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LILLA GREW MOFFAT LEVITT

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi
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INTERVIEW

[This initial interview was an informal, introductory conversation with Mrs. Lyon and her sister, Lilla Grew Moffat Levitt, and their cousin, Elizabeth Lewis Cabot. Mrs. Lyon and her sisters were Foreign Service offspring who later became Foreign Service spouses. At Mrs. Lyon's request, most references to the McCarthy era were deleted from the transcript]

LEVITT: That was while they were in Turkey.

Q: And there was an account of you [Levitt] in your Father's memoirs, too, of spending five hours...

LYON: That was Anita -- Anita swimming from the Black Sea 19 miles to the [Sea of] Marmara. She was a very strong swimmer. We swam across the Bosphorus. But I don't think we were five hours in the water. She was the great swimmer.

LEVITT: She was five and a half hours in the water.

LYON: She was so fabulous. They got up early, she and Daddy, and they went to the mouth of the Black Sea and she got in the water and my father followed her in a rowboat. And he took along our portable gramophone and he would play "I'm Following You." And he took a thermos of cocoa and things to feed her. And when they got abreast of our country house on the Bosphorus, which was way down the line, I got into the water to join them, but I could not keep up, Anita was such a steady, strong swimmer. I had to get into the boat because I was holding things up. I couldn't keep up her pace, even briefly, even though she had already been in the water two and a half hours.

Q: But your Father must have been an avid swimmer.

LYON: He wasn't all that avid a swimmer, but he loved water and he loved boats. Because of his having had scarlet fever as a boy, and being deaf ever since he had scarlet fever -- one ear was absolutely deaf -- and it had left him deaf, and he always had to be very careful to keep his head out of the water and so on. But he loved boats, he was always boating, and on the Bosphorus he would always be watching all the ships going by.

LEVITT: He used to spend his summers as a boy in Manchester, Massachusetts, and do a lot of sailing, rather than swimming.

LYON: But he did accompany us on our cross Bosphorus swims, and the first time we tried, we got within 100 feet of the shore, and the current swept us back, we couldn't land. Then another time, you had to wait for a good day when the wind would be blowing from the south, from the Marmara, and then we managed to make it. We swam across, and a little eight year old girl belonging to a Standard Oil family came along with us and got across, and it was about a mile and a half swim.

Q: Anita was in, was it the Guinness Book of Records?

LEVITT: It may well have been. She had a lot of fan mail.

LYON: She was really a very strong swimmer. She was told later that she had not done her heart any good by all this swimming. But at the time that didn't worry her. She had pushed too much.

Q: It seems to me that the residence in Turkey was a rather...

LEVITT: It was interesting.

LYON: A marble staircase like the Women's Museum.

LEVITT: Very high ceilings, and it had been built by some Turk for his lady love, and it had only one bedroom, a great big beautiful bedroom. And there were servant's rooms on the top floor

LYON: We were in the servant's rooms on the top floor.

LEVITT: So it was difficult for my Mother.

LYON: We were right next door to a cafe, Novothy's, and they would play music all night and first my sister and I found that rather fun but it made getting to sleep rather difficult. This White Russian orchestra would play all these wonderful pieces, but it would always go on night after night after night.

CABOT: I seem to remember a nice boat on the Bosphorus.

LYON: Oh, we used to use that, and when we went to Therapia we took a house... Were you there?

CABOT: No, but I used that boat several times afterwards. (Ohhhhh) It was left to the Embassy.

LEVITT: This was the barge that Admiral Bristol had left, and when that conked out they got a boat called...

CABOT: The only Embassy that had a barge and a boat for years.

LYON: And then the Heather, and then the Halberg was the last one we got which was sort of a speed boat. But the Heather we used for picnics to go up to a beach near the Black Sea. So the five years in Turkey were interesting, and Lilla and Pierrepont came to visit.

LEVITT: Twice. We were in Switzerland, in Bern, and I remember coming by boat from Venice through the Adriatic, and the other time by the Orient Express.

LYON: We used to go from Venice to Istanbul by boat. We would stop in Brindisi and Pireaus, for Athens, and it would go through the Corinth Canal. It was very interesting. But we also made many trips on the Orient Express, which was three days and three nights on the train, and that was the only way to get out.

Q: That was one of the most elegant trains of all times?

LYON: Well, it may have been in the movies. But I came across letters I wrote my Father when he had stayed behind, and I said that Mummy was so cruel, she watched me while she made me wash in a handful of water which was filled with black from the coal, and I was complaining bitterly at having to wash in that. No, it wasn't all that luxurious. I used to sit on a seat in the hall, looking out the window.

LEVITT: Before the family left Turkey, my next sister, Anita, married an American Foreign Service officer, Robert English, and the wedding was in the Embassy in February [27, 1932], and then just before they were assigned to Budapest, my parents were assigned to Japan.

LYON: And the way we heard, Lilla was having her second child -- she had a daughter born in Bern, Edith -- and she was in Washington with Pierrepont -- what was his job then?

LEVITT: He was Chief of the Western European Division. Later when they made it all one, he was Chief of the European...

LYON: And Lilla was having a baby, and Peter [Moffat] was born January 17, 1932, and we got a cable, "Peter sends Grandfather heartiest congratulations." Nothing had been confirmed about his [Joseph C. Grew] going to Japan [as Ambassador]. It had not been officially announced, but it had leaked at home. And so in March we left, March 13, I will never forget. Because although Turkey hadn't been all that happy all the time, still when the time came to leave, there was great nostalgia. Then we went home, and I really can't remember why we were home so long, because we didn't actually get to Japan until June [6, 1932].

LEVITT: Well Daddy probably had his two month's home leave.

Q: Let's see, what year was that?

LYON: 1932. We went home by way of Paris and London, and...

LEVITT: And so the new baby was Pamela's husband, Peter. [Reference to Pamela Moffat, President of AAFSW, at time of interview]

LYON: Who later went in the Foreign Service and became Ambassador to Chad and is now in the War College.

Q: So that is the third generation Foreign Service. Your grandfathers were not in the Foreign Service?

LYON: No

Q: It began with your father, this dynasty.

LYON: Father. My father had to break away. His father wanted him to be a publisher in Boston. He thought [Daddy] was crazy when he wanted to go into the Foreign Service, as you know....

LEVITT: Or banking, the brothers were in banking.

LYON: But apparently a job was awaiting my father in the publishing business, in Boston, but his father allowed him a trip around the world, and that did it.

Q: So then your Father went to Japan. But that must have been about the time that you [Lyon] and your husband were in China.

LYON: No, I went to Japan with the family. And we arrived in June 1932. And while we were home on leave, at Decatur House -- Marie Beale's historic Decatur House -- she was giving a party for us and Cecil and I always argue about it, I say it was a reception, he says it was a lunch. But she said [to Cecil], "I've got Elsie Grew, I want you to come and balance her." And his first impression of me as he saw me standing in a doorway was that I was very large. And that was the only impression I made on him.

Q: It wasn't lasting, let's put it that way.

LYON: Then we went off to Japan, and we arrived June 6, and Cecil had mentioned to me that he was going to Hong Kong as vice consul, but they were also talking of having to drop the lowest 100 members of the Service because of lack of funds. So there was some question of him becoming my Father's private secretary if he were dropped. But then that was rescinded, it was changed, and my Father asked the Rector at Groton whom he recommended, and he recommended Jeff Parsons. You may be interviewing Peggy Parsons at some point. And Jeff became his private secretary and went out with us, and anyway we went to Japan and I was thrilled from the first word go. I loved it there, just loved it. And I knew that Cecil was coming out at some point on his way to Hong Kong. I had gone up to the mountains, but the two Roosevelt boys, the sons of the Governor General of the Philippines, were going to come out, and we knew that, I forget their exact names at this point, but I knew they were coming through, and my Father wanted me to come down from the mountains to help entertain them the day they would be in Japan. So

I was to go to the boat to get them off the boat and take them to see the Daibutsu in Kamakura, and then go and have a swim at Hayama where we had a house on the sea, and then bring them back to Tokyo for lunch.

And while I was on the ship I was standing in front of the purser's office, and I said, "Do you have a Cecil Lyon by any chance on board?" It was just a shot in the dark, and they said yes, but he has left for Tokyo.

And so I thought well, that's too bad, I've missed him. And we went to the Daibutsu, the great Buddha in Kamakura, and a group from the ship was already there, and Cecil stepped out of the group and said hello. And I said, "Oh, can't you come with us!" So he went to his group and said the Ambassador had sent for him. And he joined us, and he stayed with the boys and me, and we went up to Tokyo, and we were together all day and did things, and then gave them dinner and put them on the train for Kobe, where they were to rejoin the boat.

And the next time I went down to Hayama on the sea, the housekeeper said that one of the danasans had left a watch. Well, the chances were two to one that it was the Roosevelts, and one that it was Cecil. But I wrote Cecil and said, "Did you leave your watch?" "No, but if you will send it to me I will see that it reaches the Roosevelts." "Thank you very much." "Not at all." The correspondence went on, and he decided to come and spend his leave in Tokyo, which he was going to do. But he got as far as Shanghai on the boat, and he got a telegram saying, "You are assigned to Tokyo." And he threw the telegram in the water because it was sent by Ernest Black, who was always playing practical jokes. He didn't believe it, and after having thrown the telegram in the water he thought, "Supposing it were true?" So, I forget how he confirmed it, but he went back to Hong Kong, packed up, and came to Tokyo. And that was Memorial Day, '33, and we got engaged a month later, June 30, and were married on my parents' 28th wedding anniversary, October 7, in Tokyo, in the Embassy.

LEVITT: And then you were sent to Peking, because they don't allow families at the same post.

LYON: We were sent to Peking for five years.

Q: And then Tientsin.

LYON: We weren't in Tientsin. We went through, the boat lands in Tangku, we landed and it was blocked with ice. They had to get an icebreaker to get us off the boat. And the boat we traveled on, the rudder broke, the wireless broke, Cecil didn't dare tell me. I was in the cabin feeling rather unhappy, with our big police dog. And my mother had sent her Austrian maid, Mizai, to help me settle and we weren't enjoying ourselves very much, it was so rough. And Cecil would be up on deck and get all these reports about the rudder and the wireless, but finally we made it. There were a lot of cockroaches on the boat. So then we arrived in the middle of the night and were taken on an icebreaker to the station

of Tientsin, and sat there all night until the express roared through at two in the morning. And we arrived at Peking at five in the morning. That was our introduction.

Q: Travel really was... It may sound romantic, but it was arduous.

LYON: Oh, very. And then Mrs. Johnson [wife of the Minister] very kindly took us in, and she was the kindest, dearest most wonderful chefesse anyone could have.

Q: This must be Jane, who I met several weeks ago.

LYON: I met Betty Jane [Johnson daughter] at the Museum. I knew her before she was born. She is a trustee, and oh Jane was wonderful. She was so good to me those first years in a new post.

Because it is not easy to go from being an Ambassador's daughter to the wife of the lowest of the low.

