

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

**MILDRED TEUSLER RINGWALT**

*Memoirs of a Foreign Service Officer's Wife 1938-1958*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Mrs. Ringwalt was born Mildred Minor Teusler in Tokyo, Japan of American parents. She married her husband, Foreign Service Officer Arthur Rumney Ringwalt, in 1938 and accompanied him on his assignments in Washington, D.C. and abroad.

Background

Born in Japan in 1907

Married Foreign Service Officer Arthur Rumney Ringwalt in 1938

Peking (Peiping), China

1938-1941

Journey via ship and Trans-Siberian Railroad

World War II begins

En route via Germany

Jewish plight in Budapest

Theft of documents in Strasburg

Moscow

Mukden

Housing and staff

Carpet buying

Mrs. Frank Lockhart

Bandits

Protocol problems

Chinese foundling home

Japanese occupation

Peking Union Medical Center

Pony and camel racing

Health and Sanitation

Japanese conquerors

Children

Japanese language facility

Mounting US-Japan war threats

Evacuation to Shanghai

Daughter (Mary Stuart) scarlet fever scare

Return to Richmond, Virginia

Richmond, Virginia	1941-1943
Resided in Richmond while husband was in Chunking, China	
Predictions that Chiang Kai-shek would lose to Mao-Tse-tung	
Signators of Chunking Embassy telegram	
McCarthy witch-hunt	
Washington, DC	1945-1948
Newport, Rhode Island	1948-1949
Housing	
Environment	
London, England	1949-1957
“China hands” and McCarthyism	
War devastation	
Housing	
Children	
Household staff romances	
Palace Garden Party	
Social protocol	
Princess Margaret	
Ball for the Queen	
Russian Embassy lunches	
House burglary	
“one penny per pee”	
Coronation of Queen Elizabeth	
Sir Edmund Hillary	
Mrs. Aldrich’s wives’ meetings	
Bunny Hibberd	
Volunteer for CARE	
Kingston, Jamaica	1957-1959
Environment	
Protocol responsibilities	
Climate	
Security	
Household help	
Entertaining	
Race prejudice	
Impressions	

## INTERVIEW

From beginning to end, my life with Arthur as the wife of a Foreign Service Officer was exhilarating, challenging, and full of adventure. I shall start at the beginning. We met in Washington, DC, at the home of a mutual friend who was a colleague of Arthur's in the State Department. We were immediately drawn to one another because of our common interest in the Far East. Arthur was on leave from his assignment as a Chinese language student in Peking, China, and I was born and brought up in Japan where my father, Rudolf Teusler, was founder and director of St. Luke's International Hospital.

Arthur drove me back to my apartment in Washington, and the next morning I was overwhelmed with a gift of roses from him. The flowers kept coming, and I was dined and courted. On my return to Richmond, Virginia, where I lived with my aunt and mother, I shared my interest in Arthur with them. They insisted that before things went any further, it was imperative that we find out something about this young man.

Accordingly, we wrote to Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, my cousin, who was living in Washington and was a close friend of all my family. She made discreet inquiries through the head of the Department of State who then turned her letter over to his assistant. The letter was handed down from hand to hand until it reached the China desk, and there it was turned over to Arthur!

Needless to say, an excellent report of the young man was given which was then sent off to my cousin Edith and mailed to us. We were married in June and my cousin Edith was there, as well as all of Arthur's approving friends in the State Department. Jim Penfield, our host on the first occasion that Arthur and I met, was his best man.

We went to Farmington Club near Charlottesville for a weekend honeymoon, and the first person to greet us on our arrival there was Jim. He and some of his friends had registered for a weekend there, having no idea we would show up! I, for one, was disappointed when we learned they all left early the next morning. I thought it would have been fun to celebrate with them.

We had to return to my aunt's house on the Monday as Arthur was to go back to Washington for some unfinished business on Tuesday. The following day, Arthur called me in the afternoon to ask if I could get ready to go to Peking via Europe and the trans-Siberian railroad, stopping over for a ten-day assignment in Moscow...by Saturday. Of course I could! I was absolutely thrilled, and all my family pitched in and helped to get me ready.

In those days we didn't fly but went leisurely by boat. The entire trip was an extended honeymoon until one morning in September. Having breakfast with Arthur in the courtyard of our Chinese house, served by Arthur's Number One Boy, Young, Arthur picked up the morning paper as I was about to say something, and I realized the honeymoon was over. (Transcriber's note: It is assumed that Mrs. Ringwalt means that the newspaper held some bad news presumably relating to the start of World War II, not

that her bridegroom was ignoring her in Dagwood fashion by reading the paper!)

On the way to our new home we had celebrated some beautiful days with my two sisters and brother-in-law in England and some heart wrenching days in Budapest, meeting many desperate Jewish people, some of them wearing the Star of David, and staying at different places every night trying to get out. The American Consul looked drained and exhausted and told us he could hardly force himself to go to the Embassy each day where he had to turn away so many desperate Jews. All were expected to raise their arms and “Heil Hitler!” I refused. We took a Jewish doctor to a restaurant for dinner. He was having to wear the Star of David, but he, too, refused to “Heil Hitler!” I telephoned St. Luke’s in Tokyo and asked if they would give him a position there. They agreed readily to do so, but then we lost contact with him. I have never known whether he got out.

We had some bad experiences. In Strasburg, we decided to visit a famous monastery on the border between Germany and France. It was a fascinating place where many people went on pilgrimage. We spent the day there. Walking down the hill on our way to the train to take us back to Strasburg, we stopped for a few minutes to rest on the side of a hill. We both fell asleep and discovered, on awakening, that our carrier bag with our diplomatic passports and visas had been snatched up. We went back to the monastery and broadcast an appeal for their return, but finally as the monastery closed, we had to leave. We were both stunned by what had happened.

Arthur reported the theft to the Consulate that night and went straight there first thing in the morning. We offered a reward for its return and finally, early in the afternoon, he showed up with our bag and all its contents intact! Later, we met with the man who claimed he had found it, but we suspected he was the person who stole it.

Six months later, when we were established in Peking, he wrote to us demanding more money and, if we did not comply, threatened he would write to the State Department in Washington and expose the incident. We did not respond and never heard from him again. From that time on, we wore a leather case suspended from our shoulders wherever we went.

