

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

PATRICIA VELIOTES

Interviewed by: Patricia Barbis
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INTERVIEW

Q: Patricia Veliotos is the spouse of Ambassador Nicholas Veliotos and has performed the duties of the wife of the ambassador at least twice and those of the wife of an Assistant Secretary of State. Mrs. Veliotos, you have during the same time had your own interests and activities and I wonder if we could start by just giving us some of your perspective of how you both got into [the] Foreign Service and some of the things that were important to you.

VELIOTES: Good morning Pat. Well, my husband and I met at the University of California Berkeley and when we became engaged he was in International Relations in the Political Science Department and I was a Dramatic Art major with a Music minor. We went through the whole process of what we were both going to do with our lives and our future married life together and we were both very interested in traveling. Also very interested in doing something of service for our country, but we really didn't have any focus at that time. In the meantime a recruiter came to the University of California from the Foreign Service and talked to people that were interested in joining. Nick went to that interview and decided that he would take the Foreign Service exam. Well, I was delighted and he was delighted with the prospect of joining the Foreign Service although we thought the obstacles were fairly steep because we knew the exam was difficult, etc. Well to make a long story short, he passed his exam and he passed his orals and we had to wait. During this whole period we had gotten married and I had started teaching school in a little town called Port Costa about 30 miles from Berkeley and commuted each day and he was in graduate school and it was during the freeze and they weren't hiring people and they were on hold. So he went on and got his masters degree. Then things became unfrozen and he got into the Foreign Service. It was about April 1955 we got the call after waiting about two years.

Q: Two years?

VELIOTES: Yes it was a long time. That he was to be assigned to Curaçao. Well we didn't quite know where Curaçao was and we looked it up and it was in the Caribbean and we were just delighted and I thought, "Oh, I have to go out and buy rattan furniture", and here we were living in a little apartment in Berkeley. So he had to precede me to Washington because I had to finish up my teaching contract. When he got to Washington, shortly thereafter I got a telephone call from him. He said, "Well Pat hold onto your hat, we're not going to Curaçao, we are going to Naples, Italy." Well, if you had mentioned one country in the world that I really could go to if I had the chance it would have been Italy at that time. So, I was just on cloud nine. Anyway, at this point when I think of what has happened in the Foreign Service today, I look back on that time as such a happy time and the fact that we knew enough to know that there were certain obligations that the wives had to fulfill. I always felt that with anything that we pursue in life there's a cost

and I felt that the cost for an interesting life was to maybe to roll bandages or do whatever I had to do to help in the community and that hopefully, my interest in music and art and the theater could be used in the Foreign Service as well. As it turned out through various posts I was able to pursue these interests and, hopefully, they benefited the Foreign Service as well. So I never felt some of the alienation that some of my colleagues and spouses felt. Maybe it was because I had a transportable profession and so it was easier for me to get employment almost immediately, and I did in Naples. I started out as a substitute teacher at the Naples Navy School there and then it worked into a full time teaching job where I finished up the year.

Q: May I ask you, at that period was that not unusual to work outside the home so to speak when assigned to an embassy? Were you a path breaker at that time?

VELIOTES: I never thought of myself as a path breaker, but as I look back on it nobody else in the consulate, none of the other wives were working, but no one thought a thing of it because I really think that most of the women there even though they weren't working and were doing more traditional things were people that I greatly admired. They had done things previously and they were very talented women, very intelligent women. They were so thoroughly enjoying just their leisure time to be able to explore the wonderful antiquities of Italy, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Naples and that whole area; and being able to travel, which I was able to do too, but didn't maybe have quite the same freedom because I did have work although it had started out as part time work. So I guess in a way it was a choice of theirs because a couple of the women there were teachers and they could have gone to the school if they had wanted to.

Q: Well, Pat, that's very interesting and I saw from your information that you worked in Europe and later in Asia and then several tours in the Middle East. I wonder if you would like to share with us what you think some of the most significant impact you made on the communities in which you served. Perhaps apart from your husband's contributions.

VELIOTES: I think that I certainly made a contribution in New Delhi, India. I taught at the school there also, but I was very active in community affairs. I put a lot of effort into the "go down" and that is an Indian expression for storage area and it's usually under the house so you go down to it. The "go down" collected or the group that ran the "go down" collected antiques, jewelry, all kinds of things from all over India and then once a month we sold those artifacts or antiques or what have you. With the profits from the "go down" we supported and opened a school, a dispensary, and a hospital in a little village that was close to New Delhi. So that was an ongoing thing that I was involved in and that was great fun because it introduced you to all the beautiful crafts and lovely things that India makes. Really it was like going back into history. You learned so much about the country through these crafts and each area of the country -- the south, the west coast, the east coasts, the northern part of India -- they're all so different and they all have their very individual type of craft. So that was a really fun thing to be involved in. Then each year we had to be involved with the jewelry bazaar, it was second-hand jewelry. That was really through Nick's boss' wife, who was a big mover and shaker in this particular

activity and it made a great deal of money and that money went to charity. These particular things always brought us into close contact with the Indians and I think that is the thing that is so, was so wonderful about the old Foreign Service if I can put it that way. I think it is somewhat different in today's Foreign Service where so many of the women working and do not participate in these activities that get them out into the community where they do meet people of the other culture. I felt, and I feel that the only way that you really make friends is by being friends, by being there, by having the time and the availability to be with friends. I mean you can't just be the way most cultures are - - a once a month friend. If you are going to be a friend with an Indian they have to be able to drop by on you when they feel like it and it might not be when they're invited and what have you. I think this is something with the new Foreign Service you're not getting this and in a sense that with so many of the women working and now working within the embassy or the spouses that we have come closer to what the old Russian idea was. With the Russians everybody was just working there they never really got out into community. I think that we were always such a contrast in the old days because the Americans were very active in the community. Along with the English, the French, and the other Europeans. So I think that certain things have been gained on the individual level there have been some losses too in the Foreign Service.

Q: That's a very valid observation and I think it's one of the challenges that the new Foreign Service faces certainly. I'm reading more and more statistics about the number of single people who are at post and you don't have the families, which cause you to get involved in the communities so much and that definitely is a loss. After India where did you serve?

VELIOTES: Well, then we went to Laos and that was probably personally my most difficult post. We had to sort of build a house around us and it always got flooded and it was very difficult for my children because we had had a 15-day transfer from India to Laos without any leave time. It had already been two and a half years in India and we were getting a home leave and we were leaving at Christmas time and I had to pull the children out of school. This was very difficult and I feel . . .

Q: What ages were they?