Q: What kind of revelation was that?

LYON: I realized that I was very spoiled.

Q: Did you realize that you had seen the Foreign Service from...

LYON: From a different viewpoint.

Q: From an absolute, marvelous pinnacle...

LYON: It was just right, and having to start, it wasn't all easy, I can tell you. There were always wives who would resent one, and put you down a few notches. And, well, I'm sure Elizabeth has been through it too.

CABOT: We all did it when we were young.

Q: This is where you knew Caroline Service.

LYON: Oh, and then Caroline came a little later, when I was sort of settled in Peking. And they went to Yunnanfu, where Jack was Consul. But they stayed with us in Peking. Later he came back to Peking to be a language student, and we became very close friends. And then she was with me in Chinwangtao at the start of the war. And her parents arrived on an army ship to visit her, and she met them and things were really popping. And I had sent Cecil a telegram saying, "What's the temperature?" And he tried to answer, "Boiling," but could get no answer through. Things were very tricky.

But before that when Caroline came, she was going to go with her parents to Peking, and I didn't even have my passport. It was very stupid to be anywhere without one's passport.

And my parents were saying to try and get on a ship and come to Japan. They had been in touch with Cecil, but he couldn't contact me directly. But I got on this train, and decided to go up. But the trouble was I was nursing my baby and I just had to leave her -- left her with the Japanese nurse -- and Cecil went to meet the train and thought, "Well, thank God, Elsie's all right in Chinwangtao," and I got off the train and he was ready to kill me. He said, "You go right back," so I burst into tears, and the next day he sent me back, and it's lucky he did. Because communications were cut, and eventually I got on a coal freighter with the children and went to Japan.

LEVITT: But for a while you could only communicate with each other through Tokyo.

LYON: And I would keep going to the shipping office and saying "Do you have a boat?" and they would say, "We'll let you know when we do." And one day there was a funny, little tiny boat, way down in the water, the Katie Moller, and I went into the office and I said, "When are you going to have a boat?" "Oh, come to think of it, there's one leaving for Japan in four hours." So I had to go and try and help the servants to be left all right, so they could get back to Peking, and the Japanese nurse and the children and I packed as fast as we could, and we made it. And the Captain gave me his cabin, and I slept with our daughter, Alice, in his cabin, and the Japanese nurse on a very hard bench, and Lilla in her little basket.

But the trouble was that as I [was no longer nursing Lilla], she dropped from looking like an advertisement for Mellon's food, she just dwindled away because no formula would agree with her, and by the time we got her to Japan we were quite worried about her. But we got her there and she picked up all right, and we stayed there until wives were allowed to go back. The other wives were sent out. Some went to the Philippines, some went home. All the wives had to get out because they were having bombings, and so on in Peking.

Q: So you actually had left before the China Incident.

LYON: Yes, Marco Polo Bridge. June 6. And I used to hear troop trains going through all night. I would read "Gone With the Wind" and I wouldn't go to sleep until it was light because it was rather eerie. And I had the Japanese nurse and the Chinese servants, and one day a Japanese customs man, very drunk, came and terrorized the servants with a knife. We were off in the woods, I didn't know what might happen if the Japanese soldiers came. We weren't in the part of the beach that was patrolled, because I had got an extra big house in a better place because my parents were going to come and visit us that summer. But needless to say they couldn't come, but it meant that I wasn't where we would have been patrolled and looked after. We were quite off by ourselves, and General Stillwell's daughter had been staying with me, and they sent for her and said, "Come right back" to the Army camp four miles away. They weren't going to let her stay there. So that's where we were until we managed to get off. Never knowing quite what might happen. The Chinese coolie would sleep outside my door, not that he could have done much, and the Japanese nurse was at the other end with Alice, and I was with the baby at

another end of the house. But then we made it to Japan.

Q: From there we go to Chile.

LYON: But meanwhile, what was Lilla doing?

LEVITT: We came back from Bern to Washington, as I told you, and then were sent to Sydney, Australia, when President Roosevelt felt that diplomats should have some consular training. And Sydney happened to be a very political post at that time [pre-World War II], and very important to have a diplomat there, and it worked out well for a year and a half. And I loved it. It was an outdoor kind of life with beaches, and lawn tennis and that kind of thing. And then Pierrepont went home and I took the children on a boat up to Japan to visit my parents. And we put in at all different ports, so it was a very interesting trip. I loved that trip. And no sooner did I arrive in Tokyo than my Mother said, "Elsie is ill. Alice is in the hospital with scarlet fever, and she hasn't got a good nurse, and I have engaged a Japanese nurse and you are to go right away with this nurse to Elsie. So I left my children -- they had their nurse with them -- and with this Japanese nurse, I traveled for three days and nights to Peking, all day by train, and then all night by ferry, then up through Korea to Manchuria and down, and so forth, and got to Peking.

LYON: I had a fever of 104°.

LEVITT: And the Japanese nurse took over, and the children began to get better. And I remember I was the one to take Alice to her doctor, and did all kind of things that were yours to do.

LYON: Because I was so ill.

LEVITT: Including a small part in a play.

Q: How were you able to do that. Could you read the lines?

LEVITT: Well, I didn't have many lines. It was Victoria Regina and Cecil had a main part in it, and I had a few lines.

LYON: When Alice got scarlet fever, you see it was pretty awful because with our family, my father having been left deaf, and my sister having died of it. And Cecil had gone off on a trip and had gone to visit Jim Penfield in Yunnanfu, and he was going to come back up the coast on a Chinese coastal steamer. And once he would have got off on that trip, there wouldn't have been a way of reaching him or of his being able to come in any way. So I thought I should let him know that Alice had scarlet fever. And Jim thought he was quite crazy (Jim was a bachelor then), when Cecil said, "I'm going back," and Jim said, "You can't do that, you've got this trip you're looking forward to." And Cecil said, "I'm going." And he went to see if he could charter a plane and the Chinese told him exactly what it would cost to the last cent, but then they said we have no plane. So he got on a

train and he came, which was wonderful. Because after taking Alice in and wanting to go and visit her, the rules were so strict I was only allowed (I was nursing Lilla, you see), and they wanted me to take every precaution, and they made me put on a surgeon's gown and a mask. And I stood in the doorway and Alice held out her arms to me, and I couldn't come any nearer, and so she would throw herself down on her bed crying and of course it would just cut me to pieces. So then when Cecil came home he would be the one to go visit her and I would have to stay home and look after Lilla. And I didn't try, but she had been exposed to so many languages -- Japanese, Chinese, [a] Scotch nanny, when we left her with my Mother when we went home on leave, a Scotch Loch Ness Monster -- and so she hadn't begun to talk, and after the four weeks in the hospital she was spouting Chinese, from the Chinese nurses, and she came home really talking. And wasn't that when you came?

LEVITT: That's when I came. When she got back from the hospital.

LYON: When she got back from the hospital or when she got back from Japan? She hadn't yet been to Japan, had she? No, she was still not very well.

LEVITT: Then I returned to Japan after a month in Peking, and my children had been very well cared for by my parents, and learned that Pierrepont had been... that they had reorganized the State Department, and instead of Western European and Eastern European divisions, they had one called the European Division, and that was what Pierrepont was to head. So he was to remain in Washington, and we were to go there.

LYON: So you never went back to Australia.

LEVITT: No, we had a year and a half, but we did not go back to Sydney. We had had to give up the house we had rented anyway, so we were all packed up. But we went straight back to Washington [from Japan]. But in those days it was 17 days by boat across the Pacific.

Q: This was my next question. You [Cabot] I think had 18 posts. There was no jet travel in those days. It seems to me that you spent an awful lot of your time getting from one place to another, packing up, getting settled.

LEVITT: I ought to tell you something about that. You would get exhausted with good-bye parties, and packing. And you would have a lovely five days on board ship, or more, that you really could rest. You could have all the rest you needed and, and then you had to come and immediately get settled, do your calls to the different people. So much was demanded of you right away but you at least were rested. Now you have all of the part of leaving, one flight, and all the part of arriving and you don't get the rest.

LYON: We went to Paris and we married our daughter Alice in Washington, and arrived in Paris and Mrs. Houghton the next night was going to give a dinner and dance in our honor, and...

LEVITT: As soon as I arrived in Sydney there was a reception in my honor, and I had to make a speech, and I didn't know one did have to make speeches. It was an Australian thing, and I was so young, and so shy, it was very difficult.

Q: Did you make it?

LEVITT: I said a few words. I wasn't prepared to make a speech, but you had to be ready when you arrived at a post for anything that...

Q: And of course you traveled with trunks, and mounds of luggage, children in no wash and wear.

LYON: We didn't have wash and wear

Q: Of course not.

LEVITT: That 19 day trip across to Sydney, Australia -- the children were aged four and two -- I spent much of my time ironing their clothes. So that they could have a fresh dress or fresh suit every day.

That was a lovely trip, the Monterey the ship was called.

Q: Yes, the Matson Lines.

LEVITT: They had special cabins with its own little lanai, or porch, and Pierrepont and I were given one, and another for the children. But there was no connecting door. They were side by side but you had to come out in the hall. And the lanai had no safety, it just had rails; the children could easily have slipped through those rails into the ocean and I not know. So the first day I took those children, aged four and two, no five and three they were. I took them and stood by the rail, and I said to them, "You must not put even one foot up on the rail. If you did you might fall through and fall into the water, and the boat would go away, and nobody would know, and you'd drown" and so forth. I made the most dramatic picture I could. "Don't put even one foot up on the rail." And then I was at peace the whole trip because all on the upper decks, anywhere, children could slip through.

LYON: I'm surprised that worked.

LEVITT: Then when we were about to leave, we took our karatani nurse, a very special kind of trained nurse for children that we had in Sydney. We were taking her home with us, and Peter, when the children knew that she was coming, they were so excited, and Peter, now aged five, said to her, "And nurse, you mustn't put even one foot up on the railing. You could fall through and you would fall into the water, and the ship would go on and leave you behind." And you know, she could no more -- she was quite stout -- she could no more have gone through those rails... But it fascinated me that the message got

through so strongly that he was cautioning her a year and a half later.

LYON: Good, because I didn't manage to handle it that way when we were on our coal freighter going from China to Japan. There were just chains, and Alice was two and a half, and I put her on reins, and she was so insulted, and she cried and cried, and wouldn't leave her cabin. And I said, "Alice, darling, I cannot take you up on deck without them." And the whole first day she just cried and cried and was deeply insulted. But she had to; I couldn't... There was one chain around to keep one from falling in.

I was also going to reminisce on another trip. When I went to Japan to have Alice I went five days on a boat with no doctor. And a friend, a Navy wife, was with me, but thank goodness Alice didn't start, and when I got there we found she had to be a caesarean, so it is just as well nothing had happened. But we made it. And then when she was born and I went back, I went by train through Manchuria, as Lilla did, and it was quite a trip. And Cecil sent the Chinese Number One Boy to meet me in Dairen, and all he did was to check the kori basket that Alice was supposed to sleep in with all her diapers, everything I needed. He checked it, so I couldn't get to it until we got to Peking. His only contribution. When we talk of these boat trips, we had our ups and downs, I would say. I was also going to say that now, with this jet travel, you might not have the rest between posts, but then for instance, when my Mother died, I was able to fly home to her. Now in the early days, in the Service, you couldn't just rush to somebody. Now we could, we could get on a plane and be there in a few hours. I prefer the jet travel to the slow boat, but Cecil yearns for the slow boat.