One evening I well remember in Berlin. We attended a beer garden in a large hall after dinner where there were many Nazi youths drinking, jumping on the table, and shouting Nazi slogans. Although they paid no attention to us, we were very uncomfortable and did not stay long. Although they were in good spirits, we realized there was something sinister about what was happening there. We had no idea of the evil that would be perpetrated on the Jews within the year.

We stayed in Warsaw for a few days before starting on our trip to Moscow by the trans-Siberian railway. As we waited to board the train, our passports and visas were scrutinized. When we were about to board, an official informed us that we would not be permitted to take that train, which was destined for a long stopover in Moscow, since our visas were not valid. We were bewildered. They were adamant. Just before the train

pulled out, I intercepted two Japanese couriers and asked them in Japanese, please to notify our Embassy of our predicament. This they did on arrival in Moscow, but the Embassy was unable to reach us by phone.

In the meantime, we were told that there was a room available upstairs for us and that we could use it overnight and depart on a train the following morning that stopped at Moscow for only a short time before going on to Manchuria. A Jewish couple, who were escaping from Austria and who were also not allowed to disembark in Moscow were told they could not use the upstairs rooms. They, too, would be allowed to take the morning train, but would have to spend the night in the waiting room. Arthur and I were outraged at our preferential treatment and said we would prefer to spend the night in the waiting room than to abandon our friends.

After some palaver, the station master decided to allow them to go upstairs after all, and we proceeded to go up together. There were two soldiers on guard upstairs. We had prepared some sandwiches to eat on the train, and these we shared with our new-found friends while we talked about their predicament in having to flee from their homeland. This was during the time Chamberlain was meeting with Hitler for appeasement. The results as yet had not been broadcast.

The following morning, we all boarded the train, and I was glad to leave the place where we felt like virtual prisoners. On arrival in Moscow, two men got on our coach and came over to our section. They put Arthur between them and took him off. I was wondering what would happen next when they reappeared and asked me to collect all our luggage and they would take me off the train. They told me they were from our Embassy, and I was vastly relieved. There was no interference, and we left the station as the train pulled out. The Soviet authorities refused for several days to give us permission to stay in Moscow, but finally they broke down and gave us our visa. The whole episode was manufactured because there was bad feeling between the Americans and the Soviets, and they deliberately set about harassing us.

Alexander Kirk was the Ambassador and was living in the Embassy residence. We stayed in his apartment where he lived before he was appointed as number one. I had known Alex from my childhood days in Tokyo when he was a secretary at the Embassy. He gave us a most sumptuous dinner at the Embassy a few days after we arrived there, my first diplomatic dinner and one of the most enjoyable of all those further down the line.

We were very comfortable in our apartment where we had our meals prepared by a Russian woman who came in every evening with her baby. I looked after the child while she produced the dinner. We thoroughly enjoyed one afternoon when we visited a “dasha” owned by a member of the Embassy staff. I remember how beautiful the birch trees were and how quiet and peaceful the country. We were free to mix with the crowds in the street and to wander about wherever we wished. Arthur spent most of the time at the Embassy in consultation, while I was busy noting and absorbing the feel of the place. We, of course, visited Lenin’s tomb and were duly impressed.

Finally, we embarked on the seven-day trans-Siberian railroad to Mukden and were made comfortable on the train in a small compartment. It was a long trip but a fascinating one. The train stopped at many places, but we were never allowed to go beyond the limits of the station. There was a constant stream of Russians getting on and off the train and many different nationalities, mostly Soviet.

The most interesting part of the day was from two o'clock on when lunch was served in the diner. We all ate together with the farmers and local people as well as the persons who served us and took turns eating their meals with us. There was a great deal of comradery and fellowship with no class distinctions. We, of course, could not understand anything that was said, but we did appreciate the open way everyone related.

Finally, the day arrived when we reached Mukden. The American Consul General, George Merrill, an old friend, met our train, and were we glad to be there. Our thoughts centered on a hot bath and a bed that was steady and quiet. We could hardly wait, but instead we were both taken to the guardhouse, I protesting loudly and vehemently all the way. We were detained because we refused to give permission to the officials to inspect our luggage since we were diplomatic and it was customary to extend this courtesy. We really didn't care and tried to persuade our friend, the Consul General, to give in. But he was adamant. He said it would set a bad precedent unless we held firm to our position. After a short interval with constant complaints coming from me, we won out and were allowed to depart. We were somewhat relieved to learn that the Consul General had made a previous appointment for dinner that night, so Arthur and I had a very good dinner served to us and then enjoyed a wonderful night in real beds.

We arrived the following day in what was then called Peking and were met by the Chief of Staff, Frank Lockhart, by other colleagues of Arthur's and by Young, his former Number One boy. We spent that night in the stable of a temple which was to be our home for almost two years; longer for Arthur. My good friend, Elsie Grew Lyon, was the previous occupant and had left shortly before we arrived.

Actually, there was space available in an apartment in the Embassy compound guarded by Marines twenty-four hours, but we fell in love with the beautiful tiled temple and we both agreed it was where we wanted to be. There was an outer courtyard guarded by an old man who, I suspected, smoked opium most of the time, and a small apartment occupied by someone in the Information Service. Our house was through a door leading into an inner courtyard with a small reflector pool in the center dominated by a four foot figure of Mercy in white marble. Years later, in 1940, when all the women and children were evacuated from China because of impending war and I had departed, one of our two chow dogs fell into the pool before Arthur heard all the wild barking from its mate and rushed over and pulled Folly out.

We were enchanted with our temple home with its green tile roof and its lovely carvings. There were fireplaces in every room which was our only source of heat during the winter

months, but we employed thirteen people, and one of these did nothing else except keep the fires going. Someone else did the laundry, and we had a cook and an assistant cook. I foolishly replaced Young after we had been there for some months, because I was told he would be loyal only to Arthur, not to me, and because I discovered he was accepting bribes. But then, they all did! That was the accepted pattern, and we learned to live with it.

