

## Interview with Linda Bell

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

LINDA BELL

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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*Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on July 5, 1991. I am interviewing Linda Bell at my home. This is informal because we didn't know we were going to do an interview today — we were talking about the very interesting situation at Linda's last post. Usually we begin at the beginning and work through but this time we'll work back from Lusaka.*

You were talking about the incidence of AIDS among the Foreign Service national and staff members at the Embassy.

BELL: It was absolutely rampant throughout the local community. It was interesting in that Lusaka did a flip-flop from being almost paranoid, hypersensitive about AIDS — prior to our arrival there was such hysteria about AIDS among the Embassy community that they were the first Embassy in Africa, I believe, to start universal AIDS testing of all their local employees and also to refuse to hire anybody who was HIV positive.

Now, we got there in 1988, and I think because we were perhaps more educated about AIDS by that time because of the knowledge that was coming forward and also because we were aware that this was an AIDS-infected area and we still chose to go there, the hysteria level diminished considerably. And one of the reasons for that was that you just assumed that everybody in your household had AIDS. It was probably better not to test

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them because it really wouldn't make much difference one way or another — they could be HIV positive this week, perhaps two months ago they were negative. So it was very difficult to keep up with.

*Q: I was going to ask about that — what would be the value of testing?*

BELL: I don't think anybody knows. I mean, you can test people for tuberculosis and for other things that might be communicable but AIDS was one of those things where it was just better to assume that they were exposed to it and were carrying the HIV. I think that's the way families with young children approached it. If mothers were worried about young children and their contact with baby-handlers — there really wasn't a lot of likelihood of the children getting it, except in the case maybe of a wet-nurse — I think they just took more upon themselves, and after all if they'd lived in America they would have been doing everything by themselves. But you know a servant washing the dishes or preparing the food or brushing up against you or even hugging the children is not going to infect the child with AIDS or you with AIDS. You just have to assume that it's all around you.

Near the end of our tour the Embassy needed four new local employees. It was their policy to medically test for AIDS anybody applying for these jobs. They knew it would be difficult because the former hysteria had sort of written that into the rules. There were twenty candidates to fill the four positions, all of whom were tested, and out of the twenty, eighteen were HIV positive. That's when the Embassy decided it was time to be more flexible, because they couldn't operate under those circumstances. After all, a person who has tested positive still, perhaps, has five or six very active working years — there aren't enough data on the whole situation. And after all, somebody might be hired without HIV and yet walk across the street and be hit by a car. It was just as prevalent to lose our employees through that and other accidents.

So I think the whole feeling was “just assume they're HIV positive and give them a job, they need a job. They're still productive elements of the community, you can't put this

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stigma on them.” You just have to make sure that your behavior is such that you don't open yourself up to any unwarranted kind of vulnerability.

*Q: You mentioned the coffins to me, before.*

BELL: I did mention that the Embassy had a policy that they would make coffins for family members of local employees, i.e., of AID, USIS and the Embassy. We had a fairly large employee network because all the carpentry, plumbing, electric work, and so forth were done not by contract but by regular employees. By the time I left, they were making a coffin a week, an average that was up considerably from a couple of years ago when it was about once every three months. A lot of those coffins were for infants before the age of two. Of those I don't know what the percentage might have been but certainly the majority were AIDS victims.

So, it was very sad. You had to harden yourself a bit. I can't recall statistics of the number of deaths in Lusaka every day but it was absolutely phenomenal. The cemetery was just down the street from us and there was a constant stream of the trucks full of people who appear in an African funeral, sometimes four or five funerals at the same time went past. One day, you'd go past an open field, the next day there would be all these little crosses; where there had been funerals, now little headstones.

*Q: Were other people in the Embassy able to live with this as well as you seem to have done?*

BELL: Well, I think during our tenure the whole panic died down, from a sense of, “Okay, just take over what you need to take over to protect yourself if you are pregnant.” I think we know more, now, about how AIDS can be transmitted. Remember, it wasn't so long ago that we still weren't sure whether the mosquito might transmit it. None of the epidemiology had shown that it could be but there was still a lot of false information hanging in the air. I think that once information became more factual through study, it's become a less nebulous thing: we don't certainly know everything about it, and tomorrow

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something else entirely different could be discovered. And of course the strain mutates amazingly fast as well.

I think basically that, as the nurse said, the major concern for Americans in Africa at that time was probably skin cancer. Statistically, we were going to be much more at risk for skin cancer than for AIDS. I think she was right. You have to keep that in mind, and it rather negates the hysteria.

*Q: Did other Embassies in East and West Africa — perhaps you can't answer this — face the same situation as in Lusaka?*

BELL: It varied. I don't know anything about West Africa and AIDS hasn't really impacted there as greatly as in East, Southern and Central Africa. I know that in places like Uganda there's still that sense of hysteria. I was talking to the CLO from Uganda just last week and they have a major mental health grant to buy books — books on grieving, factual books on AIDS.

*Q: For Embassy personnel?*

BELL: Yes, and for local employees. Because I think so many of the Embassy families were losing their staff members. It is difficult, because your household staff does become an adjunct to your family, so your feelings are heartfelt about what's happening out in the compounds or servants' quarters, whatever you call them. When the children die, you know something's happening out there. So it's better to be informed and perhaps to help them get over it as well. It's difficult to watch someone go downhill. I think once you see a full-blown case of AIDS, the degradation happens so rapidly that it really is frightening. And I think it was frightening to the American community.

*Q: Understandably! What would happen if someone needed an emergency blood transfusion in Lusaka?*

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BELL: We handled that by having our own blood bank. After all, we had all been tested for AIDS through State's medical tests.

*Q: They do that now?*

BELL: Yes, I think it's required now of all Foreign Service regardless of where you've been posted. When you go to MED for your physical, I think they routinely screen for HIV. Since we had come to post all HIV negative, the nurse would ask us at the outset to indicate our blood type, so that if an emergency blood transfusion were needed for one of us, they would get a match from another one of us. By the time I left we had an Embassy doctor — he was regional, obviously, maybe he was in Lusaka, maybe not — and some of the small clinics that we went to there were perfectly fine, there was a good doctor, and I'm sure that it would have been of fairly good standard. What was a problem: you didn't want to land in a hospital. (Fenzi agrees) But there are many places in the world where you wouldn't want (both laughing) to land in the hospital.

*Q: So if people needed hospitalization, were they medevaced, routinely?*

BELL: Yes. Most often to South Africa. There was good transportation. That was ours, I'm not sure where East Africa medevaced to. You know, you didn't think about it all the time — I don't know of anyone who was very hypersensitive about medical problems during my tenure there. One of the most worrisome was malaria.

*Q: Living with malaria in West Africa was probably not all that different, except our servants couldn't transmit it to us or our children.*

BELL: They could in a sense through the mosquito vector, but of course not through contact. And malaria was something a lot of people came down with in Southern Africa. Even with prophylaxis it's not uncommon to get resistant strains. It was scary, because

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it was always kind of “around.” When fever and chills hit, the first thing to determine was whether it was malaria.

*Q: Take more pills and then ask. (laughter) I still have a few questions. What was the spouse employment situation in Lusaka? I'm thinking now of the Embassy spouse who came into the office to work in an “under employment” situation leaving a child at home with a nursemaid with AIDS, and you say that would happen.*

BELL: (after a pause) Now, this may have been a particular time but the women who had small children, really, did not work. It was one of those luxurious things, either because of the women who were there — and there were quite a few women with small children — but most of them were involved with their children and took great precautions. A lot of them, when they came in to do errands, just took their children with them.

*Q: Just like they do here.*

BELL: That's right. So I think, sure, they were under a nursemaid's or a housemaid's care from time to time but ...

*Q: The mothers were the primary ...*

BELL: I know one person even made a conscious decision not to nurse, for instance, because she wanted the child only to rely on a bottle so that there would be no question of the care taking servant's nursing her just to keep her quiet, say. Mom isn't home yet and Mom is the primary food source and the baby's crying, so what does the African do but start to nurse the child, especially if she has small children, which this one did.

*Q: Which they usually do.*

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BELL: Right. So this mother just decided consciously that she was not going to breast-feed this child and the nurse could give the child a bottle at any time. So that was one way, that was a conscious decision that was affected by AIDS.

*Q: Probably a wise one, if someone terribly, terribly much wanted to nurse a baby.*

BELL: Well, I think it's a part of trust and education, too. I think you have to have some sort of working relationship with your servants, you can't always be following them around to make sure they're carrying out your orders. I think that in general they try to please, and that they think very seriously about going against your wishes. So if you explain that there are certain things you don't want them to do, I think that in general they follow those.

*Q: And they're so happy to have the job, too, that they want to do what they can to keep it.*

BELL: When we moved into Lusaka we had a houseman and a cook. Between them, those two servants had twelve dependents, in a small house on the property for servants that was divided into two apartments each with its own bathroom and shower. But twelve people is a lot of impact. On the other hand they were living much better than if they'd been in African townships. So, you're very reluctant to kick any of them out, you just don't do it.

*Q: Anything else in this conversation will seem anticlimactic (laughing) after that. Well, let's continue on. We know that you started in Rabat — (reading from bio) Tunis, Abidjan, Oslo, Washington, Wellington, Harare — I forget where Harare is.*

BELL: Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, and then we went up to Lusaka. So we had five years in Southern Africa.

*Q: "Playground director for summer months".*

BELL: Yes, with Ruth Fenzi. (laughter)

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*Q: As the helper. Wonderful!*

BELL: I must say, I was glad that I came into the Service before 1972. And I was glad that I had the contact with some quality people, you included, and wonderful Ned Roberts's wife Nancy, such a wonderful mentor and wonderful friend. But I've been very fortunate in knowing some of the spouses that have been in leadership positions in terms of so much that's happened. Jean German, Margaret Sullivan ...

*Q: Joan Wilson.*

BELL: Yes, and Patty Ryan whom I worked with has been so active on the Forum. Jean and Patty were both with us in Oslo. I just feel very fortunate that I had some very good teachers. At the same time I had a nice dragon lady to start with and sort of (both laughing) got my feet wet very quickly. So I could see the other side of the coin!