Q: Now, you were coming back from Sydney, I believe.

LEVITT: Yes, and then we had three years in Washington, and then Pierrepont was made Minister, as it was then, to Canada, and three years after that, he died quite suddenly, and I returned [to the United States] and that was the end of my diplomatic career.

CABOT: I think something that might be of interest to the Service is how simple our Embassy organizations were, you know in our first few, in my first year, my husband was the only Secretary in a big Embassy. In these other embassies where you were, there were never more than one or two Secretaries.

LEVITT: That's right, there were two in Bern

CABOT: And there would usually be a good Consul General who generally had been there for years. There would be a very small staff, very able, helping women who were permanent. Miss Carp, for example in Turkey, who was famous for generations of Foreign Service.

Q: And they were Department of State employees?

CABOT: Yes, who stayed put. And therefore, as you see, it was a very different story.

You did not have a group of people to help you run an Embassy. You had to go out and meet people by yourselves, and make most of the contacts in each of these places. That affected very much your life.

Q: My husband still thinks that having to go out and find your own place to live was very valuable to us in several posts.

LYON: Oh, in Chile we had so many houses. We moved again and again and again.

Q: Now why was that?

LYON: Well, we would rent a house and we couldn't keep it. We had five houses. We were in the Hotel Crillon for a month. And then we took a house on Parque Forrestral for a month. Then we got a house we were able to get because someone was going away to Europe for part of a year, and we moved in. It was a lovely house, much too big for us and rather pretentious, but very comfortable. Then we had to move out of that and so it went: we always had to move from house to house.

Q: I remember being impressed with the number of moves Caroline Service made.

LYON: Incredible!

Q: The thought of packing up every few months. What did you have? A two or three year...

LYON: But my Mother gave us a good piece of advice. She said, "When you take a place, feel that you are going to be there for years. Settle in as if you were, even if you take a house for six months. Get out your bibelots, your pictures, make it yours, and really feel settled, and do it right away.

Q: The old days with the small embassies, we had a built in support system.

LYON: Well, I was just going to say, people like Miss Carp helped the wheels go round.

CABOT: Over 20 years, this woman in Turkey.

LYON: I used to feel sorry for young wives arriving in Paris, such a huge Embassy, and maybe their first time abroad.

CABOT: It was too impersonal, too big. There were lost young women. Going into a very small post and being trained with what might hit you made them much stronger when they got into the bigger posts.

Q: Imagine what it is like now.

LYON: So big.

Q: Now we have this enormous administrative device to ease people into the Service. Well it is impersonal, it is not the same.

LYON: Oh, it has changed a lot. At the time of my father, there was a group of people who were like a happy family. They all knew each other well and they were all career.

Q: Your father was there for the 1921 reorganization, which -- I don't know much about it, but it ...

LYON: It was the Rogers Act.

CABOT: It was the birth [of the modern Foreign Service].

Q: And then he [Joseph Grew] left just at the time of the 1946...

LYON: After the War, yes. A very interesting span, and he was always tremendously interested in his daughters' careers. We all exchanged diaries, which is a dangerous thing to do apparently, but he would always send us all copies of his diaries, and Pierrepont kept a diary and...

LEVITT: And now both my father's and Pierrepont's diaries which are at Houghton Library [at Harvard] are much used. People who write consult those diaries all the time.

LYON: I always kept a diary, and Cecil did for a while, but then he didn't dare any more after the McCarthy period.

Q: Where are your personal diaries? [to Levitt]

LEVITT: Mine are in the form of letters; I used to write every week to my parents, a diary letter.

Q: And you have those?

LEVITT: Yes

LYON: When you come to Hancock, I can show you. Lilla's returned to me letters I wrote my father, typewritten letters, but for the first few years I kept a diary and then Cecil had them bound, but I don't think they are worth much, except perhaps for the description of Jack Kennedy's trip to Paris. That was fun, describing that, and things like that, those memories.

Q: Your papers will perhaps have much more value [a hundred years from now]...

CABOT: To people who don't know the period.

Q: To people who are really looking back on this as we look back on Abigail Adams.

LYON: Well, when you come to Hancock, I can show you what we have. And Cecil has some of his diaries, but then as I say, he got scared. He decided to stop keeping a diary.

Q: My husband was held up coming into the Foreign Service because of the McCarthy...

CABOT, LYON, LEVITT: Oh, terrible.

Q: He took the exam in '51 or '52 or something like that, and didn't get in until 1956.

LEVITT: He is in the Foreign Service?

Q: He was; he just retired in the fall of 1985.

[Cecil Lyon enters the room.]

Q: We had just gotten to the McCarthy years.

CLYON: I am not going to stay.

LYON: I said you stopped keeping a diary, because of the McCarthy period.

CLYON: That's right. You know why. Somebody, Edmund Clubb, I noticed they had made him produce his diary in the McCarthy business; he had indicated that he had met certain leftist leaders, which we all thought we should.

CABOT: Why not? Part of his job.

Q: Just doing what any good young Foreign Service Officer would do.

CABOT: You hear of it [McCarthyism] even today.

Q: Oh, yes. It's the cause celebre of the 20th century, of our Service.

LYON: Did you meet Jack Service? He and Caroline were such a wonderful FSO couple. His knowledge of China, the Chinese and the language couldn't be surpassed.

Q: Yes, he is the most vital, attractive man his age that I have met in years.

LYON: He and the Clubbs are dear friends, and they did such a good job, and they got so little representational allowance, and they had so little money, and they spent every penny entertaining. Marianne would cook the most wonderful meals for these Chinese -- they

had more Chinese friends than anyone -- and that's what you're meant to do. No, that period was awful when we saw our friends going down like nine pins. Terrible.

John Davies was also a sacrificial lamb. They did a wonderful job.

Q: They did a wonderful job of reporting.

CABOT: It was part of the job. That was McCarthy's evil.

Q: Well, it was also Senator [Wm.] Knowland from California, from the Oakland Tribune, and of course he had the paper as a mouthpiece for his lascivious purpose.

CABOT: It was a terrible period.

LYON: I remember watching the McCarthy hearings. I thought it can't be that in our country we are going through something like that. It was so awful. The McCarthy period.

CLYON: Mayor Reuter, who was the mayor of Berlin, said, "You Americans are lacking in civic duty." This from a German. Of course he had stood up against Hitler and he had been arrested and everything, but still it was rather hard to take.

Q: Could we go back to that dreadful McCarthy period? As I said, we came in right after that, and it held my husband up for over three years.

CABOT: We finally emerged from it

Q: That was my next question. How long did it take.

CABOT: It took a long time.

LYON: It took a toll of many friends.

CABOT: It destroyed a number of friends who McCarthy had never seen, didn't give a hoot about, but they were names to him and he would say in public, "Now, look at this man in Rome. He is one of those." No proof, and he went after people who in any way could be damaged.

Q: Did he believe this, or was he just playing politics.

CABOT: Politics.

LYON: He was just an evil man. Took some of the finest people in our Service. Take John Davies. He was a brilliant officer; he had a fantastic mind. We had known him since he was a language student with Jack and Jim Penfield in Peking. He was invaluable to the government. He and his wonderful wife.

CABOT: You know there are periods. Periods like the witch hunters in Salem. Periods in France in the middle of Provence, in the middle of the 13th century, there was a similar madness. The Inquisition was another terribly cruel period. And this was a period when Americans were willing to believe. And it took so long to stand up to them.

LYON: Yes, it destroyed initiative.

CABOT: I don't know why the State Department didn't have more courage. This is one of the things in my old age I would like to question. Why the heads of State...

LYON: They are always scared of Congress.

Q: They shouldn't be, but that's where their funding comes from. That's where their livelihood comes from. My husband says the same thing: the State Department has caved again on an issue.

CABOT: Well, they are supposed to represent the people, the State Department, but on the other hand they are supposed to represent the best part of the people and not merely the weak.

Q: You know, the Foreign Service has no constituency.

CABOT: I can remember my husband having to go to the Foreign Relations Committee. One of his assistants at that time was Tapley Bennett, and he came to Jack and said I would like to go to the Democratic Convention and see how the Americans run it. He had been abroad with us. And Jack said, "I want you to go. That's a good idea." Jack was Assistant Secretary at that time, and Tap was his under man, running all over Latin America. And a little bit later Tap came up for his confirmation for his first ministership, and the old boys in the Senate, Republican boys, in control, said, "This man certainly cannot be made an ambassador. We have it on record that he went to the Democratic Convention." And Jack went to the Foreign Relations Committee and he said, "I simply want to tell you he went on my personal recommendation. This is a very competent man; he well deserves his first ambassadorship, and I think you should take it into consideration and give it to him." And they did, but we had to go and say so.

Q: Give an excuse for going to a Democratic Convention.

CABOT: At that time, you see, the Republicans were powerful. Think of Mr. Helms now, the fun he would have trying to trace who goes where. I forget which was the Senator in charge at that time, who was equally powerful and narrow minded.

LYON: Is all of this going to be all right to be in the records?

CABOT: That is perfectly correct. That is in Jack's record.

LYON: Well, it is?

Q: Let me tell you what we do. All of my instructors have always said, "Never turn the tape recorder off." But what we will do is put bands around the tapes and say, "Restricted until such and such a date."

LYON: I can say right now, I think, anything about the McCarthy period and friends.

CABOT: It would be perfectly shocking if we couldn't discuss the McCarthy period today.

Q: I think it should be put down.

LYON: Do you [Cabot] think it's all right?

CABOT: I think it would be shocking if we were not allowed to, or should not wish to. It was a very bad period, which we hope will never be reenacted.

LYON: And you think it may be very salutary to have it go down in the record?

CABOT: To know it existed and what it did.

Q: Yes, it certainly should be preserved for history. If for no other reason to have some young man coming into the Foreign Service, because it could happen again, as you pointed out, the Inquisition. These young men were doing their job, and they were doing a very good job and they were persecuted. That should be in the record.

LYON: A much better job than many people who didn't do much and got by.

CABOT: What we are anxious for is to strengthen and support the Service men, so they shall be honest reporters. That is the strength of the Foreign Service. Not to be political. And our bosses unfortunately have not been other than politicians for the last few years. And therefore it has had a tremendous reflection; there has been no protector in the Foreign Service.

Q: And the fact that people don't know one another. It's just seen in writing, it's a name with no face connected, no knowledge of his reputation as an officer. The size of the Service has something to do with that. We will never get back to this ideal Service where everyone knew everyone else.

CABOT: No, and where you trained them.

Q: Where people were trained, where there was a personal contact.

