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Foreign Service Spouse Series

SALLIE SMOOT LEWIS

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Jewell Fenzi. I am interviewing Sallie Lewis at her home in McLean, [Virginia on] May 24, 1989.

You were in Naples and Florence while Clare Boothe Luce was Ambassador in Rome.

With your interest in theater, did you have a chance to discuss this with Mrs. Luce? What was your involvement with her, if any?

LEWIS: Mrs. Luce and I never had any serious theatrical discussions. My husband Sam had a six-months temporary assignment as Vice Consul, which was a wonderful time for me because it was my first time with no responsibilities while he was working in the Consular section. As a wife whose husband was on temporary duty, no one in the section knew I was there. By this time I was already fluent in Italian and it was wonderful -- I left the house early every morning with the guidebook. I'm one of the few human beings in the world who has had a six month tour of Rome.

We were included on a guest list at Villa Taverna early in our stay in Rome. One of the most amusing things is that Mrs. Luce would never have known a new vice consul's wife. As I had never been to Villa Taverna and saw it in those glorious days -- it was beautiful -- I remember the first reception. As we were coming through the line and shaking her hand, we could see her eyes glazing over. We were the early staff arrivals who were to help with this big party. I noticed that she had a little aluminum hair clip holding a curl on the side of her very beautiful face. So I took the bull by the horns and said, "Pardon me --" (she laughs heartily) "Ambassador Luce, you have a little hair clip -- " She looked very annoyed and took it out. We passed on down the line and I said to Sam, "Well, thank goodness she doesn't know who I am. It really won't ruin your Foreign Service career that I have irritated her!" But after the reception she sent for me to thank me in a royal way for being the only one to tell her -- she said, "I cannot believe that 50 of my staff had passed by and were going to let me meet the Italian society with my hair clip." I think I realized then how lonely an Ambassador can be.

So we did become kind of good acquaintances and she included us in a lot of things that Sam particularly enjoyed, because once we were assigned to take care of Sophia Loren. (laughing) Mrs. Luce really did have a lot of glamor and was a very bright lady. I'm thrilled I got to know her. And he was a very interesting man, too. But we were very, very low down on the fringes of everything. When she found out that we could speak Italian and were younger, she included us in a lot of parties, so we got to see a little of that period of history. The Italians take their own government so non-seriously -- they are so sophisticated compared to our involvement in our politics. Italy was a marvelous first post.

Everyone in the Foreign Service falls in love with their first assignment, but to have had it be Italy! Sam and I were so dedicated at that point we would have gone into the jungles with a machete knife to (speaking like an evangelist) to serve our country! And then to have it be this blissful, wonderful, glorious Italy.

Q: I note that you were married the first year he entered the Service. Had he joined when you married?

LEWIS: No. That was during the McCarthy hearings and there were no Foreign Service

appointments. He would have been in, but he was finishing up his graduate work at Johns Hopkins here in Washington when we got married. I was to support us through the last year of his graduate work.

Q: How did you do that?

LEWIS: Well, I got a job as a jobber (actor in repertory company) at Arena Stage. But then I became ill, and it eventuated that Sam had to become a temporary typist to support us -- we had a rather rocky first year, I was in the hospital most of it. But I got up in time to tear off to Naples. It was very exciting.

Q: The fact that Italy at that point was terribly -- well, maybe the rest of the world was worried about Communist influence in Italy at that time but you don't think it bothered the Italians?

LEWIS: It didn't bother the Italians at all. The difference was that on Sunday the Communists wore red ties. We made as many Communist friends as we made Christian Democrats. We did it, originally, with the intention of finding out what made an Italian communist. We discovered that the Italians weren't really -- very, very few of them -- serious Communists. I suppose those few Communist leaders were the only Italians who were seriously dedicated to dividing up the wealth more evenly. Now, isn't it interesting that just in the last two months we're beginning to think that this "great threat" that we were fighting all our lives, we have won by economic means!

Q: That's what Barbara Tuchman advocated years ago. And my husband was always an Economic officer and that's what he advocated. (she laughs) They were ahead of their time.

LEWIS: I've always tried to listen to what Mrs. Tuchman said but the message never got through to me. (both laugh)

Q: So Naples, and then Florence. That must have been nice.

LEWIS: Florence was such fun. It was a Consulate General with three officers, Sam at the bottom of the totem pole. And the city was unmobbed and unhurried. And after the rest of Italy, which is such layers and layers of civilization, to have just the period of the Renaissance there -- and I really was not well educated in art history and it was like a graduate degree in fine arts to be there. We were there for 3-l/2 years, long enough to really feel at home.

It was amusing because I had developed a Neapolitan accent, so the whole time I was there it was, "Seen-yor Vee-chee Con-su-lay Sam Lewis" and "la Nay-a-politana" — I was always called "the Neapolitan" because I had this awful accent. And when I realized that they were so snobby about their beautiful Italian, instead of reacting like a sensible lady would and trying to get rid of it, I think I began to capitalize on it a little bit. (she

laughs heartily)

Q: Well, it set you apart!

LEWIS: Florence is a fascinating kind of place, no question about it. My duties and life were interestingly kind of blasé. I tried hard to do all the things Foreign Service wives were supposed to do but it didn't seem to function very well. There were certainly no other wives for me to worry about except my two boss ladies, and they were all thoroughly ensconced.

Q: I'm going to interrupt -- what did you think those things that a Foreign Service wife should be doing were?

LEWIS: Well, spreading "the American message," you know. I was all for getting "the American dream" out, and it was awfully hard because life in Florence in those days was really so good that there wasn't a whole lot that we Americans could do, except try to hide the fact that we were devastating the world with Coca-Cola. (both laugh heartily) Our main duties seemed to be entertaining the American Congress, which came in great droves, and constantly.

Q: Understandably, to Florence.

LEWIS: The social life in Florence was very closed. There is, you know, the ultra-ultra Florentine society who really very rarely entertain in their homes -- they take guests to restaurants and trattorias. So we tried to make our home be absolutely open. By doing it informally, we would finally get invited sometimes into home situations. But it was quite different from any of my other assignments.

In Naples we were immediately taken into home situations too. But Florence was very, very strange -- in all strata, not just "high society." The workingman also didn't think of having you to his house. It was very interesting. That part I wasn't so fond of, but the rest of it was such fun, and it certainly was a wonderful opportunity for us. But I felt I less "earned my keep" in Florence than in any other place we lived, I think. We helped run the American Episcopal Church, which because we were the only Protestants on the staff when we first arrived -- which is an interesting development in itself -- and the society was sort of dominated by, how should I say it, sort of ex-Brits, ex-Americans, and other expatriate artists of all ages and sizes that end up in Florence.

Q: This was your society that you moved in?

LEWIS: This was the society, this was it. I mean, it was very, very interesting, and we really did try to cultivate a lot of working class people there, because we found them refreshing. But it was always at our house. (she laughs) You didn't very often go to their homes. We have a lot of friends there and go back a lot; particularly around Florence. I went off one time to try to get rid of my Neapolitan accent and spent a month in the home

of my little maid in Arezzo.

Q: Do you want to elaborate on that?

LEWIS: Well, it was interesting to see what a real peasant community in Italy in that period was like. No running water, you know, no plumbing, and yet how busy and how happy. The village life is quiet -- your day is ruled by daylight and hands are always busy. I respected that very much. But I still have the bad Neapolitan accent.

Q: And your maid in a Tuscan village had an accent that was preferable to your Neapolitan accent as far as the Florentines were concerned?

LEWIS: Absolutely!

Q: That sounds like a marvelous introduction to the Foreign Service, by the way.

LEWIS: Oh, I was spoiled rotten. You know, we had some wonderful people that we worked for. There were Helen and Dick Service, Sarah and Dale Fisher, Merritt and Jean Cootes. Dale was killed in an air crash on route to an Addis assignment. Sarah was a phenomenal lady and went on and made her own career in the Foreign Service. And this was a glamorous assignment, which none of our others have ever been. (laughs) It was fun meeting all the Congressmen. And I can remember Henry Fonda with his little 12-year-old Jane arrived. Everyone goes to Florence, so you met everyone. Adlai Stevenson would come and spend the summers there. He was my first vote for President and I was his devoted slave. He was as absentminded as everyone said. He used to sit on his glasses almost daily and (she laughs) I had to make a trip to the oculist for him. And it was fun for Sam because he got to translate for Stevenson in all his conferences with Fanfani, who was Prime Minister of Italy at that time.

Q: So after Florence you came back to the Department? This must have been in about 1959?

LEWIS: Yes, '59. Sam was the assistant Desk Officer for the Italian Desk. From '61 to '63 he was special assistant to the officer who was then the Under Secretary, Chester Bowles. And then when Bowles became the President's adviser on Africa, Asia and Latin America -- that was both exciting and a sad thing to watch. Chester Bowles was one of the world's most constructive thinkers; everything he said has come true as can be. And he always surrounded himself with brilliant young man, even if I include Sam in the bunch. Steb Bowles of course was a fantastic representative of this country; certainly in India. She reached out to the Indians in a way that I don't suppose any one American ever has. Galbraith did a good job too, I think, but ...

Q: We attempted to interview Mrs. Bowles but I'm afraid it's not possible now.

LEWIS: No, not possible now.

Q: You were about to mention why Jack Kennedy and Chester Bowles...

LEWIS: Yes. Getting to meet the Bowles family and be included in that ambiance was really an honor, really truly. He stretched my mind, I'm sure he stretched Sam's. So interesting for a man to have made his money in the real, hard, tough world of advertising and then to decide "Now I'm going to serve". It was with the idea of service, not of power that motivated them both.

It was a fascinating thing that happened when two great liberal intellects met. Jack Kennedy (at the peak of his power) and Chester Bowles could not sit down with each other without irritating each other to the extremes. I could never, never understand it. You'd think that these two men could find so much in common. But if Jack Kennedy had little Caroline in the room, Chet, (who adored little ones), thought the President was not listening to what he said. Whatever either one did irritated the other; it was oil and water. And so, I thought it was tragic that Bowles wasn't in the Cabinet at that time. But it was wonderful that he was able to accept another ambassadorship to India. They'd done such a fabulous in-depth job the first time. It meant a lot to Chet.