VELIOTES: They were 8 and 10. It was a very difficult time and plus Laos was not as -- there was a large American school there, however they didn't have the activities they had in India, there was something for every kind of child and every kind of temperament in India it was wonderful, but in Laos it was really very limited. A lot of it had to do with the situation there because the school was at Kilometer 6 and Kilometer 8. The Pathet Lao were always around and so there was always the danger that the Pathet Lao could come into the school and they were only two kilometers away. On the positive side I felt that I had gotten involved with all the activities there with the women's club and I didn't teach. I did produce and help direct the international variety show there, which was great fun and we had to get everybody involved from all the different missions. It was my job to go to all the embassies and talk with the ambassadors and ask if they had any talented

people that would like to participate. This brought the whole community together and there were many funny things that happened that I don't think I have time to go into now. Then we were asked from time to time by the president of the women's club if we would do things such as go out to see the Peace Corps people -- the international voluntary service people -- that were out in the outlying areas in Laos. I did that once and it was very frightening because we had to have an escort behind us in back of us. These people were really heroes that were out there. They were stuck out there and right across a small little river was the Pathet Lao that were looking right across the river to them, but they were doing a lot of good helping.

Q: What kind of activities do they do?

VELIOTES: Help care for the refugees and with farming and distributing information. Just being helpful to the people. So that was an interesting time. Then when we went to Israel Nick was DCM there and our ambassador was not married -- he subsequently got married about a year after we arrived -- so I had to kind of act as the hostess for him and also the monthly meetings that the wives put on that was always held at my house, etc. Plus by that time my children were in their teens and again we had before going there three moves in four years and their whole high school was broken up. So this was a very difficult time. So I didn't work there and then we came back to the states (always after each post except for the India/Laos assignments). We came back after each one of the posts and had two or three years in Washington and then I always resumed my music teaching at that time.

Q: Excuse me, when you mentioned teaching abroad I assumed it might be English language teaching, which many of us did, but your teaching was always in music.

VELIOTES: It was either in the schools or in music. So before I went to Egypt when Nick was Assistant Secretary I had taken a course and gotten my qualification to teach Suzuki piano at George Mason University. I loved it. I just felt this is the method I've been looking for all my life. I started teaching and I had a wonderful crop of 20 young students and they were doing so beautifully and then we got the assignment to Egypt. I haven't mentioned Jordan. I'll have to backtrack and go back to Jordan because there were some very wonderful things that happened there.

Q: Yes.

VELIOTES: Well needless to say you hate to start a studio and have such talented children and then have to leave them. I had to leave these children and furthermore being a Suzuki teacher you should try to find another Suzuki teacher, but because the method's so wonderful the teachers are just filled up. Because when Johnny starts and he's the oldest in the family and he does so well, well naturally Suzy and Jane and everybody else has to take -- I mean the parents see that the method really works because it does indeed teach people to play. So once the whole family gets involved and it is the whole family commitment. That's part of the success of it I think and the beauty of it is that the whole

family is involved. So I had to leave these 20 wonderful children. We arrived in Egypt. We got settled. We had to get our feet wet so to speak. We arrived in November and there was a lot of work to be done on the house, on the residence, and then meeting all the people etc. The following September I started teaching. I put a little notice in the paper and didn't say who I was, just saying that I was going to teach. I met a lot of wonderful Egyptian families and the word sort of spread so I had about 15 students and I even taught the Danish Ambassador's wife also. The money -- and I did make money -- I gave half of it to charity. I felt that this was right.

Q: Were there any conflicts? I remember during a period, spouses were -- unless you got special permission from the ambassador -- you could not work outside the embassy or doing anything remunerative. Was that a problem?

VELIOTES: There was no problem then. Actually if I had worked outside of my home in an Egyptian office, I probably would have had to [have a] work permit, but doing this on a private level, I was able to, I mean there was no problem there.

Q: It must have given you an entree into the community and the culture that was invaluable.

VELIOTES: Well it did. It was really quite wonderful to see because when you give Suzuki lessons one parent has to be there because the philosophy is that the parent is the home teacher and really they equate this to sort of a trinity with the pupil at the top, the supporting the parent and the teacher at the bottom.

Q: In a partnership in a way.

VELIOTES: Right, it is a partnership. The parent really is more important than the teacher because they're with the child six days out of seven days and you're only with that child for one hour. So this was a completely new concept for the Egyptians because when they send their children to school they expect the teacher to teach them and they come home. Or, if they send them for music lessons just as we did you know, we drop off to the Safeway and do our shopping while Johnny takes his music lesson. Well this way it's much more demanding, but the parent becomes so enthusiastic because when Johnny is able to do that little phrase or two phrases that he's worked so hard at. The parent knows what it takes to execute that and so therefore it's a celebration. He was able, he's finally really got that this time. So it was a wonderful thing. It just breaks down any kind of national barriers because you're all in something together for the good of something else, which was the child. There was a marvelous group there at the blind school and they had their orchestra, so I participated in that charity a lot because what they did for these blind children was wonderful. Mrs. Tahawazaki, who was the director out there, and I became very good friends and then I felt that part of the proceeds that I made should go not only to them, but to other charities too. I wouldn't necessarily when I'm earning my money here -- yes, we give a certain amount to charity -- there I felt that I should ...

Q: ... return it to the country from which it was earned. You're very generous.

VELIOTES: So anyway this was very rewarding and I can do the teaching during that portion of the day where there were no activities. My mornings were completely full, in fact I was at my desk every morning at 8:00. It was a very very busy post. In fact Egypt is I think our largest post in the world as far as numbers.

Q: Oh really. Including the entire mission?

VELIOTES: Right. Large AID, large military, and so on.

Q: When generally were you in Egypt?

VELIOTES: '83 to '86. So we were having lots of terrorist acts all over the place and we had the Achille Lauro.

Q: Oh yes we should speak about that.

VELIOTES: Yes and that was.

Q: What sort of help did you have from the embassy. At some posts, now we understand, there is some sort of social secretary or there is some assistance in handling some of the heavy representational duties.

VELIOTES: The help we had. We had a social secretary in the embassy, she did not only our invitations, but she did a lot of the DCMs as well as others. So she wasn't just our social secretary and the help situation was very difficult. We had receptions. I'd say we had two . . .

Q: You mean the domestic help -- servants?

VELIOTES: Yes. It was probably the most difficult of any post I'd ever been in and probably the least competent and yet my responsibilities were more. So, I was given permission to hire a housekeeper who could speak in Arabic to the cook, etc. There was real great -- I had studied Jordanian Arabic when we were in Jordan and Egyptian Arabic was a little bit different. I was starting the study there, but Nick and I had never been given the Arabic training school. He had put in for it early on in his career, but had never gotten it. So, we tried to learn that difficult language on the job. It's almost impossible because Jordan as well as Egypt we were getting two or three congressional groups coming in every week, I mean it was unreal, the kind of...

Q: Level of activity.

VELIOTES: Level of activity and the Middle East representatives that were going around and always this thing of the Arab/Israelis problems, so you were getting constant visitors

and then you had your own sort of American community that you wanted to be touching base with, a huge community, as well as the whole Egyptian community. So it was always sort of a balancing act. Our predecessor's wife had started a community services organization, which was very successful and wonderful where she had hired two professional people that came in and a lot of it had to do with mental health issues, adjustment, etc. This was open to everyone. It wasn't just the American Embassy. There was a huge American business community there too. We had that on top of everything.

Q: How was she able to find funds, resources?

VELIOTES: She got seed money and then was able to work with probably Betty Atherton.

Q: Betty Atherton, I was thinking.