*Q: But I can remember spending long afternoons at Nancy Roberts's. She lived across from us and I can remember you just felt so welcome. Is she still living?*

BELL: Yes, as far as I know. Ned recently passed away, but their son Doug took over for Chuck as correspondent for Voice of America in Abidjan in 1973, when we went to Oslo. So what goes around comes around, (she laughs) it's really incredible. Of course Laddie Drucker was another one in Rabat ...

*Q: She lived right behind us.*

BELL: ... such a wonderful person, and just full of good stories about the Foreign Service. I was glad that I served with the professionals, as it were.

*Q: Tell me what else — I can't remember exactly what all you did in Rabat. You were ...*



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BELL: Let's see — in Rabat I went out with Nancy to a missionary nursery in the bled where we gave out milk occasionally. I had a baby.

*Q: I should have said "in addition to having children."*

BELL: And all those cultural shocks. I remember some lovely lazy days there on the Mediterranean. I don't know... There was a lot to get my feet wet in Morocco. It was wonderful to go to a culture that was so very different, in the sense that it was very Arab and not Christian. And the scenes that I can remember. Even driving back and forth from Kenitra you'd see the man astride the donkey and the woman following with all the stuff on her head. Biblical ...

*Q: And also the fact that you had of course the Moroccan culture, you had the veneer of French culture, and then — this didn't affect your baby so much but my two children had the MUSLO Club where they could go for their hamburger, go to the movies, and they could walk up there. I never worried about the children in Morocco in all those years.*

BELL: That's right. Yes, it was a safe environment. Also, we all lived fairly close to one another. As I recall, we lived right behind the American school, for instance. It was on a side road ...

*Q: That's right.*

BELL: I think it was just the elementary ages ...

*Q: Yes, I remember that.*

BELL: ... but they had that house. I could just look out of my kitchen window and see all the kids having such a good time. All of a sudden I was kind of surrounded by Americans but it wasn't — there were times when I was just pulling out my hair. I can remember my first Thanksgiving when — you know, we'd been using the gas bottle on the stove since

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we'd arrived, we didn't know anything about this type of thing — I had several Peace Corps volunteers invited for Thanksgiving Dinner.

*Q: And the gas gave out.*

BELL: Yes, in the middle of the turkey and pumpkin pie that one of the volunteers had made from a real pumpkin. So Chuck took the bottle out; we didn't know. As I recall it was a red bottle. So he went to the first place he could find. Oh but they didn't "do" red bottles, they "did" blue bottles. So he goes to the next station, they only "do" yellow bottles. And then the orange bottles. (she breaks down in laughter) He was gone, finally, forty-five minutes to an hour before he finally found a place that would exchange it for a new red bottle.

*Q: And all the while you're sitting with the hungry Peace Corps volunteers and the turkey not done.*

BELL: Well, only a few volunteers but the turkey was gelatinous in the oven. (both in gales) You know, that's how you "get experience in the Foreign Service." That was also the last time we had only one bottle.

*Q: So, when you got down to Abidjan, even though you had only two babies, there you managed to teach ...*

BELL: Yes, I taught English at the harbor to pilots and did some tutoring. Well, Abidjan was a mixed bag for us because Chuck was Information Officer for the first two years, and then he was Voice of America correspondent for the second two years. So four years was a long time in Abidjan, for one thing, most people stayed two years. My husband was gone for about 60 percent of the time that he was VOA correspondent because he was traveling throughout all of former French West Africa, and covering a few stories as well from former English countries. So, basically, our link was listening to his recorded voice on the radio, since most of the time he was in places where you couldn't call in those days.

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*Q: And you could hardly go along with him.*

BELL: No. I went on two of his trips, I think in the end, but it was very difficult. I had good support, though, from friends — again, a very supportive community, a very supportive English-speaking community — that came from many varied nationalities. We lived next to some British diplomats who had quite a number of children and who were very, very helpful to me, especially when I came down with dengue fever when I was seven months pregnant. Otherwise we would do things together, including spending Sundays on the beach.

So I didn't feel isolated and alone, although I know that I was, and I remember that it was very difficult. I returned to post after a month and a half or two months on home leave and found that the British family, without any forewarning, had been transferred and were already gone. My husband hadn't returned to post with me, he had business in Paris, and there I was with two children and no immediate friends close by. It was a very lonely feeling. I felt very isolated, let down and angry. I missed them and felt cheated that I hadn't said goodbye.

*Q: But it was lucky, fortunate that you could get out and teach a little bit to ...*

BELL: Yes, I enjoyed the teaching that I did. I had my own class, which was actually at the port, my students were all involved in navigation and doing the pilot boat navigation. They needed a particular kind of English, which was kind of fun to teach. They were a very cohesive bunch. I think I did that for at least two or three years, I can't recall exactly. Peggy was born during that time, in a small French clinic where the doctor arrived in tennis shorts just in time for the delivery. (laughter)

*Q: Typically French.*

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BELL: Well, he took off his wet tennis shirt that was all sweaty from tennis and he rubbed his chest with the soap, washed his hands, and delivered the baby still in his tennis shoes and shorts.

*Q: That's fine, when there's no problem.*

BELL: Exactly. Well, yes, it was a very fast and very easy delivery. Then of course they push you off the delivery table, maybe you walk back to your room, and then when you get there you find there's a half-gallon of wine waiting for you, beside your low sprung bed (rest of sentence drowned in laughter). Well, it could have been a lot worse. The midwife got very cross with me when I didn't drink all the wine. (dissolving again) I really couldn't. But she said, "Madam, that's so good for the milk!" (after pause to recover) So that's how Peggy was brought into the world.

*Q: I had skipped over Tunis, I thought you went from Rabat to Abidjan but you went from Rabat to Tunis — two very nice posts. A very nice beginning to the Service, really.*

BELL: Well, we'd met the Arabs in Morocco. Tunis is a much more cosmopolitan place, though. It's been "hit" by every seafaring nation that's on the Mediterranean and I think they have a sense of being very international - Turkish, French, Arab, Berber, you name it, there's just shakshuka (Arabic for mixture, a stew).

*Q: And all the Roman ruins.*

BELL: Right, the wonderful Roman ruins. We did enjoy our time in Tunisia thoroughly and had some interesting adventures there. I got to know the people fairly well. I worked in a school for the blind — I forgot to include that on my bio-sheet — where I went about once a week to work with the blind children doing dancing and singing, various activities. It was a super opportunity for me to get out into the environment and into the society.

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But I made a close friend there. She was the school's director and had been educated in France. I'll tell you a short little story because it's indicative of the way Tunisia was. She was a very French woman, really, even though she was Tunisian. The whole aspect of Tunisia being modern was very different than Morocco. The women were encouraged not to wear the veil, to go out into society, they had voting rights, they could divorce, could own land, could be in control of their own money. All of this was very, very "modern" in the 1960s in an Arab country.

One morning I was down in the souk quite early looking at something. I think someone was with me, I can't really remember. A couple of times I heard "Linda!" and looked around. Here was this Arab woman, but not knowing what was going on I turned back, didn't pay much attention. Again "Linda, it's me!" I looked back, only Arab ladies in their veils, I still didn't understand. Finally, my friend, I think her name was Rushida, came over to me and said, "You don't recognize me, do you?" I looked at her and thought, "Who is this woman?" Of course I didn't recognize her because I'd never seen her in the safsari with the entire veil and the white robe. "Oh," she said, "you know, it's my mother, she needed tea. Look!" And she showed me underneath her safsari she just had her nightgown on. But her mother needed tea, why get dressed, she wasn't ready yet, hadn't showered, was just dashing out into the market. So she put her safsari on, went to the market, became like anybody, then she sees me, sees no reason not to talk to me even though I don't recognize her at first — in fact, I was surprised she even had a safsari.

How convenient! It's like the time our maid came in a safsari in the summertime and I was so surprised, because Malika never wore a safsari. "Why are you wearing that now?" I asked. "Oh," she said, "it's summertime, it keeps my clothes clean. You know, there's all the dust in the air, I just wear this and then I get home and everything's clean." So there was this sense of almost "dual" culture. It was useful. When in Rome do as the Romans do. It had a very useful purpose, and don't negate it. Even though Bourguiba says, "We want you to be modern."

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*Q: You worked on something called The Tunisian Digest? As co-editor. "English language weekly newspaper for official and unofficial English-speaking community."*

BELL: Well, it was interesting. We had a number of people—Joanna Macy, the wife of the Peace Corps director; and Adele Simmons, who is definitely a personality in her own right. Her husband was heading up the Ford Foundation project in Tunisia. They were both very, very capable in French and very astute in political and economic matters. What they did was to scan the Tunisian papers and translate them for those of us who were not reading the French papers, so that we would have an idea of what was going on politically and economically. What I did then, because my French wasn't nearly on their level, was to write various feature articles and hunt up various English and American activities, for example, foundation grants — the Smithsonian had a fisheries expert there — businessmen in the country who were doing interesting things, etc. I would write up certain aspects of what they were doing, so that as people got together at various organizations or through social contacts, they had an idea, a perspective, of what was going on and who was doing what.

And it was a very valuable little contribution to the community but it was larger than just the Embassy community. But we had a large Embassy community there, because we had Peace Corps, and AID.

*Q: This was pre-computer days, how did you do it?*

BELL: Oh, I did it on the mimeograph.

*Q: Could you use USIS material?*

BELL: I actually did the work in the Peace Corps office. It was probably not more than eight pages ever, so we would just get all of our drafts together, and they really were

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drafts, and I would just type those, and the Peace Corps office would print and distribute them.

*Q: How often did you ... ?*

BELL: We did it bi-weekly, as I recall.

*Q: Really? That must have really kept you busy, then.*

BELL: Oh yes, it was a fairly big commitment. Our Ambassador Russell was very, very much a professional career ambassador, and he had a very strong sense of community and how this would be a priceless asset to the community to keep them informed. It was after the '67 riots — as you recall, the tail end of our departure from Morocco. I think that there was a sense that a lot of this had come about without any sensitivity on the part of a number of the Americans. So yes, we had terrific support from the community to get it out and it was very much appreciated and was a fun thing to work on.