But of course, as always when we're back on assignments here in the Department, I feel much less included in affairs of State. Sam went on a trip around the world with Chet, leaving me at home when we were adopting our second child. We weren't to get our son for another two months. The agency called me during the Cuban missile crisis and said the adoption agency had decided that every baby should be with its family, in case we were all going to be bombed. I said, "I don't have a husband just now to come get Richard." And they said, "Never mind." (she laughs) So my five-year-old daughter and I went down and adopted Richard. And Sam got home very shortly. Ah, the drama of that period.

At that time I was working with the Peace Corps (PC). But this ended abruptly after I had a new baby. That was the beginning Peace Corps, of course. Oh, one of the things that happened to me in the PC, which may be a little off-drift. My job was evaluating letters. I was the one to get the idea of bringing older people into the Peace Corps. And it was "Miss Lillian" Carter's that was one of the three letters that I took to my supervisor to suggest that there should be something for older people to do.

Q: You were evaluating letters of people who were applying?

LEWIS: Yes, of the hopeful volunteers. You see, no one had any idea if anyone would volunteer or not when PC started off. And we were just inundated with mail. There were no criteria to evaluate the letters. That's neither here nor there with the Foreign Service, of course! (she laughs) It fitted in later very often in Israel, though.

Q: Nonetheless, that's what you were doing as a -- who was taking of your daughter while you were ... ?

LEWIS: She was attending play school that was run by a close neighbor of mine whom I knew very, very well. She loved that. She came home [after play school] and played with the neighbor and her three girls until I got home. But the minute Richard arrived, that ended. (she laughs again)

Q: After that experience, you went to Rio.

LEWIS: Those were beautiful days in Rio. And Sam was working with AID, which quite a new experience for me because I wasn't top dog in Embassy family, where you have a real setup. You have to sort of find your way around. And Rio is, topographically speaking, the most beautiful city, I suppose, in the world. There's nothing like those sheer rocks going right down to that beautiful ocean, and tropical lush vegetation. But it's a very difficult city to live in. If I hadn't had Italian, I really don't know how we would have coped. I was in the hotel for three and a half months trying to find a place for us to live, with two small children. We were flea-infested -- it was a very dramatic arrival in Rio. They told me, after we'd been there a couple of years, that they were having more nervous breakdowns (as we used to call them) in that one post among spouses than anywhere else. And I figured out that the answer was that one must love the beach to survive. The ladies who went to the beach and didn't worry about their hair and fingernails, survived in Rio. But life there was so difficult. It took Sam an hour to drive across town. Even in those days the traffic was horrendous.

We rarely had water in the taps, which is difficult in a hot climate. Electricity I can always bravely get along without, but the water problem there -- you always had to account for spending time standing in line for your bucket of water. And yet it was very glamorous. It was the days when bossa nova was discovered --

Q: (laughing) I think Rio is always glamorous.

LEWIS: That's right, yet I found it the most difficult of all our assignments, because there were people living within three blocks of me who were starving to death. I simply found I couldn't cope with it, and there was a complete lack of social awareness on the part of all Brazilians. Unless you were starving to death, you didn't worry about people who were starving to death. There was one group of women, called an International Club, that did a little social work. So, I did not have a happy time there. My life went well. Lincoln Gordon was our Ambassador when we got there. I was lucky to have gotten to know Mrs. Gordon, with Sam's job in AID. The people I was working with were dealing in grass, and mud, and things of that sort (laughing) and I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Sam had explained to me that he was going to do this career-wise. He just thought that if you didn't understand how big AID programs worked, you'd never be very useful in an Embassy. He said I was to understand that this would impede his career quite badly, because no one was doing anything like that at that time.

I found it extremely fascinating to be dealing with literal things, not ideas. Sam was in the programing side, so it wasn't as though we were really helping people develop grass; but USAID did, you know. American AID found the buffalo grass that solved the problems in Brazil. It met all the requirements of enough nutrition, not needing much water. It was a great scientific experiment. And that was really fun to be part of. And traveling in the interior of Brazil -- I never got to do enough of it, we were there only two years. And the cultural heritage of that country is fascinating. But the point remains: it is an unjust society and there is such a lavish wealthy class that just feel no responsibility for these people who are flooded out of their shanty homes every year. I remember we had between 30 and 70 babies in our house one time after one of the floods. This was a beautiful home -- a house on the beach, in the suburb of Leblon. After the flood I went up to see the woman who worked in my house, who had five kids, and there were these children with no roofs and the rain still coming down. So we just opened the house and said anyone could bring their baby in. It was a nightmare: first to get the water by standing in line with a bucket or collecting rain water, then to heat it, and then, first, you'd bathe the babies in the water, and then you'd take the water and try to wash the diapers. Impossible, but you couldn't have children out in driving rain with no roofs over their heads. It was a poverty that I'd never had to live with, before. I never found poverty like that, I think, even in India or Afghanistan. And they just accepted it as a way of life. When the rains stop, they start to build their little shacks again.

Mrs. Gordon had to call me in and tell me I couldn't work in a clinic in our local favela because if the clinic did anything wrong, the U.S. Government could be held responsible for it. There was a British doctor on something like a CARE program, and two British women, and they needed someone who spoke Portuguese. I started off just as a receptionist. A poor mother would come in and have a urinalysis, then never come back to learn the result; and you'd find out she was diabetic. So I would have to go into the favela and hunt -- it was like hunting for "Mary Smith." And that's the only time I ever disobeyed something my government told me to do. I kept on working at the clinic, and I told Mrs. Gordon I was. She was such a great lady, and she said, "Well, let's pretend that you didn't tell me that you were going to continue." Linc Gordon was a brilliant ambassador.

So I got through my time there. I went about seven-thirty every morning with the kids on the school bus, then went and worked in this clinic until noon. Then I came home and took a bath with disinfectant soap -- if we had water -- (she laughs heartily) met the kids' bus and we went to the beautiful beach and worked on our Portuguese with the neighbors, and then began the glamorous life of tea parties for Brazilian journalists, cabinet wives, and receptions and parties. That way, I kept my balance. But I somehow couldn't cope with it.

I think it happened the first day we moved into our home. It faced a wide highway, and then the beach. I said, "Before we unpack the boxes, lets all go have a swim, so we'll be in good humor." And we walked across the street, and the children said, "Who is that man?" And I said, "Oh, that's Uncle" -- I started speaking Italian with the kids while we were in

the hotel, and moving it over into Portuguese as much as I could so they would be ready for Portuguese -- "and he's taking a nap," I said. As we came back, "Uncle" was still taking a nap. I sent the kids in the house and discovered that the man was dead. When I called an ambulance, they were very angry with me that I had called, because you don't call an ambulance for a dead man, you call a pick up truck!

Q: You didn't know he was dead.

LEWIS: Well, I wasn't certain. I said, "What did he die of?" And they said, "Starvation." So, from that time on, also at our house, it was always a mad house and I had trouble keeping a cook or anyone to help me. It was just known in the neighborhood that there was always food at our house. You had to work for it. One day the garden would be raked by some old man, the next day it would be raked by some old lady. They would wash our windows, which because we faced the sea had to be washed every day, and they would eat their black beans, or usually tripe or something like that; and we fed an awful lot of people. But we made them work, always. When it started to get too many sitting out in the back yard, they seemed to understand that and then wouldn't come the next day, wait a day or so.

Anyway, it was a very interesting experience for Sallie Lewis. (laughing) And a very beautiful one. It was an exciting time in Brazilian political history, too

Q: The terrorism hadn't started yet?

LEWIS: No, it was before all that. There was a lot of robbery, but of course there is when people are poor.

Q: And then you came back to the Department for a long time, it looks like -- from '65 to '71.

LEWIS: Yes. I don't know if I can give you all of Sam's job in that period.

Q: I have them here, and really we want to talk about you. So let's jump ahead to Kabul, unless you did something particularly -- [consulting the vitae] he held the position of Special Assistant for Policy Planning in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs.

LEWIS: While we were in Brazil, my mother-in-law discovered she had terminal cancer. So we came back, and I lived in Houston, Texas, with her for about a year. When she said, "Well, I guess I'm just not going to die, and you all can't stay apart." So we moved into this house here. Sam took a leave of absence for about three months, as I recall, which it was wonderful that he could have. With us around her, Sam's mother thrived. She was a fantastic lady, wow, the best friend. I pray I'll be able to be a good mother-in-law. She died while we were here. I don't think I accomplished very much except ...

Q: It sounds like you accomplished a great deal, taking care of her and keeping her spirits up. And then, Afghanistan was next. I have lots on that assignment because we've interviewed Marlen Neumann.

LEWIS: Marlen is one of the super-ladies in my life. I'll never forget the joy and honor of working under her in Kabul. She was "something else." The only difficult thing -- you must put this in -- about my assignment in Kabul, which was one of my very favorite places to live, was that I was supposedly trying to fill Penne Laingen's shoes. And that was not an easy job. I didn't know Penne when I went, and by the time I left I was certain I was going to hate her for the rest of my life (laughing heartily) and we became very close friends.

But it was amusing that everyone would say, "Well, Sallie will play the piano for the fashion show." And I'd say, "I don't play the piano. You're confusing me with Penne." And "Sallie will make the favors" and "Sallie will do --" all these talents that I just didn't have at all, that Penne had.

Q: Well, you had different talents.

LEWIS: (laughing) Well, it's not a terrible ego problem, but I mean it was amusing because she was really, really a tough lady to follow, because she'd done such a good job.

Q: This is from 1971-74, and that was just at the time of the '72 directive. Marlen says, in her interview, that.....

LEWIS: No, but I'll tell you, I wonder if she remembers that she had a Number Two lady who kept talking to her about it very often and very hard. And she talked to me about it, too. We worried about it. We said, "We'll have to watch the changes." I think the '72 directive didn't make such a difference in Afghanistan because we were in such a strange cultural situation, where one was almost completely dependent on the diplomatic/AID community in the city for survival. It was very frustrating not being more a part of that directive when it happened, being so isolated from it. But when a foreign service spouse came into this situation, and we all lived spread about in the city, one had no choice.

The language that we all learned to speak was called Farsi by the Afghans but it was really what linguists call Dari because it was a simplified kind of Farsi. It was a very easy language to learn to speak; I could never learn to read it. But the point was, it was really no one's language, it was only a language that the Afghans had decided to use because they all spoke tribal languages. It was a lingua franca, an artificial thing set on top. So you could shop in it, do your accounts in it, and do business in it. But you really couldn't have social intercourse in Dari very easily. It was a very unsatisfactory setup, so we really couldn't -- I mean, the men could converse in Dari, but in all the villages the women only spoke their tribal language. There were about seven main tribal languages and they were all enormously difficult. I tried to learn one, and I just got lost.

