

AMBASSADOR SELWA S. ROOSEVELT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: When and where were you born?

ROOSEVELT: Well, I'm not going to tell you when, but I was born in Kingsport, Tennessee. I am the daughter of Lebanese immigrants. I was raised there and spent almost my entire childhood there except for two years. As a little girl my mother took my sister and me back to Lebanon, and there we were immersed in the culture for two years. We were just little kids and we were very spoiled by all of our relatives who thought we were something special. And when we came back we came back to reality. My parents weren't very well off in this country. My mother came from a very good family, and they were far better off there, but she had married against her parents' wish to my father who had sort of spirited her away. We grew up in Tennessee and in a wonderful environment very middle class. Economically, maybe even lower middle class, but my mother was very cultivated and she surrounded us with books and made sure that we were given every kind of lesson which she worked hard to pay for. We had art lessons, we had music lessons, and we had what they used to call down home "expression lessons" which were learning how to give a speech. It's amazing what this woman did. My mother is still alive. She was so extraordinary in the way she prepared my sister and me, for a really wonderful life which we wouldn't have had otherwise. I had such ambitions as a child that I was determined even though we had little money. I graduated first in my high school class, and then I said well, I'm going to the best college in America. And I decided I wanted to go to Vassar and I did, but I had to pay much of my own way and I got scholarships. I earned money in the summer and that kept me going and my parents sacrificed everything they could to put me through college. I met my husband just as I was graduating from college.

Q: I'd like to flesh this out a bit if we could. What was your family name?

ROOSEVELT: It was Choucaire. That wasn't what we used. My father anglicized it to Showker. My parents were from the Druze - the tribes that were really sort of an aristocracy of Lebanon at one time. They held the balance of power between the Christians and Moslems and the Druze are very special. They have a great history, they think, and they are proud people like mountain people everywhere. We have relatives in the mountains in villages that belong to our families. My family's village is a place called Arsoun, and the only other prominent person that you've heard of who came from there is Ralph Nader. Ralph's family was Greek Orthodox. It was a village of Druze and Greek Orthodox who lived very happily together. There were never any problems until the Civil War came. Our family houses were all burned to the ground by the Falange, the extreme right wing Christian Maronites. But they rebuilt the village and all that was destroyed has been rebuilt. You would not know it. I went back about five years ago. It's a beautiful village, totally unspoiled, with no neon lights. It's just a beautiful village like you find anywhere in the Mediterranean.

My mother married very young and arrived in Kingsport, Tennessee. She spoke English, thank goodness, because she had been tutored. She took a measure of the world around her and decided that she wanted to be a part of it. She wasn't going to be a foreigner and an outsider. She joined various organizations. She had a great personality; she is a beautiful woman and has a beautiful soul so people loved her. My sister and I are obligated to her because she decided very young that she wasn't going to worry about religion. We would just be brought up as Methodists like everybody else in Kingsport, Tennessee. So we were raised as Methodists. It didn't do us any harm whatsoever. Indeed, it made us part of the community. If my mother had worried about things like religion which is why I get so disgusted with this religious stuff total don't know what would've happened to us. We grew up going to church every Sunday and learning all things that every other American kid does like "Jesus loves me, yes I know, for the Bible tells me so." I didn't feel foreign. I felt foreign in my looks because I'm dark and have a definite Middle Eastern look. But I never felt in my soul that I was any different. I loved America and being American, and when we came back from Lebanon, I remember my mother was pleased that we had learned to speak Arabic during our two years there. But the minute we got back here, I didn't speak Arabic; I didn't want to hear it. I rejected all that because I wanted to be American, so American. So that's what happened, and I don't speak Arabic to this day.

Q: What was your father doing?

ROOSEVELT: He was a merchant, a small merchant. He started out as a peddler like all these people who came before World War I. My mother came much later; he went back and got a wife. Daddy wanted to be a doctor, but his brothers who had come ahead of him wouldn't help him. They wanted him to go home and stay with their mother, and he didn't want to do that. He started out on his own. He didn't speak English; it was really amazing what he did. He finally ended up with a little department store. That survived, and he did pretty well until the Depression when he lost everything, and he had to start all over again. He had a dry cleaning business. Then he got sick, and he died quite young of cancer. Then my mother, who by this time was about 40, decided she wanted to go to college. She went to the University of Tennessee to get her bachelor's degree, and she graduated second in a class of 750. And then she came to Washington, to Georgetown University, and got her master's and all her credits for her Ph.D. She did not do her dissertation.

Q: What field was she in?

ROOSEVELT: Linguistics. She taught French at Mount Vernon Junior College, and she taught some at Georgetown, I think. She then went back to Tennessee because she missed it, and she taught at East Tennessee State - a part of the University of Tennessee until she retired. She lived down there until I made her come up here about seven years ago.

Q: Tell me about Kingsport when you were a young girl. Where is it?

ROOSEVELT: It's northeast Tennessee, about 100 miles from Knoxville. It's in the mountains, and it's a wonderful place to grow up, it's very beautiful. It was a city without much prejudice. Obviously, if there was any prejudice it was about blacks because it was the south. But there wasn't much of that. You didn't grow up with a lot of snobbism and prejudice, which was nice. My sister and I were pretty well accepted in the community, and my mother very definitely was a part of the community. In her thirties, she became president of the Tennessee League of Women Voters. She was an activist. That kind of set an example for my sister and me. We had an excellent education. Doby's Bennett public high school was staffed with excellent teachers. I went to Vassar so well prepared. I was better prepared than most of my friends who had gone to private schools.

Q: As a young girl, both in elementary and high school and at home, were politics and world events discussed much?

ROOSEVELT: Yes, although not excessively. My father wasn't much of an intellectual. He worked and worked and worked; he was always working at the store or at his little place. When he came home, he had his dinner and then he went to bed. My mother was different. She was very involved in political matters. I think I was brought up with what I would call common sense. I was aware of international affairs, and I think being of Lebanese origin, I was much more aware of what was going on say, in the Middle East. If you said your family was from Lebanon, they thought it was Lebanon, Tennessee. They had never heard of Lebanon, literally, never heard of it.

Q: How about...this was the era of the new deal, and Roosevelt and all.

ROOSEVELT: I wasn't a Roosevelt then. Actually, my political upbringing was rather conservative because this was a northeast Republican enclave in Tennessee. They had a Republican representative in Congress. Although I don't remember very well, when I went to Vassar I was probably like every other student. I was a liberal for two years, and then I got wise. This was at the height of the communist threat. I was appalled that Vassar was so liberal. Innocently, I joined the Vassar Miscellany News because I wanted to be a writer it was my grand ambition. I wanted to be a journalist. After being exposed to these extremely bright left-wing New York types that were totally foreign to me and so passionate about their political points of view they were all screaming liberal I was disillusioned. They wanted me to agree to everything in the party line. There was a party line, and I said no, no, no, I can't do that. And so I resigned from the Vassar Miscellany News. I had this wonderful history professor called Evalyn Clark who opened my eyes to what communism really meant. It wasn't polemical; it was just that she was such a great history teacher. I ended up being very anti-communist, but funnily enough I had wonderful teachers who introduced me to Russian culture. I love Russian culture, the literature, the ballet, the music all of that is very important to me now and it started in college.

Q: To take you back to high school and even before, what sort of books were you reading?

ROOSEVELT: Everything. I read things much too mature for me. At age ten I read *Gone With The Wind*, and my mother was a little bit horrified, but she let me read anything I wanted to; she didn't stop me. I just devoured books. I would go to the library, and I would take out all these, probably not very good, books. Mother bought books and encouraged us to read good stuff and I read trashy stuff too. I'll never forget reading *Gone With The Wind*. I loved it, but I didn't understand some things and so I said to my mother, "What all are martial rights?" I had understood "martial"; everyone else read "marital". You remember Rhett saying "I could divorce you because you don't allow me my marital rights", or something like that. I didn't understand what that meant at all. I don't know what she told me, but I still didn't understand. I was just way ahead of my class and I loved reading. And I developed very early certain instincts. For example, when I was reading about Jefferson and Hamilton, I was very taken with Hamilton. I thought he was far more interesting, and I liked him better than Jefferson. I thought Jefferson was sort of pompous; I didn't cotton to Jefferson. My papers that I wrote at the time were about Hamilton, and the teacher who was a big Jeffersonian didn't like it, but she still gave me an A. Mrs. Butler, I'll never forget Mrs. Butler. She couldn't understand me. I guess I had a mind set. For example, in college I was fascinated by Disraeli and I hated Gladstone and thought he was such a prig. Disraeli was to me the most exotic creature and I read everything about him I could.

In school, I don't even remember presidential elections. The first presidential election I remember was Truman in '48. It was the first presidential election I remember being involved in. Who did he run against?

Q: Dewey.

ROOSEVELT: I remember being against Truman because he had an almost communist running with him. Wallace, no, who was it?

Q: No, it was Barkley. Wallace was the third candidate, he was very left.

ROOSEVELT: I remember now. Some of my classmates were for Wallace. After that I was always a Republican. I remember Eisenhower. That's when I became a journalist, during the Eisenhower Administration.

Q: I went to Williams from '46 to '50 and I think the Republicans were the dominant ones in the student body. The faculty was far more liberal than the student body.

ROOSEVELT: I was brought up with traditional values and with conservative, but nicely conservative, parents who gave me a lot of love and a wonderful home with very few material things. I wasn't deprived. If there was a need for me to have a dress, somehow my mother found a way to get me that dress. I was brought up like all girls with vanity. I wanted to be pretty and I wasn't.

Q: During high school or college did you get involved in summer or evening work?

ROOSEVELT: I worked every summer. That's how I paid my way through college.

Q: What sort of work?

ROOSEVELT: I was a journalist. I started out as a newspaper reporter. In my high school summers, of course, I was much too young to be doing that. My father was very against that. He thought that I would get into bad company, and he was quite right and I did. That's how I learned about the world.

Q: What paper were you...?

ROOSEVELT: It was The Kingsport Times, a very good paper. I had wonderful editors. I remember one I sort of fell in love with and worshipped. He was a writer as well of pulp fiction. I remember he was so good to me, he looked after me and he saw to it that I learned. He taught me how to write, and he really encouraged me and saw that I had something.

Q: What sort of stories were they?

ROOSEVELT: I have scrapbooks of them. I wrote features mostly although I started out doing obituaries. They always make you do obituaries. Then after that I had to learn social copy, how to report tea parties and things. In those days, weddings were a big, big deal and you described the bride's dress and all of that. I learned all of that, never knowing, of course, that one day I would be involved in the world of protocol. I learned about how you do things because I had to report it. I was always looking for something else. I talked them into letting me do features. I had to do all the boring things, but I went out and looked for features and I just wrote fun things. I was only 16 when I started this. I remember going to the circus and seeing little people - dwarfs. I was so touched by them, and saw that they interacted like grownups. They were grownups, but they were just "little people" and I wanted to do a story about them. So I did a real tearjerker, and I still have the scrapbooks of the work that I did. I was always fascinated by old homes and their atmosphere. Of course, later I supervised the restoration of Blair House, and this was the beginning of it. I would drive out to the country to some of these wonderful looking houses that were falling into disrepair and find some little old lady there. I remember Miss Annie, who seemed very old then. I asked if I could just look through her attic because I knew I would find something interesting. And she let me. And I found all these letters, and I did a story about this particular house and its era in Tennessee history. I think it was Miss Annie Tipton. Anyway, I did that for several summers. I would come back from Vassar and work. I thought I was pretty big stuff then. I got better and better.

Q: The editors, did they work on your style and all?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes, they were wonderful. They were all friends of my mother. They taught me how to write. I never took an English course in college. I didn't major in English.

Q: What did you major in?

ROOSEVELT: I majored in economics and history and political science, an interdepartmental major, because I thought I wanted to go into the world of international relations. So I majored in that, and I didn't major in English at all. I'm sorry now. I wish I had taken more English courses, especially literature, but I didn't. I read so much it didn't matter. I took a narrative writing course at Vassar, and English 105, you know, the basic English course. After that I was so busy taking history courses and economics that I never got back to the fun stuff. I took Russian literature which I told you became a great interest of mine, and to this day I'm fascinated by it.

Q: You've mentioned the students, but where did the faculty of Vassar stand at that point?

ROOSEVELT: Very liberal. Only Miss Clark was the balance with my other teachers. I had one who admitted right away that she was a communist. She was my economics teacher, Ms. Brown. Nonetheless, she gave me an A on my thesis which was very anti-communist. It was a thesis of my own choosing. I did a thesis on communist penetration in the Arab world. Nobody even thought about it. I was curious to see how much the communists were able to accomplish and I still have that thesis. If I were to read it now, I would probably think it was pretty naïve.

