

## Interview with Julia Child

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

JULIA CHILD

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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*Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Thursday, November 7, 1991. I am interviewing Julia Child at my home. Julia Child has come to Washington for a promotion of her latest book, *The Way to Cook*, and has kindly agreed to share an hour of her time with me this morning.*

CHILD: When I was in the Foreign Service, they didn't really pay attention to wives at all. A lot of them never learned the language, or did anything.

*Q: And that was 1944?*

CHILD: We [reference to Paul Child, her husband] were in World War II, we were in the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and we met in Ceylon, or Sri Lanka, it was Ceylon then. Then we went up to China and we were there when the bomb dropped (The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima August 6, 1945.). Then we came back to Washington and Paul's OSS Department — they called it visual presentation, maps, diagrams, war rooms and things like that — became the US Information Agency.

So we were there in Washington. Paul had spent a lot of his young manhood in France and spoke beautiful French, really practically bi-lingual. When they were setting up the USIS (United States Information Service) in Paris he was asked to go over which was of course wonderful for us. Outside of the Far East, I had only been to Tijuana (Mexico).

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And I had had French all of my life, but when I got over there I could neither speak it nor understand it. So I went to Berlitz two hours every day. And then we had some friends from New Haven who were medieval art historians, and they introduced us to their colleagues in France. They were called the Group Fo#illon, and there was Henri Fo#illon, who was the great medievalist, and his son-in-law was a Lithuanian, Jurgis Baltrusa#tis, and his wife, H#l#ne, was the step daughter of Fo#illon and her mother, who was known as Tante Guiguite, was partially American, I am not quite sure. Anyway, we met H#l#ne because Jurgis at that point was giving some lectures in the States for about six months, and H#l#ne became really my best friend. We said that we would meet every Monday for an exchange of lessons, but of course it turned out to be entirely French. They had medieval Wednesday evenings and Paul and I always went to them and everything was in French which was good. There would be long, long discussions about whether the false transepts had been built in 1123 or 1131, and things like that.

But that was wonderful just to be drowned in French. And then, I had never had French food before. I loved the Chinese food, it was just delicious. And I just fell in love with French food from the first bite. We came over I think it was on the SS America with our old blue Buick, and our first French meal, or my French meal was in Rouen and I never, never turned back after that. After we had gotten settled (The Childs rented "a comfortable third-floor apartment on the Rue de l'Universit# behind the Chambre de D#put#s. Paul could walk across the Pont de la Concorde to his office..." (December 23, 1974, issue of the New Yorker.) I enrolled in the Cordon Bleu (The French cooking school originally founded to give orphans a profession) and I was fortunately able to join a group of GIs on the (GI) Bill of Rights and we had a wonderful old chef (Max Bugnard) who had trained under Escoffier and was a real classicist and a wonderful man. We would start at seven in the morning and cook until about eleven. Then I would rush home and cook Paul a fancy lunch and go back again. I think it was the Cordon Bleu that helped me a great deal also because that was all in French.

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*Q: And you were the only woman in the class?*

CHILD: I was the only woman in that class with the men. I just became passionate, I had been looking for a career all my life. I wanted to be on the New Yorker or something like that. Well, this was it. I was passionately interested in it, the tremendous care that all the chefs and teachers took. It was art for art's sake. It made no difference how long it took. If it came out beautifully, that was it. That was very appealing. After I had been to the Cordon Bleu, heavens, [after] about six or eight months, it began repeating. You can just do a chaud froid (fowl or game cooked as a hot dish, but served cold). Well, about the third time you feel that, you have had it.

Luckily at that time I had met my French colleague, Simone Beck. Of course that was '48-'49 and all of the Americans [in France] could hire servants for practically nothing. And the French bourgeoisie all had their little femmes de m#nage, and I was so enthusiastic about this profession, but there wasn't anyone to talk to of my own type. We had mutual friends who introduced me to Simca, as she was known, and Jean at a cocktail party and we literally embraced each other immediately because she felt the same way about, "Whom can I talk to!" She had a colleague, Louissette Bertholle, and the two of them were working together on a book on French cooking for Americans. They had a collaborator who died. I was delighted with that. That was after we had started our little cooking school. We had some American friends who knew what I was doing and they said, "Well, we don't speak any French, so why don't you teach us?"