So American women arriving there were dependent on the American and the diplomatic family for survival, in a sense. You could find, sometimes in a home, help that spoke English; and that was it. But they were tried and true. This staff went with the house. They were wonderful, wonderful people, as a matter of fact. They must have been brilliant. And it was all on the old English colonial system. We were all memsahib, which was a little hard to take. But one had to dress correctly or get spit upon or rocks thrown at you. So we were so dependent on each other that there couldn't be any resentment that Mrs. Neumann was telling us what to do. We were all very grateful that she'd thought up some marvelously interesting things for us to do and learn.

So I guess we didn't face what the '72 directive was going to do to the Foreign Service. Before the directive, Marlen had the most beautifully organized set-up I've ever seen. When I arrived, she and the Ambassador met Sam and me at the airport, drove us to our home, which she had filled with flowers from her garden; introduced us to the seven men (laughing) who were supposed to help us run our house, which I was rather overcome by; and then departed leaving me with notes. She had plans. Each Section head's wife was to give me a morning coffee or an afternoon tea or a luncheon, so that I could meet everyone in the Embassy structure within, I guess, two weeks. She did it the way everyone always dreams it can be done. It rarely ever happens. We were already so well organized that I think everyone's nose would have been out of joint if we'd suddenly said, "Well, ladies, just go away and do your own thing!"

But some of the younger wives who came after the directive, thought they didn't want to be part of it. They always eventually became involved. Kabul was a fascinating place to run. I remember we had a commissary that had twenty tons of dried mustard in cans -- well, it was about a ton, enough mustard to last until the end of time. I wonder what's happened to that. Various people had tried to run it, it was very disorganized. Marlen had gotten that straight by the time I got there, too.

So I walked into a very wonderful situation. And we all made great friends. But you had to travel in Afghanistan; there were no roads. There was "nothing to do," so we had to settle on community activities. We did a lot of community theater. You'd get a new recording of a classical record and you'd have all your friends over for a musical evening and we'd all sit and listen to a new LP (long-playing record). It was that kind of -- there were about 25 or 30 Afghans who had studied at the Sorbonne or in England. The older ones had studied in Germany. Most while we were there were studying in Russia. They would come, some of them would bring their wives, a few of whom had studied abroad and were charming, sophisticated women. Some of the wives were miserable to be there. But most of the wives didn't come. The Prime Minister kept his wife in the village in purdah.

Again, it wasn't the kind of interaction with a foreign community that you'd usually have in the Service. But we made lifetime friends, a lot of whom came here and are still here. A few who have hopes of going back. Just now I'm trying to help the wife of the man who was Foreign Minister during our assignment. She's trying to do a book about her life. He

has a job, right now, as a used-car salesman. It has been tragic for the Afghans inside and outside of their homeland. The interesting thing is, though, that everything we put into that post, all of us working so hard together, has made the people who left Kabul the most active of all the Foreign Service groups I know. We have an annual reunion -- and it is a vast group of people -- and it's very well organized. The high school kids still all get together. Hardship posts always build closer friendships.

Did Marlen tell you about the Diplomatic Wives Club? Oh, she started it. But it was funny, because the Saudi Ambassador sent two wives. His two wives came, and they didn't speak an Arabic dialect that even the Egyptian Ambassador's wife could speak. So the meetings were conducted in French. It was hilarious. Every time they voted, one Saudi wife would vote yes and one would vote no. Because they didn't know what we were voting on! (hearty laughter) And we always seemed to have British ambassadors' wives who were, you know, floppy hats and vague and "into" gardening.

Q: Floral print dresses, and ...

LEWIS: They were wonderful. And they'd go on fantastically difficult treks up into China and things. The Russian wife was a pediatrician and an ex-guerilla fighter. I became so fond of her, and she adored my mother who joined us there. They had no mutual language, but communicated fully.

Q: (referring to notes on Kabul) Oh, you did a survey what [furnishings] the AID families had and what the Embassy families had (she breaks up, laughing) and according to the interview I previewed before coming here, the results were rather inconclusive afterward. But was it morale-building just for you to go around and ... ?

LEWIS: And care.

Q: And care -- exactly.

LEWIS: To be sure that the AID furniture was comparable to the State Department's. I let everyone look at my survey and my bedroom; but also that she might know about somebody else's bedroom that was nicer than either of ours. At the time, I was very against starting on this road, but with persistence it paid off in the long run because everyone felt we were proving our concern for them and their families.

Q: You were against doing the poll?

LEWIS: I was against even talking about things like that. And it was because there wasn't enough to do, so everybody would just sit around and look and think, "Helen has a very nice chair and I have to do with this old thing." Labor was very inexpensive and Sam was continually trying to get General Services to just say "yes" and recover the lady's chair, for goodness sakes! (she laughs) -- if that's what it's going to take to make her happy. And the point was -- usually there were five or six women who were that interested in their

color schemes. And if you could get them happy, then everything else sort of coasted along. But those ladies got together on us. Marlen very sensibly met them head-on.

Q: But how foolish in a remote post like that. We were in Sierra Leone with the same thing -- to have these two standards, AID's and the Embassy's. I mean, it was ridiculous. It built in hard feelings. And it shouldn't have taken too much thought on someone's part in Washington (she laughs) to anticipate that.

LEWIS: That's right. It's a very easy thing to say "furniture is furniture".

Q: "And it's all the same."

LEWIS: I remember in Brazil there were two color schemes for AID houses: either blue-and-green, or you could be orange-and-brown. And we were always making elaborate character judgments based on the choice of the new arrivals. There's got to be a certain guideline for fairness, but I think you're really better off forming another Great Books club and using your time in that way if you can't get people out and into their new community. But you see, in Afghanistan we couldn't go off, women alone -- take a bus load of ladies and go explore something; couldn't do that. You always had to have guns, because you were likely to get held up.

Q: And there were some murders while you were there.

LEWIS: Oh yes. But in reality, if you followed the customs, and if you knew enough of the language to be courteous, I never felt afraid in Afghanistan. And you always had to travel with <u>two</u> cars, not one. And you had to carry all of your own gasoline and all of your water. So it was a fairly complicated business to go away. And extra parts for your car. And no roads, so you were driving along river bottoms. And if you broke something on the car, you had to fix it.

I remember on one trip when our driver, fortunately, was with us, a rock hit our gas tank. We heard an unusual thump, and stopped. I got out: the gas was streaming out. We had just finished a picnic. Anwar looked at me, and said, "Carrot!" I thought, "he's out of his mind," but I grabbed a carrot and started trying to ram it into the hole, when Anwar said, "Chew, Memsahib, CHEW!" So I chewed on the carrot stick, and you know, we mixed a little road dust with it, and plugged the hole (both go into gales of laughter). Then we found the kids had some chewing gum, so we stuck that over the bottom of the carrot that was filling the hole. Well, I never will forget! Life was, no doubt about it, cruel in Afghanistan. Sports were cruel. So, as Westerners, we bonded, that's all there was to it. And we craved the order that Marlen was ready to give us. I enjoyed that, because I felt that <u>my</u> job was to get to know everybody, and keep Marlen informed. And there was <u>time</u> to do all this right. She and I -- at 7:45 every morning I called her and we talked for 15 minutes or so. But it was a very kind of inbred society.

Q: Oh yes, it would have to be.

LEWIS: And that's where my theater training proved to be very useful, because we were able to keep the whole community active and we did.

Q: You did amateur theatricals?

LEWIS: Oh my goodness -- we did things that were absolutely absurd. There was a marvelous man who was extremely musical, Paul Mayerson who worked for AID. His work was in translating and planning elementary school textbooks for the Afghans -- but anyway he had a great musical talent. He and I, just as if we didn't have good sense, would enlist the whole community. He would get together an orchestra and chorus. We would have Afghans and Indians and Brits and Sikhs and the Egyptians. The AID Director had played the drums when he was in high school, so he filled that spot. We had a full orchestra and we did full performances of "Brigadoon", "The Music Man," Gilbert and Sullivan as if it were nothing. I can still see Marlen in the chorus of "H.M.S. Pinafore". She has a lovely singing voice. It was a truly good influence on the whole westernized community. There was something for everyone in the family to do either on or back-stage. The children were often enormously talented. And talk about opening night excitement! My goodness! (she laughs heartily)

Q: And you had to make your own costumes, of course.

LEWIS: Oh, when we did "Brigadoon", I wanted to find plaids for the kilts. To this day, the last people to leave Kabul tell me, there is now great, great quantities of plaid material in the bazaar because we were in such desperate straits trying to find it at the time that the Afghan merchants think (dissolving with laughter) Westerners are always going to want great quantities of plaid! And talk about fantastic jobs by the people who made the costumes -- a lot of them were the AID wives. You know, making 40 sailor suits -- (she is still laughing). But it kept us all busy.

Q: And people needed to be kept busy, so they stopped worrying about whether their chair was not quite as elegantly covered as somebody else's. Now, from there you came back to the Department. Sam was in the Policy Planning, with Moynihan and Kissinger. There again, you probably didn't get too involved in his -- or did you?

LEWIS: Well, Winston Lord was Chief of Policy Planning and we became very close friends with him and Betty. So I got in on a lot of it. I adored the Moynihans, and can't help enjoy being around the Kissingers, they're absolutely fascinating. But I will admit, I thought my husband's ego might be crushed, might never survive being between these two great egos. And they would both be so definite. And Sam would say, "Well, yes, all right, Mr. Ambassador, I shall go tell Mr. Secretary that." (laughing) But fortunately, one thing, both of the men do have a real sense of humor too, and had a kind of enormously grudging respect for each other. So it was just exciting, just exciting. When he had that job he was Assistant Secretary for IO.

But no, I wasn't in it as much. But there were a lot of trips to New York and a lot of fun things, but I was off mainly doing my own ball of wax after we got back, I think. I was working in the inner city then, doing creative dramatics. It was turning fast into "psychodrama" (she laughs) and I wasn't trained for it and was very worried about it. I worked in three of the high schools there. My mother, by this time, was living with us. She came to live with us when we were in Afghanistan. Her health was not good so I was also busy with that, in between. Little did we have any idea that we were about to be assigned to Israel.