Q: It's all part of a thought learning process.

ROOSEVELT: I must say, I went into the bowels of the Vassar library, aided by my wonderful Miss Clark directing me to all kinds of source material for my thesis. At that time there was a lot of passion among the student just like there was again in 196 but this time it was the Alger Hiss trial, and the question of Whittaker Chambers. Of course, the left denounced him completely. I read Whittaker Chambers and thought he made a lot of sense. And I thought Alger Hiss was guilty. I mean, instinctively, before I married my CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) husband and then found out that Hiss really was a communist, but it's interesting the way you just instinctively feel something. I was very anti-communist.

Q: Alger Hiss is sort of a watershed because I felt to use an old term, he let down his side.

ROOSEVELT: He sure did.

Q: Because a lot of people put a lot of their soul on this, somebody coming from where he was couldn't possibly do that. He did do it, and he let down his side. What he did was far more damaging, I think, to a whole generation or several generations of people coming from the establishment.

ROOSEVELT: Exactly. There were many people when I first came to Washington in 1950 with my husband, there were many friends of ours who were very liberal and even in the CIA who had this sort of establishment arrogance and were convinced they knew. Now my husband was totally establishment, but he wasn't like that. I found that Archie and I were not in agreement with a lot of them. They were kind of, you know, what we called limousine liberals. And I was always put off by that.

Q: It was a dominant thing for some time which explains a lot of what happened in the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, and all of that. Did you get into New York at all when you were at Vassar?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes, a lot on the weekends.

Q: How did you find that?

ROOSEVELT: Well, it was exciting. That's where I first went to the opera. And you know I'm very active in the Washington Opera here. I helped persuade Placido Domingo to come to Washington to take over our opera company. My first opera experiences were when I was at Vassar. One of my roommate's father was having an affair with a famous diva so we got very good tickets. We got to see some nice things and we had a lot of recordings and we were playing them all the time. That's how my love of opera began and it carried through my life. New York was a wonderful cultural experience.

I also met the Arab community there. There was a lovely old gentleman called Doctor Khairallah who was a friend of my family and my mother and father asked him to look after me when I came to New York because they were worried to death about my being in this den of inequity. I remember Doctor Khairallah took me to some embassy parties. He was a very distinguished scholar. He introduced me to various Arab potentates. I took a course on the UN at Vassar, and so I went down as part of my course to observe it. At that time the Representative of Lebanon was Camille Chamoun who was a very handsome man. He looked like Charles Boyer to me. I was just a kid; I was seventeen because I was young for my class. I saw this handsome man with high cheek bones and so good looking and a big flirt. He was known to be a great ladies' man. He was very nice to me and he was amused that I was this little Druze girl. He was very respectful of me. He saw to it that I got to sit with the delegation at the U.N. and he took me to parties and he took me to nightclubs. Really, I got spoiled very early. And I thought that all of life was going to be like this, which in a way it was. He was really wonderful to me. Of course, he was married and he was president of Lebanon later. I don't know what I thought I was doing, but it was all fun.

Q: At Vassar was there sort of a power structure?

ROOSEVELT: Anne Armstrong was sort of my idol. She was older than I was; she was a senior when I was a freshman. And yes, there was sort of, but funnily enough, Jackie Kennedy was my friend Jackie Bouvier then. I fell in with some girls who were from the best families, the WASP aristocracy. It just happened. You would have thought I would have been more attracted to the Jewish minority or the Greeks or whatever, because as you know we all shared minority status. I wasn't a Roosevelt then; my name was Showker, but they were all sort of fascinated by me because I was so exotic. I learned to use that. I guess that was something my mother taught me. Adversity could sometimes be turned around to be an asset. And so I was this exotic creature.

Q: Although, I would have to say from my experience that young ladies coming out of any sort of Southern culture learn to use every weapon to their advantage. They really did.

ROOSEVELT: That's true. Southern women absorb it from the culture. So between being Southern and Arab or Lebanese, who also know how to handle adversity and to get ahead despite it, I had some weapons there that I could use. Of course, at the beginning I was very insecure. Here I was, and all my friends were so rich. They seemed incredibly rich to me. Ruthie Pratt, for example, was one of my dearest friends. Ruthie's family was the prominent Pratt family from Long Island, big oil. And I went to homes on Long Island that were like palaces to me. I went to debut parties; I had never seen anything like it. In a way it was like something out of the Great Gatsby at first. But then, in a funny way, I always managed to be comfortable. I don't know quite how I did it, but I did. I guess that's why, when I married Archie it didn't seem to be such a big deal. Everybody else thought it was.

Q: When you graduated, what did you do then?

ROOSEVELT: Well, I graduated with honors, and I wanted to be in the State Department or something like that. I didn't quite know; I was pretty unsophisticated about Washington. I talked to this lovely man, a friend of Archie's, an older man, who interviewed me for the State Department during my senior year at Vassar. I think he gave me a list of five people that he wanted me to make appointments with and be interviewed by. The last name on the list was Archie Roosevelt. Well, I started with him. That seemed more interesting. I didn't know who those other people were so I called up his office. He was at the Voice of America. He was in the CIA, but he was detailed to the Voice of America to start the broadcasts to all the Mid-Eastern countries because he knew all the languages, and to all the Soviet minorities. Now that was a very hotly debated issue. Should we stick to greater Russia or should we really hit the Russians in their underbelly and go after the minorities? Archie was all for going after the minorities because he knew all those languages and he understood their mentality and culture.

I went thinking that I was being interviewed for the Voice of America and, apparently, I was also being interviewed for the CIA. I didn't know that. That was in May and I was about to graduate, and I called up and I asked for an appointment with Mr. Roosevelt on Saturday which was not a working day but that was the only time I could leave Vassar. The secretary went to ask him if he would see me, and he said absolutely not, I'm sick and tired of people bothering me. Archie was a pretty good natured fellow, but apparently he was just sick of it. He had been interviewing a lot for all these broadcasts. The girl said imagine how my life hung on this one woman "but Mr. Roosevelt she has such a nice voice." My Southern accent sounded nice to her. She sort of pled for me. And he said "oh, well, all right." And that's how I got to meet him. So I went strutting down from Vassar in my little red suit and black hat and gloves, the works. And I guess I looked pretty good then. He apparently took one look at me, and it was love at first sight. It was one of those strange things. So he listened to me, and he said "you know you don't really have the qualifications for the Voice of America; you don't have native fluency in any language, do you." No, I didn't. I didn't know much Arabic either. I thought I was going to do things in English, but I don't know why I thought that. I showed him my thesis; I was so proud of it and he pretended to look at it. He wasn't all that interested in it. He said why don't we have lunch and we'll discuss this further? I thought I had nothing to lose so I went to lunch.

Archie was a very cute and funny man. He had a huge sense of humor and was a very amusing conversationalist. But he wasn't a flirt in any way. Later I found it was totally unheard of for him to ask a person who came to his office for lunch. He said to me. "I realized when you walked in that you weren't a Christian or a Moslem." I said what do you mean? He said, "well, I figured out you must be Druze because of the shape of your head." He was an anthropological expert. I said why, what's there about the shape of my head? He said, well, you have a dolichocephalic head and you know the Christians all have very flat heads and you'd didn't look like a Moslem, and I just thought your family must be Druze. That really intrigued me.

So then we had lunch. He said, will you have a drink? I didn't drink because I grew up in a culture where you don't drink and also it was dry down in Tennessee and my father never had liquor in the house and I really never liked it very much. But I wanted to show I was sophisticated, and I said I'll have an old fashioned. I had heard about old fashioned. It is bourbon and vermouth and powerful, horrible and sweet. And Archie had a martini. And so, of course, I drink this thing and it went right to my head and my head was swirling. And he said will you have another after we had this nice conversation and I said, yes I'll have another. So I was drunk. It was the first and only time in my life I've ever been drunk. It was a good thing. I said to him, "Mr. Roosevelt, are you married?" And he said, "Well, yes and no". I said, "Well, what does that mean?" He said, "Well, my wife is in Reno getting a divorce." So I said, "She must be a very strange woman." Later, he said that did it. I had a date with somebody else that night so I went out with my boyfriend. The next day, Archie insisted on driving me back to Vassar and we spent the day together and he said to me at the end of the day, "You know, we're going to get married." And I said, "Yes, I think I do know that." And we did. We got married three months later. It was love at first sight for both of us.

Q: Could you tell me for the record here the background of Archie Roosevelt?

ROOSEVELT: Archie was the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt.

Q: Who was his father?

ROOSEVELT: Archie, Sr.

Q: What did Archie, Sr. do?

ROOSEVELT: Archie, Sr. was a very brave officer in World War I. He was a young lieutenant who was wounded and then he came home and was in business, particularly in Wall Street bonds. Then when World War II started, he insisted on going back into the military and was wounded in New Guinea and served with MacArthur. My father-in-law was an outdoorsman, a hunter.

Q: Very much in the Teddy Roosevelt mold.

ROOSEVELT: Yes, but my Archie was more like Teddy intellectually. My Archie was the brilliant one. He spoke about fifteen languages.

Q: How did he get into that?

ROOSEVELT: Well, he was just brilliant. As a young kid he had a French governess and then they had a Polish gardener who taught him Russian. At Groton he was really a Latin and Greek scholar and got very involved in foreign languages as well. Then at Harvard he studied Middle Eastern languages, particularly Arabic; he loved it. He became a Middle East expert. Just after World War II he was military attaché first in Baghdad and then in Tehran. This was all before I met him. And then he had a choice. He passed the Foreign Service exam with the highest grade ever recorded at that time. He was offered a job at the New York Times as the Middle East correspondent and he was offered a job in the CIA. That's the one he wanted. So he joined the CIA, and was sent to Beirut to start the station there. Now when I met him he was in his thirties so he had had all this experience before I ever set eyes on him. It was after we married that he became less and less involved in the Middle East. We were sent to Turkey for two years and he learned Turkish, of course. That was it. After that he wasn't involved except here in the Middle East. I wanted him to branch out. I didn't want us to spend our whole life in the Middle East. I was disillusioned and to me it was such heartbreak.

Q: When were you married?

ROOSEVELT: 1950

Q: Did they sort of prepare you?

ROOSEVELT: No. Nobody prepares you for anything, it's amazing. Archie tried to brief me and told me there were many things he couldn't talk to me about, but there were also many things I had to understand so as not to make a gaff. We were always supposed to be in the State Department. And I had to behave like a State Department wife which was fine but I didn't know what to do. I remember the first mistake I made was not dropping cards on anybody when I arrived. Everybody thought I was a great snob. You know, the minute you get the name Roosevelt everybody makes certain judgments about you, which I'd never experienced before.

Q: It was a burden really.

ROOSEVELT: Until you learned to live with it. At first I was totally unaware that I was something that people looked at with envy or with questioning. You just don't realize it. Suddenly I go from being the daughter of an immigrannobody could have cared less about my namto one of the most famous names in America. It took a little getting used to and realizing you could offend people without realizing it. Archie, bless his heart, was totally unpretentious, and he forgot to tell me that I should call on all these ladies at the embassy and particularly the ones higher ranking than I. I didn't do it and everybody thought I was a snob. It was just awful, and so I had to get past that. I finally learned because somebody told me, "You know, Lucky, you really should do that." Thank goodness for Mrs. Freddy Merrill.

Q: You mentioned Lucky. Where did you pick up this name?

ROOSEVELT: That was at college and that was playing cards. I was a bridge player and a poker player; I liked both. They thought that I was very lucky; and I think I was. Anyway, I liked the name and it stuck.

Q: So you've basically been known as Lucky all your adult life?

ROOSEVELT: All my adult life. It started probably about my sophomore year, and I've been that ever since. Now it's not very suitable for an old lady but never mind.

Q: Tell me a bit about the Roosevelt side, was it Kermit? Was he the one involved in Iran? Did you find yourself part of the Roosevelt clan?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes, very much. The Roosevelts were very close, but not the way an Arab clan would be. For example, my mother, in her innocence, said to Archie, when she heard we were going to New York said, "Oh, will you call on your aunt?" He wouldn't think of calling on his aunt. That wasn't the kind of life they lived, calling on each other at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon the way Lebanese do. Archie used to tell this story about my mother. It was wonderful marrying someone like Archie; he was very secure in his background. He taught me not to be insecure. I was insecure in the beginning. He said something that sounds very conceited, very arrogant but I knew what he meant. If I was worried about whether I had done the right thing or if the table was set properly and you know, all that stuff you learn when you are first married and especially if you're in the Foreign Service. And he said, 'Listen Lucky, stop worrying about those things. You know, whatever we do is right.' Now he just meant that people expect the Roosevelts to know what to do, and you just have to get used to that and if you do it, it's okay. It took me a long time to realize that.