CABOT: But in part it must return. It is essential that it return. And this is what you [Fenzi] are trying to do, to build up [a record].

Continuation of interview: August 20, 1987

LEVITT: My name is Lilla Levitt. I'm being interviewed in Hancock, New Hampshire, my home. I just wanted to say before we start, I gave the name Lilla Cabot Levitt, but when I was in the Service, I was Lilla Moffat. I was married to Pierrepont Moffat.

Q: In your father's book, there was a lovely little phrase when everyone was on home leave in 1927 ... "And, finally that summer, which was 1927 ... "

LEVITT: I thought it was 1932.

Q: Well, it said 1927. Were you married in 1927?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: Yes, and it said, "And finally, the lovely wedding of Lilla to Pierrepont Moffat at Hancock on July 27, 1927, out under the trees, its simplicity being perfect."

LEVITT: I should show you pictures.

Q: We would love to see that later, but "it's simplicity being perfect only because Alice," your mother, "had with great foresight prepared every detail with perfect precision."

LEVITT: (laughs)

Q: Were you aware of that as a bride?

LEVITT: I was aware how good she was in all the preparations. She was very capable, yes.

Q: I thought that was lovely, but most of the family references in your father's book are footnotes, but this one ...

LEVITT: My mother would have liked to have had so much more of a personal nature in his book, but the editor kept saying, "No, there's no room for it."

Q: That's exactly what we're trying to do now. Put back in what all of those editors had cut out.

LEVITT: So many things were cut out that my mother thought should be in the book. I wanted to ask you about the name.

Q: I think Moffat is the name that is associated with the Foreign Service.

LEVITT: When Pierrepont died, my connection with the Foreign Service was over, you see ...

Q: Yes, until Peter entered.

LEVITT: ... until Peter entered.

Q: Yes, and how much of a span was there? It must have been quite a (span).

LEVITT: Let's see. He died in 1943, and Peter graduated from Harvard in 1953 (enlisted in the Army for three years, then he entered the Foreign Service in 1958. While in the Army, Peter took a language course in Monterey, California, to learn Russian. The rest of the time he was in Intelligence at Arlington Hall, Virginia. They went to their first Foreign Service post, Kobe, in 1958.)

Q: This was ten years, or it wasn't ten years, because your father was in the Foreign Service until what ... about 1946?

LEVITT: 1945-46.

Q: So there was just a brief span when you didn't have any direct connection to the Foreign Service.

LEVITT: Well, I had my sisters ... (Anita, then married to FSO Robert English, and Elsie, married to FSO Cecil Lyon).

Q: That's true. They were both still (married to Foreign Service officers), yes, yes. (adjustment of microphones) One bit that I lost was your very early years.

LEVITT: We used to visit my grandmother Grew in Manchester (Massachusetts) in summer. We were settled in Boston (Massachusetts) (and we spent summers in Hancock, New Hampshire.)

Q: I see.

LEVITT: We happened to be on home leave from Berlin (Germany) when World War I broke out, so my mother left us there and got a rented house in Boston. We had our governess with us and my grandparents just across the street. (My mother) went back to Berlin to my father.

Q: Your mother went back to your father?

LEVITT: Yes. Then, during World War I, she traveled eight times across the Ocean,

which was infested with submarines and torpedoes. Well, you wouldn't remember, but I know that there were a lot of boats torpedoed during that period ...

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: ... and she did eight crossings.

Q: I think it's very interesting that it was considered unsafe for you children to be in Berlin. We were not at war with Germany at the time, and yet, your mother risked her life to cross the sea.

LEVITT: Yes. She wanted to move us children to Switzerland, but my grandmother, her mother, absolutely wouldn't. She said, "You'll take those children away over my dead body." She was adamant that Mummy was not going to remove us children from this country. So, poor Mummy had to be separated from (her children). She had to keep going back and forth between husband and children. It was very hard on her. (Mrs. Grew was a descendant of Oliver Hazard Perry, brother of Matthew C. Perry, as well as America's most famous diplomat, Benjamin Franklin).

Q: How did she travel back and forth, because I assume that all luxury liner travel must have been troop ships and ... ?

LEVITT: Not then. We weren't at war. After we were at war ... The Ambassador came back from Berlin, my mother stayed in this country, my father closed the Embassy in Berlin and went to Vienna to close that Embassy, then came back to this country.

Q: So you stayed here until after the War? And then you must have gone to Paris?

LEVITT: Then my father was sent to Paris with Colonel House to prepare for the Treaty, the Peace Conference, and we finished our school year. Then we were brought to rejoin my parents in Paris. (Edward Mandell House was a representative of President Woodrow Wilson who made secret missions to Europe during World War I and convinced the Allies to accept Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis for peace. He was a member of the American Commission at the Peace Conference in Versailles, where he helped plan the League of Nations. Born in Houston, Texas, he became known as "Colonel" House during a period of service on the staff of the Governor of Texas. Working for Wilson's presidential nomination in 1912, he gained national influence and continued as the President's most trusted adviser until 1919, when he retired from public life.)

Q: So that was the first time you were really together, except for holidays, for four years?

LEVITT: Yes. When my father came back from Berlin, we were together, except that he had a lot of speech making to do. He toured the country whipping up war fever, because we were so isolationist and cut off from any desire to be part of it, he needed to tell about the Germans.

Q: He was in Germany and could see what was happening, so he came home to ...

LEVITT: ... make speeches all over the country. So, we had that winter ... of 1917-18 in Washington, and my father was in the State Department, but he was continually going here and there to make speeches. Then he left, and we children had a winter in Boston. That Spring we went out to Paris.

Q: To Paris, and were there for several years?

LEVITT: No. We were there about a year and a half, I think it was, and my father was made Minister to Denmark, so we went to Denmark. We made a motor trip of it, and, in those days, that was a tremendous undertaking. We had a Cadillac which had a canvas top, but had nothing on the sides and no trunk. We had a little trailer following with our luggage. In those days, the cars had running boards, and on the running board was extra gasoline, because you couldn't be sure you'd find a place to get it. We had a mechanic in the car with us, and we set forth. I remember we children in the back seat all got windburn, because there was no protection from the wind. (laughs)

Our first night was spent at Reims in France, and I remember seeing the devastation. We crossed the battlefields. We spent the night at Reims, so we saw all the battle scarred part of France. (Ambassador Grew wrote an account of the trip; a copy is in Mrs. Levitt's file in the Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.)

Q: You must have been about thirteen, fourteen, at this time?

LEVITT: I was eleven or twelve, twelve. My older sister was 13, Anita was ten and Elsie seven, I guess, something like that.

Q: But you were old enough to feel the impact of the devastation?

LEVITT: Oh, yes. And the next night ...

Q: They had taken the windows? Was that the War or was it World War II when they took the rose windows out of the Cathedral?

LEVITT: That was World War I, but I don't know whether they did it in Reims. Where was it that they did that?

Q: I don't know, but I remember the Cathedral had been damaged, but I don't think it was completely destroyed. (The Cathedral of Notre Dame at Reims is a exquisite example of Gothic architecture. The city in northern France lies on the Vesle River about 98 miles northeast of Paris, and its beauty centers around the magnificent Cathedral, which was begun in the 13th Century. During World War I, Reims was bombed daily for nearly four years, and the Cathedral was badly damaged. It was repaired in 1937, but during World

War II, the Germans occupied the city from 1940 to 1944. Reims later became a supply base for Allied troops, and the Germans signed their surrender at Reims on May 7, 1945.) And so, you spent your first night there.

LEVITT: I'm trying to remember where we spent our next night. (Luxembourg) I have an account of that written by my father. I'd better send you a copy of that whole trip.

Q: That would be wonderful. He does mention it in here just in brief.

LEVITT: I know, but he did that whole trip, pages and pages of it.

Q: And then, after that, you were in Copenhagen for a number of years?

LEVITT: A year and a half. We children loved being there. First, we went to a ... well, the first summer we were by the sea at a place called Hornbaek, and we swam and bicycled. It was a wonderful summer. And my parents would come out every weekend. Then, we went to a French convent. After we'd been there a little while, my mother didn't like it for us and got an English governess, and we had lessons at home. We lived in a *big* house, sort of a palace, right near the Royal Palaces in a square. At the back of our big house, which was around a courtyard and another courtyard, there was a little garden at the back. You could see over the wall into one of the four palaces of the Royal family, the one where they entertained. If anything was going on, such as a Royal wedding, we could look at it from our house. We loved that house. We children had a whole floor to ourselves. It was a very attractive, great big house.

We learned the language and made friends and didn't want to leave Denmark. We just loved it. For our schoolroom, we had the Ballroom. (There) was a Ballroom and a State dining room in the house, and one was our schoolroom and the other was where our parents entertained. They used to let us go in there and dance ...

Q: ... and have it as a playroom really.

LEVITT: ... and have it as a playroom, yes. So, Denmark was very ... Then, the next summer we went to a different place by the sea with more swimming and more bicycling. Everybody bicycled in Denmark. Then, my father was made Minister to Switzerland, so my mother sent two of us ahead to a finishing school in Lausanne and took the other two with her to Bern. We got a very nice house there, too. We loved Bern, too. We went skiing in winter and to the mountains and so forth.

While we were there, the Conference came up for a peace with Turkey. My father had to be in Lausanne, and they lived in the Hotel Beaurivage. His book tells all about that.

Q: Yes. You went to the opening of the Lausanne Conference, according to the book, and I calculate that you were fifteen. That must have been a great parade of dignitaries, among them Mussolini.

LEVITT: Yes, oh yes.

Q: Did you remember him?

LEVITT: Of course we didn't. He didn't mean anything to us.

Q: No, of course not, at that age. But I noticed that your father had taken you. I don't think he took the others. I know he didn't take Elsie.

LEVITT: He took Edith and me.

Q: Edith and you, yes. Then, some years later -- well, quite a few years after that -- the Lausanne Conference had come to nothing. He wrote a letter to you around 1935 wanting you to tell Senator King that if they had just taken steps back in 1922, things would have been different vis-a-vis Turkey. I wondered who Senator King was and I wondered; you at that time were 28?

LEVITT: Yes. I was married to Pierrepont.

Q: I wondered did he really expect you to intercede with the Senator or was he just inventing a little bit ... ?

LEVITT: I'm not sure. I'd have to read (the letter). But it was probably Pierrepont who did, rather than me.

Q: Yes. It was a letter to you though, and it said, "When you see Senator King ... "

LEVITT: Oh, yes, because we went to so many dinner parties, formal dinners and receptions and so forth, so there was great likelihood of running into Senator King.

Q: And who was Senator King? I don't recognize his name.

LEVITT: I don't either. I don't remember that.

Q: But you met Pierrepont in Turkey?

LEVITT: I met him in Washington. He had just been in Turkey.

Q: He had just been in Turkey and he was at the White House?

LEVITT: I met him (in 1925). We didn't yet have an ambassador (to Turkey). We had Admiral Bristol running things. Pierrepont, as a Foreign Service man, was sent out to him. And then he (Pierrepont) came home, and after a couple of years, we became engaged and were married before the family went out to (Turkey).