VELIOTES: Yes, yes. So anyway I felt that my contribution -- there was nothing for the American Embassy. Here there was this huge embassy, but there was no swimming pool for them, there was no tennis courts, there was no activity center for them.

Q: Were you thinking of the young people?

VELIOTES: I was thinking of the Army, the Marines, and the young people. There were hotels with swimming pools, with tennis courts, but this cost a lot of money for our people that didn't have that kind of money and it just, when you think of the tiny little posts that have these facilities for their employees. So, I worked very hard on that with the administrative officer and everything. When our economic counselor left he had a wonderful house and they were getting more property in other places so it was decided that that would be the ideal place and that was turned into a place for the teens to meet, for people to have bridge or whatever they wanted to, a tennis court was put out there, a playground. There was no place for the children to go and play with other children. Many people had nice backyards, but Cairo is so spread apart that this at least was a place for people to come and meet. Then the swimming pool -- we put in the swimming pool and it has just been wonderful, I mean everybody really. No one knew what they were missing. Although a lot of people said why don't we have these things. I think the philosophy before we came was that we should be getting out into the community and that is all right. I'm, as you know from what you've heard so far, 100 percent for that. I think that is our most important job. But I think on the other hand that with the composition of people in an embassy today, you don't have that wonderful zeal that we all had almost across the board. And like oh my we're in-country and isn't this exciting and isn't this interesting and let's find out all we can. Many of those people are there just doing a job. They're not there because they have this kind of commitment. So you've got to provide something for these people and I think this helped with a lot of people who felt isolated.

Q: Morality.

VELIOTES: And didn't want to use the community services because they didn't want to maybe go into the mental health part of it. So I felt we had, with our predecessors' input with the mental health, that was one aspect and this was the other side of the coin. We're through sports, through activities, you know that could help people's mental health too if you will.

Q: I think it's a preparation for young people because my work originally with the Foreign Service was in the area of educational exchange and later at other posts I found young people who came to the United States for college that they had not been in the situation where they had had an interchange with groups of other young Americans and were ill prepared to sort of adapt to the group living and the group activities that you meet going to college and living in a group situation.

VELIOTES: Yes exactly.

Q: Well you haven't touched too much on some of the responsibilities of the role of an ambassador's wife, but since you served in that capacity both in Egypt and in Jordan. Why don't you tell us a little bit more on some of your relationships, and I know that you met the leaders of these countries where you served by virtue of being the spouse of the ambassador, whom you met and had particular views on.

VELIOTES: Well when we were in Israel for example even though Nick was not ambassador he was DCM. Because of the very delicate time there we arrived in August, 1973, and Nick said to us before we left that these would be our golden years. We'll be able to go to archeological sites and do all these wonderful things and in October after we arrived it was the Yom Kippur War. Needless to say I did not see Nick for almost two years. I mean he was very busy and we had a political ambassador so I think that Senator Kenneth B. Keating (R - NY) or former Senator Keating was ambassador and he was very elderly and actually died while at post. So I think a lot of the responsibility was on Nick at that time and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was coming over all the time and he had just married Nancy Kissinger and we would have to be part of all of that. So we met Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin. Israel is such a small country that you really get to know everyone all the leaders. Fascinating country and one that I loved because of the great music and of course across the street from me there was a concert pianist. Down the road were two Americans who had gone to live permanently in Israel, the Trobes -- he played the flute, and I'd always go over there when I had any spare time. I'd just call up and we all became very good friends and I said are you going to be playing today? And I'd say, "I'll come over and we'd do duets". It was really nice. So you know to mention anybody specific -- we knew Begin, all these people. No one can live in Israel and not really meet these people. However, you can live in Jordan without meeting the king and queen.

Q: Oh really.

VELIOTES: But certainly with Nick having been the ambassador there we saw a lot of

them. We went to their summer place in Al-Aqaba. When President Gerald Ford and his wife Betty came in we all were invited down there for a weekend and the King is quite a lovely man really quite a family man and he loves to have his children around him. He's just a very very nice person and manners that are maybe like the emperor of Japan.

Q: Definitely from the old days.

VELIOTES: Definitely from the old days. Jordan was a very happy post for us. It was a very busy post because all the people who would come to Israel would come to Jordan and then would go to Egypt. So you were always on that circuit of all the visitors coming in from the States, but we had a wonderful time there. The Jordanians are marvelous people, they're really wonderful people. I don't want to touch too much on political things, but I always felt that- - and of course half of the Jordanians are Palestinians and such clever, intelligent, and cultured people -- they were so much like the Israelis, that if the two groups could ever get together it would be an unbeatable combination.

Q: And they would appreciate each other if they could.

VELIOTES: If they could, if they could overcome, but I always felt that the Jordanians or the Palestinians understood the Israelis more than the Israelis understood them and that was a mind blower for me because I always think of the Israelis as being so intelligent and perceptive; certainly, you know, in the lead in the sciences and the social sciences in so many countries that they've gone to and come from. For them to have that kind of blind spot, you know it was a very interesting thing.

I'll tell you just one anecdote. I don't know if it will go into this or not: Nick had very bad polyps in his nose and a lot of it had to do with football injuries when he was in college. We found out that one of the leading doctors in the world was this Palestinian that did surgery at the King Hussein Medical Center in Jordan. Nick went and he had the operation and he's never had the trouble since, and that was 1978 early 1979. When I had a visitor, my mother came to visit. I took her over to Israel to see all of my Israeli friends and I just happened to tell them about Nick having had this operation. They said, "where did he go"? "Where did he have it"? I said right in Amman at the King Hussein Medical Center and they said, "What?" I mean they were so surprised that there were doctors of this caliber or people of this caliber. Now you know I'm making a generalization. These were a few people and friends of mine that I talked to, so maybe not every Israeli felt that. But I think that they really didn't understand too much because the interaction between the two peoples was so divided.

Q: Well, as you know, I have been working the last few years in public relations. That, of course, is one of the challenges of communicating one to the other. Communications have just been at a total stop, so it certainly indicates that there's much work to be done in that area, and maybe that will work out. You said some very interesting things about Jordan. How about some of your musical activities?

VELIOTES: Well we put on a benefit for the archeology center there, it's called the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR). I was very involved in that. I used to go out on the digs and Jim Sauer was the director of ACOR and just a marvelous man and scholar. I was fortunate to be able to take his pottery course, which went from ancient history right up to almost modern times. Anyway he needed money always for all the research groups. So I put my head together with the head of the high arts center and we put on this show. The other music teacher in Jordan was English. She was a member of the British community and was with the British Consulate there. We played a duet, and that was sort of our contribution. We raised quite a lot of money for ACOR. That was great fun.

Q: Generally speaking, did you find differences in appreciation of Western music?

VELIOTES: Yes. There was certainly a small group of Jordanians that loved classical music and were familiar with it. But the vast majority weren't that familiar. Martha Graham came to Jordan, but I think it was wasted, really, because they didn't understand modern dance. It was open to the public and I think it should have been maybe by "invitation only" to have been more successful. People just walked in off the streets so it was more like outdoor entertainment. People were talking and everything while this great performance was going on. Martha Graham was there, and she was being presented and members of the royal family. I don't believe Queen Noor and King Hussein were there, but I think Prince Hassan was there with his wife.

