The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

Foreign Service Spouse Series

MARTHA H. BLASIER

Interviewed by: Cole Blasier

Copyright 2008 ADST

A memoir written for Marty & Cole's 60th Wedding Anniversary

Like other women of her generation, Marty Blasier is a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. But she is far more multi-faceted than that. She has played in many roles in Europe and Latin America as well as in the United States: athlete, skier, dancer, singer, instrumentalist, speech therapist, professor, manager, official world traveler, polyglot

Healthy Beginnings - Monticello, Illinois

Marty was born in 1923 near Monticello, Illinois, a farming community on the forested banks of the Sangamon River surrounded by the vast flat lands of central Illinois. In the early 19th century white settlers overcame Indian inhabitants and took possession of remaining lands. Monticello was founded in 1829 by Marty's forebears. Abraham Lincoln campaigned there against Stephen Douglas in the late 1850's.

Marty's mother was Edna Blanche McMillen who was related to many families in town, most of whom owned or had owned sections of that rich black soil which nourished Monticello for generations. Marty's father was Jesse Earl Hiett who as born in Ray Colorado. His parents died in a dyptheria epidemic when he was two years old; he was brought up by relatives with family connections in Illinois.

In 1930 Marty's father was about to move the family to Denver, Colorado to take over his insurance company's office there when he was killed in an automobile accident. Marty's mother used his insurance to buy 90 acres of land, once a part of the McMillen family spread near Monticello. The 90 provided bedrock security for a widow who supported her two children on a school teacher's salary. She kept the 90 until shortly before her death 50 years later.

Marty and her brother grew up mostly during the great depression. But the small community of Monticello weathered it well. Marty's grandfather, uncle, and others rallied around in support. Her mother was strong and sympathetic. And the family remained sturdy and respected. Marty remembers these as happy years.

Marty was a conventional looking little girl, with a round face, dutch bobbed hair, and a full figure. In the manner of Jack Armstrong, she grew up as an all American girl: basketball player, cheerleader, marching band baritone horn player and class officer. She was a conscientious student of the violin and piano, but after years of practice became the tri-state regional champion of the baritone horn. Blessed with a happy disposition that never deserted her, she matured into a genial and accommodating college girl, popular with fellow students and her teachers.

Who would have believed that this little girl, so accomplished, so conventionally trained, so "small town" would some day become, in the best sense, a woman of the world. By the time she was fifty she had run households in major capitals of Europe and Latin America. She had a full professional career: Chicago, New York, Washington, and Pittsburgh. She could phone, shop, chat, and direct staff, sometimes primitively, in Spanish, Serbian, French, and German. Marty was at ease in the company of Chilean students, poor families in Pittsburgh, the professional elite in Washington, and at diplomatic occasions in Europe.

What people remember most about her is not the variety of her skills and experience but her unfailing tact and consideration for others, her cheerfulness and goodwill. Marty brightened any gathering.

Like her mother, uncle and brother before her, Marty enrolled in the fall of 1941 at the University of Illinois only a few miles from Monticello on the "hard" road. At the University Marty majored in Speech Therapy and minored in Psychology. She became the protï¿½gï¿½ of Severina Nelson, a national figure in the field and head of the University's Department of Speech Pathology and its Clinic.

Courtship - Urbana to Washington

Marty and I first met in January 1942 at a meeting of the Freshman Council of the five thousand strong class of 1945. She had just been elected Secretary. She arrived late to the meeting, her hair still wet from swimming class. As then Chairman of the Council, I helped the late arrival into her seat. The meeting was uneventful, but as I walked home past Altgeld Hall, I firmly resolved, inexplicably but portentously, that I would never marry Marty Hiett. I was too young, 16, and too ambitious. I defended this resolution stoutly for nearly 6 years. A few days later, throwing caution to the winds, we began to date, usually only once a week, Saturday nights.

In the summer of 1942 Marty got a job as the night accountant at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, not far from my earlier summer employment near Traverse City. Meanwhile, I worked at a ranch near Jackson, Wyoming. We exchanged letters. We saw each other regularly, usually once a week during the school year 1942-43. Our dates always ended at the Alpha Chi House under the watchful eye of her tall and elegant house mistress.

Meanwhile, she went out with other men, many acquaintances of mine and particularly Wayne Broehl, later a national figure in business history at Dartmouth College. Marty continued her studies in speech therapy with Professor Nelson, completing the Bachelor's degree in 1945. Her first job was as a speech therapist in the Highland Park Public schools. By chance she was the first paid therapist in the state system, symptomatic of her usual good luck and nonchalance.

Marty continued to see me after I enlisted in the U.S. Navy on July 1, 1943. Assigned first to nearby DePauw University, I frequently hitchhiked on weekends to visit Marty in Champaign-Urbana. When I was sent to officers' candidate training at Wellesley College in 1944, Marty and I exchanged visits between Wellesley and her uncle's house in Manhasset from which she commuted to a summer job in Manhattan. We exchanged a few letters during my war time assignments in the Pacific.