*Q: Do you still have some copies?*

BELL: I do, yes.

*Q: How fine, we could Xerox them, to put in your file as an example, just one or two of your best issues.*

BELL: Well, it was quite a good vehicle.

*Q: The transcripts are really very nice when they have supplemental material, photographs, reports, correspondence, and other things that you've done. It seems to me that Tunis is the place where you really started developing your ability to write. Was it your first opportunity or had you written before?*

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BELL: Well, my degree was in journalism and I had been doing some work in Washington actually before I went out, again in a voluntary fashion. But I don't think I did anything connected with writing in Morocco. I have written poetry, though, during my entire Foreign Service career, and it's very interesting how it reflects the cross-cultural experiences and the experiences of, well, not only youth to middle age and all the attendant sort of emotional things that you grapple with — children, and place and growing older and parents being far away.

*Q: Fantastic, because you're doing it in a multi cultural environment.*

BELL: Yes. A lot of it reflects very much the place where I am and the people that have meant a lot to me, or people who I feel are — well, I think, the whole sense of change. You know, there was a sense in the Foreign Service for a long time — maybe now that I'm older I don't pay as much attention to it, or I ignore it more — but as an incoming young person there was a sense that there were things you just didn't talk about. There were things you skirted around. The things that meant the most to me were kind of forbidden territory, in terms of a lot of the friendships and contacts which you made. I mean, things like religion, and politics, and how you felt about where the host country was going politically, or how your own country was going politically. And of course those were the years during the Vietnam situation.

I think a lot of us had some very strong views on these issues and we felt like we'd been censored to some extent. I know I had a few good friends that I could sort of be free with, but there was always that sense of having to realize whom you were talking to, and skirting around. I didn't like that at all, I felt very constrained and very unsympathetic to that kind of ...

*Q: When you're young it seems like hypocrisy.*

BELL: It was.



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*Q: And when you get older you realize that it's just taking the course of least resistance to keep the wheels of diplomacy, (laughing) international intercourse.*

BELL: Well, I don't know... Since I was made a private person in 1972, I've been much more outspoken. I figure that, you know, I really (she laughs) have nothing to lose. And if I don't like the politics in power in my own country, I'm going to say so. And if I say I feel that — obviously I'm not giving away any state secrets because I don't know any state secrets, but I think I'm entitled to my own opinion.

I think in that respect the '72 Directive did have an impact on my life. I thought, “Well, by gum I'm going to say what I feel from now on.” And when a host country — well, we were in Norway, for instance, where these people were like us. These Norwegians had been among our best friends at some of our other posts, where we fell into an English-speaking tribe or international club. So it felt, in a way, like going home but not going home, and I thought, “Well, why should I be less than honest with the Norwegians?” It just didn't seem honest to me, my integrity was not ready to be compromised at that point. So the directive came along (she laughs) at the right time.

*Q: But before 1972 was your poetry writing a vent, perhaps, for some of these feelings that you couldn't ...*

BELL: Oh definitely, definitely. Oh, good and bad — I mean, not all of it's negative by any respect, some of it's very joyful. It's just kind of a window to a whole life really, to the whole life experience, which happens mostly overseas.

*Q: Invaluable, if you would include those [with the transcript], it shows your passages in the Foreign Service through poetry because you felt restrained, that you couldn't express yourself in the foreign community that you were living in. Did you stop writing poetry in 1972 when you could start speaking your mind? (she laughs)*

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BELL: No, no. It has big blank areas, though. I think as you get caught up and the muse just kind of sits somewhere else for a while, then all of a sudden something will jog you and the muse comes down and says, "Well, you'd better write that down." And I think some of it is reflective of various happenings.

*Q: Well, I sort of skipped from Rabat to Abidjan, and now to Oslo, where you did do the cross-cultural report on Norway. Did Joan ask people to do those? Was she in charge of ...*

BELL: What she did, as far as I know, was to send out to all posts — she was in charge of what we called "the wives' seminar" back in 1975-76.

*Q: (consulting a source) "She was training instructor, '72 to '80." She was there a long time, wasn't she.*

BELL: She sent out guidelines for cross-cultural investigation, assuming that we didn't know where to start, which was absolutely the case. She knew what she wanted in terms of a type of sensitivity study, something as an adjunct to the post report — not nuts and bolts but more behavioral, and more what to expect. For instance, there's a very easy thing in Norway that surprises an American. I suppose it happens all through Europe, I don't really know. But for instance you're in a theater and you're on maybe the aisle and someone needs to reach an interior seat. The Norwegian is always going to come to you with his face to you instead of his back to you. Which is the opposite of what we do.

*Q: In other words, as he's inching in he's looking at you ...*

BELL: ... saying "excuse me, excuse me?" Whereas our custom as Americans is to present our backs, which in Norway is extremely impolite. So, if you know it ahead of time, the whole thing becomes kind of a guessing game. "Are they going to do it that way? Oh

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yes, they're doing it that way." "Maybe we should do it that way too." (both laugh) So it just clues into the cultural mores of the society.

We had a super time writing the report. We got together as a committee and all shared input into the various topics, because it was divided topically. Then I did all the coordination and writing and editing, but it went back and forth to the committee innumerable times. I mean, we had a good time. You know, it was interesting in that our experience often reflected different experiences, so you'd get one group or one person saying, "this is my experience" and the other person saying "well, I had exactly the opposite experience." So you had to reflect it all, and I think that's why it was very good in that particular post to do it with a group.

*Q: Had you known Joan Wilson before?*

BELL: I can't remember, I think so, but I hadn't been at a post with her.

*Q: Were you the chair of the — I notice you edited ...*

BELL: I can't remember if there really was a chair. We just kind of all got together under the Embassy auspice. They knew I'd done some journalism and I certainly was willing to take it on. And I did it on an old manual typewriter, you know, no personal computer in those times — I suppose there was at the Embassy.

*Q: I don't think so.*

BELL: The whole thing was done on a big old Underwood and all the typos were worked out (she laughs) page by page, it was rather painful but anyway it worked out well, and I think the OBC was pleased with it. It's still available there.

*Q: Do you still have a copy?*

BELL: Yes.

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*Q: Fine. I'm writing down the things that I hope you'll give us as supplementary materials to the interview. I see that in Wellington you were at the Academy of Science.*

BELL: That was full-time. The children were in school and we had been back to Washington in the interim and I had done the AAFSW Newsletter for two years. That was in 1978 and '79. So I had been very involved with AAFSW. I co-chaired the conference about internationally mobile children which we ran in 1979 for the International Year of the Child, sponsored by AAFSW. I followed Margaret Sullivan as editor of the AAFSW Newsletter and she had a very strong mandate about where women, dependent women, were in this whole picture. I think at that time the Department was just entering into the era of tandem couples and she wrote some very interesting pieces, as you know, for the Foreign Service Journal.

I got to this publication and I thought, I don't really know much about that subject and I think that maybe we should focus more on children who, after all, don't have a choice. If a grown-up spouse says 'enough is enough,' she has a choice. Often it's a painful choice but she is an adult, she has a choice, and a child of course doesn't have that choice, they go along for the ride.

So I was just interested to see how the international mobility would affect the children. I know my own children were having a real bout of — well, it wasn't re-entry, they had never lived here, so it was like another post for them. And as the kids say when they learn they're going to go on home leave, "I am home, what are you talking about?" They don't have any perspective for the whole experience.

*Q: As they had never lived here.*

BELL: No, they came home at ages ten and seven and we were home for approximately three and a half years. So I was just interested in how that featured in their lives, because I had always lived in one place all my life and I thought, well, their life has been so different.

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So my interest was reflected in the Newsletter — but I always had at least one article featuring children in those years that I was editor.

And then we did this conference in connection with the UN Year of the Child, which worked out very, very well. It was sort of the first of its kind in terms of focusing on educating the Foreign Service child, and re-entry. Sidney Werkman, who had written on this subject, came, and Ruth Useem, the person who was the first to use the term “third culture kids.” Mary Lou Weiss headed up one of our workshops, as did Kay Eakin, I think Sidney Werkman did as well. Susan Donnelly, was my co-chair on this project, which worked out very very well. It was probably the kickoff for some of the things that the FLO actually did later on. The FLO, which had only been created the year before, made a videotape of this conference and sent it out to all the posts as kind of a “for your information” jumping-off point for dialogues and workshops.

*Q: Do you have material on the conference too that you could ...*

BELL: Not a lot. I have the conference agenda.

*Q: But that helps to show ...*

BELL: That's true, that probably should be part of the archives, in a way.

*Q: ... what was going on. (End of Tape 1, side A)*

I remember that AAFSW awarded the Newsletter editor a scholarship at George Washington University, as a perk.

BELL: That's right. Margaret Sullivan had worked very hard to effect some sort of compensation for the Newsletter editor. And I did take a year of the publication specialist's course, for which I'm eternally grateful because I have since used many of those materials and a lot of the training that I had in subsequent jobs. I actually designed a similar training

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course in Harare. But it was difficult to balance the Newsletter, two kids, living out in the country, and these night courses.

*Q: You did it all simultaneously!*

BELL: Yes. So I did it for a year, it was a two-year course and I just really couldn't handle doing it for another year, plus the conference. Doing the conference wasn't so hard, but it was taking a toll. It was detrimental to the kids, and we knew we'd be transferring. At that time, there were a just a lot of things going on in our life. So I didn't do the second year, which to some extent probably was more technical in its focus. And I went out for another ten years, in which time the whole publications technology revolution did another flip-flop. In effect, what I would have learned that second year probably would have been totally outdated by the time I came back anyway. What I did do, though, was very, very worthwhile. I don't know whether successive editors have taken that up.

*Q: I think the salary for doing the Newsletter now is \$5,000 a year.*

BELL: WOW!