I felt that I didn't know nearly enough. But Simca, who had been cooking all of her life, and had worked with Henri Pellaprat (Pre-World War II chef/teacher at Cordon Bleu.) and so forth, said, "Well, why not." So we started our cooking school about the next day and we called it the #cole des Trois Gourmandes, the School of the Three Hearty Eaters. That really started us seriously. Then their collaborator died, and that pleased me very much. I

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never knew him. Good timing. So we started in on our book together, and that took a long gestation period. It wasn't done until our last post in Norway which was in '59.

*Q: I think it's extraordinary that you carried that on via correspondence for how many years?*

CHILD: Yes, but we kept meeting each other all the time.

*Q: Well, you weren't really too far away in Marseilles, Bonn, and Oslo.*

CHILD: No, and Simca came down and visited us [in Marseilles]. And you can do so much by correspondence anyway.

*Q: This was before the days of fax.*

CHILD: Yes, it certainly was. And computers. And when I think that I would make six copies on my old standard typewriter. Then correcting those six copies. It was terrible. Just awful.

*Q: It's the type of thing you can't believe you did.*

CHILD: Well, but everybody did it. And when I think of living here in Washington with no air conditioning. It was horrible, but that was the way everybody lived. So that's my career. [Pause] It was very nice having a hobby and profession at the same time because you met all kinds of people and it was a very good introduction to the French as well. And, I gave cooking lessons.

I guess I didn't do any in Germany, but when we got to Oslo there was an American Women's Club and I remember the first luncheon I went to, which would have been in probably '59. It was a typical ladies' luncheon. They had a salad made out of Jell-O, I guess, and it had bananas and grapes and marshmallows and it was shaped ... and really it looked like a phallic symbol. It was sitting on a little piece of lettuce, you couldn't hide

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it under anything. Then it [the luncheon] ended with one of those cake mix cakes with a white mountain of coconut frosting. Horrible! And some of us got together and said, "Never again!". So we had a cooking committee so we couldn't end up with anything like that again.

I gave cooking lessons there in Norway with a mixed... Norway was an awfully nice post. Oslo, we just loved it. So many nice people and then of course they all spoke English. Even though you were learning Norwegian, so it was very easy to get along with them, and they are such nice people anyway. So we loved our last post. After Norway, Paul had said that when he was sixty he was going to retire because he never really liked the bureaucracy at all. And so we left when he was sixty, and that's when my book [Mastering the Art of French Cooking] came out. And he helped me with all of that. He helped me with proof reading and the index. He's a wonderful photographer, so he did photographs from which we had a sketch artist do drawings. So it was wonderful having him.

*Q: He was very supportive, wasn't he?*

CHILD: Oh, very, in everything. He was a prime dishwasher and baggage carrier. And then he was good intellectually for me, for I was rather messy intellectually. But he would always talk about the operational proof, and things like that. We had a very good time together.

*Q: I guess I am just a half generation later, and, you see, it never occurred to me before Mastering the Art came out that there was not a step-by-step French cookbook. So, what was your jumping off point. You had to go and observe the chefs at the Cordon Bleu and then make notes, or what.*

CHILD: No, I think you learn an awful lot from teaching, because at that point I had had the classical background. I was always learning. And we also had our wonderful... the man on the back [of Mastering the Art], chef Max Bugnard. He came and taught at our school, and also another wonderful one, a pastry chef, Thillmont, and he would come and teach. And

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then there was a man who was very good at demonstrating, Pierre Mangelatte, and he also was chef at a wonderful little restaurant up in Montmartre. The wonderful thing about that profession is that you are always learning. I remember talking to an old chef, even Bugnard, who said, "Just about every day I learn something new." It's a very wonderfully creative profession.

*Q: And also, to be able to go from your lessons to all of the delightful little restaurants around Paris.*

CHILD: Yes, and what was wonderful. Those were the days of the classic cuisine, and it was so good. It was delicious. Just a plain roast chicken was so good. That was before they had learned to do battery raised chicken. They really tasted like chicken. And delicious vegetables and salads and cheeses, and so forth.

*Q: While you were learning at class, you must have gone to little restaurants.*

CHILD: Oh, in the old days, I think Paul's salary was \$6,000.00 and I got \$100.00 a month from my family. But we had envelopes, and we each had \$2.00 a week allowance, and we had everything budgeted out and we very carefully saved everything for going out. But even so we could go out two or three times a week, and even a great restaurant like the Grand V#four was only about \$3.50. Or was it \$10.00. I think maybe it was \$10.00. But you could eat beautifully for a reasonable price. But we had to watch every penny.