Q: Your first post was Istanbul? How was it?

ROOSEVELT: It was at the height of the Cold War. And it was very scary, and you really were conscious of Bulgarians and other Eastern Europeans being across the border. People were dying. It was a very bad time in the CIA in terms of hairy operations, which since have been written. Archie was much younger, and he was opposed to their "cowboy" approach. There was a big battle within the CIA about sticking to your knitting and not doing big paramilitary operations. My husband was always on the more conservative side like Dick Helms. Archie was a great admirer of Dick Helms and not such an admirer of some of the cowboys.

Q: It was a time when some of the CIA was still fighting World War II. They wanted to send in commando teams. A lot of people got killed.

ROOSEVELT: A lot of people got killed. Archie was very upset about that and thought it was unnecessary and fought it. He got into a lot of trouble with his higher ups when he was in Turkey. I remember all this very vividly, because I was so worried about him. I was afraid he'd get fired. I didn't understand a lot of it. I understood it in hindsight. We were two years there, and I was awfully glad to come home. Archie, I thought, was getting into a lot of trouble because he was opposed to many of these operations. He believed in diligent intelligence work where you prepared agents for longtime service and infiltrating them into the enemy camp. He was a very professional approach as opposed to what he thought was the approach of amateurs. And that was what bothered him. I was brought up by him in the intelligence world. I shared his thinking. When we came home after two years in Istanbul, we were four years at home. Then he was sent to Spain. We were there four years.

Q: What were you doing at home?

ROOSEVELT: That's when I started my career as a journalist. I wrote a column for four years in Washington, for the Washington Star. This is what prepared me later for my job as Chief of Protocol because I covered the White House, the State Department and the diplomatic corps. These were my sources. I covered events, State dinners, State functions, inaugurations, diplomatic events, etc. That's how I learned what I later brought to my job in the State Department. I didn't know at the time I was preparing so well.

Q: What was the Star like?

ROOSEVELT: It was wonderful, I loved it. The Post I worked for later and there is no comparison. The Post is a superb paper, a fabulous paper. But the camaraderie of the newsroom, the feeling at the Star was just wonderful. Mary McGrory was a good friend of mine, and she taught me. All these people were very nice to me. I was a kid. I started out as a copy girl, and after six months I had my own column. And I remember it was Jackie Kennedy who really helped me because everyone tried to get an interview with Jackie, she had just married Jack but she gave me her first interview.

Q: She had been a photographer?

ROOSEVELT: Yes for the Times Herald. But once she married Jack she wanted nothing to do with the press. But she was a friend of mine and so I called her and asked her for a favor as a friend of mine, would she give me an interview, and she did. And the editors were so impressed. That was the beginning of my career. If it hadn't been for Jackie, I might not have gotten so far so quickly.

Q: What was the Washington diplomatic society like?

ROOSEVELT: Well, it was exciting in the fifties and up to the sixties. It was a different world, of course. It was the Eisenhower Administration; it was very old fashioned now as I look back on it. People still wore long white gloves and had long dresses at dinners. People gave five-course dinners, and I knew all the great hostesses like Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, Mrs. Truxton Beale, and Mrs. Robert Low Bacon. I was just this kid, you know, but they all knew Archie's family. And Mrs. Alice Longworth, of course, was Archie's aunt, and she launched Archie and me into Washington society. We called her "Auntie Sister". It was wonderful because we were much younger than most of the people at these events. Certainly I was. I was learning a lot, and it was great fun. And it was a world very formal compared to now. When Mrs. Longworth entertained it was always perfection - the table and all. Yet I don't think she did it. I think her staff did it. She just said they were having 24 for dinner, period. She had the most beautiful Baccarat glass, most beautiful china, most beautiful silver; everything was perfect, the food was divine. She had the best chef, a black cook who was the best. I remember the food very well. Everything was much more formal than it is today. The diplomat corps was much smaller, of course; there weren't so many countries. All the major embassies had ballrooms. And they gave balls. They weren't charity events. You didn't have to pay. You went and you danced the night away. It was another world. Now it's gone, totally gone.

Q: Did you find at these parties, that a lot of business was being conducted?

ROOSEVELT: I suppose. Yes, I think so. There were a lot of hostesses who prided themselves on having salons. Mrs. Longworth, of course, whenever you went there used to go for tea and there would always be somebody important there. She talked politics all the time, and she was fascinating. She was kind of mean about everybody; she had a rapier wit. She loved Archie because he was funny and he amused her. She really was a grand dame. She had tea every afternoon and people came and called. All the political people that had aspirations would come there and try to curry favor with her, but she was very shrewd. She knew; she saw through people. If she didn't like you or if she thought you were pretentious or whatever she didn't approve of, she could skewer you with one phrase. She loved Archie and she seemed to like me so we were very fortunate. She used to say about me, "Well, I must say to that stuffy brother of mine that it was really great that you came into the family." You know, just to liven things up. She rather appreciated me. She was good to me. The one thing you couldn't do with Mrs. Longworth was bore her. The minute you started to bore her, forget it. You were never asked back.

Q: The columnists in those days were very important.

ROOSEVELT: You mean like Joe Alsop?

Q: These were very powerful people.

ROOSEVELT: Yes. Walter Lippmann.

Q: Drew Pearson?

ROOSEVELT: He was not considered someone you invited. He was powerful, but he was beyond the pale. Joe Alsop was one of them. Stewart was wonderful, his brother, who was also one of the establishment. Scotty Reston, all of these people were very much involved.

Q: Did you find yourself rubbing shoulders with them?

ROOSEVELT: Always. They were just part of the scene. I got involved with all of them in one way or another. Of course, they looked upon me as this kid. I was just 21 or something.

Q: Was there much in the way of political slant? In other words, people trying to get you to slant stories?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, no. Not at the Star. When I came to do this column and suggested it, they had been reporting parties just by saying so-and-so gave a dinner and here is the guest list. That was it. They didn't make political inferences from the guest list. It was just so primitive. I said listen, I think these parties are the most significant things that happen in Washington. Let me report them as political events. And that's what I started doing. I had to be careful, because when people like our aunt, Mrs. Longworth, invited us I wasn't allowed to report on her parties. They were off the record. But there were plenty of others that weren't. People like Mrs. Gwen Cafritz and Mrs. Perle Mesta and Mrs. Marjorie Merriweather Post; they loved publicity. They were not establishment, not any of them. So there was a difference in the sort of people that Mrs. Longworth would have as opposed to Mrs. Mesta.

Q: There were all sorts of layers of society?

ROOSEVELT: Yes.

Q: How about the group that was called the "cliff dwellers"

ROOSEVELT: They were another set of people not so political, but old Washington families. They were the Chevy Chase Club and all that. They were a different group. The cliff dwellers were here no matter what administration came and went. Mrs. Longworth, for example, had a more political salon. Political figures would come and go but they wanted to be sure that they were in good with her. And Mrs. Bacon was the same. The cliff dwellers were people who were always part of Washington society regardless of political coming and going.

Q: Your reporting was basically all in the Eisenhower administration?

ROOSEVELT: That was when I was reporting.

Q: Where did the Nixons fit into all of this?

ROOSEVELT: They were just modest, nice people. Most of my liberal friends were leery of him but not Mrs. Longworth. She took to him quickly, and she's the one who helped make him acceptable to the salon. Most of them, the limousine liberal types, were very uncomfortable with him.

Q: Many of the political types who come to Washington come out of a completely different world, sort of a Rotary Club, slap them on the back and all that. You must have seen a lot of, you might say, the civilizing of Washington and maybe not the civilized. Some of these people were pretty strong, pretty rambunctious characters..

ROOSEVELT: Well, you know, I had very little to do with the Congress. I was covering the diplomatic corps and the White House, the State Department so I didn't have the Congressional beat at all. I didn't know those people very well. I would see them at Mrs. Longworth's and they'd be at parties, some of the more popular would. Some of them were really very provincial and stayed that way. We never saw them. They never figured in Washington society.

Q: How about on the diplomatic side? How did the British, French, and Germans fit in?

ROOSEVELT: They gave beautiful parties. They really entertained a lot. They had a lot of money to do it with. They had big expense accounts. For example, the Brazilians; I remember they had a beautiful embassy with a ballroom, they used to give dances. And the Columbians had with the most beautiful ballroom you can imagine; they still have it. The British, of course, were always number one and the French; those two were always the most important.

Q: Do you feel there was a duel there between them at all?

ROOSEVELT: I don't know, I'd have to think back on it. They were both very important. The food was better at the French embassy, and so was the wine usually, at least that's what people said, but actually I always went to the British Embassy. I've been going there since I first came to this city. They always do everything beautifully, as well as the French. Then the Spanish suddenly came on the scene. They sent a diplomatic couple, Spanish aristocrats called the Count and Countess of Motrico. They had lots of money. They were determined to put Spain back on the map, even though it was Franco who sent them. They were determined to reestablish good relations with America. And they did. This is where I saw a diplomat actually achieve a total turnaround in the perception of his country just by his brilliant diplomatic instincts. He wasn't a career diplomat, he was a political appointee. He and his wife had five children. I met them at the train when they arrived and covered their arrival. And I saw immediately that they were a different ilk. Of course, Washington fell for the title and all that. They did over the embassy completely. They had a ballroom mirrored like Versailles and they gave the most wonderful dinners and parties and every New Year's they gave the typical Spanish New Year's party where you eat twelve grapes with one for each hour. Suddenly, it was the chic thing to do - to go to the Spanish Embassy. And after that the Spanish Embassy was always very well served. They have a fabulous career service and sent afterwards many good career ambassadors. And all the underlings were tops - the deputy chief of mission and everybody underneath. That Spanish embassy was extremely effective. The Italians, as always, kept changing governments every five minutes. I think I had a new Italian prime minister every year that had to come to see the President when I was Chief of Protocol. That was true then, but the Italians were fun and they gave great parties.

Q: The Japanese?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, no. They weren't on the map then. They weren't because, don't forget, we fought a war with them. It took a long time for them to come back.

Q: And Germany was not in?

ROOSEVELT: Not particularly well thought of either. Just because of the war; it was still fairly raw.

Q: How about the Soviets?

ROOSEVELT: Ah, that was something else. We never fraternized with them. We never went to their parties. We never reported on them. I talked them into letting me come, because I wanted to see what was going on in the Soviet embassy. I can't remember now what I wrote about. I remember feeling uncomfortable. I remember thinking these are the people that my husband and I have been working very hard to defeat and undermine. It was so amazing. Years later, I went to that embassy in the Gorbachev era and what a difference in approach and attitude and the way it looked. It had looked like a fortress before. When I went in as a journalist, it was really uncomfortable. There was nobody there of any rank whatsoever from the State Department; maybe a Second Secretary but I don't remember. And I remember Paul Robeson who they were courting; fellow-travelers and that sort were there. I remember going once. I don't remember how I got myself in there but I talked my way in.

Q: How about the Post and others? Were they beginning to copy you?

ROOSEVELT: They did copy me. Suddenly, reporting in the Style Section was called Society Section and became more relevant. Over the years it changed. What I wrote, I think revolutionized it and I don't think I ever got any credit for that. But I know it changed because Betty Beale who was my colleague at the time at The Star started writing differently too.

Q: This was not an era when the Sally Quinn maybe I'm being unfair the attack dog style was in?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, no. It was all very nice. We were just reporting, but we were reporting something significant as opposed to a social event. That attack dog stuff started with Sally and The Washington Post. In fact, when I went to the Post many years later I realized that the Style Section was not for me. I'm not capable of being mean and horrible to people who've never done anything to deserve it. Every now and then you'll run into somebody that really is awful, but then you're writing a news story. That's a different thing. When you're doing the kind of coverage I was doing, people invited you to their house, they treated you like a lady. Then if you go and write nasty, mean things, how could you ever expect to be asked back and continue to write your column? Nobody would want to have anything to do with you.

Q: What about when royalty came? As a revolutionary country, we obviously fall all over ourselves with royalty.

ROOSEVELT: I wish you could have seen. I did several state visits for the royals. Washington is just crazy about royalty. I remember there was the Queen's visit when I was Chief of Protocol. Also, I went back and looked at my notes of the visit of the Queen when I was a reporter. I covered it. Haile Selassie came, and I'll never forget him. He was at Blair House and I went to see him at Blair House and he was with his little lions I guess, or little dogs or something. They were little baby animals.

Q: How about the White House? Did you cover White House things?