Q: I see. So, he was there, yes? You met Pierrepont in Washington, and then your father went to Turkey?

LEVITT: Yes, yes.

Q: Now I have that straight. He (Pierrepont) was a White House aide during that time?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: That must have been very glamorous, wasn't it?

LEVITT: It was a difficult job, but very interesting. He was the first one, what do they call it now?, Protocol?

Q: Chief of Protocol?

LEVITT: Chief of Protocol now. Then he was called, what did they call it? He had a desk in the White House. Oh, what did they call it to begin with? Then they changed the title to Chief of Protocol because, after Pierrepont, they no longer were in the White House, but in the State Department. There was an article in the paper, I remember, with the headline: "He tells them where to sit down." He had to plan dinner parties, receptions, and all that kind of thing, and who was to come. He had such a time, because the lists were closed, the numbers had been reached and couldn't be exceeded. Then the various officials, people, wanted to bring family or friends and have other people invited, and Pierrepont always had to say "no". It got to such a point of pressure being brought to bear on him, threats and everything else, that he was ready to leave the Foreign Service, (to) resign, rather than go on with it.

Q: Oh, go on with it?

LEVITT: And when he got to the White House in the morning, there was a message for him that the President wanted to see him. He thought, "Now what?"

Q: Was this Coolidge?

LEVITT: Coolidge. "This is the straw that will break the camel's back!" So he went into the President's office, and Coolidge said, "Sit down" and went on with what he was doing. After awhile, he stopped and looked up at Pierrepont and said, "Have you learned anything about human nature since taking on this job?" (laughs) And he did the trick! Pierrepont was perfectly happy after that. He knew he had the President's backing and understanding and he went right on with his job.

Q: It must be terrible, because I imagine people clamored as I imagine they clamor today.

LEVITT: And Pierrepont was the one who had to say "no".

Q: And he was a relatively young man at that point?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: He must have been in his thirties?

LEVITT: Yes. Our first post was Bern ... no, this was before we were married that he was doing this job. We became engaged and then married before the family went off to Turkey, and then we went to Bern, Switzerland.

Q: Did he find Mrs. Coolidge supportive?

LEVITT: Oh, yes. He loved her.

Q: I heard that she was a lovely person.

LEVITT: She was so sweet with me, too. We just loved Mrs. Coolidge. And we liked the President, too. Pierrepont liked the President very much.

Q: I imagine he was a very direct person, that you knew where you stood.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: And the kind of person that ...

LEVITT: He was far more understanding than one would expect. He really knew what was going on.

Q: Where did you live in Washington at that time?

LEVITT: My parents had bought a house on Woodland Drive, 2840 Woodland Drive, and we were there until they went to Turkey.

Q: And then you were married and went to Bern?

LEVITT: We (were assigned) to Bern just before they left (but first) and we had our honeymoon. We went out to a ranch in Wyoming in the Teton Mountains. It was a wonderful honeymoon, and then we were sent to Bern and had three and a half years there. My daughter that you met, Edith, was born there. We had an old apartment on the Junkengaess, looking out on the Aare River. Oh, it was uncomfortable, but very attractive. Then, after Edith was born, we went home on leave, but came back again to Bern and had another apartment on the Haupenstrasse, bigger and more comfortable and

better, but less ancient.

Q: Probably less drafty.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: You know, I'm struck with the amount of moving that (you had). Remember the day that we talked together. I hadn't been able to look up the post that Mrs. Cabot (Elizabeth, Mrs. John Moors Cabot) had. I forget how many houses there were. And when you consider in those days how everything moved more slowly.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: It seems to me ...

LEVITT: It had one advantage. Leaving a post is very strenuous and tiring. Not only have you all the packing up to do, but you also have a lot of good bye parties given you. In the old days, you would then have five days on board ship to rest. Then, it was very strenuous to go to a new post. Immediately, you have to find housing, you have to get unpacked, and you have to do all your social calls, I mean, official calls, but you'd had a rest between. Now, you have the fatigue at both ends with only a plane ride.

Q: Because you've just gotten on a plane, yes. So you had about ... did you have five years in Bern? It looks like five.

LEVITT: (Six in all.)

Q: In all.

LEVITT: I had two and a half with my father and three and a half with Pierrepont, because we came back in 1932.

Q: Yes, and he became Chief of the Division of West European Affairs?

LEVITT: Yes, that's right. After we came back, my son was born -- the one that is in the Foreign Service.

Q: Yes, Peter. But, you know, your husband was really very young.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: He must have been an extraordinary officer.

LEVITT: He was very able.

Q: He moved up very rapidly.

LEVITT: Yes. They looked up to him so much in the State Department and consulted with him. Actually, Mrs. Hull told me after he died that when Sumner Welles left, Mr. Hull was going to make Pierrepont Under Secretary. He was very young to be that, but they thought very highly of him in the State Department. He was very able.

Q: Because, after Bern ... no, after the three years in Washington ... he went as Consul General to Sydney (Australia).

LEVITT: President Roosevelt said that diplomats should have consular training. At some point they should have a consular post, I suppose to round them out, but, anyway, it was his idea. We were sent to Sydney. Australia didn't yet have a Legation, and so, it was like being Minister, really, at that time. He did all the preparatory work for having an exchange of ministers, which followed after we left. But we lived in Sydney, which we loved, rather than in Canberra, which was still very new and uncomfortable.

Q: Uncomfortable?

LEVITT: Yes,

Q: I would think, also, that you were there until 1934 then, and World War II was brewing. I would think that Sydney would have been a "listening" post or a place to keep an eye on Japan.

LEVITT: Oh, yes. (We were there from 1935 to 1937.)

Q: And probably was important from that point of view, too, wasn't it?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: Naomi Mathews, whom I interviewed some time ago, followed you in Sydney, I believe, and she said that she had read your letters or diaries or something, because there was nothing in the State Department. You know, we had no post reports, we had no Overseas Briefing Center, she had nothing to go on to go to Sydney. But she and her husband, Bert, read your letters or correspondence ...

LEVITT: Well, I used to send weekly letters to my parents in diary form, telling of our ...

Q: Perhaps that must have been made available to her somehow.

LEVITT: Yes,

Q: Maybe through your husband.

LEVITT: Yes, he may have done it.

Q: Naomi said, "That was my introduction to Sydney," was reading your diary or letters in diary form. (She may have read Pierrepont's diary.)

LEVITT: Pierrepont had planned, when he retired, to write his memoirs. Diplomatic memoirs were his favorite form of literature. He loved reading memoirs of other people, and he was going to write his own. He kept a diary which he sent to my father regularly. He had me do the personal and social end of it, you see, by writing these diary letters, which he would have used then in his memoirs.

Q: The most recent one of those I saw was Arthur Bliss Lane's. He retired in 1944.

LEVITT: I knew him, yes.

Q: I'm sure you did. I talked to Mrs. Lane the other day. She's 95.

LEVITT: Ah.

Q: It was a lovely experience. She loaned me his book, I Saw Poland Betrayed. He resigned from the Foreign Service, some way in protest ...

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: ... to write about what had happened to Poland caught between the Russians and the Germans.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: But that would have been interesting to have your (husband's memoirs). There again, Richard Parker, who's in charge of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, which is our parent organization, calls it the "human side" of the Foreign Service. I prefer to think of it as social history. Somehow, the "human side" of the Service makes the "official side" sound a little more harsh than it really is. But you had two tours in Sydney then?

LEVITT: No. Only one. A year and a half. And Pierrepont headed for home on leave, and I took the two children on a Japanese steamship from Sydney up to Tokyo to visit my parents. It was a lovely trip, a long trip, putting in at many different ports. We went up to Brisbane, Thursday Island, and then Hong Kong, and ... what was the other in China? It's awful to forget as much as I do, but ... (Shanghai).

Q: That was a long time ago.

LEVITT: Yes, and I haven't been thinking of it. (tape interrupted)

I went to visit with them. My mother said, "Elsie is ill and has no proper nurse for the babies. I've engaged a Japanese nurse, and you're to go immediately to Peking with this nurse and look after Elsie. So I had no sooner arrived in Japan than I set forth on this trip to Peking. That involved a day-long trip in Japan, then a ferry, a night-long ferry, across to Korea, all the way up Korea, and then Manchuria, and down to Peking. It was a three-day journey. (static on tape)

While in Japan, the Japanese nurse spoke Japanese, but once we crossed over, we (could not speak) the language. All this travel! But we got there.

Q: Oh, not being able to read the signs and things! Or were things in English in those days?

LEVITT: No. We got there, and Elsie was quite ill. Alice was just back from the hospital where she'd had scarlet fever, and Lilla was a baby. The nurse immediately took over, and I took Elsie's place. I know that I went to a lot of social things that Elsie and Cecil were going to together, so I stepped into Elsie's (place) where it was important. And I took a very small part in a play that they were in.

Q: (laughs)

LEVITT: Cecil had a major part. It was Victoria Regina. But Elsie gradually got better after I'd been there for a month.

Q: Oh, you stayed that long?

LEVITT: Yes, they needed me.

Q: I remember her mentioning that, because she was very concerned about the scarlet fever.

LEVITT: Yes. Well, scarlet fever had left my father deaf, my sister died of it, and her child had to be isolated in the hospital at a very tender age. So it was very hard ...

Q: ... because of it, yes. But you had left your children with the nursemaid and your mother in Tokyo while you were in Peking for a month?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: Filling in for Elsie really in every way, socially, familiarly, theatrically? (laughs)

LEVITT: Yes. So then, I went back to Japan and learned that Pierrepont had been reassigned to the State Department as Chief of the now combined divisions -- the European Division -- so then, the children and I traveled back to Washington and had three years there. Then Pierrepont was made Minister to Canada. We moved there and we

loved it. It was a wonderful post. But he died quite suddenly, and that was the end of my Foreign Service life.

Q: For awhile. So then, where did you go after that?

LEVITT: Back to Washington. I bought a house there, and the children went right into school. Peter had tutoring in order to be able to go to St. Albans. Then, the next two years, Peter was at St. Albans School, and Edith was at Potomac and then Madiera. (We spent summers in Hancock, New Hampshire.)

Q: And then, did Peter go to Harvard?

LEVITT: Yes. He went to Groton and then to Harvard.

Q: Like his father? Like his grandfather?

LEVITT: And then into the (Foreign) Service.

Q: Yes. And they, (Peter and Pam Moffat), had one post in common with us, which was Trinidad, but they were there before we were.

LEVITT: Did you?

Q: Yes, but they considerably before we were.

LEVITT: They loved it.

Q: I'm so happy to hear that they're going to be here another year.

LEVITT: So am I.

Q: Of course you are.

LEVITT: I'm overjoyed.