*Q: I think so. It seems to me I remember reading Helen Fouch's job description when her term ended, I think she did it for two years. They were looking for a new editor and it was written right there, \$5,000. I was delighted to see that.*

BELL: Well, it's not big bucks but it's a good compensation, certainly. Because if they're going to get a quality newsletter, they have to have somebody that's willing to put time into it, and so much of the Newsletter at the time I did it was original writing. I mean, I asked for what I could ask for from various interesting parties that were willing to write something, but most of it was original work.

*Q: And even that you probably had to edit.*

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BELL: Oh sure, of course I did. Well, I did all the makeup, so it had to fit, and

*Q: Now you would do it with desk top ...*

BELL: Yes, ideally!

*Q: I don't know whether it's done that way or not.*

BELL: Well, it should be, there's no reason why it can't be, because most newsletters are put together that way now. In the old days, yes, I would take a whole day of going back and forth to the printer's and getting my blue lines all into form so they could be photographed and run. Anyway, it's good that the job is compensated, you're going to get a much more professional result. Much more interesting, too; although in the last couple of years I've been a bit disappointed. I understand it's a lot better now.

*Q: I was the first Newsletter editor when AAFSW came into being, and I look back on some of my issues and I blush, really! We've come a long way from the white glove ...*

BELL: Luncheon meetin(both laughing).

*Q: Right; oh my yes. Well, I guess actually the luncheon meetings were behind us when AAFSW came into being. One of the reasons for AAFSW was to get away from the purely social luncheon meetings at Fort McNair, which I remember going to in fear and trembling, with a big John-Fredericks hat, and gloves — oh my, really. (both break up laughing)*

BELL: Well, I went to one such and it was, you know, sort of a window into what had been. It was a very interesting window, and if I just took it in that sphere I was fine, because I could go home, take my gloves off and forget about it for the rest of my life.

*Q: What year was that, do you remember?.*

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BELL: Oh, that must have been one of those years when I was doing the editing, I'm sure. There was a end of year [AAFSW] lunch at Fort [McNair] (ruminating), maybe it was during my first tenure... I think it was during those years, '77, '78. But it was a past performance, it wasn't the way it was done normally, it was the one-off type of thing that involved the kind of fancy dress. Normally it was quite different.

*Q: (laughing) But as you say, open the window and then pull the blind, walk away from it.*

BELL: Right.

*Q: Then there's your job at the Academy of Science in Wellington.*

BELL: I walked into that job and it was a super job. I was editing everything from a monthly newsletter to books, doing a lot of administrative work in terms of keeping all the files for the various international unions that the Academy of Science belonged to. Also adjudicating a lot of their fellowships and scholarships. There were a number of these and I did all the first-cut type of reading. It was very useful.

*Q: Opened a whole new group of people that you otherwise would not have come in contact with.*

BELL: It was wonderful. The Royal Society of New Zealand (Academy) was a QANGO, which means a quasi non-governmental organization, and so I was actually working on the far sidelines of the New Zealand Government, and I was working in an all-New Zealand office. What I had was a window into the political and the social fabric of the country that was ever so much more real than my husband's. He's cloistered in the Embassy thinking that just because he had lunch with the editor of a newspaper he knows what was going on. (she laughs)

*Q: You were able to share this with him over dinner every evening.*



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BELL: Yes. And it was a real eye-opener for me. That's when I entirely stopped being a yes-person for our government or any other government. I really enjoyed being a private person and saying what I felt. I don't know ... I had some very, very strong relationships that came out of that particular tenure and I really appreciated the opportunity to do it.

That was made possible, by the way, because of the reciprocal work agreement that had been signed. We went out to Wellington at the end of 1980, and I think it was the summer of that year, perhaps a little earlier, that the first reciprocal work agreements were signed just the previous year. New Zealand was one of the first six countries. In fact, before I got my appointment, the scientists had met at board to approve my appointment and my hiring, and they said "wait a moment, how can we possibly hire her when we've all been to America doing our whatever at such-and-such university and they never let our wives work? What's going on?"

So the Embassy had to make a special effort to show this organization the work that had been done and how this was a reciprocal arrangement for other Diplomatic spouses. In other words, the New Zealand Diplomatic spouses could work here but their spouses going out on an academic grant, for instance, still wouldn't be allowed under the normal rules to work. So I was sort of breaking new ground and getting them used to the idea.

*Q: I was just noting that you started really working, other than as a volunteer, in Abidjan. Of course you were there when the Directive came out. And you really have done paid jobs at every post since then.*

BELL: Well, not really in Norway, the situation there was that the cross-cultural study wasn't paid. By the time I got to Harare it was paid through OBC. I was paid, not a great deal, but again it was a wonderful way to get on your feet in a new culture, because you could run around asking local people all these very interesting questions and they were more than happy to oblige.

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*Q: What did Harare used to be?*

BELL: Salisbury, Rhodesia, of course.

*Q: And has Lusaka always been Lusaka?*

BELL: Yes. Even in the “old days” it was always Lusaka.

*Q: Let's just put on tape what your children are doing now.*

BELL: I think I mentioned before, they're both studying to be expats, really, not having a home in the U.S. The one had a very tumultuous secondary school career. I think she would have anywhere but she was in New Zealand and most of her classmates were leaving school at the age of seventeen and eighteen, as they do in New Zealand. Her class dropped from thirty-five in number in the year she entered, the year before the school certificate or the O-level exam is given, and by the time she was seventeen, it had dropped to seven.

*Q: This was what we would call a public school?*

BELL: Well, the public schools were impacted much the same. This was reflected throughout society but she was in a single-sex small private girls school. Both girls were there. We'd always assumed that Amy would go to the coed high school which was very close to us but she chose this smaller Anglican school. She did transfer to the high school for a short period of time, but by then we felt that she really needed to be in an American environment because she was being drawn into New Zealand culture so drastically that we felt it important that she just make a break.

I think it was important to take her out of the whirlpool before she was under, drawn in. There was a boyfriend, and she had her sights set on — once you take the university entrance exam, and you pass — which she did by the skin of her teeth because she cared

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nothing about studying at the time — you get a letter that says “you may now go to any New Zealand university that you want.” End of story. If you want to take another year of high school to work on a bursary, they'll give you money to do that. But she has this letter in hand and she felt that whether or not we were in New Zealand, it didn't matter a twit, she would just continue to go when it suited her. She wanted to study art and she wanted to stay with her boyfriend. But we felt that if she was willing to go to an American boarding school for her senior year, it would be helpful.

Somehow, she did agree. She didn't prepare herself psychologically but she did agree. She got on a plane and landed in Hawaii, where she did her last year at Hawaii Preparatory Academy, just cold turkey without making any sort of break emotionally or emotionally preparing herself for what she was doing or where she was going. She just BOOM landed, and she landed badly, which to me was predictable. But she pulled herself out of it and the school was very wonderful in that respect. It had some quality teaching staff who could see what was happening and helped counsel her. And a lot of the students came from similar backgrounds — the school serves the entire Pacific Rim and represented all kinds of families — business, Foreign Service, AID, everything.

*Q: So she wasn't unique.*

BELL: No. In that setting she wasn't and it was marvelous. I think in her class there were something like fourteen nationalities represented. I think there were only ninety-something in the class, maybe even seventy, I can't recall the numbers, but of those, thirty-five had been born outside the continental United States and Hawaii. So these kids had been born all over the place. In fact there was one French-speaking young man in her class who had been born in Casablanca the same year she'd been born in Rabat. There was a lot of French being spoken at the school, a lot of these kids were bilingual coming from Tahiti and various islands. So it was a very international experience, which was the only thing that could have possibly suited her at that time.

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*Q: Could I back up? Her classmates were backing out at an alarming rate according to what you say in New Zealand at a private girls' school and you could see her dropping out at seventeen and getting married and ...*

BELL: Sure. Why go to school? It was much more fun out there working. New Zealand at that time had a very mandated kind of educational system based on numbers. In other words, they had so many places in their universities and they had so many places in their high schools, they gave the school certificate exam which is like the British O-level exam, and they just arbitrarily drew a line wherever it suited them that particular year, so that fifty percent passed and fifty percent failed. That line changed year to year depending on how the numbers fell, but they told fifteen percent of their fifteen that they were no longer qualified to continue in school and they could either repeat the year or they could do something else, thank you. The whole goal was to get them out of the educational system because they knew that they didn't have room for them at the top.

*Q: Is that more realistic? Pretty deadly for those who don't make it?*

BELL: Right. Pretty deadly on those who don't make it but I think the sad thing is it's all test-determinant. So not only is the person's whole scholastic future test-determinant but that is the thrust of the teaching as well. There's very little interpretation in the teaching, because they are teaching to this test. And of course the school succeeds or fails depending on the number that they can get through the school certificate, and then the number they can get through the next ...

*Q: A lot of pressure on the student.*

BELL: A lot of pressure. It was very different from my experience. Of course I was of the opinion that it didn't really count, it was in a foreign country, and yet ...

*Q: They made no allowance for foreign students?*

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BELL: No. And of course for Amy it did count. That's where she was, she didn't know, she'd never been in a U.S. high school, so for her that was it. As well as the whole cultural baggage she was taking in. She is not one of those people who live on the surface. Amy was always one to jump in with both feet — all of her friends were New Zealanders.

*Q: I think it's amazing that she agreed to go to Hawaii, really.*

BELL: I am too, in retrospect. I have no idea what it was, except that I think that she knew that she had to see what it was like, in that American sense. And I think her early schooling kind of fell into that same category because she started it in French schools, which are terribly constrictive. In Abidjan when she was three and four years old, they would seat them in the class by class rank order, they would class-rank a group of four- and five-year-olds. I think that when she moved on to an American system eventually she took a deep breath, [breathing in sharply] ah, this is the way an American school should be. Because, of course, she was getting some of that feeling just by being an American in an American home.

So I think somehow that since she had this window out, she ought to investigate this system. And as I say she landed square on her face. She had a terrible, terrible first semester — not academically, in that area she's never had a problem — socially, yes, discipline, everything. She'd been used to a lot of freedoms and of course at the boarding school she had no freedoms in comparison. In New Zealand she'd been hanging out with a group of kids who were all twenty-five, twenty-six years old, and all of a sudden she was with what she considered a bunch of babies.