ROOSEVELT: Not much. I wasn't the White House correspondent. I covered parties and things occasionally. President Eisenhower was a very nice man, of course, very attractive. Mrs. Eisenhower, Mamie, was just good old middle class America, a very good person but no style.

Q: How about the protocol types of the White House? How did you find the White House run at that time protocol-wise?

ROOSEVELT: Well, it was run by formula; I mean everyone knew what the protocol was. Now when Jackie came, of course, things changed. She really brought a lot of style to the White House and to the entertaining. That set a kind of style that's still happening. The way Jackie did it is the way it still being done. When the Eisenhowers entertained they had one long table, U-shaped, and the President and Mrs. Eisenhower sat at the head of the table like king and queen and then everybody according to protocol around. That, of course, was very stuffy and not a formula for a good time. That was immediately changed by Jackie when she came in. She did round tables and separated husbands and wives. In the Eisenhower days I think they put husband and wife next to each other. I mean it was very bourgeois in the Eisenhower years. It became lovely and more sophisticated with the Kennedys.

Q: Eisenhower came out of the military background. This was the way you do it. This was the table of organization.

ROOSEVELT: Exactly, and nobody knew any different. That's the way it was done everywhere.

Q: And it was simple.

ROOSEVELT: Well, I mean they had a Social Secretary and all that and there was a Chief of Protocol. Eisenhower's Chief of Protocol was Wiley Buchanan. Wiley did things very nicely, but it was just a different world. And then, as I said, when the Kennedys came, everything changed.

Q: We talked about up to and including the writing for The Star. Had you left before the Kennedys came in? Had you gone off to Spain?

ROOSEVELT: We went to Spain in the late fifties and early sixties. Then we came home for year and then we went to London. Archie was Chief of Station for five years, and that was during the Kennedy administration. I remember going to see Jackie when they were campaigning. I came home from Spain. I had the most beautiful dress that I bought from Pertegaz. It was the most beautiful dress of ever owned I'll never forget it. I was going to a dance, but I went by to see Jackie before; I was wearing this dress. Of course, she admired it. Then we went overseas to London. I remember we were in London when Kennedy was assassinated.

Q: You were in Spain from when to when?

ROOSEVELT: About '58 or '59 to '60 or '61.

Q: What was your husband's position at that time?

ROOSEVELT: He was the Chief of Station (the CIA).

Q: Was this one of those announced positions?

ROOSEVELT: No, he was under State Department cover. He was Special Assistant to the Ambassador. Our Ambassador was John Lodge who was a close personal friend of the family so it seemed logical.

Q: Were you there when the hydrogen bombs got dropped accidentally?

ROOSEVELT: I remember that but I don't think it was while we were there. I remember the incident very well, but I don't think we were there.

Q: How did you find your position? What were you doing there?

ROOSEVELT: Well, I was still a very young woman, yet because of my husband's background and all that we had very early introductions to the Spanish establishment (i.e. the aristocracy.) My husband liaised with the Franco government, but he also worked with the opposition so we had a quite broad introduction to the world of Spain. We loved it. Spain was, of course, under the dictatorship of Franco, but frankly it didn't have any affect on us. I mean it was a fairly benign government in terms of most people. Obviously, if you were a communist you probably were in deep trouble with Franco, but you know people exaggerate quite a bit about the "cruel Franco dictatorship." It was an authoritarian, repressive government but it was not something horrible like Saddam Hussein or Hitler.

Q: How did you find the people you were talking to? Were they for the most part supporting?

ROOSEVELT: Very pro-American, and very happy that we finally had good relations. Remember there was a time when we had very bad relations. By this time we had had a couple of exchanges of Ambassadors that were very effective. John Lodge was extremely popular, spoke Spanish and was a bit of a showman. He was an actor once. My husband and I both spoke Spanish. We learned it there immediately. We had a wonderful life for four years. I don't think I ever enjoyed anything more and the Spanish people were so pro-American, so happy to be with America.

Q: Did you get out in the country a lot?

ROOSEVELT: All the time. We traveled all over Spain. There was hardly a place that we didn't go.

Q: How did you find the reception there? Was it different?

ROOSEVELT: It was always very cordial, but sometimes they didn't even know where America was if you went into some back village. It was touching. Don't forget, there wasn't much television then. I don't think there was any as I remember. Their idea of America and Americans was very limited. My husband and I were both very interested in castles. We made it a point to go and visit a castle every weekend we could. We would drive to these remote villages where there was hardly anyone, maybe three or four hundred souls. We would talk to them and they would ask, "Where are you from?" and we would say Madrid. They'd say, "Oh, that is very far away." Now, it's so much more sophisticated. It's changed.

Q: It's the spread of the road system, the phone system, and television.

ROOSEVELT: Television is what really did it. But the Spaniards are a beguiling people. I really love them. I think they have kept a certain reserve and dignity and attractiveness. Every time I go back, I again realize how much I love Spain.

Q: Did you run into any problems while you were there those four years?

ROOSEVELT: Personal ones?

Q: Yes, or ones that affected the operations of the embassy?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, no. I think Archie found total cooperation with the Spanish. They didn't much like the fact that he went over to see the King in Portugal, but they knew it and they turned a blind eye.

Q: This was the King before Juan Carlos.

ROOSEVELT: This was the father of Juan Carlos. Archie was in touch with him all the time. The Count of Fontanar who was the King's representative in Madrid was a friend of ours. There was never any attempt to hide it. I'm not even sure that Archie may have told the Spanish equivalent of the CIA what he was doing. They didn't seem to mind. I think Franco always intended that the monarchy would return.

Q: I'm not sure at what point, but he took Juan Carlos under his wing.

ROOSEVELT: I met Juan Carlos at that time. He was very much around us. We would go to a party and here was this young prince. He was either studying in college or the equivalent, military school or whatever he was doing. He mingled with a certain number of people. He was a very attractive young man who later became King.

Q: You came back to Washington for a short time?

ROOSEVELT: One person I want to mention that I met in Spain was Simeon. He was King and now is Prime Minister of Bulgaria. He was in exile, of course. This was when the communists were still in Bulgaria. Now he has gone back not as King, but as Prime Minister. He's a wonderful man. It's too bad he didn't go back as King. We came back to Washington and we were here one year before we were ordered to London in a big hurry because the Station Chief in London had become very ill. Archie and I didn't have children and were mobile. Archie was very young to be Chief of Station in London but they ordered us to London. We were home one year. In that year, I had a job with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. I was the first person Roger Stevens hired. It was then the National Cultural Center (it was before Kennedy died) and so I was working to raise money for the National Cultural Center. That's when I began my career as a fund-raiser for non-profits, and I've been doing it ever since.

Q: You were in London from

ROOSEVELT: Five years, in the sixties, from '61 or '62 to '66 or '67. That was wonderful.

Q: There I assume your husband was a declared person.

ROOSEVELT: In the embassy roster, he was still assistant to the Ambassador, but everybody knew who he was, of course. And certainly he worked hand-in-glove with the British Government all the time. This was a very exciting time; it was the Profumo scandal and Philby and Burgess and McLain. All of that happened while we were there.

Q: Had your husband known Burgess and McLain and Kim Philby?

ROOSEVELT: He knew Philby.

Q: They were both Middle East hands.

ROOSEVELT: He knew Philby's ex-wife who one day came to our door in London. Suddenly Archie looked up and said, "Oh, my God, that's Eleanor Philby." So he met her at the door. She'd come apparently trying to get Archie's help because Mrs. McLain was having an affair with Philby or something like that. It was very murky. She wanted Archie to intervene. I don't know how he could intervene. How she knew where Archie was, I don't know.

Q: When the news came out about Philby, it must've been like a bombshell in your social circle.

ROOSEVELT: Not really. I think my husband never quite trusted him. It may have been a bombshell for some people, but Archie was pretty perceptive about people. In the first place, all these people drank so much. It didn't seem very professional.

Q: I think eventually Philby died of drink.

ROOSEVELT: He certainly was a very heavy drinker.

Q: How about drinking? Did you find in the circles where you were, did one sort of keep away from the taint of too much alcohol or was it typical?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes. I never drank, so I'm not one to talk to. My husband found that in London he perhaps drank more than he ever had. They go out to lunch, and the British idea of lunch is wine and port and all that. He wasn't used to that. He certainly was exposed to a lot of drinking in London.

Q: Did you find you socially had assignments to make contacts with people?

ROOSEVELT: We were really just like the State Department people. One didn't run operations in London, and if they did I was unaware of it. Archie and I had an understanding that he wouldn't tell me things that I didn't need to know. Especially being a journalist, I didn't want to know. Most of the time Archie's job was liaison with MI5 and MI6. At that time everybody was suspicious of everybody. I mean all these people in MI6 (Is it MI6 that is equivalent to the FBI?) Anyway one is the FBI and one is the CIA. I can never remember which. I remember that the head of it was I thought very suspicious from the word go. I always thought he was a Soviet agent. Apparently, so did a lot of people in England. There was a secret investigation in which Margaret Thatcher announced that he had been cleared, but I never believed it. Something about him was very arrogant and he seemed sure that he was fooling all of us stupid people.

Q: What about the atmosphere at the time? Did you find that there was a certain tension between the Americans and the British?

ROOSEVELT: No, not at all. I found that was a very good time to be in London. But there was a certain amount of tension, if you want to call it that about this whole spy thing because a lot of people in our intelligence service I gather were a little dubious about entrusting secrets to the British when they were going to go right back to the Soviets. There was a lot of that. On the social level it couldn't have been nicer. We had five absolutely lovely years. We had a beautiful house, and we lived the most pleasant life. I think that was the highlight of our overseas experience. We went to the opera and to the ballet and to the theatre. This was the time of Margot Fontaine and Nureyev. At this time Marie Callas was at the end of her career, but then we had Joan Sutherland, and Pavarotti was beginning his career. And the theater every week it was Laurence Olivier, Michael Redgrave, all the great actors that you know. All of them were performing. I guess I got the best education, because I had not had a chance to see much theater until then nor had I had a chance to see much opera. For me, London was just thrilling. We didn't go away on weekends the way most people do. We thought English country weekends were for the birds.

Q: They sound dull.

ROOSEVELT: They're dull as can be and there's absolutely a pattern, you know. You arrive and then you hang up your clothes, if it's a very swell house they hang them up for you, and then you'd have one huge meal after another. They eat very well in England, contrary to what people say, and the wine is always superb. But then you have to go for long walks which I don't like, and then you have to freeze to death which I hated. There was never any central heating. I said, "Archie, we don't have to go on these country weekends. Let's not go." So we stayed in London every weekend practically, and we went to the theater and to the opera and things like that.

Q: Were you able to do any of your newspaper work?

ROOSEVELT: No. I did not write while I was in London. I started writing again when I came home. You're so busy and I had a lot to do and Archie had a very big station. I had to look after these people, and I was like the den mother. Being still quite young, it was a big responsibility and I took it seriously. Most of the people I looked after were much older than I was.

Q: After these good solid five years there, where did you go?

ROOSEVELT: We came home. And I said to Archie then, "I don't want to go overseas again." We had been overseas most of our marriage, and I wanted to stay home and have a career which I hadn't been allowed to have up to this. I started working, after we got settled back home again, for the Washington Post. Before I had worked for the Washington Star. The Post was so different from the Star. The Post is very intense. Everybody's career minded. I loved the more relaxed attitude at the Star.

Q: There were a lot of articles in the last week with Mary McGrory.

ROOSEVELT: And I worked with Mary McGrory, and I loved her.

Q: And talking about how much fun it was there.

ROOSEVELT: It was so much fun working at the Star. I loved it. And I was part of this group called the lunch bunch. And Mary McGrory was one of them and Jerry O'Leary, who is dead now but he was a big star. I was the youngest, and I began as a junior copy girl at the Star. I got teased a lot because my mother-in-law would give me her hand-me-down Balenciaga suits. I would arrive at the office in a Balenciaga which was pretty chic. Here I am, the copy girl. I had a lot of things to learn.

Q: When you were at the Post what were you doing?

ROOSEVELT: I was writing features. I did not cover news. However, I was sent to cover, and this was the beginning of my career with Reagan, the 1968 Republican Convention in Miami. I was assigned by The Washington Post to cover Mrs. Reagan. That was the least important assignment because I was the kid on the block. All the big wheels were covering Mr. Reagan. I interviewed Nancy Reagan. That was the first time I had ever met her. She was difficult to interview. She was very wary of the press. And you had to work at pulling stuff out. I felt sympathy for her and I liked her. I wrote a reasonably favorable article; it was not a great article, but it was not an anti-article. The Post had other fish to fry. They liked an edge to everything. I wasn't up to that. So I ended up writing an article which I still have to this day since I kept the carbon of it. I picked up the paper the next day, The Washington Post, and they had changed my article and still put my byline on it. They changed the thrust of it, they changed the lead, and I was furious. So I stormed in to Mr. Simon, I think he was the managing editor then, and I said, "Look at what they've done." I showed him my original and he said, "You're absolutely right, that's unforgivable. They should've taken your name off." So then I got so angry I send a copy of my original article to Nancy Reagan's assistant. I said, "I just want you to know what I actually wrote." I got a very nice letter back from the assistant saying Mrs. Reagan appreciates the fact that you made the effort to communicate with her. I never thought anything more about it. So that was my first meeting with the Reagans.