A few weeks after our arrival in Peking, Mrs. Frank Lockhart, whose husband was Chargé of the Embassy in the absence of the Ambassador, and two other Embassy wives decided to take a day's trip by train to a carpet factory where some very beautiful rugs could be purchased. It was somewhat risky to undertake this because bandits all too often blasted the trains and kidnapped the passengers or shot them. The group was not enthusiastic over my joining them because I was pregnant, but I was very eager to go and prevailed on them to include me. We had an uneventful trip for which we were all very thankful. It was well worth the risk for we commissioned many very beautiful carpets. At that time, the exchange was \$20 for one American dollar. My daughter still luxuriates in the lovely carpets I gave her. I thought it was the least I could do after exposing her to the risks involved.

When we were able to get away from our active social life, Arthur and I loved to go to the Western Hills outside Peking. The bandits were in control of many parts of the country during the Japanese occupation, and we were discouraged from going to that area. There had been kidnappings and disappearances, but the country was so lovely, we could not resist. We walked through many deserted villages where residents must have fled on very short notice with many of their possessions left behind. We could hear shooting and bombing in the distance, so we were not able to venture too far afield. Fortunately, we were not molested, and towards the end of my second year in Peking, we were forbidden to go to the Western Hills.

Several months after we had settled, I gave a lunch for some of the Embassy wives and other friends who had entertained me. Arthur and I went carefully over the seating arrangements so that each of my guests would be seated exactly where she should be. The wives of diplomats always took precedence and, accordingly, I placed Lady Chase, a widow whose husband was not a diplomat, in the middle of the table. Lady Chase was an old-timer in Peking who lived in a beautiful old temple where she "received" every other week in style. At the entrance, guests were met by her Number One boy, who ushered the visitors through countless halls with many extraordinary carvings into the inner sanctum where there were more liveried servants and Lady Chase herself, a most gracious hostess. Tea and cakes were passed around, and then we said "goodbye" and stepped back into the present.

I liked Lady Chase, although after awhile her parties bored me, so I was utterly unprepared for what happened at my ladies' party. We were all about to sit down when I heard Lady Chase's plaintive cry, "You are not going to seat me here, are you?" There was a dreadful silence. "Well, yes, I did plan to," I said. What else could I say? There was

silence, and then I asked one of the ladies who was seated higher up if she would mind exchanging her seat for Lady Chase's. She readily agreed. To this day, I have never been clear as to how I should have responded. I do well remember that Arthur, who was at the time sick in bed with the flu, was very comforting and supportive of me when I rushed into his room in tears after my guests had left.

Shortly after our arrival in Peking, Frank Lockhart, acting Chief of Staff, and his wife invited us to a welcoming party at their house in the Embassy compound. Imagine my embarrassment when halfway through the party one of the guests gently pointed out that hanging from my belt behind me was a large bunch of keys. These were essential because everything had to be under lock and key, as was the case many years later in Kingston, Jamaica. I removed them and dropped them in my purse, but it gave us all a good laugh.

Some of the Embassy wives were interested in a Chinese foundling home, supported by a Mission, where conditions were absolutely appalling. There was a turntable basket set in a corner of the building on a side street where mothers placed their babies. A little push and the table would turn to the inside where the babies, presumably, were received and given proper care and affection. The tragedy was that there were so many babies and so few staff that only the hardiest could survive the cold and neglect. It was a dreadfully depressing place because there was so little we could do to help. The babies were strangely quiet and unresponsive, because their cries were unheeded.

I remember arriving home one freezing afternoon from the nursery and seeing our little girl, warm and loved, under a quilt I had especially made for her. The next time I went to the nursery, I took the quilt, and Mary Stuart was just as warm and comfortable under one of our coats.

The Japanese occupied China at that time, and birth control devices were forbidden. There was a courageous Chinese doctor practicing at the Peking Union Medical Center, a Rockefeller Foundation Hospital, who made herself available for this information. She urged quietly and secretly to send her as many women as we could persuade to go, but we had few successes. It was too risky. Later, I heard that the foundling center was taken over by an American organization, which the Home was desperately trying to bring about. Then war broke out, and I have never known what happened to that pitiful foundling home.

Arthur and I spent one Saturday at the race track outside Peking where there was an annual competition attended by the business, military, and Embassy personnel in horse racing, camel riding, etc. A friend, who could not attend at the last minute, persuaded me to ride her pony in one of the races. I had some strong reservations, but I agreed although I had never been in a race. It was all very professional with the weighing-in process and extra weights put on my pony because I was so slight. Then I found myself at the starting line with the sound of the starting pistol. I was not prepared for the short, bumpy gait of my little pony and did not take long to give my full attention simply to staying on! We were next to the last at the finishing line, but at least I made it!

A short time later, I found myself on a camel which, when it stood up from a kneeling position, lurched me backward and then threw me forward, so all I could do was to hold on for dear life! A shot was fired, and off we went ... my camel boy tearing along with the camel held by a rope. I was tossed about in every direction so I lost all my wits. I thought it would never end! At least we were not the last.

Sometimes there were dreadful sandstorms when the sky would turn yellow and the whole city would be covered with desert sand. Even with the windows closed, it covered everything. Outside, it was sometimes difficult even to see. Fortunately, we had a staff of thirteen and so we did not have to do the cleaning up.

Our temple house had no insulation whatsoever, and there were places that had cracks large enough to see the dirt foundation. All kinds of insects wandered in, such as scorpions and centipedes. One of the former was found over our baby's crib, and many times we discovered centipedes in the little tub where we bathed our baby. There was no tub or shower, so we rigged one up which was quite satisfactory.

Our main problem was drinking water, which was not safe except in the Embassy compound. We arranged for one of our staff of servants to fill several gallon bottles from the Embassy compound whenever needed. The Embassy compound was about two blocks from our house and was surrounded by a wall with a gate guarded by two Marines. We had to give a pass to our coolie who went for the water, and in order to insure that he had been there, he had to take the pass to Arthur at the office to sign. We had to be very careful of the spread of disease in Peking since there were no regulations regarding public health. Typhus, typhoid, scarlet fever, and cholera were prevalent.

Our second summer in Peking, cholera was epidemic, and preventive shots were given at the rail road station. Arthur applied to go to Tokyo as a courier and learned that a man had passed out the previous day on receiving his fourth injection in as many days. Many people were afraid of the needle and were willing to pay the man for his pass in order to escape having it done to them. (Transcriber's note: A similar story is told by Elsie Lyon concerning the number of injections her Japanese nursemaid was forced to endure so the family could travel.)