*Q: I am also interested in the McCarthy era. Because you were in Paris.*

CHILD: When it broke, we were in Marseilles. During the McCarthy (Senator Joseph McCarthy (Republican, Wisconsin) who made communism a successful campaign issue in the late 1940s.) thing we were in Marseille, and when (Roy) Cohn and (David) Schine (Reference to infamous European trip made by McCarthy's two bullying assistants.) came through, I think we were still there. We went up to Paris shortly afterwards and I remember our cultural attach#, Larry Morris — he was an older man, I guess he was in

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his fifties. They [Cohn and Schine] had arrived in Paris and of course they went out to all the nightclubs and so forth, and it happened to be during Easter, and on Easter Sunday they had called a meeting that everyone was to get there at eight o'clock AM, at the USIS office.

Of course, they didn't appear. It turned out that when they finally got hold of them, they were sleeping off a night at Montmartre. They had ruined everyone's weekend. I remember they were charging though the USIS and Larry Morris came in and saw Cohn sitting at his desk with his feet on his desk. Larry Morris said, "Get out of that chair. Get your feet off my desk." But most people were scared to do anything. They were also the kind of people that if you really came at them, they would back right off. But most people didn't dare.

I remember Allen Dulles (Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the early 1950s.), as I was told, when they wanted to investigate the CIA, he said, "If you are going to investigate anyone, you can investigate me." They never touched him. But if you cringed, they were right on top of you. I never met them myself. There were also the people who just cravenly fell down in front of them. And we had quite a number of people who were just ruined by them. John Carter Vincent (Minister to Switzerland (1947-51) was one of the noted Chinese specialists (the China Hands) drummed out of the Foreign Service by McCarthy's tactics. Vincent and others were accused of "losing China" to the Chinese communists led by Mao Tse-tung. [He] was a good friend of ours. He was drummed out. I remember we were back in Paris I guess when were stationed in Marseille, John Carter Vincent came over and gave a talk at the American Club, and he had a standing ovation. It was horrible what they did to him.

*Q: I was just reading Caroline Service's (Wife of John Stewart Service, also a China Hand forced out of the Foreign Service by Senator McCarthy. He was reinstated after six years of legal negotiations.) transcript [of her interview] done at Berkeley, and of course he was treated very shabbily.*

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CHILD: Jack Service, yes. They were all our era.

*Q: I was interested in her transcript also because the first place she went in the Foreign Service was Kunming. And I was reading about Kunming.*

CHILD: Because we were there.

*Q: Yes. She first went about ten years before you did, and she said it was dirty and isolated and she was homesick.*

CHILD: It was beautiful, it looked like California.

*Q: But I imagine that going as an OSS officer and being in charge - you were in charge.*

CHILD: Paul was in charge of this visual presentation. I was always in the files, but at least I knew what was going on. I had no qualifications whatsoever, because during the war I had no languages. I could type, I had gotten my first job. I was still studying shorthand. I got to "It was a gray day when Ted ran the great race," and I never got further than that. It would have been useful. So I had no qualifications of any sort.

I started out [in Washington] at a place called Mellett's Madhouse which was across from the Willard Hotel. There was a nasty little woman, a little naval officer with feet that went like that [does a staccato tap, tap, tap with her fingers]. She was in charge, but horrid, you know. She never gave you a smile. I was typing little white cards and I was so furious at my job that I typed them so hard that they had to get two people to replace me when I left. I thought I should get a job by myself without any pull and that's what I landed — I had friends in the OSS — so I applied for that and I ended up in General Donovan's [Director of the OSS] file room, and he was a fascinating man. Kind of smallish and rumped, piercing blue eyes and it was said that he could read by just turning the pages. He was one of those people who could take the whole thing in. I don't know what there was about him, but people were just wonderfully loyal to him. I think that he took people very personally,

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was interested in them. So I was in his files, and then they started an air sea rescue equipment section and I moved over to that and I was administrative assistant, that's the only time I really got out of the files. I had to order them being made. And then they started sending people overseas and I knew that I would eventually get to France, so I applied to the Far East. And thank heaven I did.

*Q: Did you come to Mellett's Madhouse as a recruit in the Foreign Service Auxiliary?*

CHILD: Oh, no, this had nothing to do with the Foreign Service. I just came in as a plain person. And just to be sure that I wasn't being disloyal to my country, I applied to both the WACS and the WAVES, standing to my full height, and I was an inch and a half too long. Thank heavens, so I didn't have to go in there, which I wouldn't have liked. But I did apply, so I was patriotic. Luckily I was tall. So Mellett's Madhouse I got all by myself. It just shows what you can do without any pull. And no talents.