Also, the school system was so different, the way they taught was so different. In the European system they tell you once to do the project and if you don't hear it or don't do it, that's fine with them, they don't want you getting down to the other end where they don't have room for you in the university. Of course, the American system is so, what she said was, so force-feed, almost — they tell you once, they tell you again, then they show you

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how to do it and they check if you're doing it. (both laughing) She couldn't believe it and she thought it was all a bunch of baby work.

Anyway, she made it through that year and made it through that graduation and did come out with two very, very close friends at the end. And had a great deal of respect for some of the teachers she was working with, as they did for her. At first the school was forcing her to choose a college and she wasn't interested in that. She had this piece of paper that said she could go to any New Zealand university, so what was the big deal? She was actually in correspondence with the director of the academic art curriculum for New Zealand, approaching it from the standpoint of "look, I've got this piece of paper, I want to come back to New Zealand and do my studies, can I? My parents are under this temporary residence, what are the rules?"

Unbeknownst to Amy, this person was well known to us and knew us well, so when he got this letter from this American student across his desk, he only called Chuck and said, "Did you know this?" (both laugh heartily) Here's this grown-up child trying to make her own way in the world and these adults are already ...

*Q: Conspiring against her!*

BELL: So he wrote back and said, "Well, if your parents aren't here, you don't have any legal reason to stay here and it will cost you as much. Really, we might not have room for you." He was a bit "down" on it, which I don't know whether that was Chuck's instructions or whether that was just the situation. I think it was really a combination. So Amy finally applied to a college in the States, in May I think, and decided that there was only one place she really wanted to go to and if they didn't take her that was fine, she'd go back to New Zealand. And (heavy sigh as though in relief) they did! Even though she didn't even apply until May.

So she ended up traveling with some New Zealand friends most of the first half of the next year, because they were on their summer break. She had some marvelous experiences

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— went to Israel and lived on a commune with one of the New Zealanders who was doing a year there on a commune, and came back much more mature, actually. She came out to Zimbabwe where we were then posted, and then she went as an incoming freshman to the university in January. Which is typical of Amy — don't do it when all the rest of the kids are doing it, when they're giving all the information out and making everybody feel happy, go do it yourself, you know, do it the hard way. And she's had a fairly good college career ever since.

She's switched colleges, which is also typical of Foreign Service kids — did two years at Macalester and is now at the University of Minnesota. Switched from studio arts, which was her first major, which was because that was an easy major and let's get it over with if your parents think you ought to, so let's do it. And she's become intellectual and is doing mostly graduate-level courses in African studies and actually will be a teaching assistant for one of the courses this coming fall, even though she hasn't gotten her Bachelor's degree yet which she should receive at the end of next year.

Peggy, the younger child, by contrast is just a straight arrow. She decided early on she didn't want to go through a different school system than the American school system. Even in New Zealand for some reason her class had a lot of North Americans, two of them Canadian, another U.S. They were always very close - she had strong New Zealand ties and strong New Zealand friends but there was a mediating sense of there being other kids from my land as well. And so she had this balance of cultures.

When it came to going to high school, she said "I'm not going to go through what Amy did, I'm just going to go back, go to a boarding school." She did it all very methodically. We went through all the brochures, then she applied to four, we went and visited all four. And she got into all four, so she could have her pick, which she enjoyed and which put her on a terrific scholastic climb. Scholastically she's really very top and will now start her junior year at Brown. Her major interest is in Chinese studies; she's had seven years of Chinese

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language already and she'll probably spend half this next year either in Taiwan or China depending on the political climate.

She's definitely into foreign affairs, and probably will recycle into government or some official agency. She likes the structure of the government.

*Q: She sounds like a natural for the Foreign Service.*

BELL: Well, she does, in many respects. I think that that's what she actually tends to do, but if she doesn't it will be something very similar. Whereas Amy will probably realize a career based on some sort of expatriate mix. Maybe even more academic, maybe more in terms of a private nonprofit organization. I don't quite see exactly how she's going but she lands on her feet. She will do it, there's no doubt about that and she'll probably have some very strong views about what she's doing and tell the world about them at the same time. (laughter)

*Q: Like her mother! Well, the most important thing for us is to have our children benefit and profit and come out on top of this experience because unfortunately some of them just don't.*

BELL: I think in the end, when all is said and done, that's one of the most important legacies we have in the world, no matter whether we come from our culture or another, it's our kids that are our living legacy. No matter what we add in terms of our work experience and in terms of the kinds of people we were, I think if we make — well, I don't know that people mean to make a botch of raising their kids or the situations make a botch of it, I think all kinds of things can conspire to have things happen that are completely out of our control. We try our best, but at least I don't feel that I have guilt about it. I think it's a sense of having done my best.

*Q: Under very unusual circumstances for bringing up your children.*



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BELL: Well, that's for all of us though.

*Q: That's what I meant, for all of us.*

BELL: But that's the best I can do. I'm proud of them and I think that they'll be useful and remarkable citizens.

*Q: You really can't ask for any more than that. My husband and I feel that we're very fortunate too that our children turned out so. Tell me, now, about the project you're writing a proposal for and that you're planning to do. Let's get that in the transcript.*

BELL: It rounds out my interest in the Foreign Service child, because I grew up in one house and one locale. I knew that my kids were growing up in a much different kind of environment and this whole sense of where they belonged was different to mine, and evolving differently. So after I did this conference in 1979, I said to Joan Wilson at the time, "I think what we need is some sort of oral history or some sort of idea of what happens to these kids once they're grown. We have some idea of what happens to them when they re-enter the culture as teenagers, for instance. We know a little bit about how they feel when they go off to university maybe from an international school overseas and all of a sudden are thrust into an all-American situation.

But what happens in the long view? How do they work through the experience, and how are their life choices affected? And are they affected at all? So what I plan to do in this next year is to work on an oral history project that will identify children who have grown up in the international mobile community, not necessarily in the official American community but also arching into business, perhaps missionary families; not military so much, because I think their situation is a little different. And I think the prerequisite I have for all my interviewees will be that they have lived in several countries, not just one experience. Because I think that in itself is a unique thing. But it's not like our kids in the

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Foreign Service, for instance, that have a smorgasbord kind of environment so they're not always in only one culture.

And the other thing is, I think it's important to look at people who have done their secondary years with their parents posted abroad. So either they're streamed in the host country schools the way Amy was in New Zealand, or they're in international schools as is so often the case, or they're sent to boarding school outside the country of residence, or maybe even within it, and the different effects of those. So I think those will be my constants. That's what I'm trying to get — the kids who have moved a lot. I'm trying to look at it from the standpoint of relationships, lasting relationships, where they consider home, mobile or stable life styles, whether they've utilized languages they may have gotten to know very well as children, whether they're international careerists or whether they've found their career in some other kind of work entirely.

What are the various factors, and how does it all work out? In one of the chapters I think I'll look at siblings, so that I have a framework with basically the same kind of experiences but how all the siblings in the family will have worked it out in different ways. I think that will be very interesting. Then other chapters: for instance, on minorities. A child that has had a cross-cultural kind of parenting, for example, where one parent is not American and the other is. There are just many different ways to look at it. In terms of where they consider home — that's another chapter, how you put that all together. How do I answer where do I come from? Maybe in terms of how they're raising their own children, how that life-style may be impacting on some of their choices if they have them to make; what they would like for their own children.

We'll see what comes of it. I'm going to dedicate this next year to doing it. Once the interviewing is done and the transcripts are under way, It's not going to be nearly as ambitious a project as the Foreign Service Spouse project. It's going to be limited to maybe 12 or 15 interviews, but then compiling and getting them together will be a part that I can accomplish anywhere, I should think.

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*Q: Are you just doing this to publish the results as a little book, or are you going to work on a degree with it, or ... ?*

BELL: Well, I can see how it would fit into a degree program but I would rather take the cart before the horse, which is typical of perhaps the family, and just see where it goes in terms of a publication that is very readable because it will be in their own words, it will be their own stories, it will be their own experiences. If I can get this into a cohesive sense, it will mean something to the parents of children coming through this now, or the children themselves, or people who are involved in their education, people who are involved in the medical scene — maybe therapists who might see these children in various guises. I mean, I just think there's a whole raft of people, if you make it interesting enough — I'm not coming at it as a social scientist, it's not going to be filled with surveys and data. My background is as a journalist, so I will let these people tell their own stories but my job is facilitating that task.

*Q: That's basically what we're doing in the Spouse project but we're dealing with a larger group. We're just trying to show the outside world and young Foreign Service women coming in what their legacy is.*

BELL: That's right.

*Q: And I think if you know what that legacy is, you understand why you are where you are today and what you might be able to do about some of the things that you don't like that you find when you come into the Foreign Service.*

BELL: That is exactly the case.

*Q: And we're doing it to the words of the women who have lived the experiences. So I think they're both valuable.*

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BELL: I think that was the whole point of doing this childrens' conference, I mean, all this kind of identifying — if you don't think about where you are going, you can fall into these deep dark holes. You know, it can happen before you even know it. But if you're forewarned ...

*Q: Down looking up.*

BELL: Whereas if you have some forewarning, if you've thought about it ahead of time — for instance, one of the things that came out of that conference was that mothers should always use their mother tongue with their small children. Because any other language that's foreign to them is going to seem stilted to the child. The infant senses this right away, that all of a sudden his mother has lost her spontaneity, she's not the same person as she is in her mother tongue.

Just something that simple — for instance, if you have a cross-cultural marriage, then encourage the mother to use whatever language is hers. Don't do it to please her husband, that's not important, that can happen later when the child understands that these people are coming from two different linguistic backgrounds, but use the mother tongue that is the natural way that you have been parented because that is the way you will parent most naturally.

It's that kind of thing, that if you just know what to think about ahead of time, you can do it naturally and the result will probably, in the long run, be more valid.

*Q: Be more effective.*

BELL: Yes. The one criticism I believe about our foreign service is that we have been out much too long. I think that there should be a statute of limitations. It's especially, I think, for USIA and AID, where so much of their work is in the field and so little of it is in Washington. And the good officers want to stay overseas.