Q: I ran through our entire computer file last night, and we have never interviewed anyone who has been in Israel. Very interesting.

LEWIS: That is interesting, because I'd guess, of all the posts I've served, it was certainly the most popular. It is magnificent, from the Foreign Service angle. So many places to go, so much to see, and so much to do; and not really any language or cultural barrier, because all Israelis study English and they're all very multilingually oriented, since they either grew up in an Arabic-speaking country and immigrated, or their parents were all from Europe from a multi-cultural background. And all diplomats find this -- Germans can speak German nearly everywhere, and the French can certainly speak French everywhere. A beautiful climate. And there's everything that one would want to do in the out-of-doors available there, amazingly. Not a whole lot of skiing, but there is snow, and skiing, on one mountain.

And beautifully organized -- there are touring groups, nature societies that have wonderful walking tours for all ages. It's a marvelous place for children because the climate's so good. People think of Israel as a dangerous place. In reality it is the most free place for young people in the world right now. They walk in droves, they hitch-hike. All that side of life is easy. And there are jobs for American women, which is a very important thing. The salaries are deplorable but they're on the Israeli wage scale, so you can't dare fuss. (she laughs) They miraculously manage to live on these salaries, but in nearly every Israeli family both spouses have to work if they have any children, or if they have a house to maintain. Taxes are so high. There's very little of the really "beautiful wealthy life" there. There's a sort of sincerity to life, no folderol.

I doubt seriously if I could have been successful as an ambassador's wife in a country of much formality, because I'm simply not a very formal person. And while I tried to learn as I grew up in the Foreign Service about all the proper things, like finger bowls, I find it rather boring to have [to] spend all of your time thinking about the trimmings. And as I loaned dresses to other Foreign Service women who were going to Paris, I thought, "Isn't it marvelous that I don't have to be concerned about my sauces and my clothes and my possessions". Where in Paris, I'm quite certain, you [imitating haughty tone] you must be chic! Or you let America down. So I'm very glad that I was in a country where the important thing was the talk, and the people that you collected for your evenings. As the years wore on while we were there, I did less and less and less formal entertaining; and more and more outside buffets around tables in the garden where you could have dessert

with somebody you didn't have dinner with and move around.

And everyone in Israel knows everyone else. It's a small country, really. If you don't see them often now, you went to school with them, or your brother was in the army with them. So it's a network. Sam and I delighted in just mixing people up crazily. Well, there are no strata of society; and certainly politically we would delight in having arch-enemies sit at the same table -- as long as there were a couple of properly chosen people between them! (she laughs) And that's the way the conversation became interesting. Food has to be plentiful but it doesn't have to be always gourmand.

Running a house in Israel was something I'll never forget because it is such a melting pot. You had to have help -- well, I figured it up the first year and I averaged having about 400 people a week in the house, visiting -- parties, or something. That was an average. It was a lot more than that regularly. And I just kept it a busy house. Anybody that wanted to come, every kind of meeting for every kind of good cause, any kind of intellectual, musical evenings -- we had wonderful musical evenings there, I've never heard such good music constantly: chamber music and such; their Philharmonic is a wonderful orchestra. So it was a very, very busy house. But it was a true "Foreign Service story," because at one point I had an ex-British jockey as a cook; an Australian as the major-domo; my waiters were Kurdish-Iranian, a Sudanese, and Filipino; a Yemeni downstairs cleaning woman; a Moroccan kitchen aide, and a woman born in Rhodes who was the pastry chef, who wore a prison camp number tatoo; and an Arab gardener, and a Finnish waitress. And oh, the upstairs maid was a Romanian. So it was a little United Nations. And of course you had to keep them all very busy or they didn't get along at all. They'd have terrible fights and there were feuds and things. So I kept them busy! (she laughs heartily)

But it was a little like a bucket of worms. And I would travel up to Jerusalem and visit with our Consul General there. They had a beautiful old Turkish house, staffed with only three wonderful Arab men.

Q: And it looked heavenly!

LEWIS: Peaceful, serene. You could ask for anything at any hour of the day or night and they could find it for you with no trouble. (dissolving at the thought) And I'd think, "Oh my, I have to go back down the hill to the 'real world,' my bucket of worms."

Q: Well, you seem to have kept your good spirits throughout it all.

LEWIS: Oh, I loved the assignment, I loved it. Just the excitement of knowing personally people like Abba and Suzy Eban and the Dayans -- close personal friends, Moshe and Rachel; and a personal friend of Moshe's first wife Ruth. And the wonderful pioneer families that went to Israel cannot be underrated. And brilliant minds like Haim Cohn, their supreme court justice, who's now retired. To have the honor of knowing all these people intimately. When we met Prime Minister and Mrs. Shamir in 1977, he was Speaker of the House and they spoke only French. That shows you how clever the Prime

Minister and Mrs. Shamir are: they decided they were going to learn English. And they did, by gum. Now he's able to conduct all of his meetings in English.

I've never known as many people of such high motivation as there are in Israel. I guess it's because they or their parents or their grandparents came there with a purpose. And it can't help but be stimulating to be around them; that's all there is to it. They literally wear you down with wonderful enthusiasm.

Q: And you were there eight years. That's a long time.

LEWIS: It's a long time in a Foreign Service life, because our lives are in pockets of two, three or four years. It was the longest our family had ever lived one house.

Q: Your children were with you too?

LEWIS: Well, Grace was supposed to come back to university. She went over and liked it so much that she stayed and became an assistant teacher at the American High School. And Richard started high school there and went through all four years. But then they did have to come back, so we were five years without my daughter and four without my son. They came home summers; sometimes for Christmas if we could afford it.

Q: Where are they now?

LEWIS: Both here in the area. Richard is living at home until July, when his company is moving to Florida. Grace has a little town house in Oakton, Virginia. She's a ceramist but makes her money as a frame designer in a framing store in Vienna [Virginia]. They're both doing fine. There were times when I was sure I'd ruined their lives in the Foreign Service, and they were certain I had. (both laugh in agreement) Now, thank goodness, they've decided that it was all a positive experience. But I can remember moves at 6th grade or high school that were the tragedies of their lives. And you feel such a crumb.

Q: There's nothing you can do about it. When you came into the Service, did you have any training at, let's see, in 1953 there was no OBC; was there any language training for wives then?

LEWIS: No. I was told I could get something like a dollar an hour back on language. But the bad thing was that we thought we were going to Rotterdam, so I had started my lessons -- this was while I was still in the hospital, trying to get over all my health problems; poor Sam. And I started studying Dutch. Two weeks before we were to leave, we found we were going to Naples. I had had five Dutch lessons to get ready to go to Italy. (large laugh) And those were the days in Italy when you either spoke Italian or you didn't speak. I mean, no one spoke any English in Italy then; no one. It was wonderful, though. The easiest language I ever learned because there was just no question about it: you just learned it.

Q: Did you ever go to any of the courses -- I believe at that time, 1953, it would have been Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Patterson?

LEWIS: It must have been they, then. I had a course and, oh boy, did I read those handbooks. "Social Usage." I want you to know, I carried my hat and white gloves in a shopping bag on the train from Rome to Naples so I could put them on to report to Sam's personnel officer the first time. Yes ma'am. I mean, those were the days you had -- you know, those rules made us all rather comfortable, (suddenly laughing) now that I look back on it. You knew what you were supposed to do. It's very interesting that I remember. I remember getting off that dirty train and putting on my white gloves and my pink straw hat. My first time to ever be inside an American consulate, because I'd never been abroad. We were so excited!

Q: Some of the topics we deal with in these interviews are representational responsibilities, training for Foreign Service life, children, household -- some of these we've covered already. Day-to-day life in Afghanistan. Money -- that's something we haven't discussed. Did your husband's salary cover expenses? Allow for savings?

LEWIS: Well, it simply had to, yes. There was never any discussion about it. At some posts you were living very close to the bone.

Q: Did you have any private income?

LEWIS: No.

Q: In the earlier days, of course, nearly everyone did. How about representational reimbursement? Were you perpetually out-of-pocket throughout the years?

LEWIS: That was just a fact of life, yes.

Q: Was there ever a point when you just drew the limit and said, "Now, LOOK"?

LEWIS: No, I don't think I ever did. I remember one time in Florence. It used to be the custom there that on Thanksgiving Day the American Consulate gave an open house, and our bosses were all cleverly -- the two couples of them -- absent from post. And Sam and I, on his Vice Consul's salary, had to give a reception -- well, you never knew. There were usually about 400 to drop by, sometimes a lot more. And so I remember I had one little maid, and I went to the commissary in Livorno and bought numerous turkeys. And we came back and cooked them. It took two days and all the night before. And the night before Thanksgiving, Sam and I stayed up all night making whiskey sours because we figured our money would go further. And we served whiskey sours and sherry. That was the only choice -- there were great complaints -- and fruit juice, I remember. And turkey sandwiches to this hoard. And that year we had 750 people come to call on the Consulate.

The Consulate there is a wonderful old palazzo on the Arno River, right by the statue of

Garibaldi in the Piazza, with an Aubusson carpet that is still being walked on in the ballroom. That was our first time to ever feel like Mr. and Mrs. America. Despite the fact that I hadn't slept for two nights and we were quite worried about the finances of the party, it turned out to be a very elegant affair. There wasn't a whole lot to eat, and not much to drink, but it was a fun party. That's the only time, I think, that I thought, "What will we do? Will we be able to eat next month? I'm not quite certain." Well, of course, we did. You can always eat pasta and vegetables.

No, sometimes there were inequities, but I never felt that if you properly explained things, and knew to whom to explain them, that there wasn't hope for the future. I mean, very often you didn't see the thing happen while you were at post, but two years later. Our whole career has been only improvements in the rights of Foreign Service people. The whole time it's gone up, it's never gone backwards. And I feel that if it's wrong, it's our Service and we're the ones that are supposed to straighten it out. Instead of sitting over there on post and bitching about your problems, I think the thing to do is to inform the Department of any serious injustice. Now we don't have to worry whom to inform, we've got our FLO. But I never found that the inequity couldn't be ironed out.