But it was fascinating being with Donovan. I saw everybody and I knew who they were. And then our first post [in the OSS] was Ceylon. We were in Kandy, Ceylon, and we had a fascinating and amusing girl, Jane Foster, who came from San Francisco. She was terribly funny, kind of scatterbrained and very funny, and all kinds of ridiculous things would happen to her. Everyone adored her because she was just so amusing. Then when we were on post in Paris, we had a friend who came through and said that he had heard that Jane Foster was somewhere in Paris and he just wondered where she was. And so several people wondered about that, and one day we were walking along the quay and we saw a poster, she was an artist, saying "Paintings by Jane Foster". So we hied ourselves to the gallery and left a note, and when we got home we had a call from Jane and she was indeed in Paris and she had married a rather short, funny little fellow who I think was, I don't know what nationality he was. But she was as funny as ever, and we were stationed at Marseille at that point, and every time we would come up to Paris we would see them. And then, when we were in Germany, Paul suddenly got a call, no there was a cable and it said, "Send Child at once to Washington". I said I know why he is going, they are going to

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make him head of the department. Well, he got back there, and it turned out it was an FBI examination. And the first thing they said to him was, "Are you a homosexual?" He was furious. He said to the agent, "Take down your pants! How could you tell anything [that way]?" It was something like that. He was absolutely furious. He thought it was horrible. But I think they often do that so if you are homosexual you often admit it. They dropped the homosexual bit, and went on to question him about colleagues, friends, etc., etc. We knew a lot of fairly important people at that point. As soon as he got out that first day, he went howling to everybody he knew and after while, another day or two of investigation, it turned out it was all about Jane Foster, who had turned out to be a Russian agent. I think this chap she was married to was Russian. So they sent Paul back by way of Brussels to help pick out the site for the [1958 World's] Fair.

*Q: I don't think they are bothered about that so much any more.*

CHILD: I should think they would. I have no idea. But it was a horrible experience for him. Then of course McCarthy turned out to be a homosexual and so did Cohn. And Cohn died of AIDS. Yes, a dreadful man. We had some English friends, and all of our English friends were absolutely horrified by the McCarthy thing. They thought it was just like the beginning of Nazi Germany.

*Q: Did you hear the references to McCarthyism during the Thomas hearings.*

CHILD: Well, I heard as much as I could. Those were disgusting, dreadful. Dreadful. Well, we were always down around rank four, so we didn't have to do any Embassy things. We had our French friends, and we lived a very, very nice life. We had no really diplomatic responsibilities, and Jefferson Caffery (Jefferson Caffery was Ambassador to France 1944-49, C. Douglas Dillon from 1953-57, and Charles E. Bohlen from 1962-68.) was Ambassador when we were there. He was an old line, kind of a strange fellow, when you would go through a reception line, he and his wife would sort of push you on like that. Shaking hands then... [gesture of dismissal]. And then Dillon was ambassador, he and his

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wife were charming, and then the Bohlens were there and we had already known them anyway. They were charming people.

*Q: Their daughter has gone back now as Deputy Chief of Mission.*

CHILD: That's what I hear. We are good friends with Anne Willan who runs the La Varenncooking school and I think they are great friends of young Avis...or Celestine. Of course, she is not so young any more, is she. And then they had a son, I wonder what's happened to him, I wonder.

*Q: I don't know about a son. I called Avis Bohlen's home here the other day, because one of her mother's friends, Fanny Chipman, came up from Florida to receive the transcript [of her interview] at our annual Benefit Tea last week. Mrs. Baker (Susan Baker, wife of Secretary of State James A. Baker III) presents the transcripts, and Mrs. Chipman wanted Avis to come, since the Chipmans and the Bohlens had been in Moscow together. This is one of the changes in the Foreign Service that we are documenting with these interviews. Avis Bohlen was the prototype Foreign Service wife of the 1960s.*

CHILD: Mother Avis.

*Q: Yes. And of course she was a tremendous support system to Chip Bohlen in Moscow, in Paris and in Manila. And so now the daughter is going back, not as a support for a male officer, but is the officer herself.*

CHILD: Is she married?