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Q: *Out of twenty-four years you had three years here.*

BELL: I know.

Q: *So your children really grew up abroad.*

BELL: That's right.

Q: *Actually, ours did too, pretty much. When we first came into the Service we had two years here when they were about two, and five, and then they went to third and fourth grades here and we didn't come back again until Ruth was in Peace Corps and Millo was in college.*

BELL: Don't you think it's a long time?

Q: *I thought it was a long time when I came back in 1976 and so much had changed, especially in the women's issues. So much had changed. [Tape cut off here, as her recital not relevant]*

BELL: I loved Tunisia with its high society, high standard of civilization. And in the summertime you would go to these various events and the men would be all in this dazzling white, down to their push in shoes — I can't recall what those were called.

Q: *In Morocco they were yellow and pointed, and you just slipped into them.*

BELL: Exactly. And the men in Tunisia wore only white in summer — the shoes, the robes. And then, to cap it all off, they would wear this little bouquet of jasmine behind their ears. And it was fabulous! And the women, again all in white, in the safsari, would wear a necklace of jasmine. And so, any kind of social gathering or any place where there were a lot of Tunisians — in summer when there was the jazz festival or the Carthage Film

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Festival, we had Louis Armstrong one year, and they would bring in ballets that would all be performed in the old Roman baths in Carthage.

And of course most of the Tunisians would be enjoying that but you'd get this waft of jasmine. I suppose originally it was to cover up body odors but Tunisians are basically very clean people. This waft of jasmine was absolutely heavenly. And the twinkling bright stars — you know it was in North Africa, so bright and glittery. Those nighttime events were out of this world.

I found the Tunisians so sophisticated — much more sophisticated than the Moroccans. The latter were a very friendly people - of course I was very new to the Foreign Service — but there was always that sense of tit for tat — in Morocco.

*Q: Oh, definitely. But you didn't get that in Tunisia.*

BELL: The Tunisians were just totally giving and generous, not only of what they had but of their time as well. And very ceremonial as well. You remember the Moroccans had their mint tea. In Tunisia you had a black China tea that had pine nuts on top; sweet tea. And you would sip the tea, very, very ceremonial.

The cross between the Turkish and the French, and the old cultures of Rome and Greece and Phoenicians.

*Q: Was all there!*

BELL: Was all there. I really loved Tunisia. Actually, we went back during one of our R&R breaks out of West Africa and spent quite a bit of time in Tunisia and were so pleased to see it. I was very close to the help. The woman who worked for me was not so much younger than I was, because I was very young at that time and I was married and had a child and she didn't, so she was learning from me at the same time she was doing. When we went back several years later, she was married and we were invited to her home. Her

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family took us in, it was incredible during our years there, they would invite us to their home routinely. Her mother, every Saturday for as long as I can remember, sent us a dish of couscous on a plate, nice and hot, covered with a plate and wrapped in cloth, on the younger boy's bicycle. He would deliver it just in time for our lunch, and every Saturday it got just a bit more spicy, more hot. And then the next Saturday a little hotter. We noticed the progression, we used to tease Malika. Then finally one Saturday it was beyond the pale, we really couldn't eat it. (laughter) They really were just a very gracious people.

We actually had quite an experience with our teenager friend Malika who worked for us. She became engaged. It was an arranged family marriage — you know that they were — and they actually had gone to the city hall and signed the papers. But the marriage had not been consummated, she was still living with her family. Then they found out that this man was drinking and alcoholic, which of course in their society is the kiss of death, it would have ruined her life. But they realized this, and public drunkenness was a very serious offense.

She didn't know exactly how to deal with it, so she decided that if she could get him arrested, it would be grounds for annulment. As a Tunisian woman she had the right to go to the courts to ask for help and ask for an annulment; she could do this.

*Q: With her parents' permission or without?*

BELL: Oh, I think with their permission but her parents were very much perplexed by this whole problem, too. They knew that it had been a terrible mistake and that if she married this man her life would be hell, really, because of the nature of the illness. One doesn't drink in Muslim society. And they didn't want that for their grandchildren either. So Malika arranged for this man to come to our house at a certain time. She knew that he would have been drinking, and thought “if I can get him arrested in front of the house, they'll see that he's drunk and he'll be arrested under this charge and there will be grounds for my divorce.”

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So she called the man up and said, "Come to the house where I'm working and I'll meet you there and we'll walk back [to wherever] together." Meanwhile we locked the gates, locked the house, left the dog outside. We knew he was coming and she asked me to make the complaint, because I would then have to stand by my complaint in a court of law. So I called the emergency number, much like the one we have here, and the person picking up the call heard that I was not a French-speaker and he asked me immediately if I were an American and I said yes. "Oh!" he said, "I've been studying English. I have no place to practice my English, can you please tell me where I can study English and how I can get a scholarship to America?"

I said, "Yes but we need this help, we need (she breaks up) and I tried to explain in French or English what we needed, and he really wasn't about to be sidetracked, he really wanted to practice his English. It was really a panic. Of course I didn't have a lot of faith in the system, I must admit, I wasn't sure that anything was going to happen anyway. So I hung up after this very frustrating call that was miles too long because Malika's man was coming closer and closer. But since we had locked all the gates he was kind of puzzled for a while, couldn't figure out how to get in, and in that time while he was waiting for us to respond to his yelling at the gate, one of those tiny little Renault police cars drove up alongside and they did arrest him. That was grounds, then, for her eventual divorce.

We had to go see the lawyer, see the judge, go down to the court and testify — both Chuck and I did this because of course I was a woman and they needed a man's weight behind this even in those days, or especially in those days. And it was just a very interesting window on the whole culture. So I feel that we saved Malika from a very horrible kind of adult experience. After we left Tunisia she eventually married a man who was much older than she at the time but it's been a very happy marriage and they've had - not a lot of children, too, because that's one of the things I told Malika over and over again. I said, "You know, it's a fact that you just have to limit your family, you can't expect to have that standard of living if you're going to have 10 or 12 children." I think she was one of 12,



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so she saw the need for it. She had three children, I think — two girls first, so they tried again and got a boy, thank heaven, and that was the end of it. (she laughs heartily)

*Q: Oh, good. But how wonderful that you could have such a positive impact on another life.*

BELL: Yes, well, I think in another way it was the Embassy big guns that did help. I don't know that she could have accomplished this quite as — I think she would have, she was so determined, and she was a very intelligent, strong-willed young woman and I think that she would have accomplished it without us because she was so determined to do so. But certainly it helped and it put her mind at ease that somebody was behind her in addition to her parents, who were also behind her in this. Anyway, we got lots more couscous and ... (both dissolving)

Care and feeding. There are many stories like that. We were very close to our young Togolese woman that we hired after Peggy was born. She was from Togo, her father had been a teacher who taught not only German but English and French ... (End of tape)\*\*\*

Linda Bell, Self-recorded Addendum, December 19, 1991

I don't think that when I interviewed with Jewell I really talked to those years in Lusaka except to cover the perspective of how AIDS affected our community. There are a couple of other things I want to touch on, and part of it is the 10 years that I spent in the Commonwealth and in my own language group. I think in that length of time, all at one stretch, you lose your sense of being different, because you're not having to learn a new language every time you move and the governmental systems of the country carry over from one Commonwealth country to another.

Then of course you are speaking the language of the country and you're speaking it well — it's your language. So you don't have any trouble communicating, you sort of meld into the community without any sense of pulling away and being different. It's very seductive

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in many ways and you forget that you're foreign. I remember that when I was working as an editor for the Royal Society of New Zealand and somebody would call that didn't know me, and all of a sudden there would be a pause on the other end of the line and the person would say, "Why are you an American?" I would be rather taken aback and think, "Well, how do you know I'm an American?" (she laughs) without ever remembering that of course my accent gave me away wholly. But I was in an all-New Zealand office and I didn't consider myself the least bit different. I didn't hear my accent during those years, nor did I hear the New Zealand accent, really. I knew it was there, it was only when we left New Zealand — I can remember making a long distance call to our very good friends and neighbors there and it hit me then, "Janine has such a strange accent!" I had totally forgotten.

We were three years in Zimbabwe before we went to Lusaka in 1988 for two years. While I was in Harare, I think I may have mentioned, I worked in an all-African office at the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe. I also wrote the cross-cultural report (for the Overseas Briefing Center), which gave me a fairly good grounding in the culture. In Harare not many of our friends were from the American community; mostly our friends were other Zimbabweans and it ran the gamut, actually. We had colored friends, black friends, white friends, some Diplomatic friends outside the American community.

When I was working, of course, I was working in an all-African office and I learned so much about African organization and how different it is from the American approach — everything being decided in an indaba (like the West African palaver).

You move ahead and you do a project that you've been assigned, but then instead of handing in the project to your superior, everybody on your team — in this case a writing team — spends three days reassessing every bit of the plan to make sure that it is what the group wants through consensus.

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This is an African way of making progress, whereas the American puts their teeth into the project, does their best, and at the end, sort of says, "Well, that's done, what's next." But, in Africa it's a backwards and forwards process. I think I had never been aware of that before and I was set back at first when I realized what was going to happen. But then I could really see the value in it, and it certainly made for a strong team in this office where I was working. They did have a lot of solidarity and a lot of loyalty to each other, which I suspect is strongly cultural, in that they know that for the good of the group, the individual must take a back seat. In our culture, of course, it's just the opposite emphasis.

I was very comfortable with the land in southern Africa. I think partly that was because my husband and I usually went out with the mountain club every weekend and hiked. There was a sense of knowing the land, not being afraid of it, or what you might find on it. We did some extensive backpacking in the mountains, both in Nyanga and Chimanimani in the eastern highlands. We made many safaris to Mana Pools and Gonarezhou. We did a five-day backpacking trip with guides in Kazuma Pan National Park. So there was a sense of conquering — I mean, when you stand 50 feet from a live wild elephant you get a sense of "yes, there's ways to do this, isn't there?" And we subtly sort of learned.