We found a lovely place on the ocean to go for our vacation in the summer at Beidahoe, and after Arthur and other friends had returned to Peking, I stayed another few days. There were just the three of us...our eighteen month old baby, her Japanese nurse, and I in our

comfortable house overlooking the ocean. We were quite nervous about being there alone, however, as the Japanese were in occupation. Terrifying stories were circulated about some of the things they did, and we felt isolated. We always ate an early dinner so we could get to bed before dark to avoid lights. Sometimes we heard steps outside and hoped the baby would be quiet, but it was unnerving, and I was relieved finally to arrive

safely home.

On the train going to Beidahoe there were several Japanese generals who were enchanted with our baby, and I felt quite confident turning her over to their care when my attention was needed elsewhere. There was a brutish side to them also. Once when Arthur and I were walking along a road, some Japanese officers accelerated their car and would have run us down if we had not jumped into a ditch. Apart from our anxiety over the behavior of the Japanese conquerors, there was always the risk of being held up by bandits when traveling by train. There were weekly reports of holdups and kidnapping, and we were never quite sure we would make it.

Arthur and I spent our first vacation at Karuizawa in the mountains of Japan with my mother and sister who were visiting there. On our return trip, we disembarked at Tangu, China, expecting to proceed by train to Peking with our baby. Fortunately, I went ahead of Arthur and was outside the building when we heard over the loudspeaker that no one would be permitted to leave. Someone in the milling crowd had suddenly become violently ill with cholera, and all of us were, therefore, quarantined! We were told we would have to go to a camp for observation for three weeks. I was horrified at the thought of going through such an ordeal with our five-month old baby.

When the announcement was made, there were some ten to twelve persons, mostly British, who happened to be outside the building with their friends and relatives from Tangu who had come to welcome them back from Japan. I joined this group, and together we hired rickshaws and were taken to the British clubhouse on the outskirts of the city. I could see Arthur gesticulating to me as we took off, but I did not dare wave to him for fear of being forced to go back inside. The club was peaceful and quiet after the confusion and noise of the harbor. Best of all, there were practically no flies, where (at the station before) there had been dozens plastered on my baby's face and hands. Every fly could be a carrier of the dreaded disease.

The group conferred together and then decided to send our most distinguished member to plead with the Japanese Consul to free those still being held in the building. That failed, and I then volunteered to try, since I was born and brought up in Japan and spoke a little of the language. As I passed the building where my husband was being held with many others, he waved to me, but I did not dare to wave back. The Consul was expecting me and politely listened as I explained how serious it was for everyone if we were not allowed to leave. I told him of the anxiety we felt if the authorities continued to hold the group in the building.

Suddenly he agreed that we could all go free, and I was raced back in the rickshaw to the group at the club to tell them the good news. We had missed the train for Peking and we had to wait a long time for the next. I spent the hours fighting flies, but it was such a relief that our family was reunited that I could feel only gratitude.

In the late Summer of 1940, we were told that tensions between the U.S. and Japan were

mounting and that all Embassy and Consulate wives should be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Each household received a notice suggesting that we prepare for two possibilities: one for immediate departure with only two suitcases packed and ready to go; the other, for a day's notice with no more than four suitcases. It was unnerving to say the least!

Then began the exodus of various Embassy wives, children and personnel. I was especially upset when the British Embassy women left. Then came the distressing morning when the Scottish guards, with their cheery and reassuring bagpipes, no longer marched past our temple house as they had done faithfully every morning since our arrival in Peking. Finally, the decision was made and the dreaded command went out. Embassy and Consulate wives must set an example to the business community and be amongst the first to leave. There was a ship waiting in Shanghai for all evacuees which was to depart in two weeks.

I was prepared for the news, for my mother and sister had been evacuated from Tokyo three weeks earlier. The day before I left Peking with our eighteen month old baby, I received a phone call from the mother of a friend with whom my child had been playing the previous day. Bad news! Her child had just been diagnosed as having scarlet fever! In those days, this was a serious disease. (Recently, a doctor told me he would rather have his child develop scarlet fever than to have a bad cold.) Anxiously and sorrowfully, Mary Stuart and I said "goodbye" to Daddy and husband and took a boat to Shanghai from Tanghu. It took about two days, and no lights were allowed after dark, so we ate early. We arrived in Shanghai and went immediately to a hotel where I discovered that Mary Stuart had a temperature of 104! Dismayed, I immediately called a doctor who obviously suspected scarlet fever, but since she had not broken out with a rash, he advised me to proceed with plans to leave the following afternoon with the others.

There was so much to do, and I arranged for an amah to look after the baby while I attended to tickets and passport. It was dreadfully frustrating not to be able to communicate with the amah, since I spoke a little Mandarin, which has no similarity whatsoever to the Shanghai dialect. There was still no rash the following morning when the doctor came. He explained that if she did get it during the day before the boat left, she would have to be transferred to an infectious hospital and that I would not be allowed to accompany her. We waited anxiously for the hours to pass until three o'clock when the passengers prepared to board the ship. The doctor came after three and, since there was still no rash, he gave me the wonderful news that we could board the ship after everyone else had embarked. Each of us wearing masks, we were taken by car to the pier where a motorboat was waiting to take us to the steamer. I was almost overwhelmed with a sense of thankfulness as we were on our way.

We were rushed down to a suite which had been reserved for Mrs. Johnson, the wife of the Ambassador, and her children. Mrs. Johnson occupied the bedroom half of the suite, while we took the livingroom half. We were now safe, and I could give my full attention at long last to my baby. That night, at dark, the siren blew and the ship slowly moved out

of the harbor. I looked out of my porthole and, to my surprise, the river was crowded as far as I could see with boats, each with a lantern. These were the husbands, the brothers and the friends of the many women on our ship. I could hear their voices singing “goodnight, ladies” as they followed us down the river. I could imagine the tears and the waving from the rails of the decks above me. It brought the imminence of war very close.