Q: Would there have been restriction about the dancers-- costumes may have been revealing by local standards?

VELIOTES: Well I think after a few selections (as I recall) they got the picture of what kind of audience they had. That this was an audience who didn't know what they were doing. But it was fascinating to talk to Martha Graham, and we had a whole evening together to hear her ideas and concepts.

Q: For the oral interview of Patricia Veliotos on June 14, 1994 the interviewer is Patricia Barbis. Just to continue the question the program under the auspices of the USIA?

VELIOTES: Yes. I believe Martha Graham was under the auspices of the USIA. We tried to get as many cultural events scheduled as possible. Before we arrived in Jordan we knew that there was not a piano at the residence and so naturally, because I am interested in piano, we got permission to have a piano. So we got a lovely grand piano, and I wanted to have cultural events there. So we were able to have them for the first time in the residence, but unfortunately it happened to coincide with periods where the funding for USIA was cut. So some of what they considered "outlying areas" were not getting the kinds of entertainment that they had once had. So we had a lot of wonderful pianists and we certainly did a lot of great things just in the embassy. At Christmas time everyone was invited from the whole embassy -- the local employees as well as the Americans -- and

anyone who could play an instrument. We would do all the carols and entertainment, and I would accompany everybody on the piano. We had violinists and we had the kids involved. Everybody was involved, and we had lots of fun. When we went to Egypt, the same thing held. We didn't have near the cultural events that I would have loved to have had. I gather that at different other incarnations, there had been more cultural things sent.

Q: Bringing major orchestras, which are very expensive.

VELIOTES: Right and I think they came out and did Aida after that when the Wisners were there and they did it up in Luxor.

Q: Oh my goodness. That would have been...

VELIOTES: It would have been great.

Q: Well you've mentioned Egypt before. I wonder if you could mention the leaders of that country that you must have known while you were there.

VELIOTES: Well of course we knew President and Mrs. Mubarak. She is a lovely woman and very intelligent -- much different from Mrs. Sadat. (I met Mrs. Sadat also). Mrs. Mubarak, who I think had the vision of the late President Sadat was not as visible, if you will. But maybe if I can say this certainly just as intelligent as Mrs. Sadat, and in some ways, perhaps more educated. I think she had more qualifications, actually, as far as schooling. I might not be absolutely certain about that. Anyway she is a very, very nice person, very simple, very easy to be with. You feel like you're with a member of the family, and she is very well-liked by the people.

Q: At that time what sort of role would she play as wife of the President of Egypt?

VELIOTES: It was a hard act to follow because Mrs. Sadat had been so disciplined, so un-Egyptian in the way she saw her role, and very active certainly. Of course the peace between Israel and Egypt was such an important thing and Mrs. Mubarak has done an awful lot for schools, and education and libraries (setting up libraries in the country). She's done it all in a very quiet way without a lot of publicity. In a sense she's been more a traditional Egyptian wife. With Mrs. Sadat you were always very cognizant of the fact that she was doing things out there and doing things in her name, etc. But Mrs. Mubarak is just a different personality.

Q: I think we find that our own political leaders have their own styles and their interests, and we are certainly seeing that today in our current administration. We've talked about so many interesting things and very much on the positive side of things, which I personally find valuable because so many times we hear complaints and all the reasons why Foreign Service life or career has not been valuable. But certainly we've all some traumatic experiences. I wonder, as you reflect over the 30 years, whether you might share one or two of the most traumatic or challenges that you had as a Foreign Service

family or spouse.

VELIOTES: Well there have been naturally traumatic experiences, and I will not go into it in great detail. But I'll say that the many moves and uprooting of my children have not impacted that well on their lives. For that I feel very bad, but I don't wish to go into any detail on that.

Q: I think it's just an individual thing what I have observed myself through the years in the Foreign Service and it's what we find at home. Some children are much more resilient, same genes, same environment. Who's to say why one adapts happy as a little puppy and another is very sensitive. Things that didn't bother the one in the same family would bother another. That's probably true for all of us mothers in the Foreign Service. We chose to participate in a career, the children didn't really get to make those choices. What about some of the historic incidents -- I understand that when you were in Egypt that the Achille Lauro incident happened which certainly, for those of us just reading the newspapers, was a terrible event.

VELIOTES: Well it was a very traumatic event. I got a telephone call from Nick who had gone to the boat, and when he got on the boat -- the Achille Lauro. He does speak Italian, because we were in Italy, and he could talk to the captain. He found the people -- well of course everybody...

Q: Maybe we should back up a moment. Maybe others don't know this was a cruise ship in the Mediterranean that was taken over by terrorists.

VELIOTES: This was a cruise ship in the Mediterranean that was hijacked by terrorists. Anyway it came into port in Egypt and Nick and his DCM went down there and they found that many of the people on the ship were Jewish American. So maybe that was one reason -- I don't know why -- it might have been a reason to be targeted. Although I don't know if they, the Palestinians that did it, particularly knew that. But, at any rate, they had been very badly treated, as everyone knows. And Klinghoffer, who was crippled, was thrown overboard.

Q: In a wheelchair.

VELIOTES: In a wheelchair.

Q: I mean, it just horrifies one.

VELIOTES: It was just terrible. So the people were in a state of shock. But the thing that was so touching to Nick was that all of the people there said (they were mostly over 75 years old, they were all very elderly people) "Mr. Ambassador we want you to know we never buckled and we never broke."

Q: Extraordinary.

VELIOTES: Anyway...

Q: Those are some of the duties that you have to do when you're abroad representing your country that sometimes are extraordinarily challenging. The perspective we sometimes encounter is that U.S. diplomats are cookie pushers and striped trousers. Many times the American constituency, which we do not have, does not appreciate some of these things that come into our orbit and that we are responsible for. As spouses we become often as involved as our husbands just because of the community interest and the human beings involved.

VELIOTES: Yes. Well so anyway, needless to say, and it was just bad luck. Nick said that there was press, there were people around. I mean they practically had to just push people away so he could get on the boat. Then when he was talking by telephone ship to shore to the DCM that's when the famous line that they zeroed in on occurred. The way it was played on in the press, was if he had made a public statement. This was a private telephone call to his DCM saying we've got to tell the foreign minister to prosecute the sons of bitches.

Q: And Nick was just like Prince Charles -- you think it's a private phone conversation, only with high technology today nothing is private.

VELIOTES: Nick knew that there would probably be -- because the Egyptians were in a very peculiar place there. I mean as far as, you know, they would know that President Mubarak would want try to get out of this anyway he could.

Q: To not choose sides.

VELIOTES: To not choose sides, etc. At any rate that was the famous line and then when we, you know, saw clips of this on television it was if, you know, you heard this voice booming over.

Q: The sound bite, that was the sound bite of all times.