We learned a lot about nature and wildlife of the area, as many expatriates do. But there was also a comfort level with the people that was quite amazing as they gradually sort of entered our spheres. And I wouldn't think anything of going out into the areas around Harare by myself. I would go into the game park by myself, or take a visitor — I'd often take my big Alsatian dog, Max, and we would go up on the granite dome or out to the botanical garden at Ewanrigg, or just daily walks in my neighborhood. I never felt the least bit afraid or apprehensive. My dealings with the Africans that I met were always courteous and friendly.

Some of the "Rhodesian" colonial women, when I would say these things or say what I did, would be quite surprised because of course they had lived through a war, they'd lived through a lot of terrorism and they'd heard a lot of stories; and they'd been brainwashed

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to some extent in their lifetimes there. They just wouldn't think of going into those areas without protection. They just wouldn't think of going there anyway, I'd go into the African market, for instance, and often I'd be the only white person. Sometimes I'd take a friend, it was kind of an expedition. And again it was something that most European women, who'd lived exclusively in Harare, had never done.

So there was that sense of being comfortable and of being adventuresome. When I landed in Lusaka, even after six months in the States, I really felt more at home there than I had in America. The systems were all known to me, the African settings were known to me, the language was slightly different, but I had enough of an ear for Shona that it was fairly easy to learn the greetings and the thank yous and hellos, and things like that, in Chinanja.

The other thing is, soon after my arrival in Lusaka I went right into a job, as commissary manager. I had never worked within an Embassy community before. I had worked overseas but usually outside the community. What I've often said to my children is that the direct-hire employee is in a foreign country but always has one foot firmly planted in the U.S. because they're within their own culture at work all the time. They may be reaching out to the foreign nationals, but the system, the whole sense of protection that they get as soon they go into that office building — whether it be USAID or USIA or the Embassy — is really very American; whereas the children and the spouses are the ones out on the cultural front lines. They're the ones doing the marketing, learning the systems, involved with the schools, playing with kids of many different nationalities, playing on the street. There are just all kinds of ways that the dependents, just by their actions, are really showing more people about America than the actual direct-hire employees. It's something that we all know and recognize. That's why we impress upon our children and our spouses that they are “guests” in the country and that they are to act as respectfully as possible to the mores and values of that country and culture.

So I had that ease of knowing what I was surrounded by when I went to Lusaka. It was the first time, because generally when you relocate everything is new, at least for the

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first six months, that I hit the ground running, as they say. I became the commissary manager within the first month after my arrival. It had been very poorly managed and it was sort of limping along without any formal oversight, just the board. It was the first time that I had actually been employed within the American community — surrounded by Americans, finding mostly American friends. My commissary bookkeeper — the other main commissary employee — was born in Zambia, a white Rhodesian. So we weren't entirely of one mind, but it was very interesting to really get to know that American community from the inside. It was interesting to get to know the officers, the Marines, the family members — their needs, the kinds of things that were important to them. As commissary manager I had one African employee who was a stock boy, a sales clerk who was generally a spouse, and the bookkeeper. We had responsibility not only for all the food that the commissary had in its store, which was on-site at the Embassy compound, but we also controlled the buses for the American school. They picked up a variety of people, not just our kids. They were obligated to pick up the children of direct-hire government employees, but to fill the buses we [provided rides to] others. There was quite a scramble at the beginning of the year, as parents wanted this service.

So not only did we keep the food gathering on-site there at the compound but there was also that link with the American school in getting to know the children that rode the buses, and the African bus drivers, who also got to know the children — sometimes (she laughs) too well, in that sometimes the children misbehaved.

In many ways the offices in Annex A of the Embassy compound were kind of the care taking, nurturing hub of the Embassy. We were three offices together — the nurse's, the CLO which was time-shared between two spouses, and the commissary office, and a kind of self-serve library that functioned as our lobby area. I've often thought what a good sitcom could come out of just the kinds of experiences we had because each day was just so different. The nurse — an American local hire whose husband is a second generation missionary to Zambia — and I were dealing with the local employees a great deal, because of course the commissary needed continual servicing, not only by the bus

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drivers but in terms of, oh, carpentry support, electrical support, computer support. We got to know the local employees very well. One local employee did all our customs clearing and it was important that we knew his schedule and he knew ours, so we coordinated quite closely with him.

It was a very unusual setting for me, in particular, because I had always eschewed the American community, preferring to find my friends locally. And then of course for us Harare was next door and that sense of “going home” came over us whenever we hit the road south — our dentist was there, we still would get medicines from the veterinarian we'd dealt with for three years for our three dogs and two cats, we occasionally saw a doctor in Harare, we still had local friends there. There was a sense of “returning” which again was so odd, because it had just never happened that way before. It made it harder to leave when the time came, I think, because not only were we leaving one country but we were leaving two with more finality — a whole region and a whole way of living.

Because the commissary had the school buses, soon after I became manager it became necessary to pick up a new school bus at the port of Durban, South Africa. This was a commonplace routine — American employees could choose to go down to Durban to get their cars and drive them up, about a four-day drive if you took it easy, or you could have somebody else do it — there were a number of importation firms you could hire for the purpose. The commissary needed a number of things and here was a good chance for me to get the bus and to meet with our supplier in Johannesburg, who I'd never met. So I had the chance of doing this and I remember thinking of it as an adventure but not being the least bit nervous or afraid of driving this bus — well, I'm not sure how many kilometers between Durban and Lusaka — but through a good bit of territory. I was very comfortable with Africans, I knew that if I had any breakdown out in the bush I'd be okay, that I would have resources to help me.

So I flew down to Durban and brought this bus up. But I remember how horrified some people were to think about this — a white woman driving alone through Africa all that

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way in a bus! A bus loaded with cases of liquor, pasta and detergent, I might add! It just seemed incongruous to so many people, but for me it simply seemed like a neat adventure and I was pleased to do it. And I had a very good trip, actually. I think my treatment at Customs was probably a little more lenient than it would have been to many other people who might have driven up this bus. I was treated with real friendliness wherever I went. The only bit that was not comfortable was when the inn where I had made reservations to stay outside of Louis Trichard had no record of my reservation. It occurred to me just then that it might be because of anti-American sentiment in the country due to the sanctions that had been imposed about six months earlier. In fact it was a mistake and they were very gracious in helping me find other accommodation. I had to drive back the road I came for a few miles but I did find suitable accommodation. So it all worked out.

I was going to say earlier that in terms of what the DCM and the Ambassador may have thought about “being in control of the Mission,” I think the three offices down there in Annex A really felt much more like “Mission control.” Between our three offices we held the pulse of the Mission much closer than anything that was going on upstairs. Indeed, the Deputy Chief of Mission did “liase” with us — very frequently he would come down and just sort of poke around, ask questions. He was interested in understanding the personal dynamics of the place and because of this he knew, he had the sense to (she laughs) come on down and see us!

Yes. I think having the compound as it was in Lusaka — the commissary on the compound, the nurse's office on the compound, the library on the compound, the CLO office on the compound, was a very valuable resource in the sense that people really felt cohesive. In fact, it was the most cohesive place that I've ever lived.

There was real working together. For instance, when USIS put up a satellite dish, they were interested in the news broadcasts and bringing in their USIS Worldnet, et cetera, but many of the other Embassy employees, including some with USIS, were also interested in getting the football games and various programs on the Armed Forces network. So there

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was a lot of healthy cooperation to do these things for the Embassy. During the football playoffs they made sure to open the lounge, where monitors and comfortable chairs and sofas were set up and they brought it right in. They just had a wonderful time. And I think that just the physical layout of the mission in Lusaka did make for a stronger Embassy community than if it had been spread out.

There was quite a bit of talk while I was there of maybe buying another place and moving the CLO and the commissary off the compound to give it more accessibility to other people and maybe other embassies. There were a number of us that fought it from the standpoint of “bigger is not necessarily better” in terms of feeling solidarity with who we are and why we're there. And I hope that they will retain that sense of cohesiveness that they had during those years. Zambia has always been a cohesive embassy and I firmly believe that that's one of the reasons.

As I say, the school was also very closely linked to us. We saw everybody. We saw the school personnel because of course they shopped at the commissary, we saw USAID people, we saw the contractors, we saw the TDY people, we saw the Fulbrights, there was just such a sense of overlap there in the commissary, and it did function as a community store, really, where people came as in the old days not only to shop but to find out the news and to talk to their friends.

The commissary hours were not terribly long so of course people had to make an effort to come during the hours it was open. So they always saw people they knew and nobody could be really too much on the fringe without us being aware of it, and I think that was healthy. Plus, as a bonus, kids got to see where their moms and dads worked as often a visit to the commissary was combined with a visit or a ride home. Maybe the fact that in Lusaka we had to bring in so much food wasn't healthy — that's a function of the country's standards as a whole and there were a lot of problems brewing on the outside. We knew that, and maybe that's why we felt particularly comfortable spending our money within our own compound and not on the outside market where the sense of what some people



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had and what others didn't have was so great. There was not as much available locally as we had even in our tiny store, although there was a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables and cheeses, much more so than there had been for a long time, but availability fluctuated. So we did have a real sense of purpose, and it was just nice to be a part of it. I think, again, that's why leaving was more difficult.

After I left the commissary job I made several long trips. I went to Kalabo in the far western part of Zambia, stayed at a Catholic mission for a short while. I also camped by myself in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. I never was the least bit nervous about it.

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### DIP COOK; OR NOT EVERYONE HAS THE AMBASSADOR'S STAFF!

"Oh, but you must have to entertain all the time!" is the exclamation I've heard all my married life, married as I am to a career USIS officer. Except for the three years we spent on a mini-farm outside Washington, living off the land and relishing a reclusive lifestyle, the answer is, "Yes, I do have to entertain a lot." The one big difference between my parties and those of my Stateside contemporaries is that most often I entertain people I've never met before and probably will never see again. Potluck means something entirely different in the Foreign Service!

As an appended member of the Foreign Service, my responsibility to become a hostess was not a role I sought, but one that I came to gradually as the demands presented themselves. It is a responsibility I share with my husband. And it is, in a way, a trade-off for the benefits I've received living overseas, not the least of which is watching history unfold.