Q: Of course, because who knows where they'll go after this. Could we go back to some of the ... I don't know why I jotted this down, but it's just that so many people, who have anything to do with Mexico and Latin America, mention the wonderful regime, if you can call it that, at the Embassy in Mexico when Dwight Morrow was there. (Dwight Whitney Morrow was an American lawyer, banker, and diplomat, who served as United States Ambassador to Mexico from 1927 to 1930 during the Mexican-American diplomatic crises. His daughter, Anne, married Charles A. Lindbergh.) I've wondered, when you were in Washington around 1927, if you met Charles Lindbergh and if he came to the White House?

LEVITT: No, but I was very interested in all of that. Actually, the day he made his flight to France was the day Pierrepont and I became engaged.

Q: Oh, really?

LEVITT: May 22, we became engaged, and he flew to France.

Q: So, you remember that?

LEVITT: And we were so interested. Another connection with that family: the nurse we had all through those World War I years ... well, she was more than a nurse, because she had to handle everything in my mother's absence, with four children ...

Q: She must have been an extraordinary woman.

LEVITT: She was an English woman, Dorothy Graeme, and when she left us, because then my mother had finished with her and had a French governess instead, and we learned French, you see. Then a little after that, she entered the Morrow family. So, as Anne was growing up, she was with them after she'd been with us for so many years.

Q: How interesting.

LEVITT: So we had great interest in the Morrow family and in Charles Lindbergh, but didn't meet them.

Q: But knew them through your nursemaid. That's very interesting. Then, if I could go back ... did you actually meet Monet and go to Giverny? (The interviewer is referring to the French painter, Claude Monet, who lived from 1840 to 1926, and was a founder and leader of the Impressionist group of French painters. From about 1890 on, he did many series of paintings showing the same subject at various hours of the day under different lighting.)

LEVITT: I didn't. Of course, my parents did. My grandmother spent about ten summers in Giverny. They had a house right next door. My parents went there for the birth of my sister, Edith. We children went to Giverny at a later time. I was about five, something like that, and I remember it, but I don't know ... when did Monet die? I don't remember.

Q: Was it as late as 1930? Was it that late? (It was 1926.)

LEVITT: Well, then he must have been living, but I don't remember meeting him. Maybe we did.

Q: If you were so young ... but do you agree that your grandmother has some of the influence of the Impressionists? Do you attribute that to her years there?

LEVITT: It was not only Monet, but many who flocked (to Giverny) to be painting at the same time with him. He was not a teacher, but if you painted with him, he'd often say things that would be helpful. He said to my grandmother, "Don't think of what you're painting. If you see a patch that is yellow, paint it. If you see something else, paint it and the shape and the color you see. And then, at the end, the picture is there." You know what I mean?

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: Many things that he told her, that he found, were helpful to her. He was very careful not to do a landscape beyond the time that the light was the same. Sometimes he'd go out with several pictures he was working on, and for twenty minutes or a half an hour he'd work on one. Then the light would be different, and so, he'd go to the next one. So then, he would come back to a picture many times. It was always at the time that the light was the same.

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: And there were many interesting things that she learned from him. They were very good friends, my grandfather and grandmother and Monet. They really were.

Q: But that must have been around ...

LEVITT: It was way back.

Q: It was way back. Wouldn't it have been before the War, before World War I, yes?

LEVITT: Before the War. It was in the last Century, because he was still young, and my grandmother was very (young). It was in the 1800's.

Q: It had to be, because I believe I read somewhere that your grandmother was born in 1848.

LEVITT: I can't confirm it, because I've forgotten. Yes, 1848, yes.

Q: But then when she painted in Japan ... was that ... ?

LEVITT: That was after she was in Giverny. My grandfather was given a post at the Keio University to teach in English literature. For three years they were there, and my grandmother painted a great number of paintings.

Q: ... because I remember some of those from the exhibit, the opening Exhibit at the Woman's National Museum.

LEVITT: Yes. There was a landscape, and then there were my aunts and mother as a trio.

Q: Yes, yes.

LEVITT: That's in a Japanese house.

Q: Yes, I remember that one. Unfortunately, the last time I went back -- I went with Mary -- there was only one. I believe the title was "Woman in the Evening Dress."

LEVITT: Oh, I know. They only own one of my grandmother's paintings.

Q: I see.

LEVITT: The others were for the Exhibition of the Opening. Oh, they had some wonderful ones at that Exhibition. I have the catalogue of it with very good copies of them, but the pictures went elsewhere after that. They were just for that.

Q: They were on loan for that Exhibit, which was lovely. I remember the one with the three girls, yes.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: So, really your family connection with Japan goes way back. What relationship was Matthew Perry? And Oliver?

LEVITT: Great Uncle of my grandfather. Matthew C. Perry's brother Oliver Hazard Perry of Lake Erie ...

Q: Yes, yes.

LEVITT: ... was my grandfather's grandfather. So, he was what? Great, great, great uncle of my mother?

Q: Yes, it would be three greats. (The Perry brothers became famous United States naval officers. Oliver Hazard Perry, 1785-1819, became noted for his heroism during the War of 1812. At the outbreak of the War, only a naval lieutenant, Oliver received command of the Lake Erie naval force. With nine small ships, Oliver forced the surrender of the British fleet after about fifteen minutes. He then sent General William Henry Harrison the famous message, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours." The victory gave control of Lake Erie to the Americans. In 1819, while sailing homeward along the Orinoco River after a mission in Venezuela, he contracted yellow fever and died. He is buried at Port of Spain, Trinidad, the post at which his great, great, great grandnephew, Peter Moffat, served many years later.

Matthew Calbraith Perry, 1794-1858, opened Japanese ports to world trade, sailing first into Tokyo Bay on July 8, 1853. He arranged a treaty with Japan in 1854 which

protected American seamen and property in Japanese waters. The Americans were granted trading rights in two Japanese ports, Hakodate and Shimoda, the results of which changed American and European policy toward Japan and brought about a change inside Japan itself. Because Japan became a great world power over the next fifty years, Matthew's opening of Japan is seen as one of America's most significant diplomatic achievements.)

LEVITT: And the Japanese liked that so much, having (my mother) come, she having been there before as a teenager. They were so pleased to have her come back. Oh, they gave her the most wonderful reception. They were so happy to have them come.

My grandmother had a maid, Otsune-San, who was very devoted to the family. (She was just a young thing. And when my parents went out there, Otsune-San showed up, now quite old. And oh, Mummy was happy to see her, because she'd been with them when my grandparents ...

Q: But that was many years later, wasn't it?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: And there she was!

LEVITT: But she knew from the newspapers that they were coming and she came to see them. That was very exciting, yes. Darling person.

Q: Your father was Ambassador to Japan when War was declared (in 1941)? Ten years he was there?

LEVITT: And before that, our ambassadors had stayed such short times, and it distressed the Japanese. They'd be there a year, a year and a half, and then somebody else would be sent. So, when my father came, and they loved him so, and they were there ten years, that was wonderful. But then Pearl Harbor, and my parents and all the Americans there were interned in the Embassy compound.

Q: Did you go out to see them in Japan?

LEVITT: Twice, with my children. (1934 and 1937)

Q: Before 1941?

LEVITT: When the children were ages two and four. We traveled out there together, four days or whatever it is across the Continent by train, you know, and the long steamship journey. (We) stayed three months, I think it was. And then, when from Sydney, as I told you, I took the children, we traveled up and had three months again then. The children, by then, were five and seven.

Then, you must have read in my father's book about the internment -- six months wasn't it? -- and then the exchange of the Japanese from Washington and the Americans in Tokyo? The boat from Tokyo brought my parents, and they landed at Lourenco Marques (Capital of Mozambique) in Africa. The Gripsholm, that brought the Japanese, landed there, and then they changed ships, and my parents came home on the Gripsholm.

Q: Why Lourenco Marques, I wonder?

LEVITT: I think it was about ...

Q: ... halfway? I suppose it would be, yes. Interesting. I don't know if you were aware, but do you think you patterned yourself after your mother as a Foreign Service wife? I don't know, do our children grow up realizing that their mother is a Foreign Service wife?

LEVITT: Yes, yes, and the responsibilities and obligations and duties go with it. Oh yes, I was well trained.

Q: Was that by osmosis or did your mother consciously (train you)?

LEVITT: By osmosis.

Q: I would think by osmosis. She couldn't have anticipated that all three of you were going to marry Foreign Service officers. But it must have been an enormous advantage to have grown up in the Service.

LEVITT: Well, it made you appreciate being in it. I mean, if you go out to a foreign post "green," never having had any contact with the Foreign Service, like some of the wives, it is much more difficult. I was so used to that kind of thing that it made it easy and enjoyable. I was very happy in it. We all three were.

Q: Because it was the way you had grown up, like our children who knew nothing else.

LEVITT: Yes, that was our life.

Q: They didn't realize that people lived in the same house for twenty years.

LEVITT: You grew up in the Foreign Service?

Q: My children, I'm talking about, yes. They were Foreign Service children from ages two and four.

LEVITT: Are they grown up?

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: And did they go into the Service?

Q: No. One is in Washington now. Her husband is an attorney here. And the other one is an engineer in California.

LEVITT: Well, of course, Peter had had the life before he became an officer.

Q: True, true, and now his children are having it. So his children are really the fourth generation. It will be interesting to see if any of them go into it.

LEVITT: Well, I don't know what Nathaniel, who is just starting college this year, I don't know whether he'll go into the Service or not. He's much more interested in business, finance, and that kind of thing. But Matthew didn't, and Sarah's married a lawyer, the one who just passed by. So, I don't know that it will continue.

Q: Maybe it will skip a generation and pick up again. (laughs)

LEVITT: Yes, I know. But the Service has changed so much.

Q: Yes, it has.

LEVITT: It was much more of a family thing, small staff, and everybody had a feeling like a family.

Q: And there were only several hundred of you, really.

LEVITT: But now the staff is so enormous!

Q: And the role of the woman, the wife, spouse, if you will, is different, too.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: Because there are a lot more people, as we just mentioned, the wives who have never traveled, who have never lived abroad in that fashion, and they graduate from college expecting to have their own career.

LEVITT: Pamela (Mrs. Levitt's daughter-in-law) was wonderful. She took to it like a duck takes to water. She just did it so well and loved it. She really was wonderful, because she hadn't left Washington. She'd always grown up here.

Q: She did a wonderful job being President of the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW) those two years.

LEVITT: Anything she undertakes, she'll do well.

Q: She had tremendous responsibility. Just hundreds of women calling you about this, that, and the other thing. It requires patience and diplomacy, all of which she has.

LEVITT: Yes, I know. Wherever she goes, she finds something to do that's very worthwhile and needed, and she's just the person to do it.

Q: And we really all enjoy doing that.

LEVITT: Of course.

Q: I don't think I had interviewed the woman, Catherine Peltier when I talked to you last. She's Abigail Adams' seven times great granddaughter.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: And she is a very traditional wife, just as you and I were. She said, "I cannot imagine going out to a country and answering the switchboard at the Embassy or filing visa papers or something like that when I can be out doing volunteer work in the community." So much of that spirit is gone now, which I think is a great loss.

LEVITT: I do too.