Mary Stuart was quarantined for only another day and a half, and then we were allowed the freedom of the ship and dinner at the Captain’s table with Mrs. Johnson, her children and other friends. The food was excellent and so was the service. Some of the wives had never been exposed to the care of their children, who had been taken care of by amahs. I shall never forget a conversation we had with our waiter midway on our voyage. Most of the mothers, he observed, spent their mealtime trying to persuade their offspring to eat. From every table we could hear, “Just one more bite, dear,” and “Please, for Mother’s sake, another tiny bite” and “Come on, now, just open your mouth.” He went on to explain that he had been brought up in eastside New York. In his family there was never quite enough food and all the kids were always hungry. He felt our children were deprived far more than he was, because there was so much anxiety connected with the eating of food that they were no longer able to enjoy it! It was an important lesson for us all in child-upbringing.

Three months later, (in 1941) my husband joined us on leave at my aunt’s house in Richmond, Virginia. On December 7th, we drove to Washington to visit my sister who had an apartment there. We were listening to a concert over the radio when, suddenly, there was an announcement of an attack on our fleet. At that very same moment, we had to go under the bridge. When we came out on the other side, the message had been given. We did know something very serious had occurred, but not of the proportions of Pearl Harbor!

It was not long before the terrible news came pouring in, and Arthur rushed over to the State Department. It was devastating to me because I was born and brought up in Japan and I loved it as my own country. Arthur returned in the evening to report that everyone in the Department was in a state of shock and confusion and there wasn’t much he felt he could do at that time. After a few days, we returned to my aunt’s home in Richmond, making it our headquarters until we could foresee what the future held for us.

Less than a year later, when Arthur was assigned to the China desk at the State Department, he received his orders, together with his best man at the wedding, Jim Penfield, and other China hands. They were to fly to the American Embassy, housed in a cave at Chungking, China. This happened shortly after our second child was born, and sadly I dismantled our apartment in Washington and moved back to my aunt in Richmond. We were separated for three years.

General Hurley was the American Ambassador at Chungking, and it was during one of the Ambassador’s visits to Washington for consultation that a telegram came from his staff, mostly drafted by John Service, and sent by George Acheson, John Carter Vincent,

Edmund Club and others to the Department of State. After discussion with Mao Zedong in China, those who signed the telegram reported that, in the struggle being waged between Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists, Chiang would lose. General Hurley saw the telegram and was enraged. Later, during the McCarthy period, those who signed the telegram were slowed or blocked in their careers. This was especially true for John Service, who was dismissed and then reinstated as a result of a Supreme Court decision in 1957.

At the time of Arthur's return to the U.S., the witch hunt of McCarthyism had not surfaced or, if it had, Arthur did not talk to me about it. I had no idea of what was coming and, therefore, did not feel threatened. We rented a house on Idaho Avenue and started all over again having a life together; this time with two children. I learned to cook for the first time and to heave coal on our erratic furnace in the basement. Ahead lay the happiest of the over forty years we shared together, a year's stint at the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island. We rented a big, old house on the oceanfront and reveled in the freedom and openness of life together as a family. Arthur liked his studies and the many close friends we made at the College. It was a one year assignment, and in the Summer of 1949 we were transferred to London. One by one, the "China hands", as they were called, were subpoenaed by Senator McCarthy to appear before the Senate to answer charges of Communist sympathies. Distanced from Washington as we were at the Naval War College, I was not aware of the seriousness of the approaching condemnation and persecution of the "China hands" through the McCarthy Senate hearings.

Looking back on that time, I realize that Arthur deliberately shielded me from his anxiety about what the future might hold for us. He thoroughly enjoyed our relaxed family life at Newport and was successful in preventing fear and concern to intrude. And so came the Spring, and we both rejoiced in the news that we would have our third child in October. Then, one evening in May, just returned from a trip to Washington for consultation, Arthur told me we were to be transferred to London. I was thrilled. Both of my sisters lived there, and it would be, in a way, like going home.

We decided to go straight from Newport to the ship and embark for our new post. Arrived at Liverpool, we had a hard time finding our way to London what with the change of driving on the left side and the fact that there were no direction signs anywhere. Although the War had ended several years earlier, there was devastation everywhere ... churches, schools and whole streets. Finally we reached Shepherd's Park and, from there, the Cumberland Hotel, where we stayed. It was a busy commercial hotel, but we were comfortable even though we were offered only powdered eggs and erst sausage for breakfast.

Arthur had explained to me that he was expecting to be called before the Senate and it was decided to get us out of sight and, hopefully, out of mind before he was subpoenaed. We were among the few who were fortunate enough to escape the tragic consequences of the McCarthy inquisition. Arthur was ordered back to Washington to answer charges, but Julius Holmes, his immediate superior at the Embassy with the rank of Minister, insisted

he could not possibly spare him. And that was that!

We stayed most of that long hot summer in London at the Cumberland Hotel, hoping that eventually we would be able to move into an Embassy house. There was only one possibility if we were turned down after many weeks of house hunting. It was a place in the suburbs called Christmas House, and we were both charmed by the name. In the end, we were assigned an Embassy house because of my pregnancy, although others were ahead of us on the list.

It was a wonderful moment when Arthur came back to the hotel to tell me we had it. There would be no more worries about locating a house and, once moved in, our maintenance needs would be taken care of by the Embassy. We loved the house at Golders Green in a quiet, sunny spot called Carlyle Close. We moved and settled in quickly, and I was so glad to be enfolded once again in my own home, not just existing in a hotel.

We were fortunate in being able to call upon Embassy maintenance people to make repairs. There was a coal stove in the kitchen which had constantly to be attended to and, consequently, covered everything with soot. It was moved to a storeroom outside with no cost to us. Fortunately, I was able to hire a young Finnish girl, who wanted to learn the language, to cook for us. She was pleasant and trustworthy and stayed with us almost the entire seven years we were there. We were out many evenings at cocktail parties or dinners, and it was essential to have someone responsible at home.

We also hired an Irish girl, May McGuerry, who was a “mother’s help” from Ireland who came to London for dental work and was with us for a long time. One morning, a few weeks after she had come, she looked out of my bedroom window and saw a young man driving a tractor on the golf course. This was after we had moved out of our Carlyle Close house to another Embassy house just a block away on the golf course. May told me she had been watching the young man for some time and liked him. Quite gravely and smiling, she said she was going to marry him! This seemed a little precipitous, but I readily went along with her strategy.