At my table there have been third-world revolutionaries now in positions of power in their respective nations, a Norwegian traitor, cabinet ministers, well-known cultural personalities from both my country and my host countries, and charming world citizens. I have sat through dinners filled with bureaucratic posturing, intense international political debate,

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thrilling stories of settlement and war in Africa, journalists' tales of adventure and escape, and very meaningful as well as meaningless banter. My responsibility to “like” my guests, of course, is not always fulfilled, but then sometimes it is — tenfold.

In three languages I've listened to brilliant conversationalists, drunks, bores, braggarts, mute and vocal anti-Americans who eat your food and drink your wine while disparaging your nation, and in between, some memorable and great people. I've received insults as well as unexpected and gracious gifts from my guests. A month before Christmas one dinner guest I had never met arrived with a magnificent homemade gingerbread house complete with smoke coming out of the chimney and a yarn family.

I have had the responsibility to produce social encounters on three continents and one large island. To work with servants and without servants. To go from menus which featured tropical everything to menus at 64 degrees north latitude where a single green pepper costs over \$3.00. Food-gathering languages and customs are unique and necessary to learn in every country, whether it be in large self-service grocery stores or native stalls. Butchers in particular will always find 30 different ways to skin a cow, and an equal number of new names for the various hunks. Equipment in each situation varies, as do kitchens (understatement!). I've cooked overseas with bottled and piped gas, electricity, wood and microwave. The variations are endless, and the possibility for failure by fate always lurking!

One large party we hosted in West Africa and which included our Ambassador, several visiting dignitaries and what are fondly called “local high officials” ended in near disaster when I found the cook in the kitchen crying instead of serving up the rice and chicken. The problem: he was from Biafra, and the separatist forces in Biafra had just capitulated to Lagos. Ojukwu, the Biafran leader, was missing. My cook was understandably grieving while my guests were equally understandably impatient for their as yet uncooked rice. Besides, we all knew where Ojukwu was, if only the cook had asked! Or, the outcome of a close friend's first (and only) cocktail party in Tunisia which coincided with the first day of

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the Six-day Arab-Israeli war. They closed the curtains and barricaded the door while the curried eggs and cream puffs for 100 dissolved in the desert heat. Then there was the time our pet dik-dik ate all the cocktail nibbles while we were dressing for the party. You get the picture ....

Over the past 20 years I have had to learn shortcuts to coping with social command performances. And while everyone's experience will vary, I pass along these hints in hope that a newer, busier and even more creative generation of diplomatic hosts and hostesses will not waste time reinventing this particular wheel of fortune.

# 1: Leave at home all those cookbooks with recipes that start, "To one can of this, add one packet of dried that, and bake using frozen whatever's as cases." The best sources for coping with cooking overseas are the basic primers for cooking from scratch — from Fannie Farmer to the "Cherry Corner, Iowa Methodist Church Potluck Compendium." Ethnic cookbooks are a help in dealing with specific local conditions and products, but there is no point in trying to cook Tex-Mex in Ghana. Most posts have at least one local cookbook prepared by some international group. You don't have to join the club to tap into a great source of coping skills hard won by those who came before you!

# 2: Buy metric measuring equipment and a kitchen scale. You'll end up doing so eventually anyway, so you may as well start out as prepared as possible. "When in Rome ..."

# 3: Learn to substitute. Very few countries have the kinds of culinary choices we have in America. If you are hooked on some product which you can't live without, either take enough to last, learn to make a reasonable substitute, or ultimately, do without. Over the years I've made my own mayonnaise, ice cream, tomato sauce, pita bread, peanut butter and cereal when those items were unavailable locally. Forget Yuppie necessities like raspberry vinegar, walnut oil, buckwheat and pressed breast of duck. If you're used to ordering out for pizza on Sunday nights, keep the freezer stocked instead. The other side

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to this coin is that in every country there will be food items you will become addicted to and convinced you can't live without. Then just try to get avocados for your 18-month-old -who only eats avocados — after you're transferred to Iceland. Or try to duplicate the Tunisian daily home delivery of fresh French bread and accessibility to olive oil in Beijing.

# 4: Keep a party diary listing the occasion, menu, guests and annotated notes on its success, failure or something in-between. First of all, you will thoroughly enjoy having a giggle over it when the time comes to hang up your chef's hat; secondly, it will serve as a ready reference for what worked where and when; and thirdly, you can avoid repeating yourself too obviously. You will also find it interesting to note how your own style is influenced by circumstances and how you adapted to certain situations. I evolved from Jello to salad Nicoise in only two Mediterranean postings!

# 5: Standardize. If you are the cook, work out a menu and with some seasonal variation stick to it for about a year. This may sound boring, but it will cut your preparation time in half and in my experience it is seldom that the same contacts are invited more than once a year (this is where the diary comes in). A menu you know well will be preorganized in that you won't have to think again about whether you have adequate silverware, glasses, the right serving dishes or enough preparation pots. Pick something you like to eat and something you know you can do consistently well.

# 6: Decide realistically how many you can accommodate and use a caterer when it is necessary to exceed that number. We are not running restaurants, we are running homes. For this reason too, many officers prefer to keep lunches in town. Home lunches often require the spouse to function as a "housekeeper," serving up stags and bowing out of the picture. If there are no restaurants, maybe it is better to meet on the terrace for drinks.

# 7: Divide and conquer — or clearly define areas of responsibility for family members and hired help. The best entertaining ideas have been thwarted by the "I thought you were going to ..." school of explanation. In my case my husband and I have come to take for

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granted each other's contributions. I take care of all food service, he arranges for all drinks, except coffee and tea. Knowing this greatly eases our total burden, and it stays consistent from place to place and for every function, no matter how large or how small. If he needs a bartender and more glasses, he arranges it. If I need a server or caterer, I arrange for that.

# 8: Stay flexible. The best preplanning is often complicated by the unavailability of the piece de resistance. If there were strawberries last week it doesn't mean there will be strawberries next week when you are having a dinner party. And be open to change, even if tradition dies hard. I remember our first Christmas in the tropics when I prepared a full Christmas dinner in a literal sweat shop. By the time it was finished, so was I, and no one felt like eating it anyway. It was the last "tropical traditional." Future Christmas dinners featured a steak on the grill, a huge salad, fresh shrimp chilled to almost freezing, and homemade ice cream.

# 9: Beware of local dietary habits and know your guests and their cultures. Most countries have some dietary taboos; some quite subtle, some very obvious. For example you wouldn't serve beef to an Indian, pork to an Arab, or shellfish to an Israeli. If in doubt, stick to chicken! Other customs are less noticeable until contravened. The Arabs define hospitality as breaking bread together, so make certain there is bread! Scandinavians feel almost as strongly about potatoes, Asians feel rice is necessary. Once in youthful naivete we asked a French couple to join us for a typical American dinner which included sweet corn. They were insulted (corn being for pigs in France) and in a justifiable quid pro quo invited us for the worst meal we have ever had — cow cheeks! Touch#!

# 10: Retain your own style and integrity as you entertain. Everyone adjusts somewhat to the style of the situation they find themselves in, but your own props are an extension of your own style. Don't forsake those for the fashion of the moment which may not really suit your taste and be an unneeded expense. Whether it is an outdoor buffet for 50 in Africa or a sit-down dinner for 8 in London, do it your own way. You may be a "guest" in the country, but your hosts will become your guests on your own turf.

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While there will be moments of great fulfillment at what you have accomplished under the most adverse conditions, there will be times of absolute frustration when the best of plans somehow get hopelessly twisted. You'll think, "Why didn't I tell the houseboy not to put lettuce under the chocolate mousse?" never thinking for a moment that anyone ever would! I know I am not the only diplomatic hostess with the same reoccurring nightmare that goes something like this: everyone is seated at the candlelit table enjoying the wine after the delicious first course and you just remember that you forgot to buy the meat for the main course. Bang — you wake up in a cold sweat!

There will always be things you could have done better, or things you could have remembered, but generally no one will ever notice except you. If you keep it light your guests will respond with laughter. And you will have the last laugh as the wealth of your own particular trove of anecdotes mounts through the years.

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### BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Charles L. Bell

Spouse Entered Service: 10/65 Left Service: active duty You Entered Service: 10/65 Left Service:

Posts: 1966-67 Rabat, Morocco 1967-69 Tunis, Tunisia 1969-73 Abidjan, Ivory Coast 1973-77 Oslo, Norway 1977-80 Washington, DC 1981-85 Wellington, New Zealand 1985-88 Harare, Zimbabwe (formerly Salisbury, Rhodesia) 1988-90 Lusaka, Zambia 1991-present Washington, DC

Spouse's Position:

Information Officer/Public Affairs Officer, USIS; Voice of America correspondent

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Status: Spouse, USIS

Place/Date of birth: December 26, 1942, Lakewood, Ohio

Maiden Name: Horsfall

Parents (Name, Profession):

David J. Horsfall, lawyer, businessman

Laura Horsfall, teacher

Schools (Prep, University):

BA Journalism, Ohio State University

Publications Specialist Course, George Washington University (1 year)

Profession: Writer, editor

Date/Place of Marriage: December 27, 1962, Westlake, Ohio

Children:

Amy, born in Morocco, 1967

Peggy, born in Abidjan, 1971

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: A. At Post: Rabat - TEFL teacher, paid; Tunis - Co-editor Tunisian Digest, English language weekly newspaper for official/unofficial English-speaking community, volunteer; Worked with blind children, volunteer; Abidjan - TEFL teacher, paid; Tutor, Calvert System, paid

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Oslo - Writer, editor "Cross Cultural Report on Norway" (for OBC), paid; Wellington - House editor, Academy of Science, paid; Harare - Writer, editor "Cross Cultural Report on Zimbabwe", paid; Free-lance editor paid; Editor for English adult literacy organization, volunteer

Lusaka - Commissary manager, paid; Washington - AAFSW Newsletter editor 1978-80, volume, but awarded course at GWU; Co-chair, International Conference on Culturally Mobile Children, volunteer for AAFSW; crew-painting, redecorating firm, paid

End of interview