Q: I think they have two huge handicaps that we didn't have. The cost of housing and the cost of education, two important things, have outstripped everything else, including Foreign Service salaries. So, they do have financial concerns that we didn't have.

LEVITT: I know it. Well, it's always been, "can you afford it?" In our early days, it had to be people who had something independently ...

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: ... because they couldn't do it without it.

Q: Sometimes, you know, during the Depression there were no incomes.

LEVITT: They just didn't have the money they needed.

Q: ... there's a job in Prague, if you can get yourself there, but no money for home leave and transfer. You had to buy your own tickets and things like that with the hope of being reimbursed.

LEVITT: In Pierrepont's and my day, you had to pay your way home on leave. You were sent out there and that was paid for, but when you came home on leave, I think we had to do our own. I'm not sure.

Q: Probably, because other people have mentioned that they did.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: So, one of the things that apparently has changed for the better are the allowances and the assurance that your transportation will be taken care of and that you will be sent home and the medical evacuations and things.

LEVITT: In the early days, you might not get home for a great many years.

Q: Many years. One thing that no one has mentioned in any of my interviews is what happened if one really did get ill in Peking or Tokyo?

LEVITT: They just used the local doctors.

Q: They just used the local doctors and ...

LEVITT: Children were born in the country you were.

Q: Yes, and by and large they survived. I really don't know what the statistics are on that. Maybe our own medical abilities are so much greater than these other countries, I don't know.

LEVITT: Many of the other countries have as good or better. I mean, it just depends what country you're in.

Q: ... what country you're in.

LEVITT: It must have been rather difficult to be in Africa. There weren't as many posts in Africa in those days.

Q: That would make a big difference, wouldn't it? To be in a place like Chad or even Dakar and have to rely on the local medical facilities? People do go to more primitive posts now.

LEVITT: Yes, and they have to travel to a nearby, civilized place.

Q: And they can also be flown out on a moment's notice, too, which you couldn't in your early years either. I don't have any more questions, do you? I can't believe I've run out of questions. Oh, I do have one here, your relationship with Mrs. Cabot?

LEVITT: Her husband, John Cabot, John Moors Cabot, was my mother's first cousin, so he's our cousin once removed.

Q: First cousin once removed. Did you see Cecil's (Lyon) little thing in the last DACOR Bulletin, where he mentioned that. Did you read it?

LEVITT: I think I did, but I've forgotten.

Q: He mentions that the three Grew daughters all married Foreign Service officers, and then he mentioned the cousin I didn't know anything about, Clarke Vyse.

LEVITT: (He was a cousin of Cecil Lyon.)

Q: Let's see, thus we have another three generation Foreign Service family. Ambassador Lyon also notes that Pierrepont Moffat's sister married Jack White, also a Foreign Service officer, and that his first cousin ... Clarke Vyse? (Pierrepont's brother entered the Service and was Director of AID in Burma, and an uncle, Seth Low Pierrepont, was in the Service, too.)

He was also in the Foreign Service from 1920 to 1953. His widow, Mrs. Clarke Vyse, is a Dacorion. Can any other family tie this record of this Foreign Service affiliation? I don't think so.

LEVITT: (laughs) When did that one come out?

Q: This one just came a day or two ago.

LEVITT: So I haven't seen that one.

Q: Oh, August 1987. It just came.

LEVITT: It's probably waiting for me.

Q: It's probably waiting for you at home. But I just wondered who Jack White and Clarke Vyse were.

LEVITT: Henry White was in the Foreign Service, and his son, John Campbell White, married Pierrepont's sister. (Betty White, widow of John Campbell White, is now 89 years old, and lives in Chester, Maryland.)

Q: Sister, I see.

LEVITT: Betty, Elizabeth Moffat.

Q: Then, to skip way back again to the early years with your parents: your father's description of having to get in his full regalia to go to the last wedding in Berlin. The last royal wedding before World War I, when all the heads of state gathered and the Teutonic punctuality and everything. As a child, you grew up with it naturally, all these marvelous,

well, the gowns and so forth. There's a portrait of your mother in here in a beautiful gown and a hat and everything. Were you aware of the glamor of all of this that you were growing up in?

LEVITT: We were too young at that time to be very much aware of it. Yes, I remember when Mummy would come and say good night to us children and be in her evening gowns and all this, that we loved the feel of the velvet or whatever it was, but we were pretty young. They had posts that soon after everything changed where there was a lot of that glamor; St. Petersburg, Berlin in the old day, and Vienna in the old day.

Q: You were born in St. Petersburg?

LEVITT: I was born in St. Petersburg.

Q: Just looking at those palaces along with all the other summer tourists in Leningrad, it must have been an extraordinary life. And so, after World War I, when you were in Paris and then Denmark, I wouldn't have thought the Scandinavian ...

LEVITT: Yes, that was a Royal King.

Q: But they've always been a more modest, more simple ...

LEVITT: But he used to ride by our house on his white horse, and any woman on the sidewalk would drop a curtsy if he went by, and the men would doff their hats and so forth. And there was a changing of the guard. We were right close to the Palace, so we could see the daily changing of the guards. They looked like the ones in England, but wore royal blue jackets instead of red jackets, but they had the same bearskin hats on.

Q: What do they call them, "busbies" or something like that? (laughs)

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: So there was that pomp and circumstance?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: I've always thought of the Dutch Royalty, the Dutch really, thought of Juliana especially, and Beatrix, too.

LEVITT: Juliana was in Ottawa when we were stationed there. She and her children left Holland at the time War was so close.

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: So, we got to know her and enjoyed very much knowing her. The children

played with our children.

Q: She was a very unassuming monarch, very unassuming ...

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: ... and very beloved by the people. Beatrix is a bit more (outgoing).

LEVITT: She was just a little child. My great granddaughter's age -- Caitlin -- I remember her so well, she and her younger sister.

Q: But much of your life, really, the first 35 or 40 years, were spent with the people who were making the momentous decisions in Europe and the United States.

LEVITT: I was 35 when Pierrepont died, so all up to 35 was that kind of life.

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: And then it changed completely. For awhile, I lived in Washington, so I still was in touch.

(End of tape 3)

LEVITT: So we went on a trip together to different countries in Europe and visited Elsie and Cecil (Lyon) in Berlin.

Q: Oh, they went back to Berlin?

LEVITT: They were stationed in Berlin after the War.

Q: World War II, yes.

LEVITT: It's very hodgepodge, the way I've been talking.

Q: Everybody talks that way. We don't think of our life chronologically at all.

LEVITT: If there's anything in the course of these that's worth elaborating on, you let me know. I can do that, but ...

Q: It almost takes three, four sessions, really, because things that we talked about the first time, we've elaborated on today, and the more I learn and the more I read -- the problem is this is official -- your father's Turbulent Era really is the official diplomatic record, and what I am trying to do is piece into that your memories and experiences, but you were really young. Turkey we haven't touched on.

LEVITT: Elsie talked about Turkey, because I (just) went twice with Pierrepont on leave to visit with the family, and he had been there before.

Q: Well, more or less, as a bride?

LEVITT: Just months visiting with my parents, and I loved it. Oh, it's a fascinating place. Istanbul is, and then in the summer, they were in Yenikeng on the Bosphorus where they had a summer house there with swimming and boating and that sort of thing. But Elsie can tell you more about Turkey.

Q: I guess I do keep coming back to your early years, where you were educated by governesses, and it seems to me that there was ... and we read about that ... the governesses almost ... we say "layered" now in the Foreign Service if there's someone between you and (your parents). Well, the governess was almost a layer between you and your mother. Was your mother to you the figure that you read about in English literature?

LEVITT: I know it's much more so in England. We were close to Mummy. She was wonderful to us.

Q: It seems to me that you were very close.

LEVITT: She could be. In Denmark, we had wonderful times together. When we were in Paris, we used to go every Sunday that we could on a picnic outside of the city. We'd go to Fontainebleau or Versailles or different places. The names elude me. My father loved driving in those early, early days when the roads were impossible and the cars were very primitive and so forth.

We'd go for the drive to someplace in the country and have a picnic lunch. We'd often have friends with us. So we had family times a lot. Then, in Denmark, it was still easier. We had lots of times, especially in the summertime, and my parents would come out to where we were for weekends. I remember we used to play croquet and we had a kayak canoe and we did a lot of swimming and bicycling, but as a family.

Q: So, in spite of times spent with governesses and tutors, it was obviously your parents made an effort to drop diplomatic life and have a family life, which is very, very important when the children are moved hither and yon, from language to language, from pillar to post as they are growing up. So your mother was very ... She must have been a very strong woman.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: ... and knew her own mind.

LEVITT: She had no easy life, but she handled it very well, yes.

Q: And your father seems to have been totally devoted to the Foreign Service.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: Absolutely devoted to the Service.

LEVITT: But also to the family. He was a family man too.

Q: And how he worked all that in together is just extraordinary, really, because one of the complaints of many Foreign Service children is that they never see their parents. Their parents are out five nights a week, seven nights a week or whatever, and your parents obviously had a great many demands on their time, but they worked a lot of time with you when they could, too. And I love reading your father's letters and what have you, because he really was absolutely devoted to his work.

LEVITT: Because ...

Q: Seeing the Foreign Service through a lot of changes.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: Enormous changes from 1904 when he came in until 1946, was it?

LEVITT: Yes, 1945 or '46. '45, I'm not sure, one or the other. He had been Under Secretary for the second time when he retired, yes. 1946 I think it was.

Q: Did he retire when Harry Truman came?

LEVITT: No, he was Under Secretary of State when Harry Truman came in, and he was very impressed with him, how he'd bring a problem to the President. And the President was so decisive. He listened very carefully and then he would decide what the answer should be and stuck to it, and that impressed my father.

Q: But there again, a person like that is so rewarding to work for, rather than one who ...

LEVITT: He'd come in so suddenly as Vice President, becoming President, that my father thought he did very well to be as good at it right from the beginning.

Q: Was your father at Groton and Harvard with Franklin Roosevelt?

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: The same time?

LEVITT: But Franklin was a couple of years younger, I mean, below him.

Q: Behind him.

LEVITT: But they were ...

Q: But still, they had school ties?

LEVITT: At a place like Groton, you get to know everybody.

Q: Everybody. So he had those strong ties, really.

LEVITT: And then, my son went to Groton, and Anita's son, Joe English, went to Groton, and my grandson started there. All the family had gone there.

Q: I've run out of questions. (laughs)

LEVITT: I wish I were better at remembering names and facts, but I haven't brushed up on this and I haven't been thinking along these lines. The names just go.

Q: It makes all the difference in the world. It's too bad that we can't talk, say, again tomorrow, because, it's interesting, you start thinking. But this has made me think back over my own career, too. Things that I hadn't thought about in years, because I'll relate to something that you've remembered, for instance. But I think we all agree that we've had an extraordinary life.

We really did.

LEVITT: What were your posts?

Q: Well, my posts were Rotterdam ...

LEVITT: Oh, I never went to either Belgium or Holland.