VELIOTES: And so anyway, you know, Nick said of all the things that I've done in the Foreign Service that I really have been pretty happy with, that will be the only thing that half the people will ever remember is to "prosecute those (sons of bitches)". And I must say, at that point you see well the whole thing, with the plane being intercepted on its way to Italy. It just appeared that people were very angry, here in Washington, by what was going on. But it was funny in one way because Nick was getting fan mail from all around the world. I mean the letters were pouring in saying its about time one of our diplomats tells it the way it really is. But every time he got one of these letters, he felt awful because that was not the characterization he wanted to represent his total career.

Q: He said he was in a nontraditional role. Well it's one of those things our mothers

always tell us, "be prepared, you never know what situation you might be asked to meet" and that was one of those occasions where during his entire career he was prepared to handle that kind of emergency situation. I think his response, in that case, was again not to get in any sort of partisanship. But I think that was one of the things why, when Governor Michael Dukakis, as a Presidential candidate, was asked about his wife, he didn't react more forcefully, stronger. There is something in the American psyche that expects you to stand up and defend your own and so in a way it was almost the cowboy Nick. But he fell into that role because that's what the American psyche wanted to see portrayed. Pick the right note.

VELIOTES: Yes. It's very funny because one Egyptian person that Nick really didn't know came up to him at a party, But all the Egyptians felt that way, I mean some people were very angry with that you know. Plus the interception of the plane, naturally they were very angry with that. But this man said, "I would hope that our Egyptian ambassadors around the world would do the same for us if we were in the same situation, and I'm not sure they would have." He was very complimentary to Nick, "you did the appropriate right thing." And, of course, again it was as if he made this announcement and it really was a telephone call to his DCM.

Q: Well I guess the message in that ...

VELIOTES: Don't say anything over the phone you don't want ...

Q: That's right, say or do anything that you don't want publicized. That certainly was an extraordinary experience. You know many of us have experienced illness in posts abroad. How did your family fare because you had ways and assignments in difficult places without the latest medical resources.

VELIOTES: Well, I would say by and large I was extremely healthy in all areas. Nick got everything there was to get. He's had amoeba. I don't know how many times he's had dysentery. He's had hepatitis. If there was a bug out there to get ...

Q: It chose him.

VELIOTES: He would get it and the only time I really had anything similar (I did have amoeba) was in Egypt. It was our last post. I was older and I had shingles there. I got a really bad case of shingles, so I must have been exposed to the chicken pox virus somewhere along the line. I don't know who, but it was fairly mild. It was still painful, but it was mild compared to what some people have.

Q: What about your children?

VELIOTES: The children were very healthy except one time in New Delhi. Our son played with an old cat and it bit him. We sent the cat off to the Ollenbe Institute for Medical Science and they analyzed the remains. They said there was no doubt the cat was

rabid. So we had to start with the 20, or whatever, shots in the stomach.

Q: What age was he?

VELIOTES: He was about six or seven and that was really terrible. His little stomach got almost black and blue because, you know, on a little stomach there's not that much room to put all those shots even though it's over a period of time. I forget, I think we had to go in every day for 20 days -- I can't remember. You put those things out of your mind and other than that, physically, they've been terrifically strong.

Q: I'd like to ask you, before we get to something that I'm a little bit philosophical about, some of the issues I know you have worked on and have been a leader in working on. E.g., spouse compensation or recognition. But before we leave the cultural experiences, I was wondering if you had any unusual things that you would like to mention. Certainly Egypt, archeologically, is an extraordinary place.

VELIOTES: It was wonderful and my very, very close friend there for whom I'm now godmother to her daughter, was one of the archeologists at the American Center for Research in Egypt. We became fast friends almost immediately so we were able to go off to places. She had -- not exactly entrée, anyone could go -- but she knew where the digs were. She was an Egyptologist. So we went to Luxor together and we went to the Valley of the Kings and we did all of that together. We went to the oases that parallel the Nile in the western desert. There were all kinds of digs going on there. Then we went to Hierocropolis I think it is. It's a name that is so familiar. It is so similar to my mother's family name which was Hieronomus. Hierocropolis -- I'm pretty sure that was the name. They think that that was the seat of the beginning of Egyptian civilization and there was an American dig and they showed me various things that they had discovered. I feel I had a really unique time. I guess one of the highlights to me was going to a place called Kasser Breen, which is the castle of Abraham. This was out off of Lake Nasser so we had to go almost from where the Monuments of Abu Simbel were. We'd go out in Lake Nasser and, of course, there were no other boats out there. We had two Arab, Nubian boatmen and Mary Ellen and me.

Q: Is this Mary Ellen Lang?

VELIOTES: Yes.

Q: Oh she's a good friend of mine, I thought when you said Egyptologist.

VELIOTES: You're kidding. Oh my goodness I didn't realize you knew Mary Ellen.

Q: I headed a task force on ...

VELIOTES: Isn't she wonderful?

Q: ... appointments for women, a task force on arts and humanities last year and I solicited her because she's in an organization that I belong to -- Leadership America.

VELIOTES: She is wonderful, just wonderful. Anyway we went out to go to this dig that was taking place and it was an Anglo-American dig. We had to go four hours by this boat, this put-put that was so like the African Queen. And just mile upon mile of just desert on either side. I was so taken with the terrain. I said "My gosh, no wonder the Egyptians got their idea for the pyramids, all the terrain looks like that." It looked like pyramids in the distance just the way the sand and the heat and everything had formed into various shapes. So we get out there and, oh, it was marvelous. They had late Pharaonic part of a building, they had the remains of a Coptic church, I believe, and the remains of an old Roman wall complete with the sandals that the Roman soldiers had. Obviously it was a tavern. It was in a Roman outpost and the Romans would get drunk and they'd just flip off their sandals. So they found untold number of Roman sandals there. So you have the three different periods: the late Pharaonic, the Roman, and the Coptic. They were just the, what was it, I can't remember, it was one of the leading actresses of England who was out on the desert, elderly. What was her name, well I've got it written down. Well, she's also one of the greatest textile experts, or was. I think she's dead now. Talking with her, she said most sites are very sparse. You're lucky to get a few little remnants here and there because clothing disintegrates with time. Here, she said, we've had to throw things out, just leave them there. It's just like a cake, a fruit cake, that when you cut down every layer it is just full of things to stick in their homes. At night we stayed, they stayed -- the people on the dig -- on the houseboat and the Nubians stayed on another houseboat. They helped carrying the dirt and so forth. We had to keep our doors shut because the jackals would come out at night. You could hear them running up and down the deck and everything.

Q: How did jackals get on the houseboat?

VELIOTES: Oh, it was moored right onto the site and it must have been a very high site because the water just came up to that point. So you see so much of that. The Nubian Valley had been flooded by the lake. So this was a very important site because it was about the only one left in that particular area as all the rest had been flooded.

Q: Were you a photographer during your Foreign Service career?

VELIOTES: No, unfortunately.

Q: Because some of the things you're describing are images that would be wonderful to capture. But it's often difficult because there are people who feel that you either spend your time taking the photograph or you spend your time looking, absorbing, seeing. It's very difficult to do both.

