister, George Borg Olivier, had been the successful bargainer with Duncan Sandys over Malta's Independence. The price was 50 million pounds. B.O., as we all always called Borg Olivier, said, "And how about all those buildings you, your troops have been occupying these last hundred years and more? What about their destruction through use?" Okay! Well, another million pounds were added, and B.O. came home to Malta, waving the agreement, the paper, in his hands as he came off the airplane.

We gave a drinks party to celebrate B.O., and he told us his achievements were due in part that he could hold out in drink better than Duncan Sandys and also that he was used to staying up through the small hours of the night. When Harrison accompanied B.O. to his car, Harrison said to me afterwards he was glad that B.O. landed upright on his feet.

Addendum by Penne Laingen. Transcriber1987

Hilda and Harrison Lewis enjoyed their last post in Malta so much they retired there. Harrison was the last Consul General in Malta before it became an Embassy. Hilda was able to produce some very fine paintings, mostly watercolors with a distinct Japanese character, and she had several significant exhibitions in the Maltese Museum of Fine Arts which always drew admirers among the Maltese and members of the diplomatic community.

Perhaps their most important contribution to the Islands was their walking group. The main island of Malta is 17 x 9 miles in area, and the Lewises covered every inch, putting their discoveries down in a published guidebook that is still used today by local people and tourists. The routes they plotted took walkers over fields of poppies and buttercups, down rocky inclines to the beaches, along the famous Victoria Lines, and into the hidden grove of ancient olive trees. As Hilda has described it, the group at times swelled to around one hundred, not always to the liking of the local farmers or bird shooters as they trekked through farm fields and down into hidden ravines.

One of Hilda's projects was to safeguard the Neolithic temples of Hajar Qim and Mnajdra, and when the Maltese began excavating too close to these precious ruins, using heavy-duty machinery which shook the earth for miles around, Hilda was not shy to voice her criticism to the Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff. Mintoff, a difficult, irascible man, did not always like Americans, because his father had been attacked by an American sailor at one time. Mintoff never forgot the incident, and when in power, denied the American Sixth Fleet access to Malta's harbor and port facilities. However, he listened to Hilda Lewis and deep down admired her unshakable determination to preserve Malta's heritage.

Harrison concentrated his interest in Malta upon its archeological history and wrote books on the subject, particularly in relation to the ancient "cart ruts" and his theory as to how they came into being. In 1979, after fifteen years in Malta, the Lewises returned to the United States, settling in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Harrison had had bypass surgery, but spent his remaining years writing his memoirs, which are also part of this historical collection. Hilda, now a widow, continues to paint and keep up a correspondence with her many Foreign Service friends.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Harrison Lewis

Spouse Entered Service:1929Left Service: 1965You Entered Service:1937Left Service: same

Status:Widow of Chargé d'Affaires, Malta

Place and Date of Birth: New York, May 15, 1909

Maiden Name: Bruhm

Schools:

Beard's School, Orange, New Jersey

Leipzig Art Academy, Leipzig, Germany

Date and Place of Marriage: May 5, 1937, Leipzig, Germany,

Profession: Artist

Children:

Jack Lewis

Robert Lewis

End of Interview