Oh, one of the interesting social entertaining tales was the way we lived in Afghanistan. I may be duplicating Marlen on this, but the most fantastic, surprising things would happen. You would be sitting in someone else's home for dinner, not necessarily an American's, just someone in the diplomatic community, someone who'd been to your home socially, and you would suddenly notice that the meal was being served on one of your platters. These wonderful male servants all knew each other, they had their "pecking order," they all knew who needed which dishes when, and they would all also help in each other's homes if the party were big. Things would go by bike across the city back and forth between our homes.

There was the night I was serving a turkey dinner; none of the guests was Muslim. Australian and American Embassy refugees from Pakistan had come to stay in our home. I thought we were having a turkey dinner, and as we sat down at table we were served curried shrimp, something you never saw in an inland country like Afghanistan. I was absolutely floored. I learned that the Neumanns had a Pakistani friend who had brought them the shrimp. As they were preparing to serve, her staff discovered her guests were Muslims. So her dinner came to my house, and my dinner went to her house. And we never knew anything about it. She was rather angry that she didn't get any shrimp! (hearty laughter) But she was spared a faux pas.

Another interesting thing that these men knew: you'd be standing, having a drink with the Prime Minister, say, and he would be drinking his scotch. Another guest would arrive and the waiter would come and grab the glass out of the Prime Minister's hand and shove a glass of orange juice into it. You'd think, "Has he lost his mind?" And you would learn that the servant knew that the P.M. would not be seen drinking alcohol by the newly arrived guest, who was an elder Muslim who really practiced his faith. We were so helpless without these men, so indebted to them for their know-how on all the details of

our daily lives. I had another funny Foreign Service tale, as good as the famous one, you know, "when the turkey falls on the floor, oh, bring in the other one" story? Well, my wonderful majordomo, who had worked in our house since he was seven years old, when he'd come as a gardener's assistant. He had to bike almost an hour to get home. But if it rained during the night, he would bike back to be sure Memsahib remembered to close the windows. He was that dedicated to that house.

We had a wedding of our Embassy's Philippine doctor in our garden. I asked her what she wanted for the menu. She replied, "Sallie, I'm sorry, there's no choice, you may have to send your cook home but we just have to have roast pig." So I talked with the cook and the servants, who were a little upset about this. So she sent over her cook to supervise the cooking of the pig, and I said to my Faroz, "I'll serve it, you don't need to." "No, Memsahib, if you can eat it, I can serve it. I won't touch it but I'll serve it." And I explained to him that we should have a nice red apple to put in its mouth before bringing it to table. Faroz thought that all these American habits were so strange and he came in carrying the roast pig at the wedding feast with the apple in his mouth. And I stood up and said softly but in frantic terms, (speaking through clenched teeth) "If any of you laugh I'm not going to let you have a bite of this pig." And so he paraded all the way around the table, placed the platter in front of the bride and groom, and then came and stood behind me to see if I needed anything. I said, "Thank you, Faroz. Now is the time to take your apple out." And we went on and had the dinner. But it did set the tone. I fear seriously for those seven men who helped for those four years. We know they were all arrested.

The other great story -- Sam may have told you -- was when we returned from signing the Camp David Peace Treaty. I had a pastry cook, Allegra, who came occasionally. She'd been born on Rhodes, a Holocaust survivor of Buchenwald. The Israelis were in such a high state of elation and joy over peace with Egypt. Until the last minute we weren't at all sure that the peace treaty was going to be signed. We had been through a year and a half's extensive work, with visits and everything else to get to this stage. So, we were coming back, all very tired from the trip and such an emotional and exciting few months. The children and the staff welcomed us royally, and we went in to have our family dinner. And proudly -- I can just see her -- little Allegra brought in the tea cart with the cake. On it she had written in English which she had tried to write for the first time: HAPPY PISS. So we all kept our faces straight and Sam went upstairs and got his camera and we all got our pictures taken with Allegra and her cake. And we never let on to this day to Allegra that she had made a spelling error. I treasure the photograph.

Q: Those are the things that you cherish, aren't they really! One of these series of questions you've answered already -- you certainly thought of yourself as one of a team.

LEWIS: That's a credit to Sam.

Q: Well, I think some of that credit goes to you too, though.

LEWIS: Well, you know, husbands -- I think that ball really falls in their court. He always

made me feel that it was our assignment and our job. So of course (laughing heartily) I worked my tail off.

Q: Of course. And you had a sense of actively sharing in the process of your husband's career and career advancement. Absolutely yes.

LEWIS: Sam has had no retirement syndrome. I had a little bit of one. We all know the satisfactions there are in life come from doing something that is bigger than ourselves. I always felt that what we were doing was important for our country. I was sewing little seeds of peace on earth. Even if it was making 4,000 tuna fish sandwiches or thank you notes. And it gave life a very special meaning.

Sam retired from that job and started another one that doesn't need me particularly. I miss that in my life, you know? And I kept telling the kids: "You know, we are so lucky." Poor kids. "But remember, (laughing) whatever you do, the host citizen will say, 'that's what Americans do' -- remember!" Poor kids, what a way to grow up. Maybe they were happier. I mean, it gave a kind of a purpose for them also, as you do with your oral history project.

Q: Really, it's a fascinating project, because every interview takes on a life of its own. And the diversity of the women who have served -- and we did serve, let's face it, basically as volunteers. And all that we contributed over the years -- not only from 1920 to 1990, which we're trying to document; but ever since Abigail Adams went abroad in 1784, we've been doing the same thing.

LEWIS: One thing I didn't talk about: I really did always -- well, at least in Afghanistan and Israel -- I really did try to be as unobnoxious as possible a mother hen for the American community. I always felt my chief job was to relate to the country I was in. I really did feel that the Ambassador's spouse's job was to look after the other families and spouses, and be sure they were comfortable in their new roles. That was not such a great chore. Except that in Israel it was sort of complex, because we were a very large and loosely bound group. We had an American Embassy's women's group that was very relaxed as to structure and the Israelis already had a superb international women's group that was "going" all the time, a great going concern, with tours and university courses available. So that that was made easy. And then once we finally had our first CLO, that also took an enormous burden off an ambassador's wife.

Q: I was going to ask you, what was your relationship with the CLO? Did you meet with her?

LEWIS: Oh always; wonderful; yes. We were (laughing) in absolute constant touch.

Q: With our remaining time, let's get back to your relationship with the CLO. I do know that -- I was a CLO, in Trinidad -- and the one thing the CLO was not, was a social secretary to the Ambassador's spouse. Let me hastily say you didn't imply that! It sounds

rather that you immediately realized what her value could be to you, which was to take people in tow -- to show them where the ballet lessons were and ...

LEWIS: That I even had someone to share the burden of worrying about this Embassy family was so important. If you say your great problem out loud, it falls into perspective. But I would meet a new wife arriving and say uh-o, this family is going to have this and this kind of problem. And to be able to get, as every Foreign Service wife with children feels, the first and foremost thing she's concerned about on arriving at a new post is to get those children sensibly and happily settled in their new life. I know that feeling far too well. And to have someone else that could be a liaison with the school -- till then, I'd felt I had to know every grade teacher, I had to sort of head off problems which you can often see. And it was just that we had such a frenetic schedule ourselves, and I just kept getting up an hour earlier. When we finally had our first CLO, I didn't have to get up at five every morning because it was the only uninterrupted time I had to try to plan: I will call or get a note to so-and-so about her son, where he can find -- guitar lessons. (she laughs) Because if he can't have his guitar lessons, her life is ruined. This kind of silly things, but everybody has them. And it takes time to know a woman well enough too to know what's going to make her feel settled.

And I really took the mother-hen-ing attitude quite seriously. And it wasn't a serious problem in Israel because there was so much to do and because you could just immediately relate to your neighbors. And you could ask, in the supermarket, while you couldn't read what the labels said, you could say to someone, "Is this cottage cheese, cream cheese, yogurt?" And they'd usually say, "Oh, that's edsal" and you didn't know what that was. (It was a kind of watery yogurt that you could practically drink; like clabber.) Incidentally, I'll never be a good speller after learning Hebrew, because I started transliterating everything from then on -- to spell it just to pronounce it was all-important.

Q: Now, where in this busy schedule did you find time for your theater interests?

LEWIS: Well, I didn't. I didn't suffer in Israel, I became very thoroughly involved in the Israeli theater scene. Without giving financial help, became sort of a patroness of the four or five theater groups -- Habimah and Cameri, and then the cities have good ones. Haifa had a very interesting theater. I went to the theater often, because it's a wonderful way to learn a language. That's the way I separated my Portuguese from Italian, by going to the Brazilian theater. And you learn a lot culturally about a country, too. The theater is usually ahead, or more liberal, say, more progressive, if that's ahead -- but you can learn a lot about a country by seeing what the new playwrights are writing.

Sam really had to suffer through those evenings in the Hebrew theater, because he never had any time at all to really study the language. I went incessantly, I saw everything. And I got to know personally all the actors. We had evenings at the house where one theater group or the other would come. The famous Hannah Rovena, the leading actress, the great classic actress of the Habimah Theater in Russia, did her last performance at our house. We hadn't even dreamed that she would come. We were having an evening with

Habima and we of course invited her. She lived in kind of semi-retirement. She really came out, a beautiful statuesque woman in her late 80s. She came to the party and we treated her like a queen. And I felt that all of the actors that did their little bits and parts of Habimah Theater history were speaking just to her. It was fabulous. All of a sudden, she arose, and said -- in Russian which I couldn't understand at all (imitating majestic tones) "I wish to perform." And I'll tell you, it was a real theater "happening". She did a piece of a Tolstoy novel. It was breathtaking to listen to -- in the old theatrical style. The people who were in our house were so thrilled. We were front page on all the newspapers next day. It was a moment of history that Hannah had performed again.

So, I wasn't suffering. I was having a perfectly marvelous time. And I love to be around actors and actresses, directors -- I love that ambiance. I mean, I'm comfortable; that's it, I'm comfortable. And so that was a lot of fun. And they treated me with great hospitality and kindness. So it was terrific. My theater interests were useful in every country we've been in, except Afghanistan. And while we were there, we also -- well, with the help of some very talented world travelers who just happened through the country and took a contract job with USIS so they could stay a little while -- got started the Kabul National Theater; there'd never been one. That to me was very, very important. USIS can be proud, but it's gone: the Russians.