The next morning, when Ronnie Tractor -- as we called him -- came toward me driving his tractor, I was standing by the golf course with my son, Christopher, in my arms. May was behind me. I waved to Ronnie Tractor to come and was greeted by a tall, handsome, and shy young man with curly hair. I asked him if he would mind taking my child for a ride on his tractor. At this point, May stepped forward and took Christopher from me. Off they went, and that was how it began!

They saw each other constantly during that year, but he would never pop the question. I really could not blame him. He enjoyed what he was doing and did not want to change while May was urging him to go into training to be a policeman. Another year went by with nothing happening, and May persuaded me to have Arthur talk with him as to his intentions with May. I even made Arthur wear his best suit, and poor Ronnie was finally

hooked. He never did make it as a policeman, but they were married, and the last time I visited them, May was expecting her second child and quite content.

Then there was Hilda who came from Switzerland. She was a model “nanny” for our youngest and delighted in knitting all his clothes. Then one day she met our monthly window-washer and decided he was just the man she wanted as a husband. There were no problems meeting him because there he was regularly once a month looking through all the windows! The romance proceeded in very much the same way May’s evolved, even to Arthur’s meeting with the window-washer. Arthur, in his study and in his formal dress suit, talked with the window-washer. He had been dating Hilda for over a year and his intentions were to marry her, he said. In due course they held the ceremony and lived happily together ever after!

In May 1950, we received an invitation from the Lord Chamberlain to attend an afternoon presentation garden party for the Queen at Buckingham Palace. American Embassy wives were encouraged to attend a rehearsal to learn how to curtsy properly and, finally, that very special day arrived. Dressed in our best bib and tucker, with the ladies wearing hats, we were off to Buckingham Palace. We were reminded to use “ma’am” to any question the Queen might ask us. That was not hard for me to do. When I was evacuated from China with our daughter, Mary Stuart, I settled in my aunt’s home in Richmond, Virginia. She insisted that Mary Stuart always respond to a question with the “ma’am” prefix, and it became such an obsession with the child that I found her one night sitting straight up in bed, with eyes closed, saying “ma’am” over and over again in her sleep. My home is now in North Carolina where it is even more a part of the Southern way of speaking.

The Queen was gracious and charming, but it was Sir Winston Churchill who was of most interest to me. As he departed, I was immediately behind him. He was alone and seemed so apart from us... so solitary.

Arthur served under three ambassadors during our seven years in London. There were times when Embassy wives met regularly with the wife of the Ambassador at Wingfield House, the official residence. On one occasion, we were asked to assist in a tea party for lords and ladies, dowagers and what-not. We attended a sort of rehearsal before the tea so that we would know just what to do and how to act. On the assigned day, we arrived early, and when the guests arrived, we were all smiles and conviviality. I had no time to see how the others did, busy as I was in seeing that the ladies I happened to be with had their tea and cake and that the conversation flowed smoothly. The tea party didn’t last long, and I was glad when it was over. What was my surprise to be told by the Ambassador’s wife that we had been of little help and that she was very disappointed in us! She never asked us again to help her out with a tea party, for which we were duly thankful!

This same lady seemed to have it out for me. Arthur and I agreed to a reception for John Foster Dulles on one of his visits to London. As I remember it, we gave the party at the Penfield’s house. I remember we had shrimp, because Arthur and I spent a couple of

hours shelling them. Everything seemed to go well until the end, when I suddenly was aware that the Ambassador's wife, Anne, Jim, and Arthur had left the room upstairs. The Ambassador was still there, and so I went straight over to him and waited until he was ready to go downstairs. We then went down together, and the Ambassador's wife was just getting into the limousine. I bade the Ambassador "goodbye" and thanked him for coming, but I could not get her attention. The Ambassador then addressed her, "Mrs. Ringwalt has come downstairs to say 'goodbye,' my dear." There was no response, and they drove off, leaving me feeling unloved, to say the least. I recovered!

One of the notable balls we attended was given at Wingfield House for the Queen. She asked for an informal evening to meet some of the American staff. She wanted something very simple where she could mix freely with everyone, but it just didn't turn out that way. Later I learned there was a party in her honor which was informal and which she seemed thoroughly to enjoy. Princess Margaret arrived late at the party I attended and, in her eagerness to tell the Queen something, forgot to curtsy. The Queen seemed amused.

We went downstairs where the band started up. Everything had been arranged beforehand, who was to dance with whom and when. The Ambassador had the first dance with the Queen, then Walton Butterworth [William Walton Butterworth], second in charge with the rank of Minister, was to relieve him. After the first dance, the music started up again, but no Minister! He was around, but he paid no attention to the Ambassador's desperate signals. I was dancing with Arthur and saw quite clearly what was happening. The Ambassador was finally rescued when music started up for the third dance and one of the Embassy secretaries, by pre-arrangement, appeared. I was not surprised to learn several weeks later that Walton Butterworth had been transferred elsewhere. His departure came as no surprise to anyone.

Halfway through his London tour of duty, Arthur was asked to serve as liaison with someone of his same rank in the Soviet Embassy. He met quite regularly with his counterpart and was careful to report all conversations to his superior at the Embassy. Once or twice a month, the Soviet Embassy gave a reception when they showed propaganda movies. We thought them dreadfully boring. On one occasion we gave a tea party for those Russians we had come to know, and they seemed especially to appreciate being in an American home. As the meetings progressed, Arthur became increasingly suspicious that his informal lunches were "bugged" and he wanted out. I look back on those evenings, looking at poorly produced movies, as an ordeal and was delighted when we dropped out of the program.

A few days before Christmas, during our fourth year in London, our "mother's help" rushed upstairs just after seven in the morning and asked me to come down immediately. On entering our diningroom, I took in at a glance what had happened. All of my silver service set, which was a wedding present from my aunt in Richmond, was gone, including the lovely sterling tray. There had been quite a number of robberies on our street with no arrests. Everything stolen was immediately melted and unrecognizable. I remember thinking, as I stared at the empty sideboard, that I should really cry. I could not

imagine anyone not crying in such a situation. I did manage to squeeze a few tears, but beneath the tears I was conscious of a great sense of relief. No longer would I worry about cleaning all that silver every ten days on our return to America someday to live. A great deal was taken, and the burglars were never apprehended, but we did receive full insurance coverage. We spent the monies in far more creative ways than in the purchase of a silver service.