*Q: Yes, and his name is Calleo. He will be staying here in Washington, I believe, so the question is, who is filling that role for Avis Bohlen, Jr. that her mother filled for her father. This is one of the changes in the Service. I'm not saying that it's bad, but you wonder if maybe diplomacy...*

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CHILD: Well, when we were at our last post in Norway, we had a woman Frances Willis (First woman career Foreign Service Officer to receive an ambassadorial appointment. She was named Ambassador to Switzerland (1953-57) by Harry S. Truman, and later served as Ambassador to Norway (1957-61) and to Ceylon (1961-64)), of whom we were all very, very fond of. And she had an old mother living with her, but she had to do all that herself.

*Q: Yes. Well, now she would get an allowance which would permit her to hire a housekeeper to do that for her.*

CHILD: I also remember when we were in Marseille, we had the first black — he didn't look black, he looked like a Portuguese — Cliff Wharton, and his wife, Leonie, and she was wonderfully supportive. She was a darling woman. And before that we had had a chap who was called Hayward Hill, who we all called Hill the Pill. He was really uncomfortable in his skin. He always wore gray gloves and a homburg, even in Marseille. He didn't like the house that was provided so sometimes he would sleep in his office and sometimes at a hotel. So when Cliff Wharton arrived there was no house for him. But it was interesting, everybody sort of hated each other [when Hill was there]. But when Cliff Wharton arrived, within an hour, things had changed.

*Q: Morale comes from the top.*

CHILD: Yes, in Marseille when we had Cliff it was wonderful. Let's see, whom did we have in Germany. Conant, who came after Conant? Germany was a great big post.

*Q: I remember reading somewhere that you took a stove — a big restaurant stove — from France to Germany.*

CHILD: Well, that's untrue.

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*Q: Well, thank heavens. All I could think of was what that would do to your freight allowance! I'm glad it's not true. But I think you hit upon a very important point when you said that you had no obligations [to the embassy]. You were free.*

CHILD: We were free to live a normal life. That was the nice thing about being down in the middle ranks, which we always were. And in Germany we had a boss whom we called Wooden Head the First, and his assistant was Wooden Head the Second. The man who was in charge of the whole thing was an alcoholic and so was his wife. Paul's favorite thing was "Eye on Target" and you didn't feel that anyone had EOT there. They were all trying to get ahead, and you had no feeling that anyone had much of any purpose, except for the younger people who were all full of idealism and so forth on the whole. But the upper ones were people you did not admire, and I think it's horrid working for people you don't admire.

*Q: Do you realize that taking a cultural phenomena and making it your own, really makes you a role model for the young women today, many of whom are reluctant to go abroad because they have a mid-level management job, I was going to say at a Savings and Loan, but perhaps that is not a good example. (laughter) One of the things we hope to do with the book that will eventually come out of this material, is to show young women that...*

CHILD: You can have a wonderful time.

*Q: A wonderful time. And you can then bring these skills back that you have picked up.*

CHILD: And you must learn the language. In those days, before we went over to Germany... In those days it was all slots and bodies — you got someone who was a Cultural Affairs Officer who had the mind of a mechanic, who knew nothing, didn't speak the language. I think that was regrettable, because when you think of the Russian heyday, they had to learn various languages and I think that in the Foreign Service you should have two major languages and two minor ones. You should really concentrate on those things so that when you send somebody over they could go right in and talk. Because

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what good are you if you can't talk to the people. Absolutely none. I think maybe now that we are not top dog, we may begin to take things a little more seriously. I think we always thought that we were so wonderful and that everyone could learn English. But it was interesting as an example, too, when we were in Kunming. At about two o'clock in the morning, the Chinese came around to everybody's compound and said, "We would like you all to stay in. We are having a little revolution." They went, I think, to the Dutch, the English and the French, nobody knew anything about it. So I think it was probably because we didn't really have people who were speaking Chinese and penetrating in.

*Q: That's why the China Hands — John Service, John Paton Davies, John Carter Vincent, Edmund Clubb — they were invaluable. (Fenzi relates having lunch with Jack and Caroline Service in Berkeley. Jack Service, now in his eighties, ordered the meal in flawless Chinese.)*

CHILD: I am glad that he is still around. Was he ever exonerated?

*Q: Yes, he was.*

CHILD: But that was a disgusting era.

*Q: I think he was out for six years, and then he came back in and was sent to Liverpool. Why were you in Kunming? Was it a listening post way up there?*

CHILD: It was just over the border from the Burma Road. So that was our real headquarters, but we were all over China at that point. And Chunking was still the capital but it was not the main post. But it was fascinating, there were two or three hundred thousand people. And I remember when they had a fire, the firemen would all dress up in costume with dragons and things and parade around the fire. I don't think they ever put it out. And I have in mind that there are about eleven million people living there in that little town. It's probably changed a lot.