Q: What other sorts of features did you find yourself doing?

ROOSEVELT: I have my scrapbooks. Basically, anything I wanted. I remember writing a story about Fleur Cowles, for example, because I knew her well. She was sort of my mentor in London. She introduced us to everybody. She could not have been nicer. By the way, she's still alive, she's about 90 and she's still going strong. At that time, she was an important hostess in London and as an American she sort of looked after me. Anyway, I remember writing an article about her. I remember one or two interviews. I remember one article I wrote about how you give a dinner party. And that caused a lot of people to be very unhappy because I said anyone who served champagne all through the meal should be shot or something. It so happened a good friend of mine always did that. She called me up and she said, "Lucky, I feel just terrible. I didn't realize that was so wrong." I said, "Listen, don't pay any attention to what I write." Really, in a way, it was up to me to decide what I wanted to write. I had a very nice editor, Helen Dudman. Then I started writing a lot for Town and Country and I became a contributing editor. Those were the kinds of articles that were fun to do because I went all over the world doing them. I went to Brazil three times, I did a story on Sao Paulo, and a big story on Salvador. I did a story about the Emirates, a couple of stories about Spain, and Belgium, the Belgian castles. I love castles. I don't know how many stories I did for Town and Country. Seven years I worked for them.

Q: What was your husband doing during this?

ROOSEVELT: He had been in the CIA until 1975. He retired. He was very unhappy with what was going on in the CIA because this was a time of the Church committee and all that. Archie was disgusted because he felt the President and everybody hadn't stood up for the CIA. He disliked Schlesinger. Archie didn't like Colby. And he hated Senator Frank Church, thought he had destroyed the Agency. Archie retired with honors, and he was given a medal and all that and was considered one of the great guys of the Agency. But I'm glad he did that because Archie was clandestine when we were in Washington. So it was always hard to explain to people. I'd say he was State Department but then he never became an ambassador. Here he was, this brilliant man who knew so many languages. Why wasn't he an ambassador? That was very difficult for him too, because he didn't like looking like a failure. Anyway, the bottom line was I never wanted to go overseas again. That meant there was a limit to what he could do. In 1975 he retired from the CIA and went to work for David Rockefeller at the Chase Manhattan Bank as country risk advisor.

Q: Did you stay here in Washington?

ROOSEVELT: Yes.

Q: Did you find yourself on the Washington circuit where all the people who sort of matter get together? How did you find this? I mean an awful lot of people are trying to impress or persuade other people. These aren't just dinner parties; they're working events..

ROOSEVELT: No, they were very important. You know Mrs. Longworth was still alive and she was the doyenne of Washington, the head honcho of the social world. She was very kind to Archie and me, and she often invited us. All that time we were in Washington, you know, when Archie was in the Agency and then when he was at Chase. I don't remember when she died. She lived to be 96. But she was Archie's aunt and she always treated us kindly. She liked Archie very much. She liked me too so we were very fortunate. That was the time of Joe and Stewart Alsop. Kay Graham and all these ladies who were social lions. I was busy with some good works and writing. I did a lot more good works after Archie died when I became much more active.

Q: When did he die?

ROOSEVELT: 1990. But I became Chief of Protocol in the eighties, so my eighties were devoted to the government.

Q: I'd like to talk to you about Chief of Protocol. How did that come about?

ROOSEVELT: It's an extraordinary thing. I was in Brazil doing a story for Town and Country. I got a call from Mike Deaver who wanted to know if I wanted to be Chief of Protocol. I had never asked for the job; I had never asked for any job. In the social swim, so to speak, I had invited Nancy Reagan to lunch when she came to Washington. I had met her by that time, several times, and also they had invited Archie and me to the White House for the state dinner for the King of Jordan and Queen Noor. I guess Nancy had observed me and thought maybe I would be a good Chief of Protocol when Lee Annenberg resigned. Lee had been appointed and she was there for seven months. And you know, it is a very tough job. Walter wasn't too happy about his wife running out to the airport meeting bigwigs when she was the wife of a very big bigwig. But Lee loved it. She loved the job, the challenge. She's a friend of mine. She really gave it up because of Walter, because he wanted her to. When that happened Nancy and everybody looked around to see who would be the new Chief of Protocol even though the Chief of Protocol does not work for Mrs. Reagan; she works for the President and the Secretary of State. Still, Mrs. Reagan, I am sure, was responsible for the fact that I was invited to take this job; Mrs. Reagan and Mike Deaver combined.

Q: Mike Deaver was very close to Mrs. Reagan. This was where you might say his strength was. I heard many say that while he was around he was very solid operator.

ROOSEVELT: He was. He was very smart about how he handled her. I never had too much problem with her. I was never that close to her, either. I think I might have misjudged her in my own book when I said that I found her cold. Actually, I think in retrospect that I wouldn't have written that because over the years I realized that that's just her shyness and the way she is.

Q: So she was, as so many Presidents' wives are in that they get very defensive about their husbands. Of course, their husbands are getting attacked daily; that's a part of his job, but it's a rough role. Mrs. Clinton could take it because she was tough in her own right, and I don't think she didn't hang onto her husband as much. Like Mrs. Roosevelt, being a person in her own sake and not having to depend on the husband. It's a very difficult job.

ROOSEVELT: It was and Mrs. Reagan, in my opinion, was an excellent First Lady. She performed the job really well. She brought a lot of excitement to the White House and to the social life of the city. You know, people really looked forward to coming to Washington. In the seven years I was Chief of Protocol, we did ten state visits every year. This Administration has done only three in three years. I think that's a big mistake. In the first place, it's a good way to take care of people who have been good to the Administration, you know, your big donors. You invite two of those and then invite all the other people you need to invite. It serves a lot of purposes. The Reagans entertained beautifully. I made my little contribution. Mrs. Reagan definitely oversaw. She did the tasting of the food; she'd have a tasting for every meal. And she worked with the White House florist on the flowers. I worked much more on the Vice President's state and official dinners. And I did all the State Department entertainment. I was kept awfully busy. Thank God, I didn't have everything to do for the state dinners. Of course, I attended every one of them. I did the introductions to the President, and I had my role of bringing the head of state to the function. But I wasn't responsible for the food, thank God. Mrs. Reagan's food was wonderful; I think the food has never been better.

Q: All of the stories I have heard about Eleanor Roosevelt and the White House dinners, which apparently were just awful.

ROOSEVELT: She couldn't have cared less.

Q: She couldn't have cared less. She was maybe doing to stick it to her husband over Lucy Rutherford, or something..

ROOSEVELT: I don't know what they're like now. I think they're perfectly all right. I think Laura Bush is a lovely First Lady, one of the best, but you know, the President doesn't want to entertain so they don't entertain. If they do is very quiet and sort of informal. But state dinners I found a wonderful tool, a very important tool, in statecraft. Ronald Reagan and George Shultz knew how to use them.

George Shultz was a very good Secretary of State, particularly in the way he interacted with the Department and the people in the Department. Also, he really liked to have a good time. He looked so dour, but he was so much fun and he loved a good party. He said right from the beginning, "Lucky, we're the most important nation in the world and we're going to go first class." I was allowed to use my imagination and do things with style. When he was Secretary of State there were little things that he wanted. Up until that time we didn't have a program for the luncheons and dinners. You know, in the State Department with the diplomatic reception rooms, we have the Ben Franklin Room, the Thomas Jefferson Room and all that. When we were having dinners in the Ben Franklin Room we used a program cover with Ben Franklin on it. And when we were having dinners or events in the Thomas Jefferson Room we used something with Jefferson. We were able to produce really beautiful things like that for him and he loved that.

Q: You say that Reagan and Shultz knew how to use these state things. From your perspective how were you involved? Can you think of any times when this was done to massage?

ROOSEVELT: They were always done to massage. That's what they were all about. There were all kinds of competition. There were so many examples I don't know where to begin. I remember one time when Mubarak was coming and we always had to be very careful that we did the same thing for Egypt that we did for Israel. Mubarak was coming for a working visit, not a state visit, but still we always entertained. In those days with working visits we gave them the works also. We had a real problem because suddenly one of the Russian Premiers died. The Vice President who was giving the dinner for Mubarak had to go to the funeral; and Shultz decided to go to the funeral and so we had nobody to entertain Mubarak. So he was going to call the visit off and it was very important for some reason. So I said to Shultz, "Look, this may be unorthodox but why don't you see if the President's busy? Have the President entertain him here at the State Department instead of at the White House which would make it a state dinner." Shultz liked that idea and presented it to the president. The president said, "Sure. I'm not doing anything that night." He wasn't going to the funeral; he was the only one who wasn't. So sure enough, the President came over to the State Department and Mubarak was just thrilled. This just made his day and you can imagine how that played in Egypt. So I mean, that was me making a difference.

Q: Did you have any particularly difficult people?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, did I.

Q: Did you, for example, ever run across the Ceausescus?

ROOSEVELT: No. We didn't invite them. They were awful. I'll tell you who was very difficult, the Koreans. They were very rough - not very smooth people. In fact, they were so rough that I decided as a woman I couldn't handle them. I would have my male deputy look after them when they came. I didn't deal with the Koreans, I decided not to. The Japanese were difficult just because the culture is so different. The Germans were very difficult because they were so inflexible; it had to be this way and no other. And the Israelis were difficult. I'm trying to think who else was difficult.

Q: How about with the French?

ROOSEVELT: Well, yes and no. I had wonderful relationships with the French Chief of Protocol, always. You know, they're very cultivated. But Mitterrand was impossible.

Q: In what way was he impossible?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, just difficult. One thing I will never forget; we went to France for the G-7, the economic summit, and naturally we were the guests of Mitterrand. And Mitterrand gave a dinner for the President, and the President had to give a dinner for him and so I was involved in all that. But when the President was going to see Mitterrand, he was twenty minutes late because he stopped to see the widow of an American Embassy official who had been shot and killed. He just felt he had to do it; the President was very compassionate. So he was twenty minutes late. Mitterrand took that very badly even though he was warned and advised that the President was going to be late because of this. We thought he would make an allowance for it. Not at all. He was quite annoyed. So that night we were giving a state dinner at the embassy for Mitterrand. I was sitting around with people talking just waiting for him and his entourage to arrive. And the President at the stroke of eight came right down because he was very punctual. I said, "Mr. President, you might as well relax, he's not going to be here for another twenty minutes." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "That is just his way of showing you that he didn't like your being late. So just relax, it's going to be twenty minutes." Sure enough, exactly twenty minutes later he arrived. Everybody was furious, Deaver and all. I said, "Relax. This is diplomatic language." The best thing to do was ignore it, I thought. They wanted to make a big deal of it.

Q: People can blow these things up.

ROOSEVELT: If you don't pay any attention, it isn't important.

Q: The effect is lost. Did you get involved with any Soviets?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes. I had a wonderful time with Gorbachev.

Q: How did that work?

ROOSEVELT: All along, from the day the President came into Office, at least when I was around, they were trying to do something about the Soviet relationship. They wanted to improve our relationship with the Soviets. Shultz worked assiduously at it, and so did the President. I watched Shultz build the relationship, first with Shevardnadze the Foreign Minister. Between Shultz and Shevardnadze there grew a really good friendship with great respect and affection. The wives got to know each other. I was structuring the meetings. I arranged for the wives to do things together. Shultz turned a lot of that over to me saying, this is what I want; now you do it. Shultz was very good at this. There were moments and real glitches when they arrested that journalist, Daniloff; that almost threw things off. And then Reykjavik was a stumbling block too. But in the end, I know Gorbachev came to respect the President a lot and Shultz and Shevardnadze became good friends. And I watched this whole thing develop; it was wonderful to watch it because every time it got better and better. Finally, it wasn't like a communist and a capitalist country dealing with each other at sword's point. Everybody kind of knew each other. They were relaxed. They realized that things were changing. It was very obvious to me.

Q: Something often forgotten, but you in your job you had to look at. About the wives say with Mrs. Gorbachev, Raisa? How did that work?