VELIOTES: That's right. I've always felt that I didn't want to take the time to do that, but I would now. If I had it to do over I would. I would have gotten a movie camera right then

and just taken everything because you do forget. Another thing on that particular two or three days that we were there, the Nubians there were Sufis. So they had this full moon, or a half moon, but the moon was out. They had this special chant they do and they let their hair down and they go like this: aaaaaah, aaaaaah, ah. They just work themselves into a big trance and they didn't mind that we watched, but we couldn't have any lights. They didn't want to see us, but we could look down on their boat and see them doing this sort of dance, almost whirling dervish, except not whirling that much. Of course with their long robes it was very dramatic and you kept thinking what are they working themselves up to do. But anyway that was in January and we had arrived in November. So this was wonderful. So you see how quickly I became friends with Mary Ellen and so we just did a lot of stuff together and she was wonderful. Anytime there was a visitor coming through I could call up Mary Ellen and say Mary Ellen we really need only you.

Q: She could talk the birds out of the trees aside from her professional competence, but you certainly have retained some wonderful vivid images and certainly your story today gives life to the idea that the Foreign Service life and career was a very special experience. I hope the current members are going to have some of these experiences. Back to something a little bit practical. I think that is one of the reasons the role of the spouse has been changing as our own society has changed. Two income families have become essential, almost, it seems because of the cost of paying a mortgage and educating your children in the United States since we don't have the system of other countries of a public university education. What are some of your reflections on where we should go in the future on this or what you think the role of the spouse can be?

VELIOTES: Well, I think the role of the spouse is continually evolving, continually changing. I think there will always be a limitation to what a spouse in the Foreign Service can do when they are overseas compared to the freedom of choice in this country. There will always be a difference. If you're in a country where there are good reciprocal work agreements then perhaps a woman, or whatever the gender of the spouse is, can work in that country as a lawyer. But if not, then that person has to find some other kind of activity or employment if they want to work. So I see really a restriction there to how far this can go. As far as you know, there may come a time down the road in the future, where every country will have men and women working and equal in the sense almost equal like we have here and many countries in Western Europe. But that time has not come yet. I think that as long as you have a good portion of the world that still live in what we call traditional households, where the man goes out and the woman stays home, there will always be a role for the Foreign Service spouse who wishes to tap into that as a resource for a richer understanding of what the culture is all about that they find themselves in. I think that also so many spouses now have the opportunity to work within the embassy, and many of the people that I have met seem very satisfied to be occupied full time. I think you'll always find those people who are working but still want to participate in the community things as well.

Q: Well, did you find your last couple of assignments as spouse of the ambassador that you didn't have other spouses in the embassy, which traditionally one has turned to to

assist with congressional delegation visits or some of the various activities that have to go on?

VELIOTES: I always felt I always had the help I needed, and I got a great deal of support from the community liaison person (the CLO) overseas. Instead of the ambassador's wife being the focus, in a sense, the community liaison was the focus for everyone.

Q: Has become.

VELIOTES: Has become.

Q: That's a change.

VELIOTES: So that's a change and that makes it a more neutral kind of thing because I don't think anybody was ever happy getting orders from up on high. You know I never ran into any dragons. It seems we always had really nice people that I never felt made unusual demands, but I gathered that there were just enough of those people in the Foreign Service to make everyone rebel. It's too bad because I think if there had been ...

Q: They poison the well.

VELIOTES: They poison the well. I think that, no matter what anyone says, there is still a role for the ambassador's wife. She still has to do certain things and if she doesn't and chooses not to, it doesn't impact that well on the community, particularly in the third world or places where there are more traditional outlooks. I think that time must be spent with people and they don't have to be the "important people." I'll give you an example. I felt very honored to be invited, in Egypt, to be part of a conversational group that was very important. It just happened that most of the women there were very traditional women. They also were in business, in academia.

Q: Were these Egyptian women?

VELIOTES: Egyptian women and only two other ambassador's wives were invited to join this group. Very informal you know. I was just asked by a good friend if I would like to meet with them once every month or once every couple of weeks. We just talked about anything. There was no even focus.

Q: You didn't have to read a book or prepare.

VELIOTES: We didn't have to read a book or prepare. We would just sort of take a subject and in this group was Nawal Sadawi who was a writer who can't be published in Egypt. She's written wonderful things and I think she has an English publisher, but she raises a lot of rocks and looks underneath and she came from a poor Nubian family in upper Egypt. She became a medical doctor and then she went into writing. She's written about incest and all kinds of things that you don't talk about in Egypt. Now she was sort

of way over here to the left in the spectrum, and in this group you had people who were just as intelligent and just as accomplished in their own way but felt that Nawal was not doing the right thing. You just don't talk about things like that. They just didn't feel it was proper. You know, why bring up all of those ugly things. So among these were people the only commodities broker in Egypt, I mean the only woman commodities broker. She dealt with selling cotton and corn and all that. We had the head of all the Palestinian handicrafts, the woman that was the businesswoman who brought all of these things in from other regions bought from the Bedouins and made beautiful garments and handbags and glasses cases, etc. We had a couple of people from the University of Cairo. So these were not ordinary people in a sense, but they were not official either. I felt very honored to be part of that group and I felt I learned an awful lot from those women.

Q: Yes to have a window into those perspectives.

VELIOTES: Because we talked about everything.

Q: Did you feel that the woman in Middle Eastern society was really restricted and deprived.

VELIOTES: I think it depends on which strata of society. But even in the very wealthiest parts, I guess you could say so here too. Here abuse and things like that occur in even the most well to do and well connected families. I think it was the same way there. It was institutionalized in a sense that it really was true that if a man said he divorced you, he divorced you.

Q: You're divorced.

VELIOTES: You're out.

Q: I was wondering about opportunities for younger women to educate themselves?

VELIOTES: Well I think there has always been a tradition in Egypt. Certainly the University of Cairo had women and had a tradition -- I believe that women's suffrage there was before ours actually. I'm not absolutely positive about that. They may have gotten the vote before we did in our country. So they have a tradition of intellectual women. In Jordan it was more a tradition I would say. Now when we're talking about Egypt we're talking about a very thin veneer for most of the people, because it is a poor country and over populated, it's going to be very hard for them no matter how intelligent they are, or how capable, to ever really rise. This brings me to my own theory that until population or some kind of sense is made out of population in the world, that population is really the bottom line as far as I'm concerned.

Q: Is there any family planning program in Egypt? I know Indonesia has an extensive family planning, which is accentuate the positive -- not population control, but family planning.

VELIOTES: Right, right. Well I guess I should say that too -- family planning. But also I think you have to define family planning. It's talked about. It's encouraged, however, culturally if a woman is not pregnant every nine months, the man feels it's a slight on his honor and the woman feels unwomanly. And actually if you read the literature in these countries they feel that they ...

Q: Made their contribution.

VELIOTES: Made their contribution.

Q: Extraordinary. You had said something earlier, coming back to our own domestic issues that you thought there were some things that could perhaps be changed or recommended for spouses, which does not compensate them directly but might enable them to plan a little bit for their own futures.

VELIOTES: Yes. When I was part of the brown bag lunch group that talked about spousal issues and compensation.

Q: That was early 80s late 70s.