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*Q: Yes, it has. Caroline Service went back in '75 and said she couldn't believe how it had just leapt forward into the 20th century.*

CHILD: Of course, I remember too that in our country we were really very isolated in the days before World War II. It was only the very rich or students that would ever get over abroad, and then we got to know it during the War, but it wasn't until air traffic began that we really began going over there. So a lot of people felt that it wasn't necessary to know foreign languages.

*Q: Since working on this project, I have wondered what the Europeans and Latin Americans, and others, thought of the United States. Because our diplomats who were going over in the twenties, and even in to the thirties, were [ambassadors] like Joseph Grew and John Campbell White with their own immense personal fortunes. Our non-career ambassadors are traditionally well heeled, or they wouldn't be there.*

CHILD: Well, Chip Bohlen, and did you know Freddy Reinhardt (G. Frederick Reinhardt, Ambassador to Italy (1961-68))? Have you talked to Solie Reinhardt. She has a daughter, Aura (Aurelia) Reinhardt, who lives in New York, and Solie lives in Porto Ercoli, they built a house there. He was a charming fellow, he was a good friend of ours, too. She is just darling, and they have a son I think, and Aura is in one of the big wine companies and she would know when her mother would be coming over. But she was great fun. When he was in Paris he was number two I think. And then he was our ambassador to Italy. I think they had to provide Bohlen and Reinhardt...

*Q: Yes, there was congressional legislation to create funds.*

CHILD: It seems to me that our present administration has been craven in picking non-professionals. It is really disgusting. I think the Europeans would hate it, and feel belittled when they got someone who really is not a diplomat. We were back in Norway and they do have a very nice couple there, it's a woman ambassador, and she is not a career woman

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but she has had her own career. And I think she is doing very well, and is very much concerned. And is someone that you could admire.

*Q: I keep going back to your ability [to lead your own life]. I really felt that as a Foreign Service wife that I was at the beck and call — Guido was an Economic Officer and started out as a young officer like everybody else. But it just seemed to me that my first obligation was to [his position at] the embassy. In my spare time in Morocco I collected folk tales and Moroccan recipes.*

CHILD: I think with us, being in the USIA it was kind of a step child, and we were not really considered part of the brotherhood.

*Q: But you see I always rather envied you because...*

CHILD: ...because we weren't.

*Q: You were there to share cultures, and you met the university people.*

CHILD: Like in Norway. Norway was such a nice country. You met all the people that you would have wanted to meet anyway.

*Q: But once you left Paris, you must have spent a great deal of your time refining your recipes and working.*

CHILD: Well, just working. I think people just say “recipes,” but it's not. It's the conception of what you are trying to do. A book is kind of an organic thing that comes out and that's what takes so long. And then you have to try and make sense out of things, so that things are not a babel of recipes but an organic growth.

*Q: Well, you must have done just that. The New Yorker article says that previously a French recipe was just a few notes by a chef, who knew exactly what he was doing anyway.*

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CHILD: Well, if you have had the classic training, all you need are the few notes, because there is a repertoire of la cuisine that will say that you do a lobster # l'am#ricaine, you make such and such a souffl# and such and such a sauce. You don't need to have any more directions because you know what they are talking about.

*Q: And then you improvise and do variations on those themes?*

CHILD: Yes. Let's see. Marseille we enjoyed very much because we had that nice ambassador. In Germany, we had only had our three lessons of German... or had we gotten up to eight lessons. We had an awfully nice German doctor and we invited him and his wife over for dinner and they didn't speak any English at all. It was a heavy evening. (Laughter.) I think we mutually agreed that we liked each other very much, but we couldn't get along [without a common language]. That was a great handicap. I had time to take more German, I went to the university. We were there for two years, but two years is not enough to learn a language.

Then in Norway I did very much the same thing. But when we went over last summer, we were doing a television thing, "A Taste of Norway." I got some cassettes and I was able to do a little bit. They are always so pleased if you make an effort, and can say a little something. But they were just as nice then. I remember when we were over there we had some [Norwegian] friends who were quite a bit younger than we were and now they are all in their sixties! We had a very interesting and good time, of course if you want to make money you don't go into the diplomatic service. But it is a fascinating time. You were in Sierra Leone and all those places. I think if we had stayed in longer we probably would have ended up in deepest Africa, I'm sure.