Well, to begin with, the language is wrong, you see. The only theatrical experiences in an Afghan's life are -- maybe their sports are a little dramatic -- the storytellers who go around to the tea houses. Only the men are supposed to frequent tea houses. I had two experiences of getting to hear these but of course they were in tribal dialect and I really couldn't understand. But I could understand -- they sometimes do this (she makes a clapping sound) with a drum; very exciting and interesting. In Brazil, there are the traditional Portuguese storytellers but there's a very active, lively theater that perhaps was showing a little political interest there. I got to act some while we were in Italy but always had to play foreign parts because of that awful accent.

In Brazil I acted only once in a professional show. I was playing a French maid, which I thought was so funny because my French has a German accent because my French teacher at the university was a German. The only chance in Sam's career that I really had fun in the theater was his year's assignment, mid-career course, in Princeton. It was the year before girls were on campus, so all the undergrad theater groups needed women desperately. So I got to play all the leads in all those plays. And then I joined a professional Shakespeare Company, the McCarter Theater. I worked with them in five plays in repertory. That's what I wanted to do before I decided that I wanted to be married -- Shakespearian theater. So that was enormous fun. And I was taking George Kennan's course as an audit -- oh, what a wonderful nine months that was!

Q: Do you do anything with the Folger Theater here now?

LEWIS: I attend; I contribute. I'm about to send them a play script, as a matter of fact; we'll see if they'll do it, if I can talk their dramaturge into even reading it.

Q: What kind of script are you working on?

LEWIS: Oh, unbelievable. I've written a musical with a friend in Jerusalem, a very talented jazz pianist. We've adapted an old British novel into an American musical. I've gotten so fond of this Folger company -- I only wanted it to be done on Broadway or London, but the Folger has a charming show now, "As You Like It." An absolutely delightful production, with a young lady who's in the Cosby show on TV playing Rosalind. An offbeat production but it catches the essence of the play as well as any performance I've ever seen. And I like what they've done with that company. So I think I'll submit our script to them if I can ever get the tapes from Israel.

Q: What's the title of your play?

LEWIS: "Precious Bane." We shall see. Heaven knows how we'll sell it. My friend is so talented but she's just had surgery on her spine so I'm worried about that; so we're on hold with the recording she will send me. I would love to work with the Folger, that would be fun. I don't have any personal unrequited theatrical ambitions, but it would be fun to see our show produced.

Q: You said you had a little bit of retirement adjustment because you <u>were</u> so busy before. Have you been working on your play since then?

LEWIS: Yes, it just filled the gap wonderfully. And I was quite physically tired. You know, I didn't know it. It took me almost two years to realize that I was quite exhausted from going all the time with these marvelous, wonderful, intense people. Well, anyway, the first two years we really traveled most of the time. And then suddenly I realized I'm ready to sit at my word-processor and have quiet. I find I'm quite worn out with big parties and party situations, diplomatic receptions, and all that. They just don't interest me any more. Isn't that too bad?

Q: No, it isn't. Because that part of our life is over. I have absolutely no desire to go to a National Day and stand for hours.

LEWIS: Oh, we still go to everything at the Israeli Embassy and I'm still terribly involved. But with other Embassies, I'm afraid we don't accept. But we should.

Q: No, I don't think you should (laughing) unless you want to.

LEWIS: No, I don't want to.

Q: Then you shouldn't. You know, our life is too full of "shoulds." (both laugh) So there should be some "want tos".

LEWIS: That's right -- if you're doing something <u>only</u> because you should.

Q: One of the lovely things about retirement is the lack of "shoulds", really.

LEWIS: That's right. (laughing) It should be that way!

Q: Now that Sam's involved in the Peace Institute, did you ever think of yourself as being -- you thought of yourself as representing the United States, but did you ever think of yourself as being an agent of peace, or a purveyor of peace. Did "peace" ever come into your life before.

LEWIS: (laughing again) Oh, I have thought of HAPPY PISS for a long time. I feel that our whole lives were dedicated to the search for peace. I honestly believe that's all diplomacy is: conflict resolution, keeping the peace. And I don't think it has to be big time stuff like treaties. It starts much smaller in personal relationships that turn into real trust and friendship. A human being makes one, oh, let's say, Chinese friend -- only one is all it takes, and that human being never again refers to "The Chinese".

And then Sam's proudest moments were certainly his involvement in the Egyptian-Israeli Peace. Only I know how hard he worked. I was only on the fringes. It was a thrill to be even marginally involved and to get to know the Begins, Sadats, and Carters. President Carter has never gotten half the credit he deserves for pulling that one off. The drama of Sadat in Jerusalem, of the presidential visits to Israel, of the State visits here, and of the signing of that treaty on the White House lawn are burned into my heart. Not to speak of the less dramatic, but equally important endless negotiations with less praised heroes like Phil Habib, Sol Linowitz, Morris Draper, Bob Strauss, Richard Murphy. And George Shultz deserves a peace medal and a paragraph all his own. I have had the honor of knowing some of the great peace makers of this generation. While I'm giving out peace prizes may I list a few Israeli heroes. Of course, Menachem Begin, whom I do love. And then, back in time to posthumous awards: Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon and Yigal Yadin. There would have been no treaty without the vision and the charm of Ezer Weizman, and his relationship with Anwar Sadat. And Abba Eban and Shimon Peres have worked their lifetimes with little reward. The people of Israel, Arab and Jew, long for peace in a way no American can. They have not known peace in their lifetimes. Sam and I learned from them to value the blessings of peace. Sam's new job with the United States Institute of Peace makes me very proud of him. I doubt I'm going to be able to contribute this time around.

Q: But there's not as large a role for you in this.

LEWIS: No, of course there's not.

Q: And after, what? 33 years you were in the Foreign Service?

LEWIS: I think it was only 31. (laughing)

Q: I felt after that length of time that I was ready to do something else. And yet, here I am, going right back into it, but in a different way. Once more, about CLO?

LEWIS: Well, I think it has completely revolutionized family life abroad. Because we have a voice now. And we know to whom to go for whatever kind of help is needed. Ideally your CLO makes every Foreign Service dependent feel an important part of the Embassy Family.

Q: It was a fun job. It was the only Embassy job that I wanted. I didn't want to be a switchboard operator or a visa clerk or count liquor bottles in the commissary. That wasn't (laughing) in my job description.

LEWIS: I bet you were terrific in it. You obviously can make people talk and they told you ALL the things, their problems -- (laughing). But you have to be a counselor and ...

Q: There wasn't an awful lot of that, really. I think the problem was that I was so much older. We had a lot of junior officers who were younger than my own children! -- more of them than any other kind. But of course I did know something about everyone

LEWIS: More than you wanted to know about some of the everyones!

Q: Exactly. I think one of the interesting things you did in Afghanistan was a peace-keeping effort, really, within the Embassy itself. That was the survey you did -- who had what color chair and what size. Tell me about that survey: why you did it. Was it Marlen Neumann who suggested it?

LEWIS: Absolutely. Marlen Neumann took the entire credit, because she even had me, as the Deputy Chief of Mission's wife, dragging my feet at the beginning of this idea. Now, picture ourselves in the early 70s: a vast, developing country and city with no paved streets, and 300 American families scattered from pillar to post about same. Even, unfortunately enough, the AID families were put in one section of the city and the Embassy families were put in other sections. The fact remaining: the AID families were closer to the school and to the commissary, but of course they nevertheless felt very put-upon.

We started off with a situation that was tense, to say the least. Adding also fuel to the fire at this time was the fact of where they were there wasn't really enough for Western women to do, where they had wonderful service in their homes and time on their hands. We developed an almost war, I think -- you're right to use the word peace-keeping, because suddenly it was realized that GSO had divided furniture into AID furniture and Embassy furniture.

So, our Ambassador's wife, Mrs. Marlen Neumann, believed in confrontation. Now, I'll have to admit I did a lot of the reporting to make her aware of the fact, because there weren't so many women who would go up to the Ambassador or his wife and complain

about their furniture. But I heard it over and over and over again and did report it to Marlen. So at an American Embassy women's meeting, which took place every two weeks, a general meeting, she simply stood and said that she understood there was a great deal of animosity about the division of furniture and she thought we should form a committee and investigate and see if their was any unfairness.

Q: If I might query here, had that become such an issue in Kabul that it was affecting the post's morale?

Lewis. Yes. Certainly in Marlen's judgment it was. I am always a coward and my solution to this kind of thing would have been to try to enlist these same women in groups together where they'd see each other in each other's homes and become aware of the fact that the furniture wasn't so different; et cetera. I would have had them studying Great Books or doing play-readings or learning to play mah jong or doing something of this sort. But Marlen felt that the issue was important enough. And you know, it is true that it worked; I will say this, it worked. It almost became a reason to giggle after we had enough AID wives come and look in our bedrooms (she laughs) after Marlen and I staggered around to all these homes, noting furniture, noting what needed reupholstering, noting brand names and prices. And it did turn out that aside from the few homes that had to do a lot of representational entertaining, it was a fairly even-steven arrangement.

Q: I'll interject questions now and then to clarify things for me. You actually, yourself, went into all of the homes with your little clipboard and checked out who had what kind of furniture?

LEWIS: Who had which kinds of furniture. And my records were open for every wife to see who had what kind of furniture. Mrs. Neumann went with me on as many of the calls as she could. In fact really what she did -- I asked people to call me for appointments, so that those who were most eager for this were the first ones attended to. Then, if they hadn't called me, I called and asked if I could have an appointment. Of course there were a few ladies who did not want me or Mrs. Neumann coming into their homes. And Mrs. Neumann quite wisely went along with me in homes where she felt she needed to know the woman better.

Q: What happened with those who didn't want either of you coming in? Did they just not get surveyed or ... ?

LEWIS: They didn't get to be part of the survey. We had to tell them they would not be in the statistics. We could see from the GSO records how much furniture was sent to them and of which type. Anyway, the AID wives decided that they had much better bedroom furniture and many more family room pieces to pick from than the Embassy women did. That helped a little. And the Embassy women's furniture in the living rooms was a little more expensive according to catalog value. In reality, it all ended up that we would all raise our eyebrows and throw up our hands when furniture was mentioned. But actual confrontation took an issue that was becoming a little side "Ps-s-ss-ss" sort of thing and

turned it into, I think, a kind of sense of fellowship about "how in the world do you stand that stuff you have in your son's bedroom? Doesn't it make you -- can he go to sleep at night (both laughing heartily) with those funny flowered chairs?" -- that kind of thing.