ROOSEVELT: That didn't work so well. Mrs. Reagan and she didn't like each other. I don't know why. I think it was kind of childish to be honest with you. I don't really understand it. We had a terrible time that whole visit when Raisa and President Gorbachev came because Mrs. Reagan was just recovering from breast cancer surgery and her mother's death and all that. She was really down and under the weather. She didn't feel like accompanying Raisa every minute of the day the way they expected. I said to her, "Why don't you let Mrs. Bush do it?" No, she didn't want that. So then it was suggested that Mrs. Shultz would accompany Raisa. Well, the Russians didn't like that at all. They thought that was a slap at their First Lady. This became more of an issue than the whole treaty signing. I'll never forget the Russian Chief of Protocol was so handsome; he looked like a movie star and they just dug in their heels. So up until about two seconds before this visit was to come off we hadn't solved the problem of these two women. I've now forgotten what we finally did, but I know that Nancy did not give in, she did not accompany her. I think Mrs. Shultz did it in the end.

Q: Did you get any feel about the relations between the Reagans and the Bushes?

ROOSEVELT: It was very correct. I think Mr. Bush and Mr. Reagan liked each other, genuinely. Bush was a very loyal Vice President; he was unswerving in his loyalty. He's a great gentleman and a very nice man. And the President is also a lovely man so those two got along very well. About Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Bush. Barbara Bush, whom I like very much and is a personal friend, had an acerbic tongue. You just didn't mess with Barbara. And of course, Barbara didn't like the fact that Nancy was the boss. I think there was a little feeling between them although they were very well bred about it. There was never any ugliness or anything. One just sensed something.

Q: How about with England with Mrs. Thatcher?

ROOSEVELT: Mrs. Thatcher was the most popular visitor. The President loved her and she practically flirted with the President. They got along beautifully. She would come once a year, and I would look after her. The King of Morocco would arrive with a plane load of retainers, you know 300 or 350. She arrived with not even a hairdresser. She would arrive with her assistant, Powell, and maybe one other guard and one security. That was it and she got more accomplished than anybody.

Q: I talked to somebody who was on the White House staff, and he said they used to get very nervous because they didn't want to leave Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher alone in the room together because they felt that she would get him to agree to things that they didn't want him to.

ROOSEVELT: I think that's probably very true, because she was a very strong, powerful woman. But you know she had her feminine side to her. I remember once we were in the car and I admired a pair of shoes. She said, "Don't you find it's terrible having to stand so much and you have to have comfortable shoes and they are never comfortable", and we talked about that. The other thing she said is hats. "Either I ruin my hairdo or I wear a hat. Then if I take the hat off the hair is a ruin." You know, all this female talk. She was very feminine, but she was also very smart and the President respected her enormously.

Q: She turned the United Kingdom around, put in on to a modern track..

ROOSEVELT: Oh, she certainly did.

Q: During these protocol things did you get involved at all trying to make sure that you were tapping into or not making the Democrats feel unhappy?

ROOSEVELT: We included Democrats in our events, always. The President always had people from the opposition. The atmosphere was very different from now. It was a very good atmosphere in Washington despite the political bickering, of course. Ronald Reagan was a big man and he was generous spirited. You couldn't resist his charm and when he wanted to charm somebody, I don't care who it was, he could do it. The atmosphere now is just so awful between parties and in the Congress and between the White House and ...

Q: And also the press.

ROOSEVELT: And the press is just a gotcha press. They don't want news anymore; they want scandal and shock. It's terrible.

Q: Were you feeling any heat during the seven years you were doing this of the press sort of sniffing around trying to find out what was wrong?

ROOSEVELT: What was really going on? Oh, yes, all the time. The thing was I made a decision that I was never going to talk. You know, if you start talking to the press then they think you're easy. They'll ask you questions and catch you sooner or later. My secretary knew that I was not going to speak to the press except when it was appropriate. There were times when I had to. But I was never a source. They realized that so they stopped bothering me. You just set yourself up.

Q: You really do.

ROOSEVELT: Once I said I'm not a source, forget it, I'm not going to be very available. These were all people I worked with. They all knew me as a journalist. They were very good to me.

Q: I would think too in your office you had to be very careful if there were leaks about things. One I can think of was when Madame Chiang Kai-shek complained about the sheets at the White House. Little complaints can be built up to make somebody's whole life the most spoiled or whatever.

ROOSEVELT: That's exactly right; that's what we had to be careful of. I told the people at Blair House not a word to the press about a state visit or visitor. They did not talk. They knew I meant it. That was one thing I was stern about. Any inquiries that came to the office of protocol had to be channeled through my office. Then I would decide if there was a reason for it to be answered. I kept a very tight rein on my 70 employees on that subject.

Q: Where did you get your people?

ROOSEVELT: I inherited most of my staff of professionals. They were career civil servants. I had the privilege of appointing about ten political appointees to my staff which I did. I got them through the Office of Presidential Personnel, usually. Let's say I needed someone for a particular job. I would say, "Please send me two or three candidates." They were pretty good. I got some very good people.

Q: I would think there would be a problem because the White House says we've got to do something about somebody's maiden aunt.

ROOSEVELT: I had one or two of those and I rejected them. Most people don't have the guts to do that. I got into a real fight with the White House about one person who shall remain nameless.

Q: I would think you would always be a bit apprehensive about some of the big political contributors.

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes, you had to be very careful.

Q: Also the fact that this is sort of an untamed group of people. They may be big people in Topeka, but you have to worry that they might over glad-hand the King of Spain or something like that.

ROOSEVELT: We didn't have any real problems like that. Ronald Reagan was adorable too. For example, one time he wanted to invite the man who had been his grocer in Los Angeles all those years. He wanted to invite him to a state dinner. You know, that was typical Ronald Reagan and he did and the grocer was thrilled. It was probably the highlight of his life. Reagan was like that. He was just a wonderful man. The job that I had is probably the best job in the government. It was so much fun and you meet everybody in the world. If you handle the job well, and I know I am bragging but I know I did the job well because everybody says so, I think you can make of it what you will. I found it the most wonderful opportunity to know everybody. I met so many people in the course of the seven years. In addition to the White House and state dinners and all that, Shultz gave a state lunch every time. He gave lunches all the time for visiting VIPS. He entertained a lot and he got so much work done. These were working lunches. There weren't wives there, just the principals.

Q: When people come from another culture, particularly Moslem, you know the food and all that, how did you work this out?

ROOSEVELT: Well, I had a few run-ins with the White House advance team. One time they said they wanted to take over the planning of the visit of the President to the United Nations. I said, "Well, all right but that's not your thing. Maybe you should think about it." No, we want to handle that. You know how these people are in the White House. They run all over you. I just decided I wasn't going to fight with them about this. But I still had to be in New York to keep an eye on things. As lunch was being given for the King of Morocco I went in just to look over the table at the Waldorf in the President's suite. The table was set for about twenty people. The first course was on the table which was prosciutto, which is pork, and melon. I almost had a fit. I raised hell with them, and I reported this back to Shultz. After that, somehow or other, they decided maybe Protocol ought to do the entertaining after all. We got through that little attempt to stake out new territory.

Q: The King of Morocco, what was the problem?

ROOSEVELT: He was like a medieval King. There was not exactly a problem. He was wonderful in a way. He tried to give me the most magnificent gifts, none of which I could accept, jewelry and all that. He was very kind to me. But their idea of being on time; hopeless. They would be 45 minutes late for the First Lady. The King said to me that he wanted to have a meeting with First Lady. And so I set it up. Nancy Reagan was pleased; the King was coming to call on her, not the President. I went to collect him at Blair House. His Chief of Protocol Moulay Hafid said the King will be down in just a few minutes. We were already running a little late so I waited. No King. So I said, "Moulay Hafid, you have to go upstairs and tell the King that we can't keep the First Lady waiting." I'd already called the White House and told them. He went up, and I don't think he spoke to the King at all. He came back down and said oh it will just be a few more minutes. This went on. He was supposed to be there at twelve and it was now getting to be one. So I took matters in my own hands and said, "Moulay Hafid, I'm very sorry but the First Lady has another appointment at one and she can't see the King."

Well, the Chief of Protocol was trembling and he reported this to the King and the King accepted it. He never gave me a hard time about it. I did that without telling Mrs. Reagan. I just thought it was insulting to keep Mrs. Reagan waiting an hour. So the next day, he sent her about \$2,000 worth of flowers. And the next time he came he wanted to see her, and he was on time.

Q: Did you ever have a problem with a dignitary arriving with two wives or a secondary wife or a girlfriend?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes. We had that all the time. The Latinos were the ones. They would arrive with a wife and a mistress. The mistress would be somewhere else but I had to work with that.

Q: What would you do? Could you meld the mistress into the dinner?

ROOSEVELT: No, not necessarily into the state dinner, but we could meld the mistress into a lot of things. It depended if she came with a position, then we could kind of work it out. But then the wife got very pouty. I remember once with the Ecuadorians, the wife and the mistress were both there and I had to take them all over the United States. In those days we did the right thing. When we invited someone we gave them a ten day visit to the United States. Not just three days in Washington, but then a week around the United States wherever they wanted to go. This made such a good impression. They cut that out with Papa Bush. They didn't do that anymore. They just did three days in Washington and that's it, even though it didn't take up White House time. It took up our time. I spent a lot of time on the road with visiting heads of state. My husband went with me; it was very nice and we became friends with them. It was also the right thing to do. I remember we had the Algerians and they didn't know a thing about America. They loved the trip around the United States, so much so that when he went back home he sent his five kids with proper retainers to do the same tour he did. He wrote to me and told me he was wanted me to know how much he appreciated it and what a great visit it was. He wanted his children to share in that experience.

Q: How wonderful. So many of our penny-pinching things, particularly if we're trying to accomplish something.

ROOSEVELT: We're such a rich country. That's nothing. And with Papa Bush, I'll never understand why they did this. They were very hospitable during the Reagan years so it wasn't as if they didn't understand what was involved. I was then no longer in the government, but I was a friend of King Hussein and Queen Noor. When they came to Washington the first visit to the new Bush administration not this one, PapNoor called me and said we're here and we'd like to see you and so on. I assumed she was at Blair House. "No," she said. I said, "Why aren't you at Blair House?" "Well," she said, "it's a long story. I'll tell you when I see you." They were at the Four Seasons. I went to the Four Seasons and she and I went off to do something and I sat with her in the car and I said, "Tell me why you aren't at Blair House? This is an official visit." "Well," she said, "you remember we always used to come in a day ahead so the King could rest before he took on all the obligations that went with a visit. This time we just assumed we would do the same thing and they said no. They wouldn't allow him to come a day early to rest." I was shocked. Every time the King had come he had always stayed at Blair House. This time he stayed at the Four Seasons. He said, "Very well, if that's the case then I will go to the Four Seasons." He thought that he was being insulted and so he just insulted right back. This is the kind of stupid thing that happens. You just don't know why. The budget couldn't have been that tight. Those kinds of things, I didn't allow to happen when I was Chief of Protocol. I think I took my job more seriously. I really knew what was right and what wasn't because I spent my life writing about it and also living in three embassies with Archie so I knew what offends and what doesn't. For Arabs, hospitality is the essence. I always made the President look so hospitable because I knew that was what was important. Every Arab head of state who came left thinking Ronald Reagan was wonderful, loving the United States. It's not that difficult to do.

Q: How about Saudi Arabia?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, we had a wonderful time with them. Prince Bandar presented his credentials while I was Chief of Protocol. King Fahd came. Before the visit I said to Prince Bandar, "Look. I know about Saudi Arabia. If you would rather have my male deputy accompany the King I'll understand. We won't say a word about it, we'll just do it." And Bandar said, "Oh, no, the King would be very offended if you did not accompany him because you are the ranking person." I said, "Well, I would be happy to accompany him but anytime it becomes an embarrassment, just let me know." It never was. The King was apparently delighted.

Q: Were you ever able to play a little of the games? I think at one point Jackie Kennedy had a dinner at Mount Vernon and things like that. Could you break out from sort of the protocol?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes. What I did with Shultz particularly when we went to New York, for example, we would find venues to have events for the U.N. delegates - the Morgan Library or the Frick Museum. The Frick was very difficult since they didn't want to do it even though they let us once. The Morgan was very good and there are many other museums where we did events. That was totally new. Malcolm Forbes lent us his yacht and we did events on the yacht. He wouldn't even be there. We would have a 100 people there for dinner and so forth. I did try to create more innovative things like that. We did things like dancing parties. Imagine! The Secretary of State had always entertained the diplomatic corps with a reception shaking their hand.

Q: You're talking about a dancing party?

ROOSEVELT: Shultz loved to dance. He decided we were going to have all the diplomatic corps for a dance. They loved it and it was a big success. We did that several times.