*Q: Well, maybe one post there, who knows. Your husband sounds like a very interesting man.*

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CHILD: Black belt in judo, and photographer and painter. He was not a bureaucratic man. What he liked to do was have his work and do it. And he was never ambitious. I know there were some of them in the Paris embassy who would go in on Sundays and Saturdays, busy work, so people could see they were there. Paul left as soon as he could leave, and did his work, and he just didn't get into the politics of the bureaucracy at all, so he never rose very far.

*Q: Well, Guido was the same way. I remember once reading one of his efficiency reports which said that he lacked ambition. There is nothing wrong with not being ambitious if you do your work well. You take your weekends off. I think it is very interesting that he [Paul Child] was willing to be so supportive of you, because he had been very creative and...*

CHILD: He was still able [to be creative]. If you are a painter you need long times alone and if you are doing writing you need long times alone, so it worked out very nicely. It was so nice to be together all the time. That's what you get married for.

*Q: So you have had a long life in Cambridge.*

CHILD: Thirty two years. Before we went to Norway we had looked all over and decided that we would live in Cambridge rather than California. California at that point seemed so far away. So we got a wonderful house for \$35,000.00, just almost exchanged our little house in Georgetown for that. Now we couldn't afford to buy it, it's gone up so much. Did you buy this a long time ago?

*Q: Well, 1977.*

CHILD: Just before...

*Q: Yes, we came back from Rotterdam at the right time. If we had come back six months later, we would be out in the suburbs.*

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CHILD: It's so nice to be right here, isn't it.

*Q: Oh, yes. And Cambridge must be wonderful. We like Cambridge. It must be a wonderful walking town.*

CHILD: We bought an apartment in Montecito Shores, which is right across from the Biltmore [in Santa Barbara, California]. We are on the third floor and we look over a meadow and there's the water. So wonderful. In the morning we walk to the Biltmore to get our newspaper and walk on the beach, and it is just a lovely place. And then you go out and you look, and you say, "Look at those mountains, aren't they beautiful." It's such a beautiful place.

*Q: Tell me about the book you have just done now.*

CHILD: This is a book called *The Way to Cook*. Presumptuous title chosen by our editor at Knopf. My last TV series was called "Dinner at Julia's", this was about '82. And then we decided to do six one-hour teaching cassettes which are called "The Way to Cook." So that was the genesis of it. But before that I was doing a monthly article for *Parade* (magazine). And it had wonderful photographs, I think every two months or so we would have a photographic session, and so forth, and they very kindly gave us all the photographs they had taken. Beautiful color photographs.

*Q: I remember some of those.*

CHILD: We had to take about a hundred more, so we had about six hundred photographs or more. So that was the sort of bones of the book. Then I decided that rather than doing a regular recipe book that it would be much better to do it by cooking method. The idea being that if you know the technique and the basics, then the rest of the things are just building blocks that you know also, and it's how you put them together. I try to urge people to take that conception of cookery, because it makes it so much easier. Then you know

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that anything you see you can cook. You don't need recipes. In other words, get things into your computer.

*Q: And get a screen down in the kitchen.*

CHILD: I took so much time getting that book done that I have never had time to help on our American Institute of Wine and Food, which we started about ten years ago. Because quite a number of people are taking the profession very seriously. We have lots of people who have very good educations and quite a few of them who have come from other things like banking or something else beside, and they would much rather be in food and wine. Then it's high time that it should be considered a serious profession and a discipline. And we are finally after a long time... in Boston University they had a very fine culinary facility, and we have gotten them to agree that we shall have a Master's degree in Gastronomy. The first course is just going on now. It is very hard to get the academics because the academics don't know anything about the [culinary] profession at all.

They just think it is a lot of little people piddling around in a kitchen and making hamburgers. They don't know that we have culinary historians, and that it is interdisciplinary and so forth. They feel that it is purely artisan. So we say to them, "Well, if you are an architect you have to get your hands in the building, and if you are a surgeon you have to get your hands in the body. It's the same thing with gastronomy. So the courses, I don't remember how many, will include aesthetics, communications, marketing, anthropology, sociology, language, oenology, and culinary history. Yesterday Anne Willan was there so she and I were doing a seminar on "From Escoffier to Nouvelle Cuisine" which was fun, ending up with just a little bit in the kitchen. Like the Escoffier classic espagnole sauce which took us literally three days to make, but it is absolutely delicious. I kept most of it and it is in my freezer. Well, it's so nice. We had some left over roast beef which I just sauteed with some onions and things and then simmered it in a little bit of red wine and finished off with a big spoonful of that demi-glace sauce, and there you are. Delicious, easy.