Q: How long did this take to do?

LEWIS: Oh, it took us I think it was a whole summer we worked on this; about three months. Because of all the appointments and things.

Q: The end result was what? All of the wives could come and look and see who had what?

LEWIS: Yes, yes, yes. And we had price lists of all the furniture from the catalogs so that you could see -- "Well, maybe you don't like your sofa as much as Mrs. So-and-So's, but your sofa cost $200 more than hers did." (more laughter) So it was taking something to the absolute peak of the nonsense of it and proving that there wasn't such an injustice at all. I think we just all got to know each other a whole of a lot better. Which might have been the answer to it all anyway -- you don't have your boss's wife wandering around in your bedroom writing down (breaking up laughing) what kind of furniture you've got or her inviting you to come to hers and see!

It was interesting, also, that I think it made a lot of people aware of some surprising facts. I always asked for the old furniture for their rooms when my children were little. Because I knew that a seven year old wasn't in need of a shiny new desk. And I would always ask for the old furniture, where most families took the new. I found that I could enjoy having that old desk and not worry that crayons, at least, were going to get smeared on it, probably some ink overturned, if not formaldehyde or something worse!

So, there was just an awful lot of the business that we all talked out. In reality, we had confronted the enemy and they were ours. So we made peace in the American community in Afghanistan. And, I hope, moved on to more important things than what kind of furniture we had.

Q: You know, it's built-in dissatisfaction in a place like Kabul, in a place like Freetown, Sierra Leone where we were, to have two types of furniture coming out, and have AID get one thing and State not get it, and State get something that AID didn't get. This is the situation you're up against. I can't imagine what mind here in Washington ...

LEWIS: ... could have, in general, conceived of such an idea.

Q: Yes. Yes.

LEWIS: Because it wasn't a financial thing, as I recall, when we really got down to it. It was not that AID was spending less on their employees' furniture than State was; it wasn't that at all. It was just simply the bureaucracies hadn't crossed. And perhaps GSO did not

have the authority to mix it all up; I don't know. I should think the administrative counselor could at least have shot a cable back about ...

Q: That would be very interesting time use for the study. And then, as an Ambassador's wife, why don't you just give me, if there was such a thing as a "typical day" or ,,,

LEWIS: Of course, there was an enormous variety.

Q: More to the point, really, would be in general, how was your time used from day to day, week to week? And how much of it, for you?

LEWIS: Well, it was almost a sunrise-to-sunset -- no, sunrise-to-midnight, anyway -- day that I did run through. I don't want to brag or to complain, and I enjoyed doing it all. BUT it ran like this: that I always had to get up at 5:30 to have a few moments to myself to try to see how I was going to get through this next day. Then from 6 to 7 a.m. I tried to take care of my correspondence. Then at 7, not State Department time, I would wake my kids for school -- this is only in Israel, only as an Ambassador's wife.

At 7: a.m. we always listened to the news, Sam and I. Sometimes he'd take the English language and I'd take the Hebrew in a different room, to be sure there wasn't anything left out. From 7 to 7:30 was sacrosanct, we didn't take phone calls, or anything. Usually that's when I got dressed. There was an excellent Israeli Government news program. There was also an army station that I often listened to, in Hebrew, which because they were a little bit different angles, you got sometimes different pieces of news.

At 7:30 we all had breakfast together. Also, then, I had a little time with my mother, she was part of our family. At 8 o'clock: Hebrew lesson. Till 9 or 9:30, depending on what I had to do that day. And then I would always launch out on whatever the project for that time was -- anything going on in the American community. Usually meetings started at 9.

Q: When did you direct your staff in all of this? You obviously directed them before you went out.

LEWIS: Well, this was always a very complicating factor. I always said I had a choice between Hebrew lessons and a well-run house. I usually, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, had an hour with my staff if I could get back in time. At 5 o'clock, time for my kids till 6. And then was off again, on again, you know, wham. I can't think of there ever having been a day, except maybe Yom Kippur, that we didn't entertain. But there were usually two or three things, you know -- I'd be having a luncheon in the house and Sam would be having politicians at the pool, maybe. Or we'd be having, say, one cabinet minister and his wife. I imagine I could count on the fingers of one hand (she laughs) say, if I had once a week lunch with my mother alone, it was a very special and rare occasion.

Q: Did she have lunch with you and your guests, or did she have lunch in her room?

LEWIS: Oh absolutely. If she felt well enough, she was always part of everything. Well, maybe not if it was -- she was very sensitive if, say, it was during peace negotiations and Dayan and Sam were getting together, Mother might decide that she wouldn't come down. But they would go up and tell her "Hi!" She was very much a part of things. She just really wasn't very interested in politics, so that if she were at the table sometimes the conversation would go off on other subjects. She knew that, so she would sometimes make herself scarce, tactfully. Unless it was a tete-a-tete, something like that, she was always a part of it.

Projects would be things like: we had monthly orientation of new spouses, which was a long morning usually. That was one of the things I might do in the morning, with, say, 60-80 people, never knowing exactly how many were coming all morning. Or I would be -- I was on a board of directors. One of the things I realized very early on, Israel is not the usual developing country where your diplomatic women need to organize charity activities. The Israelis have a strong awareness of the needy. So I worked through organizations that are already there and asked American women to follow their interests -- e.g., be on the board of a theater company, or -- there's a women's international Zionist movement; there is Hadassah that we're already very familiar with here; religious women's groups; the schools and homes for the handicapped, etc. And I tried to either do something for them or work with them on a cause. There are wonderful things for handicapped people going on all around. We had one wife who taught in prisons, another who drove handicapped children to school, others who were guides in museums. There was an abundance of good causes for any volunteer.

The interesting thing about Israel is that if I would ask about the women's prison, I would be called by the Minister of Police and issued an invitation and go and spend a day. I took advantage of all those things. I really felt it was an opportunity to learn about this country that very few people have. Whether it was inspecting women's prisons, or it was learning how you raised tomatoes to ship to Europe in the wintertime and make a fortune, I tried to do it all. I'm a very avid gardener and I was able to learn a great deal about the wonderful things Israel is doing raising magnificent products, flowers, with brackish water and exporting.

Q: Since there was no real need for American charitable work, your interesting the women in working in their groups, was this partly, there again, peacekeeping in the Embassy morale? Or was there enough for women to do?

LEWIS: Well, absolutely. We found a job for every American woman who wanted a job, because the Israelis were nice enough to let us have work permits for them. The salaries were quite low; but to get that all started was rather time-consuming, originally.

Q: I don't have your CV in front of me, what years were you in Israel?

LEWIS: 1977-85.

Q: Oh -- so the FLO was set up, everything was in place.

LEWIS: Our first FLO officer was Marina Viets, as a matter of fact. She did a superb job, as did every CLO we had. Back to my schedule. I was very active with Sam. Many of his appointments with the prime minister or the other cabinet ministers were at their homes, and we went together. The president's wife, Ora Herzog heads the Council for a Beautiful Israel and we did a lot together. She lived in Jerusalem, so I spent an enormous amount of time going back and forth, a distance that's now about a 50-minute, high-powered drive. Coming home in the afternoon I'd sometimes take a bit longer, being tireder, because it's very aggressive driving in Israel. I never had a whole day to myself. Besides the very active Israeli community, there's an international women's group which was also enormously successful and a lot of fun and which had zillions of committees. You could do everything -- go to the university and study archeology, through those courses you could also sometimes get enrolled in other courses; they even have courses there in English for foreigners. Lots of our wives attended the university full-time. We also had two who went to Haifa University, which was not too far away. I took one course the whole time I was there -- allowed myself (she laughs) that much time selfish life.

Q: I don't think so at all. That sounds like one of the few things you did strictly for you.

LEWIS: Yes. You have to watch that you're not getting to where you're not doing anything that's just up your alley. I was always on the board of the International Club, and their president one year. Another thing is the custom that you never go to anyone's home in Israel that you don't bring them a little gift. As I went to four or five places a day, it took a lot of thought and planning as well as shopping time, because I usually tried to make it be something that I made -- jam or jelly or plants, you know, something different, because I couldn't afford to compete on the level that they do. And that had also its other side -- whenever anyone came to my house, they brought me a little something; I wrote notes until I was green in the face.

Q: Oh, you actually wrote thank you notes for the little ...

LEWIS: I wrote thank you notes! People also send a lot of flowers to an embassy residence. I'm certain that I averaged 40 thank you notes a day, I'm certain; because, you know, you have just two or three parties for 200 and nearly everybody brings you a little something.

Q: (abashed) How did you keep track of who brought what?

LEWIS: Well, that's one of the things I had to have a major domo help me. I had a very special place on the stairs that I put things. I'd say, "Oh, thank you, are you sure there's a card in this?" And if there wasn't, I'd hand it to him, he was always dithering around on the side, and say, "Write down his name".

Q: "Find out who it is" (laughing).

LEWIS: No, no, I mean I'd do it right there. Because of course there were a few goofs that always happen in things like that. Then, anyway, you'd wade through -- then there were always ladies' tea parties and things in the afternoon, which I got to where I was able to do less and less of, but I had a lot of them in my house, just a lot of them in my house. People didn't always expect me to "get by" their tea parties in the afternoon.

Then I would be planning the next day with the major domo and worrying about the place cards that night for the dinner party. The only other answer was for him to try to get there at five or five-thirty in the morning, or even at six -- it wasn't fair. He had (laughing) a long enough day, because he stayed till the party was over and I just couldn't ask him to come early -- so we finally hit on that, when I was never in top form at four o'clock in the afternoon to try and plan. And it was fun too, because then the kids would be straggling in and they always had their comments on how things were going to be run, too. (both laughing) And menus too -- they were great on planning menus; things of that sort. Also, at that time you had to spend time with the rest of your staff.

Q: How many people were you directing, really?

LEWIS: I'm not quite certain; it must have been about seven, I guess, that were there daily. Then we always had a Marine guard in the house, there was always one on duty all night. And I'm not counting what they called gate guards, I didn't feel I was their supervisor.

Q: The Marine was at the house all the time, day and night? Standing in uniform?