One of the things I should really talk to you about that I'm proudest of is the restoration of Blair House which was really my biggest accomplishment. It took me six years. I became Chief of Protocol in 1982, and we started the preliminaries in the spring of 1982. We shut the house. We opened it again with the President coming over to cut the ribbon in 1988. So it took six years to restore.

Q: The renovations at Blair House. You were very much involved with that. Would you like to talk about that?

ROOSEVELT: Yes, very much so. I think that's probably the best thing I did in the seven plus years I was Chief of Protocol. I was fortunate in that both the President and Mrs. Reagan and Mr. Shultz wanted to see really dramatic changes at Blair House. The place had fallen into bad disrepair. As Mrs. Reagan said, it was a disgrace to our country. I couldn't believe how bad it had gotten just everywhere, even the kitchens. Blair House is 110 rooms. It did have four basements that were separated; they were not integrated. Just to give you an example of the sweeping nature of what we did, we gutted all of the basement that was quite a job and made it one huge working space, kitchen, staff rooms, a cold pantry, a place for the pastry. It was turned into a modern commercial kitchen. That's just one thing that nobody ever sees, even the public if they go through, but that was a huge job. Then the houses didn't flow, one into the other. A wall had been cut and a door had been put, but sometimes a visitor would have to go up the stairs and then down some stairs to get to the next house.

Q: Blair House is a series of town houses that were cobbled together?

ROOSEVELT: Yes, that's right. We cobbled them together. Originally Mr. Blair built the oldest one for his residence. When his daughter got married he built next door and was called the Blair Lee. That one we just cut a door, sort of. Actually later we really did a lot of changes to make a smooth connection. When the two houses next to Blair House were bought in the sixties by the government the original Blair House and the Blair Lee House were bought in the forties and what we did was really integrate those into the House. Before they had just been separate houses; there was access but it was miserable looking. What we did was make this into one rather grand but not pretentious guest house. It's too bad the American public can't just come anytime they want to but obviously for security reasons the house is closed to visitors except by special permission. It's used to entertain our heads of state and heads of government.

The house was gutted. We had to get new electricity, redo the plumbing, all those basic things you never see. The decorating was the big thing. We hired two of the greatest decorators in America Mario Buatta and Mark Hampton. I worked with them. I had a little committee of Mrs. Robert Charles, myself and a friend from North Carolina who was very good at this and sort of semi professional, Kathryn (Katie) Braganza. The three of us would view the concepts of the decorators for each room. The decorators flipped a coin for what they would do. One did Blair House, the oldest; the other did Blair Lee. We added an entire wing on the back of Blair House for the head of state with a small ballroom on the first floor. It is used for all the dinners, and entertaining. Of course, there are three dining rooms available to visitors as well and quite a lot of sitting rooms.

And then there was a hideous room that before we called the press room. There was nothing in it except the most atrocious wine-colored rug you ever saw. The walls were dirty and ugly and that was where the press could come in and do interviews and set up their equipment. Well, we changed that. It is so beautiful, that room now, it's the biggest room in the house. We painted it and papered it; we put a brocade type of papered. It has the biggest dining table, but it's also used as a meeting table. We sign treaties on that table now. When the President wants to do something like that he comes to Blair House not to the White House. Several big and historic events have taken place there in that room which before was just lost space. I raised \$5 million in cash and about two more million in gifts in kind.

Q: Where did you get the money?

ROOSEVELT: From some of the wealthiest people in America. Anne Armstrong was my chairman. Being in the government it was not seemly for me to go around asking people for money. I did do some on the quiet and Anne would follow through. People like David Rockefeller and Mrs. Astor and Oscar de la Renta. 40 of some of the most well-known, most distinguished, well off people in America or corporations. Occidental Petroleum did it, Hobart gave all the kitchens, everything as a gift.

Tiffany's gave as \$250,000.00 worth of silver. The way I got that was just by going to see the head of Tiffany's, and I said, "You all are having your 150th Anniversary. Would you like to make a special gift to Blair House to celebrate it?" He said, "Well, that's an interesting thought." I said, "Well, we need 150 place settings." We had no flat silverware. Can you believe that Blair House rented the flat silver for every single event? That shows you what the government can be like. It was ridiculous. All that money spent on rental. So Tiffany's William Chaney, said, "Tell me what you need in flat silver," and I said, "Well, a normal place setting is five, but we need ten pieces. We need fish service, we need soup, etc., etc." He didn't blanch. He said, "Sure, okay." He said, "What else?" I said, "Well, you know, when we have a dinner there we need at least 24 serving spoons and 24 serving forks." He said, "Yeah, okay." I said, "We need soup ladles, at least 24." And he said, "Oh, okay. Do you need anything else?" I said, "Well, we need pie servers you know." I thought, my God, he's never going to let me get away with this. Well, I did. They had a lovely dinner and a ceremony in New York on the occasion of their 150th anniversary. This was part of their celebration. Wasn't that nice?

The towel and sheet makers of America down in North Carolina gave us enough monogrammed towels and sheets with BH on them, and to this day, we're still using them. We had closets full. People are very patriotic when you put something like this to them. Of course, I think the Reagan Administration really inspired people to give. The Reagans were so gracious and they appreciated everything. Mrs. Reagan said to me when I started on this project, "I don't want to know any names of anybody who gives you anything because I don't want people to say that we invited them to the White House because they gave something." I never sent her a list or anything until the whole thing was over and they were practically out of office. When we did reopen the house in the spring of 1988 we had a very nice, gracious party at the house. The President cut the ribbon and President and Mrs. Reagan greeted everybody and thanked them. But up until that point nobody was able to buy their way into the White House. Mrs. Reagan does not get credit. This woman was really extraordinary. She sensed what was right and she had a lot of integrity. People like to slam at her because she took the china; the china was a gift, she didn't buy it. It was a gift to the nation. She accepted it on behalf of the nation, and that china is still being used by this President and Mrs. Bush. I was over there for lunch for Mrs. Reagan when she came here in May, and I thought it was very nice of Laura Bush. She used the red china in honor of Mrs. Reagan.

To go back to Blair House; we have to thank Mrs. Reagan and the President and their desire to upgrade this fantastic house. Do you know it's larger than the White House? There's more square footage. It really is the second most important house in the nation.

Q: Did you have a problem? You said how big it is and I know bureaucracies. You're not using this all the time and how about letting us have the space. Was this a battle?

ROOSEVELT: Not really. There was a different kind of battle. I had to go to the Senate to get the appropriations that we needed for the bricks and mortar. I raised the money for the decorating, but the bricks and mortar was going to cost around 10 million because of adding this secure wing. It all had to do with security. There was a senator from South Dakota, a Lebanese-American who was a curmudgeonly old fellow. He summoned me and he said, "I don't understand why we have to spend so much money on this house." He said, "Why don't we just tear down and build a new one. It would be cheaper?" And I said, "Over my dead body." We laughed a bit about that. Then he said, "I'm not going to approve anything like this." He was chairman of the committee. I said, "Well, if you don't approve it, you know, this is a disgrace to the country." After finally arguing with him a little while I looked at him, and I said, "Senator, I don't understand why you want to give a nice Lebanese girl like me such grief." He looked at me. He didn't know my background. He said, "Oh, really? Your family is Lebanese?" I said, "Yes. Why are you being so hostile?" He laughed and said, "Let me think about this. I have to talk to my staff." I knew what that meant. He was going to change his mind, but he was pretending he would talk to his staff. As I left I said, "If you're very nice to me, my mother will fix some hummus and tabouli and all those wonderful foods that you must like." He laughed and said, "I'll take you up on that." We parted on very good terms and I got my money.

I also had a lot of help from Paul Laxalt. Carol Laxalt is on the board. I'm still the chairman of the board of the private fund. That's really my one big public service that I do. It's a lot of work because the house reopened in 1988, and it's getting close to twenty years. Naturally, some of the stuff is wearing out again. We're having to redo and redecorate, raise money and all that. One member of my board is Ambassador Lloyd Hand who used to be Chief of Protocol. He's wonderful and he is the treasurer. He decided it was time to have an endowment fund for Blair House. He wanted to raise \$5 million and he's gotten to 4 1/2 million dollars. He just has 1/2 million to go. He's doing it in large increments. When I raised the money for Blair House in 1985 and '86, I asked people to give \$100,000 every time I talked to somebody about it. I said they could do it in three years giving about 30,000 a year. That doesn't sound like a lot of money to a very rich person. That's what happened. Some sent a check for \$100,000 immediately like John Whitehead and just said, "Will this do?", but others did take three years to pay or 50/50 with taxes as another reason, I'm sure.

Anyway, the whole adventure of Blair House was something I think unique in our history. I don't think anyone has ever undertaken something like that. I had to do that as well as my job which was a very demanding time, especially with the opening to the Russians, the Chinese. We had a lot of very high level visits. Our visits made a big difference. The Reagans understood how to do it, I have to say. No one has been as good at that as they. Not since the Kennedys maybe, I don't know what that was like.

It took the combined efforts of myself, the curator, who was then Mr. Conger, my group of ladies who I told you about, plus a very important man who was the head of the GSA (General Services Agency). He was fantastic. He did such a good job. He was a political appointee. He was very interested in restoration. I couldn't have done it without him, because he knocked heads together there and that's how I managed to get the money on time, the work done on time. They took over the restoration, not the State Department. I never would have gotten it done if I had depended on the State Department appropriation. GSA has a lot more money. Once they allocate money to a project they seem to follow through. They don't have second thoughts. I got the money. Then I got one of two rather bigger gifts. We persuaded Arthur Ross, thanks to Anne Armstrong since he was a friend of hers and Robin Duke's to do the garden. There was no garden before; it was just a mess. Now we have a really beautiful garden thanks to Arthur and Janet Ross. (They have just given an endowment of 2.1 million for the gardens.)

One day much later after I had left, I was still on the board though, we got a call that Mr. and Mrs. Bass of Texas were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, and they wanted to give away \$50 million. They had earmarked \$500,000 of it for us. Things like that happened because we had created a private fund. The money was all private funds. As a result, we were able to do things that you could never do if you were depending on government funding like the quality of the materials that we put in, the quality of the workmanship in the curtains. The curtains right now look as good as the day we hung them. That's twenty years later. It's because they are lined, interlined and double-lined. They were made in New York by the best curtain maker in America. It was expensive but they gave us a very good price. Even so, every big window cost about \$25,000. Many of the fabrics we got for free from the great houses like Scalamandri, or we got them at cost or below cost. We refused to pay full price for anything. They said, "How can you ask that?" I would say "This is for your country and we want to put our best foot forward." That was my motto and that's the way I sold it. It worked.

Q: Well, you've got quite a monument.

ROOSEVELT: I do. I'm so proud of it although I'm very disappointed. I have to tell you, that after all that work and I was the longest serving Chief of Protocol, I'm probably the only Chief of Protocol that never got a certificate of appreciation from the State Department. I never thought to ask for it. I have never been recognized. I know that one of my successors, who shall be nameless, not only lobbied for a piece of paper like that, but got two of them.

Q: Oh, yes. There are people who are paper collectors, you know.

ROOSEVELT: It never occurred to me even though Shultz never fails to admire what I did.

Q: People know what you did, the people who count.

ROOSEVELT: Yes, but I don't have any children and so when I die everybody will forget it. It's all right; I don't mind, I guess.

Q: By the way, do they ever have tours of the place?

ROOSEVELT: No, occasionally private tours. In other words, if someone wants to see the house and there's somebody we want to show the house to, like a perspective donor or whatever. I could take a friend through if I asked permission. The reason we don't have them is not only for security reasons but also the house is not geared for wear and tear. Once you start doing tour you know so and so had a tour, why can't we have a tour? We actually, in my time, tried to keep it down to a minimum. Every now and then the Smithsonian will ask for some of their board or the Corcoran or someone like that, but these are very responsible people and it's up to the Chief of Protocol to decide.

There was so much that happened at Blair House, it was amazing. I found a rug, an oriental, a beautiful Persian carpet that had been rolled up in the attic. I said, "Why has this been rolled up? It's in beautiful shape." The said, "The Chief of Protocol at that time didn't like orientals." What did that person want? Well, wall-to-wall. So that rug, thank goodness, was in pristine condition and it's in the front parlor. The furniture was in terrible shape, but beautiful. Nobody had worked on it so I brought in furniture restorers. They worked for weeks and weeks. Every piece of furniture was put in good shape.