VELIOTES: You know I'm trying to remember I think it was either. Well I know even in the early 80s we talked about it because Marlene Eagleburger (spouse of Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger) was there and I remember when Pat Haig (spouse of former Secretary of State Alexander Haig) -- it was right in the new part of the Reagan Administration and we had our first brown bag lunch when MaryAnne Stoessel and Paul Stoessel (Former AEP to USSR) was still alive.

Q: Yes. I think he was Deputy Secretary then and Eagleburger was Under Secretary for Management.

VELIOTES: That's right. No, no, no at that time I think he was still Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. So Stoessel may have been Under Secretary for European Affairs then he went up to Deputy, I mean I think. I'm not positive on that, but anyway we were all at the meeting with Pat Haig, talking to her about compensation etc. Of course she had her view too, being the daughter of a general and then married to a general etc. So she wasn't as sympathetic about this as maybe somebody else would be as, say, Gay Vance (spouse of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance) was. So anyway during this whole process, it must have been before '78, because we went to Jordan in '78. I think that those brown bag lunches were in the '76, '77 time frame. At that time, I'm trying to think, I know I brought it up in early '81 saying that I really felt that it was unrealistic but certainly laudable for women to go for it and try to get compensation. But I didn't think it was very realistic. I didn't think that Congress would ever give us anything. There was one thing ... *(end of tape)*

I don't know if I mentioned it on the previous tape, but my suggestion to the brown baggers that met and discussed things such as spousal compensation was that I felt that it would be realistic and perhaps obtainable to get an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) that spouses could be eligible for. An IRA, wouldn't be compensation per se, but the fact that you could put \$2,000 a year away in your name, I felt, was better than nothing, and would certainly have a better chance of getting through Congress.

Q: That's a very valiant suggestion because many of the other ideas about social security rights, or there were so many reasons why this could not be passed or be -- what about volunteerism: Do you think it's gone forever?

VELIOTES: Well I think its harder and harder to get people to give of their time both here and abroad. I think that many charities here in the States, they say, are mostly staffed by people that are working on a volunteer basis and are of an older age category. I think that the younger people are spread awfully thin. I think it would be very hard for me if I were young today and had a job, and my husband had a job, and we had children, and we were commuting here and there and all the things you have to take care of. I think it would be very difficult to give of your time. You'd have to be very committed to whatever project it was. I think that a lot of the people are committed to maybe their children and their schools and if they do any volunteer work it might be through the PTA or community projects that have to do with the schools. I think it would be and I think the same holds true for overseas too although in so many places it isn't as hectic because people are still able to get help. I heard a lot about people feeling alienated and lonely at posts and that always saddened me because I felt that if you do get involved and if there are community things that you can put your efforts into, it's a way of feeling in touch and feeling connected. I think that the important thing of community work is feeling a connection. If you don't have that connection, you don't have that input yourself, you are going to feel lonely and you are going to be depressed. So I think it's too bad that in certain circles it was in the zeal for compensation that made community work degrading by comparison. I mean I'm not saying this as a universal thing, but there was kind of an undercurrent that these were not really important things to do, that you must have a job, a paying job and that is what's really important.

Q: Don't you find so often that when the pendulum swings we go through a cycle of change it goes way out, and I think that's what's so much of that they rejected, everything to do with volunteerism. I would like to think that it's coming back a little bit, in the center, where there is room for both, and maybe a need for both. Not only to the community but to the individual as well.

VELIOTES: I agree, I agree Pat. I think that, hopefully, it has come back to that to a more middle of the road and that people don't feel that just because they're working they can't volunteer. And just because they're volunteering that they would have to give it up if they wanted to work.

Q: That leads me to almost my last question because I do want to ask a little bit about

what you have been doing since your husband officially resigned from the Foreign Service. But before we do that, you mentioned that he had been assistant secretary of state. What about some of your experiences either within the Department. Have you been included in White House dinners some of the things that happen within our own government that either honors you and your husband; or a very special experience that you may have had.

VELIOTES: Well, he was assistant secretary in 1981. Of course President Ronald Reagan had just been elected and we all know they were very social. A very social President and his wife Nancy. They enjoyed pomp and circumstance and glittering parties. So they started right off, unlike our Clinton administration who's just had their first, really, State dinner last night or the night before. They started right off with State dinners and we had a whole raft of people coming in from the Middle East and from South Asia during that time. So any time a head of state would come, our input was that we had to go out to the airport to be part of the receiving line and then we would fly (usually on Air Force 1, which was fun) the helicopter to the Washington Monument grounds and then be met there by the Secretary of State. Then usually they were taken to what was the Madison Hotel after a while because Blair House was being renovated and we usually had an informal, quick 15-minute tea or coffee with the Secretary and his wife and, for example, say President and Mrs. Mubarak and their aids, and then that was the end of day number one. Day number two let's see how it worked. That would be the day of the official welcoming of the head of state at the White House and we would be in the receiving line. It was always kind of funny because protocol always had our toe lines we could never go by. You always had to stand in line, you couldn't go over that one line that was always so funny because we would always sort of tease each other: Oh you're over the line.

Q: Like in tennis.

VELIOTES: Right, and the head of state and wife would come up and the President and wife, would greet them, and the President and head of state would go to the reviewing stand and give their different speeches and the wives would stand over to the side. Then I gather under Carter, that they had done away with the revolutionary troops. The Reagans, of course, started that again, and it was so dramatic. The fifes and the drums and all the people dressed as colonial soldiers. It really did bring tears to your eyes to see that. Then come the speeches our President and the head of state of the other country. Then there was always about a 15 or 20 minute reception in the White House after that. We'd all come in and shake hands with President and Mrs. Reagan and then go on and have our coffee, and leave. Then that night would be the State dinner and that was of course exciting because there would be all the people from industry, film, and academia.

Q: For the state dinners do you usually enter the main entrance in front or the diplomatic reception.

VELIOTES: We always, let's see, we always came in from downstairs.

Q: The back that has the narrow...

VELIOTES: Yes we'd always come in that way and then when Nick was ambassador, of course, we came over, and the same thing holds.

Q: When that country, the leader of that country is here for a state visit the American ambassador would come home for that.

VELIOTES: That's right. I have to tell you a funny story if I may.

Q: Yes, yes.

VELIOTES: Okay, we want this to come alive. Well our very first state dinner was with King Hussein and Queen Noor when they came for the very first time to the United States. So it was a first for her and it was a first for us to go to the White House. We had been there once before, but not an occasion like this. So we all, of course, were given our protocol buttons so we could be identified by security. Of course, you think that an ambassador and his wife are going to be given some kind of special treatment, but you're not. You're not given any special treatment. You find your way down to Blair House because the procedure is that for the state dinner you would go to Blair House to be with the head of state and wife, then you go in limousines just across the street to the White House.

Q: But you could come by bicycles to Blair House for all they knew or cared.