LEWIS: Seated in uniform, which is just terrible. I was happy to see that that got changed after we left, because I didn't think, to begin with, it was very interesting for the Marine. But there were two or three real scares while we were there, so it was just -- decided. I know Sam didn't love having them there and I know the Marine -- though, you know, it was interesting, we still write nearly all those young men. Right off of the front foyer there was the Marine's office. To get to the basement you had to walk through the Marine's office. He had a television camera and -- at my insistence -- a radio; everybody said they shouldn't be allowed to listen to the radio. I said, "I think they're going to go absolutely wild." Of course, we did entertain so much that at least there was that to watch. They could (she laughs) keep track of who came in and went out of all the parties and stand where they could see what was going on in the main rooms. But occasionally there were times when we'd be gone all day -- our little dog still loves people in uniform. (hearty laughs)

I don't know. I haven't given you a good example of "a day" at all. But it was very hectic. I would then hurriedly get dressed and start out. I'd say we entertained four or five evenings a week, and certainly the other two or three evenings we were out; we were never home in the evening unless we were entertaining. We would very often hit five spots. Maybe Sam couldn't get away early enough and I would go to the first two

cocktails. Or maybe I'd go to one and he'd go to one, so we wouldn't be late for a dinner if it were a cabinet minister's home, where there was protocol. Fortunately Israelis are informal about that kind of thing but it would go on, it would be a rush to get there and to get to the next place. Sometimes I'd have to drive because the (laughing) circumlocution wouldn't work out unless we met somewhere.

Q: And you did this for eight years.

LEWIS: And as I said, I didn't know it but I was extremely tired when I got home. It was fun, I certainly wouldn't count all the hours of frivolity, social things as "official work." But to found deep friendships, there has to be a certain amount of sincerity, and that is sometimes shown by the time you'll invest with them.

And we weren't always going to high-level official parties. We were often having dinner with a family on a kibbutz. We'd spend the night with them sometimes, because they adored to have to move out of their beds. And that was very flattering. And it was all very interesting to us, you know. You think if you've visited one kibbutz you've seen them all. But each one has a personality and an ambiance and an existence all its own.

Q: Look at all the different levels you were working on: You had your mother and your children, you had your household staff, you had the American community, the American women. And then of course the Israelis. You were entertaining and being entertained a great deal of the time. And you also found time for the theater -- you told me. But look at all those levels that you were working on. And you must have juggled those from day to day. It's a little hard to juggle your family because they're there all the time, and you don't <u>want</u> to.

LEWIS: There's one thing that we didn't even touch on, and that's the telephone, which was a really serious problem for me. Because there were just always calls. I would come back and the Marine would hand me a stack of messages, maybe 30 phone calls while I'd been gone in the morning. I had no social secretary. There was a Protocol Officer at the Embassy, who wrote the formal invitations for me and I sent her guest lists. <u>That</u> was what was time consuming also, the guest lists. My goodness, the hours one spends on those blinking, blanking things.

Q: You and Sam worked on those together?

LEWIS: Yes. After three or four years, it would more and more come in my court. I had my lists from previous years, for the annual things; but for the things that Sam was trying to -- the current things, of course, changed always as to whom we needed to see during this particular hiatus, or terrible conflict at the Knesset, this kind of thing. It was interesting that in Israel they're very family oriented and it was very often done with wives. I always imagined this kind of politicking would go on just man-to-man, but it seemed to be much more effective if we'd zoom down to Jerusalem and take someone out

to lunch or they'd come up and have lunch with us by the pool, nearly always bringing their wives. It's nice!

Q: Yes, nice. And gave you a more definite role.

LEWIS: That's right. Sometimes Sam would also help me with the seating, which had always been mine. But because of delicate political situations, (laughing) I would have to -- at least when he was tearing off to the office in the morning -- say, "Do you possibly think that the Defense Minister's wife could sit at the same table with, say, the Minister of Interior?!" And Sam would say, "I don't think so. Not this month. Not this week." Or I'd get his advice.

Q: So, really, you had to be on top of things political.

LEWIS: Absolutely. Well, for everyone who lives there it is a very political place. It's not that the ladies talk about children and babies: they talk about politics. (she laughs heartily)

Q: (also laughing) So that would be a refreshing change, in a way.

LEWIS: That's right. We're too inclined ...

Q: So really to lead the kind of life that you led -- and this is really very bottom line basic -- you had to have someone to see that the shopping was done, that the ashtrays were emptied, that the flowers were ...

LEWIS: Oh yes, my goodness, I always planned the flowers every day, with the Arab gardener. Right before he went home I'd tell him what I'd want for the next day.

Q: And the menus, and having your clothes ready -- I mean, there wasn't time for you to take care of the basics of living that we're doing today. So you had to be very well organized and have all of that taken care of for you, to set the stage for your daily performance. Which is really what it was, wasn't it.

LEWIS: Well, I don't know... Kind of. But not really. But kind of, because you just went ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM. But I wouldn't take anything for it, I wouldn't have changed it. And as I said, in some of that earlier palaver, it is the only thing that I miss terribly -- that sense that I always felt what I was doing was really important for my country; that whatever, whoever the people were I was spending the time with, were aware that Americans were interested in what they were doing, and cared, and wanted to understand. That is the secret to almost any country -- that people feel you understand where they're coming from.

That's all there is to it. I think that it's those real personal relationships that are perhaps the most important. One can never "generalize" again and say "Americans are ..." , if you can

say one American is a friend. So I just whaled into it, but I enjoyed it. Once every week I drove a car pool for little underprivileged deaf children, which I got more out of than I ever put into it. One year I had to leave the house at 5:30 every Friday morning. That was terrible, a terrible commute to make for a child that would just have gotten no help at all if I hadn't got to him. But the other years it was never that bad, it was just drive them to school and stay and be a teacher's assistant. I learned a lot about education of the non-hearing; it was very interesting.

And then I'd follow up, I'd open my home for a little, say, party for micha in the hope that the guests would make donations to this school for the deaf. I did a lot of that because (l) I felt it was important, and (2) that I enjoyed helping. It's very rarely that one has the opportunity or the home or the chance to help good causes. And I realized it was a way to reach Israelis, because they are very, very active in taking care of their own.

So we spent a lot of time doing that. I thought that everyone in Israel should have a chance to come to the American Ambassador's Residence -- I felt that that house was not there for my family to enjoy, or the Prime Minister and us to enjoy, I thought it was there for everybody in Israel to see that "this is the way America wants to be remembered to you all, as hospitable and as interested and let's be friends." You know? And it worked, I think, it really worked, because we didn't have very many regrets on invitations, ever.

Q: This is post-1972 directive: What was your relationship with your spouses on Sam's staff?

LEWIS: Well, it was always cordial. I mean, I just had -- the CLO told everybody that I surely would be thrilled if they'd call and make an appointment to come visit me; everybody.

Q: So, she was really helpful to you, wasn't she, in that way.

LEWIS: Yes. Well, I asked her to do that. (laughing) I was put in the Welcome Kit. I'd say, seven out of ten spouses called, and if one didn't -- I'd always tried to remember the ones that hadn't and be sure that I met them in some community occasion, you know, looking out for them and trying to figure out why. Sometimes it would be that they were busy and already felt they knew me. Sometimes it would be that (in mocking tone) that they didn't want to have anything to do with an Ambassador's wife. And I'd try and get them over that, if I could. I didn't stand on my head! (she laughs) But usually I might meet them at the PTA meeting or something.

Oh, that was another time consuming business, too. We had our share of problems there. When we arrived there were a lot of drugs in the American School. Now there are no drugs in the American School. It was very painful but it was accomplished. The school goes from kindergarten through high school. It's a good school. A lot of Israelis attended, particularly at the high school level because there are a lot of Israelis who want their children to do part of their university work in the States, so they want to get into the

American system. It's very expensive for an Israeli to go to an American school.

Q: I think that, with this general background and what we've said today ...

LEWIS: Well, maybe I should say that I thought at the time when I got the request to fill Margaret Sullivan's Time Use Survey for Dependent Spouses, it was a terrible chore for me. But in filling it out, I realized there were a great number of hours and that it was important that if American Foreign Service spouses were going to seek their compensation, they must prove their worth. And I'd like to go on record that I thank Margaret for all the work. I hope that all of that will be used some day.

Q: The next thing, of course, is to translate this time-use study into an effective tool to ask for compensation.

LEWIS: Right. Seriously, I've always felt I had my compensation. But I can understand: it's as puzzling to me as my children saying that their salary at their job is not enough, it ruins their self-esteem. And I always say to them, "I can't imagine what a salary and self-esteem have to do with each other; I do not know." But it's evidently something that's going on in the modern world, and I do know a lot of women who would simply rather die than admit to being a housewife. One must be gainfully employed. I'm terribly lucky that my job as Sam's wife kept my self-esteem in tact all these years, and kept me challenged most of the time. Even during those long assignments in Washington, when my kicks were getting to iron the shirts he wore when he met with the President. I still felt I was contributing. Pollyanna is ending her interview! Thank you so very much, Jewell.

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BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Samuel Lewis

Spouse Entered Service: 1953 Left Service: 1985
You Entered Service: Same Left Service:

Status: Retired spouse

Posts:

1953-1955	Naples, Italy
1955-59	Florence, Italy
1960-63	Department of State, Washington, DC
1963-65	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
1966-70	Department of State, Washington, DC
1971-74	Kabul, Afghanistan
1975-76	Department of State, Washington, DC

1977-1985 Tel Aviv, Israel

Spouse's Position: AEP, Assistant Secretary of State

Place and Date (optional) of birth: July 19, 1930

Maiden Name: Smoot

Parents (Name, Profession):
Richard Lee Smoot, Chief Auditor of Humble Oil, Co.
Grace Morris Smoot, Teacher, Housewife

Schools (Prep, University):
Mirabeau B. Lamar Public High School, Houston, Texas
Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas

Date and Place of Marriage: June 20, 1953 - Houston, Texas

Profession: Actress, Teacher, Writer

Children:
Grace Lewis
Richard Lewis

Volunteer and Paid Positions held:
A. At Post: Embassy Women's Groups, School and Commissary Boards, Gift Shops, etc; International Women's Clubs; Local Handicapped Children's Groups; Fund raising for local charities

B. In Washington, DC: Inner-City education and counseling, 1970-75; Play directing for Amateur Groups; Volunteer political campaigns (Democrat!); At present, struggling playwright!

Honors (Scholastic, FS related): Salutatorian of Class 1952; National President of Kappa Phi; Honor Council, etc; Numerous awards in Israel.

End of interview