One lucky thing happened to us. For the new wing where the head of state would be, we had no furniture. Suddenly, it was as if God had been looking after us. This lady in New York died, and her heirs called Mr. Conger, the curator, and said we would like you to come and see. Our aunt left this quite beautiful furniture and we don't know what to do with it and we want it all in one place. We ran to New York, Mr. Conger and I and we went through this town house. It had the most lovely things, some not in very good condition. They said pick whatever you want, and we picked everything that exists in those three big rooms. She gave us over a million dollars worth of antiques. It was just beautiful stuff.

Q: Did you find yourself in competition with Mr. Conger who had his own priorities, the 8th Floor?

ROOSEVELT: No, he couldn't use that stuff. Some of it was French and it wasn't right for him, thank God. He was very good about that, I have to say. We were in competition in other ways because he was the curator and he thought he should have the last word and I was the Chief of Protocol and I thought I should have the last word. We had our moments. But we managed to get through it all, and of course, he was very helpful.

Q: How was this used? It's a big place. There weren't that many state visits?

ROOSEVELT: No. It's not just for visits. Although this Administration has had back to back visits, they don't do State Dinners. They don't have State visits but they do visits. We did a State visit a month, but we also had a lot of official working visits. When it's not being used for that, the Vice President uses it a lot for entertaining or he did in our time, because the Vice President's house is not suitable for large-scale entertaining. The Secretary of State uses it sometimes. All Cabinet officers are allowed to use it for foreign policy related events. It cannot be used for political fundraising or any political events. It cannot be used for charity. We don't let any charities promise a trip through Blair House to raise money.

Q: You mentioned going to Moscow.

ROOSEVELT: I'd never been to Russia until then so of course, I was thrilled to be going with the President. I didn't know what to expect. I had already met Gorbachev. It was a return trip because Gorbachev came to us and then we went to him. You knew history was being made. It was so exciting. Moscow was just beginning to change but, of course, it was still communist. I watched it all unravel; it was very interesting. Gorbachev, I thought, was charming. I never understood why he is held in such disrespect by his countrymen.

Q: You remember he was responsible for getting rid of an empire. It had to be done. The person who has to do the job is not appreciated.

ROOSEVELT: He certainly was not. Many years later I went back to Russia. I've been back three times to St. Petersburg and once to Moscow as a tourist. No matter who was with us, you know you always have a guide or somebody with you, especially in St. Petersburg, they would never lose the opportunity to tell you how much they despised Gorbachev. I never heard a kind word said about him. And yet he could've done so much had they elected him premier. He had the instincts for democracy.

Q: He got them through a difficult time, but nobody appreciates that.

ROOSEVELT: No. See those five scrapbooks over there; they're all about the trip to Russia and his trip here.

Q: I mentioned that in the field of protocol there are two countries that are very protocol conscious. Lots of countries are, but particularly the French and the Chinese. Let's talk about the Chinese.

ROOSEVELT: I loved the Chinese. Premier Zhao came and President Li Xiannian whom I escorted for ten days. The Chinese were so easy and so charming. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed my association with them. They were very protocol conscious, as you said. They interpret every nuance so you have to be very careful that you don't send out the wrong signals. When Secretary Shultz came into office one of the first things he said to me was he wanted me to send a signal to the Chinese. He was anxious to embark on a better relationship. He said how can I do that? At that moment we were expecting the arrival of the Foreign Minister. He was there obviously to explore with Shultz the possibility of a better relationship. I pointed out that protocol-wise I only met heads of state and heads of government. I sent underlings to meet Foreign Ministers, nobody of ambassadorial rank. I said if I went to meet the Foreign Minister that would send a big signal, and it sure enough did. The Foreign Minister was Wu, and he was enchanted that I came to meet him. Then again the Chinese know the name of Roosevelt. In Chinese it's Lwa-se-fu.

The Foreign Minister was delighted that I came to meet him. As I said it was unprecedented. I never met foreign ministers at the airport. He felt like he was being treated like a head of state. I think that started them off with a good relationship. Shultz was pleased. That's just a little nuance of protocol. You know, if you don't have a President or Secretary of State who understands that, they don't know how to use you. I think that was one of the things I brought to the job. I had been the wife of someone who was under State cover so I had learned many things I needed to know about protocol. In addition, as a writer I had written about it. I had observed protocol in Washington and how it worked. I guess I was able to bring something special to the job. I'm glad about that because we had a very good relationship with the Chinese. Even though there were a lot of problems, we were able to manage. Premier Zhao loved his visit.

Q: I would think one of the great weapons the Chinese would have was dinners at their embassy with Chinese food. It's so good when it's done on the right scale.

ROOSEVELT: It was. I remember going to the dinners at the guest house in China. Until Tiananmen Square our relationship was getting better and better. Unfortunately, Tiananmen Square happened and that set us all far back. .

The Chinese regard the Chief of Protocol as one of the most important people in their government. He's the sixth ranking in the entire government. They set quite a store by someone like me; they thought that I must be very important which, of course, I wasn't. I met the Chinese President in Niagara Falls, he chose to arrive that way from Canada, so I met him up there on that bridge and then I accompanied him to Washington and stayed with him for ten days. They don't do that anymore. That made such a difference. Then I escorted him to Hawaii and said goodbye to him in Hawaii. He said to me when it was all over, "Now Ambassador Roosevelt, I really appreciate everything you've done but I don't plan to let another high level Chinese come until you come to China. I'm inviting you as my guest." Of course, I was thrilled. I said, "Well, I have to get permission." Not more than a week after he left, an important Chinese official presented himself at my office from the embassy. "I have instructions from President Li to invite you on behalf of the Chinese government and your husband and your entourage." They thought I was so important I had to have an entourage. I reported all this to Shultz and said, "Mr. Shultz, he said he wasn't going to let another high level visitor come until I agreed to come." Shultz told the President and the President said, "Okay" and I was able to go. I was accepting a gift from a foreign government.

I went. I had almost two weeks there and it was fabulous. I was entertained in the guest house of the President. He said, "I'm going to give you the same dinner that we gave to President Reagan." I had the exact same menu and I've got it in my scrapbook. Of course, the Chinese really get you. I just fell for them, as opposed to the Japanese who are much more difficult. They are also very protocol conscious. While the Chinese think the way we do, more or less, it's very hard to get inside the minds of the Japanese. I never understood them. They were exceedingly polite and nice but a foreign world. Very meticulous and anything that strayed from the beaten path got them very upset. There was quite a contrast between our relationships with the Chinese and the Japanese.

Q: What about the French?

ROOSEVELT: Oh!!

Q: In my interviews, and I've literally done hundreds, when I mention the French, they say "Oh!"

ROOSEVELT: I had my fill. I had Mitterrand. Funnily enough, socialist or whatever he was, he was as punctilious about protocol as anyone you can imagine.

I remember when we were doing the 200th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, which was supposed to be a great moment for Franco-American relations. It was a wonderful celebration, I have to say. But the French were so difficult because the debate got to be who was going to arrive first on Governors' Island, which is where the Statue of Liberty is. Mitterrand and his helicopter or Reagan and his helicopter? Our advance people were being difficult too. I thought they were never going to get this thing resolved. What difference does it make? They're both presidents, we're the host, let Mitterrand arrive first. It was one of those unpleasant things that you just couldn't believe would continue to happen. Yet individually, the French can be so charming. I had the handsomest, most attractive Chiefs of Protocol, very gallant, always kissing my hand and all that. But, oh, they are sticklers.

I had one amusing moment with Mitterrand. We were riding in the car, I remember in New York, and Bobby de Margerie was the ambassador. He spoke perfect English and so he was translating. My French isn't good. I understood what he was saying. Mitterrand said, "Madame, I would like to say something in English at the end of my speech. What do you think I could say?" He wanted a sound bite, I am sure. I thought for a moment and I said, "Well, Happy Birthday, Miss Liberty?" He said "'Appy Birthday, Miz Liberte." And he did it that night on television. We had some interesting moments. He was my first visitor after I re-opened Blair House. He couldn't have been more complementary about it. He said "Oh, Madame Roosevelt, this is the most wonderful house. I love the ambiance." He was wonderful about that. He wasn't all bad.

Q: How did Washington society fit into this?

ROOSEVELT: Well, you know, Washington society as a whole doesn't fit in. However, I felt that it was good public relations for the President because most of Washington's society is Democrat as you well know. I felt it was good public relations for Reagan and good public relations for Shultz to put them on the guest lists. Every now and then I would suggest; on every guest list I tried to put somebody that would not normally have been asked. No reason to be asked because of their positions; local bankers, local old families that had been here forever, some had never been to a state dinner and never been to the Secretary of State's. They were really thrilled and I think it made for good relations. So many people said to me afterwards, "You know, Lucky, one of the things that was remarkable about the Reagan years was they became more a part of the community." They could participate in the White House. After all there's no reason why they shouldn't.

For example, the Reagans used to come to people's houses for dinner. I don't know whether the senior Bushes did. I never had them at my house. I liked them a lot and they invited me to a State Dinner. The Reagans did it very quietly. They didn't want it written up in the papers much. But people like the aforementioned Oatsie Charles, who is old Washington society, became a very close friend of Mrs. Reagan and therefore very close to the First Lady and was often at the White House. There were others like that. Kay Graham, everyone courted her, of course.

Q: She was the publisher of the Washington Post, a major political power.

ROOSEVELT: Yes, absolutely. Every foreign government realized that, of course and when the heads of state came they all wanted to meet her. I often took them to meet her. She entertained them, she was very good about that. If I asked her to give a dinner or the Secretary asked her, she would do it for visiting heads of state, particularly the less important ones. The big ones like the British and French, they got plenty of attention. Someone from Mauritania or someplace, it really made a huge difference if Kay would give a dinner. David Rockefeller was like that too.

Q: How did you find the spouses, but in almost every case it was the wives, of foreign heads of state or foreign ministers and all that? Did they present problems to you or was it a mixed bag or how did it go?

ROOSEVELT: Well, I had one protocol officer that I assigned to the ladies. I took care of the head of state. In a funny way it was a reverse of genders; here I am a woman and I was taking care of say King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. He did not want my deputy, my male deputy. One of my visits officers, who was a man, the women seemed to prefer. He would make a separate schedule for the spouse. They would collaborate; they would be together for the state dinner. For example, a working lunch would be all male at the White House or at the State Department. The wives would not be included. Usually then what we would have is the Secretary of State's wife would give a party at some other location, maybe Blair House, or the Vice President's wife. The women were not a problem. The only problems were things like hair dressers. Now in Blair House we have a hairdressing salon and the hairdresser comes to Blair House. In my day we didn't have that luxury because the house was closed.

Q: One of the things that always works if you can, is to call on the entertainment community, the equivalent of Frank Sinatra, singers and all. Were you able to call on them?

ROOSEVELT: Oh, yes. And President and Mrs. Reagan, being who they were, had access to everybody. Frank Sinatra was close to them; if Mrs. Reagan wanted him to ask so-and-so to come to the White House to perform, Frank would do it. People responded to them. They could've had anybody they wanted. At the beginning I was a little upset because some of their assistants didn't quite understand that at a state dinner you don't have samba dancers for the Brazilians. You have something that we want to show off. The Brazilians were so embarrassed. After that I put my foot down and I said that is not the way you entertain at the White House. There were no more things like that. They were much more careful. I felt that you should have a great American opera singer or a great American pianist if you could or if it wasn't American, it should have been of international caliber.

Q: Did you get things for example, from a president whoever who said I've always wanted to see Dolly Parton or?

ROOSEVELT: Yes. If they did say that we reported it. For example, I remember when President Sarney of Brazil came; he was a great admirer of Walt Whitman. I said let's give him a really beautiful, leather bound set of Walt Whitman's writings. The President dedicated the set to him and sign it. And Sarney was thrilled with that gift. I've seen him since; I saw him in Brazil when I was there. It was wonderful what that gift did. I think people didn't give my President credit for being as sensitive as he was.

Q: This was his great strength, really much more personal relationships.

ROOSEVELT: He was really marvelous at that.

Q: Other Presidents since and before, many of them just didn't have that.

ROOSEVELT: No. He was just amazing. He always had the right touch. I don't know how he knew. He was briefed obviously but that wasn't it. Instinctively he did the right thing.

Q: Very few people have it but he had it.

ROOSEVELT: He was really a charmer. No one could resist him.

Q: I will say I've talked to some people who worked in the White House staff with him and they always used to get very nervous when he was alone with either Margaret Thatcher or Brian Mulroony. They were afraid he would give away the store.

ROOSEVELT: No. Brian Mulroney was very like Reagan. He was a charmer. And Margaret Thatcher, she just worshiped President Reagan. He just thought she was wonderful. It was Maggie and Ronnie. They really had a mutual admiration society.

Q: Well, I promised I would let you go now. I'll say, "Thank you very much."

ROOSEVELT: Thank you. It was fun.

End of interview