VELIOTES: Yes that's right or with your backpack or whatever. Anyway so we arrived and parked around the corner and of course everything was cordoned off and we had just gotten in the night before and when we got around there Nick didn't have his button on. The policeman said "I'm sorry this is cordoned off you cannot come through here." He says, "but I'm the American Ambassador to Jordan." The policeman looked at him and said, "yeah, yeah I've heard that before." Anyway, at that moment, Amir Khammash, who was head of the king's court, (it sounds very lofty for Jordan, but he had a title similar to that, that might not be exactly it) Amir's coming down the steps and we called "Amir, Amir" and so it took a Jordanian to come and say that we were okay and that we were legitimate.

Q: To the DC policeman.

VELIOTES: To the DC policeman. So anyway we got in and we went over with them and we were taken immediately up to the family quarters where the heads of state, ambassador and wife, and the President and Mrs. Reagan assembled. You have, just kind of like, six people up there chatting. You sort of disappear and they make their entrance to music...

Q: Yes. "Hail to the Chief" or something.

VELIOTES: Yes. So that's the procedure there. Another thing, for those people who haven't been to the White House which is very impressive, is that they announce you and you feel you're back in the 18th or 19th century courts where you're named the duke and duchess of so and so. So everyone is announced when they come in, which I think is rather interesting. I don't know if they still do that.

Q: I have gone to local embassies where they have done that. It seems a bit pretentious. I went one time to the Korean Embassy, maybe their visitor was head of state, but anyway it was very formal. It brings a smile to your lips.

VELIOTES: It does. It does. Anyway and then usually the next day after a state dinner, the secretary of state and his wife usually will be at two separate luncheons. Sometimes it's together, but often times they're like working lunches.

Q: In the State Department on the 8th floor?

VELIOTES: In the State Department on the 8th floor. And that, then, usually ends the visit.

Q: Does not then the embassy usually get a reciprocal night? They often do.

VELIOTES: I've been trying to think. Yes, yes they did, but now when Indira Gandhi (Prime Minister of India) seems to me they didn't. I think sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. It depends on the schedule of the people involved if they follow that.

Q: I know it used to be that the assistant secretary for that area would always be included in White House dinners, and then I've noticed in recent years that often they don't go down that low. It seems that when you have worked so hard and you know the issues, it's very appropriate to include that person.

VELIOTES: I didn't realize that. That's new to me.

Q: I've noticed that. I guess it varies with the administration. Well, the last thing that I really wanted to talk to you about after such an illustrious and fascinating career is how does one find retirement, both you and your husband.

VELIOTES: Nick had gone to Egypt with the idea that this would be his last post. He wanted to retire. He had done a lot of interesting things and he really wanted to do something else. So about a year before, he was ready to retire and before our tour was up, he was contacted by a couple of people connected with the book publishing industry to see if he would be interested if they put his name on the list of people/candidates. He said, "yes", so this went on for about a year and then the Achille Lauro occurred. There was some rumor he was going to be offered some other job in the administration because the

President was real happy with his terrible response. Well anyway, so they wrote back and said we are so disappointed because we understand that you're up for another job in the administration and that you're not interested. He wrote back immediately and said, "I am very interested" and so it started the ball rolling again and he went back in December and we met with all of the people and he got the job.

Q: This is the Association...

VELIOTES: The Association of American Publishers and he met with all the publishers, Simon and Schuster and all the people. They said can you come April, "no", they said they wanted him January first, this was December. He said I can't leave a post that soon. Really our tour wasn't up until July or August and they said what about April and he said "the soonest I could come is May, I just can't leave". So they gave him until May first if he wanted to take this job. Second jobs aren't that easy to come by, and one that was going to be this interesting, and so he had to weigh all of that. So he decided that he would retire early. He let it be known in January that he would be leaving April first. He started his job May first so he had one month so there was no time to think about down time. It was all of a sudden, it was like another post to report to duty.

Q: So there were no cultural reentry problems.

VELIOTES: I mean the only problem was that we resettled in our house, but that wasn't so bad because we were never out long enough for me to become spoiled with help. Every time I just about got settled someplace, we got jerked back here to the U.S. So anyway he started May first and it's turned out to be a fascinating job and one that we both love and even though I'm not involved in the same way that I was involved in things in the Foreign Service. There is a certain amount of involvement. We do a lot of traveling with it. There's a whole international aspect to it because they go into international copyright and international piracy. Right now it's a very exciting period, because talking about communication in publishing to the year 2000 and beyond and all the electronic stuff, and all this it's very, it's a whole industry in flux. Nobody knows what's going to happen. Nobody can predict. Everything's happening very fast. So he's just signed a new 3-year contract with them and in the meantime he's had a couple of offers to come back into the State Department. We just have a lot of commitments, family commitments, and we just couldn't do it so he's staying on.

Q: Well it strikes me as really a tribute to the type of person that is recruited and enters and has an entire career in Foreign Service, that there is a zest for living. The curiosity, the interest, and learning a whole new industry and going on. I think that is very positive for the Foreign Service. Those kind of people are going on and merging back into their own society. Some think that we are worlds apart and we had such different experiences. We continue to think of them, I think it's very positive and just dip into something totally new and go on with it.

VELIOTES: I think that's what I feel so proud of with our colleagues. Because I think

everyone has, I think that's what differentiates Foreign Service officer and spouse from maybe other people from other walks of life. I think these qualities that Foreign Service people have that makes them adaptable, going here and there, setting up a household in San Martin or wherever it may be. That's probably where it is with the break up of Russia. These qualities enable people to transfer all those wonderful skills that they have from the Foreign Service into other walks of life. I think it's a perfect preparation for doing other things.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Nicholas A. Veliotis

Spouse Entered Service: 1953
You Entered Service: 1953

Left Service: April 1, 1986
Left Service: April 1, 1986

Status: Spouse of retiree

Posts:

1955-57	Naples, Italy
1957-60	Rome, Italy
1960-64	Washington, DC
1964-66	New Delhi, India
1966-69	Vientiane, Laos
1969-70	Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School
1970-73	Washington, DC
1973-75	Tel Aviv, Israel
1975-78	Washington, DC
1978-80	Amman, Jordan
1981-83	Washington, DC
1983-86	Cairo, Egypt

Spouse's Position: Ambassador

Place/Date of birth: New York City, December 21, 1930

Malden Name: Nolan

Parents (Name, Profession):

Joseph Harold Nolan, hotel manager
Lucille Harrom, musician

Schools (Prep, University):

BA, University of California, Berkeley

Date/Place of Marriage: July 17, 1953, San Mateo, California

Children: 2 sons

Profession: Music teacher

Positions held (Please specify Volunteer or Paid):

A. At Post: Naples: Teacher, Navy School, assisted evacuees from Middle East. New Delhi: Teacher, volunteer for variety of activities. Vientiane: Liaison to IVS (International Variety Show) from Women's Club. Tel Aviv: Duties connected with spouse of DCM and [Ambassador not married,] so I filled in in this position. Amman: Ambassador's wife's duties. Cairo: Ambassador's wife's duties, also taught music.

B. In Washington, DC: Taught music on all home assignments; collected money for American Cancer Society; assisted with activities related to membership in Northern Virginia Music Teachers' Association

Honors (Scholastic, FS):

Mask and Dagger, Dramatic Arts Honor Society, UC, Berkeley

End of interview