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*Q: If the sauce takes three days, it must have to reduce and reduce and reduce.*

CHILD: Well, it's not that. You first start out with a bone. You have to have six kilos of meaty shanks.

*Q: And a pan like this (forming a huge circle with her arms).*

CHILD: So we boiled just the bones, they need boiling for about twelve hours, and then that's strained out and then you have your mirepoix (A mixture of vegetables and herbs used to flavor of meat and seafood dishes and sauces.) and your meat and the stock goes in again. And then you have to have your brown roux ( Mixture of butter (usually) and flour cooked together for varying periods of time, depending on its final use.) after that and it goes on and on. But it is delicious. And there are still some classic restaurants that still do it. It makes it so easy to have on hand.

*Q: And you can freeze it.*

CHILD: You can freeze it.

*Q: Reading the profile [in the 1974 New Yorker] the amount of work it must have been for you to put on those programs in San Francisco and Seattle.*

CHILD: Uhm. They were fun. I still do it. We've just been doing it. But we always have helpers. I was finally getting gridlock at home and I called up the Katherine Gibbs school and I said who I was and what I needed. And they said, "Oh, you know, I think you may be in luck. Because we just have a young woman who graduated from the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), and she just graduated from us." I said, "Send her right over." She came right over and I hired her on the spot. She is just marvelous and that has made a great deal of difference. She helps me and we have some good old friends who have been with me for years. And we all have a very good time.

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*Q: You were having a good time twenty-five years ago.*

CHILD: We had lots of fun, yes. (pause) The American Institute of Wine and Food, that's mostly what I do now. That, and I am very much interested in Planned Parenthood, and Smith College, and the Democratic Party, I don't know as much about that as I do about the other things.

*Q: Planned Parenthood, I think, gets to the root of all of our problems.*

CHILD: Oh, my. This new Supreme Court is so disturbing, isn't it. Do you think that they are going to undo everything that has been done.

*Q: I think so. Look how young they are. They are going to be there forever.*

CHILD: And that woman, [Justice] Sandra Day O'Connor! She has been a zero, hasn't she.

*Q: Total disappointment. I maintain it's her fault that abortion issues have been thrown back to the states, to the state legislatures. What a waste of time.*

CHILD: And when you think of France and Italy. This isn't even an issue any more.

*Q: And it shouldn't be an issue here because the issue is not abortion. It's the woman's right to have control over her own body.*

CHILD: Family planning. Then they say. "Killing babies! You're killing babies!" Who wants a baby that is from a crack mother. They wouldn't adopt any of those people. If we had the Planned Parenthood in the schools, then we wouldn't have to have any abortions.

*Q: (Cites Washington Post article about birth and stabilization costs only of a crack/cocaine baby: \$44,000.00.)*

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CHILD: Or even more. It's terrible. (looking at watch) I think I must leave [for a luncheon appointment]. This has been fun, just to talk with you.

*Q: I do thank you so much for sharing your time with me.*

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### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Paul Cushing ChildSpouse's Position:

OSS (Visual Presentations)

Department of State (Graphic Designer, Information Officer, Public Affairs Officer)

USIS (Information Officer, Cultural Affairs Officer, Exhibits Officer)

Spouse Entered USG: 1943Left Service: 1960You Entered USG: Same

Status: Spouse of USIS Officer, Retired

Posts: Husband: OSS:

New Delhi, India

Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka)1943-1945Kunming, China

Department of State: 1945-1947Washington, DC 1948-1952Paris, France  
1953-1954Marseille, France

USIS: 1954-1956Bonn, Germany 1956-1958Washington, DC 1959-1960Oslo, Norway

Self: Department of State: 1943Washington, DC

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OSS: 1944-1945 Colombo, Ceylon and Kunming, China

Place/Date of birth: Pasadena, California, August 15, 1912

Maiden Name: Julia Carolyn McWilliams

Parents:

John McWilliams, Manager, family farming lands in Arkansas and southern California

Caro McWilliams

Schools:

Katherine Branson School, Ross, California

Smith College, BA 1934

Profession:

Cook/Author (Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volumes I and II, and other books)

Television Personality (The French Chef and other series)

Date/Place of marriage: September 3, 1946, Lumberville, Pennsylvania

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: At Post: Studied and wrote about the art of French cooking in Paris

In Washington, DC: 1943 ("a dreadful typing job in a government information agency laughingly called Mellett's Madhouse by employees"); OSS

BA and Honorary degrees: Smith College, Boston University, Bates College

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End of Interview