Q: Well, my husband was always in the economic office, so Rotterdam was the largest port in the world. And then, we went to West Africa, because in the early 1960's, everyone was going to Africa for their career. Then we went to Morocco, which was ...

LEVITT: Which Peter and Pam had.

Q: Yes, that's right. We had two posts in common; Morocco and Trinidad. Then we went to Curacao in the Caribbean, and then we went back to Holland, and there again, to Rotterdam as Economic Officer. Then we went back to Washington, then we went to Brazil, and then Trinidad, and then ... no, between Brazil and Trinidad, we were in Washington. And we had the Economic Summit. President Reagan had the Economic

Summit in Williamsburg, and Guido worked on that for six months before we went to Trinidad. Then he retired, early retirement, because he wasn't well. The stress and strain of the Foreign Service had just become too much.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: So, he retired at that time. And here we are.

LEVITT: Yes.

Q: But each country is different.

LEVITT: I know.

Q: And my son was sitting at the diningroom table in Curacao once and said, "You know, there's no one else in the world like me, because nobody else has lived in the United States, Holland, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Curacao, and Morocco" at that point ... and I think that brings your family together ...

LEVITT: Yes. Oh, it does.

Q: ... when you've had those unique experiences.

LEVITT: Well, I don't know that I can contribute anything more now, but as I say, I'd be glad to elaborate on any particular point. (tape is interrupted).

Have we memories before that? I have memories of Berlin and Vienna, before that, when Anita was born in 1909 and Elsie was born in 1912.

Q: I think we should have those, too, just for the record, because there will be some kind of introduction before 1915, and this would fit nicely into that, your memories of Berlin and Vienna.

LEVITT: I have one memory, just as a baby was being dressed, and I was still in my crib brushing my dolls' hair. I had a doll with hair and a toy brush. Just a glimpse, and then I don't remember anything until Vienna. We came back to Berlin. I remember lots about that one, but in Vienna I remember when Elsie was born, we children were got out of the house, because I think Mummy had the baby in the house. And we went to Brioni, an island.

Q: Oh, yes, off of Yugoslavia.

LEVITT: I remember that. I remember I had a skipping rope that I was very fond of, and there was a pit of monkeys. You looked down over the edge and you could look down at all these monkeys down there. I was dangling my skipping rope. It didn't reach down to

them, but I was trying to, and it slipped out of my hands and it went down into the pit. I remember, what was I, four?, I remember the feeling of finality. It's gone for good. There's no way I can ever get that skipping rope back. I mean, it was a final thing that happened.

Q: Was it retrieved?

LEVITT: No, it was gone.

Q: That was on Brioni?

LEVITT: Yes. That was my one memory of Brioni. Then we came back and the baby was there. I remember the baby. I remember the whole layout of the apartment in Vienna. I can remember Mummy saying goodnight to us when she'd be going off to a dinner party and loving the dress she'd wear, feeling the material and so on. I remember going out in the park, the baby in the carriage, and the three of us walking along beside. I used to be fascinated by the Austrian nurses in peasant costumes, and I used to look and look. I was always looking behind me and every which way. And I was always being told, "Lilla, don't stare" and "Look where you are going" and so forth. One time that I turned around again, they were gone. The carriage and the nurse and the two sisters were nowhere to be seen, and I felt so lost. I was going to cry, and another child addressed me and said, "What's the matter? Are you lost?" And I said, "Yes." Then I spotted them behind a big shrub, big bush, hiding, and so that was supposed to teach me to keep my eyes open, where they should be, and so on. That made a big impression on me, so I never forgot that.

Q: How about languages? You obviously always spoke English.

LEVITT: But we learned; my first lessons of reading and writing were in German. We spoke German, both in Austria, Vienna, and in Berlin.

Q: You probably had French?

LEVITT: And French, oh yes.

Q: And English, just as a family language?

LEVITT: Yes. Always, when we had an English governess to give us our lessons, we'd have a French governess come for the French class, and when in Paris, we had a French governess. We learned a smattering of Danish when we were there, enough to have friends of ours of Danish children. But after leaving it, it ...

Q: ... disappears, if you don't use it, especially if you're a child. You never went to formal school?

LEVITT: To a Swiss, to a finishing school in Switzerland for English and Scots girls. We were finished before we were educated! (laughs)

Q: (laughs) Very well put.

LEVITT: But we learned a certain amount and, of course, it was good for the language. Then, when we went back to Washington and I went back to Holton Arms School, where I'd been as a younger child, I had two years there. I didn't have basics. I didn't have history, except for French and English. I've had all you could wish for of French and English history! I didn't have much math, but by arranging the courses to suit what education I had had, I was able to graduate with my class, but not get a diploma, but a certificate. I didn't have quite enough points for it, but I had the highest mark in final exams, the six final exams I had, of anybody in the school. So, I didn't feel completely insignificant. What I mean is, you know, you get a little inferiority complex when you're not quite up with the others.

Q: With your peers, yes.

LEVITT: But at least in my final exams I was head of the school. (laughs)

Q: Did you, as a Foreign Service child, have a sense of being different?

LEVITT: Yes, yes. And it gave one a certain feeling of inadequacy. I call it an inferiority complex. It may not be exactly that, but you long to be ...

Q: Like the others.

LEVITT: Yes, like the others, and you feel it.

Q: And you just aren't. I think that's a very, very usual feeling among (Foreign Service children).

LEVITT: I remember feeling tremendous envy of anybody who had been in the country and was up with the others and didn't come back. Of course, what complicated things for us was that just before coming back to live in America, in the adolescent period, when you're so sensitive, my eldest sister had died in Venice suddenly, of scarlet fever. She'd been at the same school (in Washington) I was, so she was already known, and I was always afraid people were going to ask me about her. Oh, it was a very difficult period for me.

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: But the two years that I had at school, I soon had friends and things got all right.

Q: Do you have photographs of any of these periods here or is everything in Manchester?

LEVITT: I have photographs and they are here, but I don't know that I have much of that period.

Q: There is an absolutely marvelous reproduction of a photograph of your mother with the four of you. Do you remember that?

LEVITT: Let me see again, which one?

Q: ... and a beautiful ...

LEVITT: My father was great on taking photographs.

Q: ... beautiful portrait photograph of your mother.

LEVITT: I have any number of them when I was small, because my father took a lot of photographs. I did put them in an album. I made that a project when I was in Manchester.

Q: This is your mother, and then the picture of you children.

LEVITT: Oh, yes.

Q: It's charming.

LEVITT: Yes, that was taken in Berlin. Yes, that's of my mother in Berlin, 1909.

Q: But the gowns? I think her gowns are magnificent really, and her hat with the trim.

LEVITT: I know it. Yes, I have a lot of pictures, but I don't think you'd need them. Then, after school in Washington, all my friends went to be finished, polished, abroad. I'd already, so I stayed in Washington and went to art school, the Corcoran Art School, and became engaged to Pierrepont Moffat. All my friends knew him, and he had a great place in the world I moved in then in Washington. And so, to become engaged ahead of any of them, and then to *him*; took care of that feeling of inadequacy, inferiority, you know. It's very hard on Foreign Service children.

Q: Of course it is. He was a bit older than you, ten years?

LEVITT: Yes, he was eleven years older.

Q: Eleven years older than you. So, he really was an established Foreign Service officer?

LEVITT: He was, and he was halfway between my mother's age and mine. He used to play bridge with my mother and golf with my father. We were just the school girls, you know. We used to see him from time to time.

Q: Yes.

LEVITT: And then, that winter that I was in Washington was when he and I began to see each other.

Q: And you were no longer a school girl? You were an art student. That made the difference.

LEVITT: That made the difference. There used to be concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Boston Symphony that would come periodically to Washington, before Washington had its own orchestra. When you took season tickets for them, you'd take season tickets for the whole lot of them. There was going to be one, I'm not sure if it was Philadelphia or Boston, in the afternoon. I think the concerts were four o'clock or something like that. My father called up and he said he wouldn't be able to make it. So Mummy said, "Well, who shall we get? Why don't you try Pierrepont Moffat?"

So, I called him up, and he decided to come with us. I sat next to him at the concert, and we talked away to each other. And then Mummy had a cocktail party or reception or something, and she was trying to work it out to get me home and go to her party. And Pierrepont said, "Well, I can take Lilla home," and so he did. But he didn't go immediately home. We went to see the Cathedral that was started then, the Bethlehem Chapel, and, you know, to see how far they were along on the Cathedral. Then, we came home, and I was late for dinner, and Mummy didn't seem to mind at all. (laughs) And he invited me to go on a picnic the next Sunday, so he picked me up, and we went somewhere outside. We went to Great Falls actually and had a lovely time and a lovely picnic. So, we arranged for a picnic the next Sunday, and every Sunday we'd go on a picnic. This ended by our being engaged, then, rather soon after, married, because the family was going to Turkey, so it couldn't be a long engagement.

Q: Yes, you were only engaged for several months, from May to July?

LEVITT: Yes, that's right. May 22, we were engaged.

Q: Then, your wedding out under the trees, in white gown and everything.

LEVITT: Yes, there's the picture. I've put it in here because the dust gets on everything when you desert a house. (unwraps it) You've come to the stone wall over at the cottage that we used to live in when we were here.

Q: Just marvelous. Absolutely marvelous. How old were you?

LEVITT: Nineteen.

Q: Isn't that beautiful?

LEVITT: But a very immature nineteen.

Q: Well, you certainly don't look immature here.

LEVITT: You know, the things you get from being in the Service, not sophisticated.

Q: Bachrach (referring to the wedding photographer). Is there a smaller copy of this that we could take and copy?

LEVITT: I don't know if there are any of that particular one.

Q: Or of ...

LEVITT: But I have ... I'd have to look.

Q: Let's take this little microphone off of you now that we're moving around.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: J. Pierrepont Moffat

Date entered Service: Spouse entered 1919 Left Service: 1943

Posts:

With parents:

St. Petersburg (Leningrad), USSR

Berlin, Germany

Vienna, Austria-Hungary

Paris, France

Copenhagen, Denmark

Lausanne, Switzerland

Washington, DC

Pierrepont Moffat's posts:

1919 Warsaw, Poland

1921 Tokyo, Japan

1923 Istanbul, Turkey

1925 Department of State, Washington, DC. (White House Aide, now Chief of Protocol)

1927 Berne, Switzerland

1932 Department of State, Chief, Division of Western European Affairs

1935 Consul General, Sydney, Australia

1937 Department of State, Chief, European Affairs
1940 Minister, Ottawa, Canada

Status: Widow of J. Pierrepont Moffat

Date and place of birth: USSR, St. Petersburg; November 30, 1907

Maiden Name: Lilla Cabot Grew

Parents:

Joseph C. Grew
Alice de V. Perry

Schools: Private tutor; Holton Arms and the Corcoran School of Art, Washington, DC.

Date and place of marriage: Hancock, New Hampshire; July 27, 1927

Profession: Foreign Service wife

Children:

Peter Moffat (FSO)
Edith Spenser

End of interview