We had some delightful vacations while in England, and one of these was spent in the United States. We had to leave our baby in London because of a polio epidemic in the U.S. We spent one vacation in Ireland and another in Scotland, but never saw Wales, as Arthur was recalled to the State Department just as we were planning it. In Scotland, I remember we stopped at a small restaurant where there was a sign on the outside privy above the shop, "one penny per pee." My daughter, Mary Stuart, and I went into the privy together and then proceeded to the small shop to purchase something. The rather formidable owner prepared our bill with the statement that she had observed that the two of us had gone into the privy together and she was, therefore, charging us two pennies. We couldn't argue back!

On our return to London, we attended the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, getting up at 5 a.m. in order to claim our reserved seats in the Corps Diplomatique section. It was quite unnecessary, for we could have come and gone at any time and, actually, a "mother's help" working for a friend of ours was able to see far better than we did while pushing a pram with baby along the main street. It was very exciting that on the very day the Queen was crowned, Sir Edmund Hillary made it to the top of Mt. Everest together with Shirpa Tensing, his carrier. Later in the month, a reception was given for the two of them which Arthur and I attended. On entering the room where the reception was held, I was struck by the noisy conversation, the smoke-filled air, and the tension occasioned by the very presence of these two men. We were introduced to Sir Edmund who, to my surprise, was smoking. He seemed distinctly ill at ease and out of place. Shirpa Tensing was then introduced. He was quiet, comfortable, seemingly as much at peace with himself and with us as he would be breathing the air of his beloved mountains. In all the turmoil, just to shake his hand was to receive a sense of peace.

Toward the end of our assignment to London, many Civil Service employees were transferred abroad for the first time instead of remaining in Washington, as was the practice. I don't know how the men dealt with this new experience, but some of the wives, most of whom had never been abroad before, found it extremely difficult. They had to settle for English houses with no central heating, no washing machines, and endless steps to climb with kitchens often in the basement. Some of them, try as they might, found their situation frustrating and unrewarding.

Mrs. Aldrich, the Ambassador's wife, arranged for those of us who had been in London for some time, (and I was one of the oldest residents there), to meet on a regular basis with these newcomers who might wish to talk with us. I met with this group on several occasions before Arthur was transferred back to the State Department. I remember one

young wife saying that she could not possibly have lived through the full, demanding days if she had not set her alarm each morning for 5 a.m. in order to spend half an hour alone in the quiet and the peace. It was her only way of collecting herself to deal with the many problems she knew lay ahead of her that day. There were others who suggested less drastic means, but it helped greatly just to meet together and talk about it. For those women who had never been abroad, I think it was a difficult adjustment to make for questionable returns.

During my last two years in London, I became acquainted with a blind woman who lived alone in a small apartment only a few blocks from where we lived. We met through Mrs. Aldrich, wife of the Ambassador, who received a letter from Bunny Hibberd asking for someone from the Embassy to visit her. Since I was her closest neighbor, I arranged to take her to my home to lunch. After a few visits, we met for lunch every week, and afterwards I took her to a Red Cross Center where there were activities for handicapped persons. Bunny became totally blind when she was serving in an administrative position during the intensive bombing of London. I greatly admired her courage and independence. She had a pleasant, clean apartment which she took care of entirely herself. During the War, she met American women and liked them. Mrs. Aldrich came to lunch one day at my house to meet Bunny and enjoyed it greatly.

During my last year in London, I became a volunteer for CARE, an organization of volunteers working with problem children in the schools. Every child entering the first grade was given a complete physical. I attended these physicals once a week and was referred by the doctor to certain of the families to visit. In the beginning I was always accompanied by my wonderful supervisor who insisted on riding her bicycle while I drove my large car. I learned so much from this supervisor that I draw upon her wisdom constantly even with the 30 years that have passed since then.

Surprisingly, I was effective in accomplishing changes in many hardcore families where others had failed due, in large part I feel sure, to my being “different”, American, and perhaps because my large car put the fear of God in them! So much time was put into my training that it was hard to tell my supervisor when the time came that I was leaving.

Arthur had already been transferred to Washington several months earlier, and so I had to take on the responsibility of packing and leaving. It was not an easy task, but we returned by boat, not by plane, and those few days at sea were delightful and restful.

After a few months in the U.S., Arthur was transferred to his last post in Kingston, Jamaica. We had never lived in the tropics, and although it was an interesting experience, I was quite ready to leave some two years later. Memories and impressions:

- Running up and down the stairs of our residence on Long Lane at the foot of the mountains in Kingston, during the first two weeks.

- Walking up and down the stairs the third week.

-Holding onto the railing when going up and down after the third week.

-Overwhelmed with the responsibility of being the wife of the Consul General, and by the attendant duties, expectations, and decision that went with the position.

-Effacing sense of utter inadequacy after a visit from the beautiful wife of John Hepler, head of the International Cooperation Administration, who called on me one afternoon... gorgeous, serene, like a picture out of Vogue. She left me with pages and pages of lists of food and household items to order from a wholesale place in the United States. She seemed so lovely and adequate, and there I was feeling utterly inadequate and scared half to death. I fingered through the lists, not having a clue what to order or how much. This was two or three weeks before Arthur was officially Consul General, since we came to Jamaica early so that our son, Christopher, would not miss too much school.

We were staying, actually, in a cottage nestled in an orange grove attached to a hotel near the Consulate residence. A short distance away was a swimming pool which was very enjoyable and relaxing until I heard over the radio there and repeated many times that the new Consul General, his wife, and seven year old son had arrived in Kingston that very morning to take over the duties of David Maynard who was departing.

-The difficulty of adjusting to the continuous, exhausting relentless heat, always summer, with little change of seasons.

During the winter months, it did turn a bit cooler and I enjoyed seeing poinsettias growing everywhere during the Christmas season. We had a large spruce from Canada in our living room where our German shepherd, Rex, spent all day every day until we finally threw the tree out. It seems that the dog was imported from Canada many years before we came and was cared for by the succession of families living in the house. The smell of the spruce stirred in him nostalgic longings which we were never able to satisfy. I was glad his end came while we were there, because he and I became deeply attached. He died of cancer in my arms a few months before we left. He was a faithful and loyal watchdog, and when Arthur went away on his frequent trips to visit and report on other islands, he always slept outside my bedroom door beside Singh, our Indian Number One.

Singh kept his machete, which he had been using all day to cut our grass, close beside him, and I felt quite safe for myself and our son, Christopher in the room adjoining mine. One scary afternoon, both Christopher and Rex disappeared. We suspected they had climbed down the hill to the gulley below us. There was a rough road that went along the gulley or "bush", as it was called, and led all the way to the north shore. Counterfeit trade in meat and drugs and all kinds of nefarious dealings took place in the "bush". We had forbidden Chris ever to go down there. Rex, in accompanying him, was taking on a great risk, since Jamaican dogs are trained to guard only their own piece of property and never to go off of it.

Almost two hours passed, and we were about to call the police when we heard a terrible dogfight on the D'Costa's land adjoining ours. Rex had led Christopher home, and Christopher, recognizing the landmark, had, in his eagerness to be home, climbed up the hill leading to his neighbor's house. The D'Costa watchdog was waiting. We had a hard time pulling the two dogs apart.

Sometimes, when we came down to breakfast, we saw little pigs or donkeys, chickens and geese wandering around our garden, and would chase them back down to the "bush". Sometimes an old white horse appeared on our large front lawn, ridden by a most curious character. Attached to his person and his saddle were all kinds of pots and pans which clattered and banged together as he galloped his horse up and down and around and around. On his second visit, I sent him word through Singh that his horse was tearing up our lawn and that he was trespassing. He sent back word that there was no other level spot where he could ride since he lived in the mountains, I called him the White Knight and put up with his episodes until he had a stroke and landed in the hospital.

We had a difficult time persuading office secretaries, who were sent to Kingston, to remain. They became anxious and afraid from stories they heard about violence and drugs. They felt trapped and isolated. Some of them stayed for only a few days or weeks and then were transferred back to the States. I remember one time, when Arthur was away on one of his inspection trips, that his new secretary arrived. She was so disturbed by some of the things she saw and heard that I invited her to stay with me until Arthur returned and we could work out something for her. At the Residence, which was isolated as all the staff went home at night, except for Singh, she was even more frightened, and nothing could dissuade her from leaving. On his return, Arthur had to start all over again in his search for a new secretary.

From the day we moved into our new house until our departure, we had constant callers who left calling cards. I was expected to return their courtesy visits, but early in our stay I gave up all attempts to keep up. I needed to be home for Christopher when he arrived back from school, and there was no way of doing both. We went out many evenings and there was constant entertaining of local people and others who came and went on visits to the Island.

Shortly after our arrival in Kingston, we celebrated a Fourth of July party for the diplomatic corps and all Americans. I met countless times with the wives of our Consular staff to make sure everything would go smoothly. We hired a little donkey saddled with a pannier on each side filled with rum. Christopher led the little donkey around, offering our guests a drink which his older sister had prepared at the last minute with too much emphasis on the rum, as we discovered later. It is not surprising that the party was a huge success, the best ever given on American Independence Day we were told by many who attended. We were still happily celebrating when it became dark and we quite forgot to haul down the flag. Later in the night, we were reminded by one of the departing guests. At about the same time, I discovered that some of our staff had passed out from the leftover rum in the little donkey's panniers. A memorable evening!

To my surprise, I discovered there was race prejudice in Jamaica. I was told that 98 percent of the Jamaicans are related to black people somewhere in their ancestry. The color of the skin seemed to have no bearing in the world of politics or business, but is reflected socially. Our son, Christopher, had a close friend who was black, and one hot, August afternoon they wanted to go swimming. I telephoned a neighbor, who graciously offered her pool at any time we wanted it. She said it would be quite convenient, but the boys soon came home. Obviously something unpleasant had happened. Singh, our Number One, brought us a message from the lady of the house asking that we never again allow a black person in her pool! It was a distressing situation for both Christopher and his friend.

One of my most pleasant memories of Jamaica was a weekend we spent at a sugar plantation on the west coast. Our host sent his private plane to take us to his house which, in Jamaican vernacular, means the “big house” where the master and mistress live. It was as if we stepped back into the 19th Century except that the workers were not slaves, but free men and women well paid and cared for. One wing of the house was set aside for guests who were treated royally and given complete privacy.

During the afternoon, we were shown all over the plantation by our host, first viewing the sugar cane and sampling the sugar in the stalks, on through the whole process of transformation into molasses, brown sugar, and finally white sugar. As we moved from the first to the last stage, there was much discussion of wages, unions, and time-off, it was obvious that the sugar workers held the owners of the plantation in great respect and that there were channels for grievances to be expressed. We were very impressed, for we had heard bad things about the procedures at some of the big houses.

We left Jamaica in 1959 when Arthur retired from the Foreign Service. My memories of the blue sky, the war, sunlit days, and the ever-welcome breeze that came up at night are as vivid and fresh today as they were those 26 years ago. Our stay in Jamaica was a fitting end to my life of adventure and challenge as the wife of a Foreign Service officer.

\*\*\*

### BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Arthur Runmeyer Ringwalt

Spouse Entered Service: May 17, 1928  
You Entered Service: 1938

Left Service: February, 1959  
Left Service: same

Status: Widow of FSO

Posts:  
1928-1932      Shanghai, China

1932-1934 Peiping, China  
1934-1937 Yunnanfu, China  
1937 Georgetown University, Washington, DC  
1938-1941 Peiping / Tientsin, China  
1941-1943 Department of State, Washington, DC  
1943-1945 Chungking, China  
1945-1947 Department of State, Washington, DC  
1948 National War College  
1949-1956 London, United Kingdom  
1957 Department of State, Washington, DC  
1957-1959 Kingston, Jamaica

Spouse's Position: Consul General

Place/Date of birth: Tokyo, Japan; May 20, 1907

Maiden Name: Teusler

Parents (Name, Profession):

Mary Stuart Woodward, housewife;

Rudolf Bolling Teusler, Founder and Director of St. Luke's International Hospital,  
Tokyo, Japan

Schools (Prep, University): National Cathedral School, Washington, DC

Date/Place of Marriage: Richmond, Virginia; June 25, 1938

Profession: Housewife

Children:

Mary Stuart Reeve 2/14/39

Arthur Ringwalt 8/18/42

Christopher Lee Ringwalt 10/12/49

*End of interview*