After nearly two years there I returned home by ship and train in June 1946. Marty met me in Chicago, and we joined my parents' at a beach house in Port Huron, Michigan. We continued to meet, she from her Highland Park job and I, having returned to college, first for a term in Champaign Urbana and another at George Washington University, in Washington, DC.

Honeymoon - Mexico and Chile (1947-48)

Marty and I enrolled in the Summer School of the University of Mexico in the summer of 1947, arriving in Mexico City by car with her parents in June. We all lived in a quaint house with a colorful garden and flower bedecked balcony near the center of town. We took advanced courses in Spanish and Mexican history at the University. Marty was entranced with lacquer work and a beautiful bowl she had decorated herself. We traveled all over central Mexico from coast to coast in her family's venerable Packard sedan. Marty already had a useful command of Spanish.

While in Mexico we decided to get married and together take up my Rotary fellowship in Santiago, Chile. We were married on September 14, 1947 in Urbana Illinois. Country girl married city boy. We then left for Chile via my parents' home in Grosse Pointe. En route we were feted by the visitors' center in Miami and stayed at the Hotel Camp John Hay in Panama. We went to nightclubs there and Marty was startled when a stript tease dancer brushed by us.

Our next stop was the Hotel Alferez Real in Cali, Colombia where we returned to Cali sixteen years later. Our next stop was Lima Peru, a dark and damp city of ancient colonial buildings and nineteenth century accommodations decorated with heavy musty curtains and tall crawling plants. En route to the Andes Marty made friends with the storied Tia Bates, our "hotelier" in Arequipa, who loaned her sweaters for the colder climate of Cuzco. At the horse races our Rotary escort introduced us to Pedro P. Diaz, the rich and well known manufacturer of Peruvian leather goods.

Marty's patience was sorely tested when we road up to the top of Machu Pichu on pack animals. I and our guides assured her, over her fierce objections, that her animal was fine. As it turned out the miserable little beast was ill and unfit for service. Marty has never let her experienced horseman husband forget this incident. Our plane stopped overnight in Antofagasta, before arriving in Santiago.

In Santiago we were lucky to find a charming apartment with a terrace overlooking the snow covered Andes. The secretary of the Santiago Rotary made contact with us almost immediately. But shortly thereafter he informed me that my mother had just died. As an only child, this was the biggest blow of my life. Marty and my mother were very close; my mother had even driven from Grosse Pointe to Champaign Urbana to give a large luncheon for Marty and her friends. She and Marty may have been unindichted coconspirators. It took a few months for the clouds to lift.

Santiago will always remain one of our favorite cities. Marty and I were impressionable at that age and impress us it did for the rest of our lives. We pretty much lived Spanish, but Marty insisted that we talk English to one another. We soon found ourselves in a wide circle of Chileans: academics, business people, vintners, lawyers, writers, artists, and language was never a complication.

We always had a cook/maid so Marty had free time during the day. She taught English to classes at the Instituto Norteamericano de Cultura. And began, as she has always been since, as my chief editor. I have always asked her to read, comment, and correct everything important that I have ever written. She has never been able to recognize that her critical faculties in this respect have been vital to such professional success I have had.

Launching a Career - Manhattan (1948-51)

We returned to the United States from Chile in the summer of 1948 stopping for a few days each in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Sao Paulo, and Rio. In the fall Marty looked for a job in Manhattan while I began graduate work at Columbia. We both dreamed of an apartment in the city, but had little hope because apartments were so scarce in the war's aftermath. After a couple of months delay and with the help of Marty's uncle, we moved to a brand new apartment in Stuyvesant Town on the lower East side.

Severina Nelson's contacts in Manhattan introduced Marty to the Baroness Katrina de Hirsch, a speech therapist trained in England. She was the director of the pediatric-psychiatric language disorder clinic at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. She also maintained a therapy practice on the upper East side.

Soon after the Nazis took over in Germany, Katrina and her husband, a German diplomat, escaped to England. They were warmly received there and Katrina made a life long friend with Winston Churchill's daughter, Mary.

During the war Katrina left England for the United States where she established a speech therapy practice on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. She married a second time to Alfred Romney who was also a warm friend of us both. When Katrina could no longer handle all her patients herself, she hired Marty and others to assist her. She trained Marty by example not only as a therapist but exposed her to European culture and style. Marty's was also hired part time by the chief of plastic surgery at New York Hospital to open a speech department for children with cleft palates. Marty's career was now flourishing. She was associated with two leading New York hospitals and perhaps the best private speech therapy practice in the city.

Katrina was probably the major influence on Marty's life next to her mother and uncle, her stand-in father. Katrina nurtured Marty in many ways, one such as her sponsor for the Cosmopolitan Club in Manhattan. After leaving New York Marty remained in contact with Katrina until her death many years later. They kept in touch in New York, Cape Cod, Paris, and her summer home in Asolo, Italy.

Foreign Service Wife - Belgrade (1951-54)

Marty and I remained in our Stuyvesant Town apartment in Manhattan until mid-1950. We moved to Washington (temporarily to Park Fairfax) and I joined the Department of State in preparation for the Foreign Service. Marty took courses in Serbo-Croatian and in protocol. Our first post was Belgrade, Yugoslavia which was still suffering from World War II damage and from the effects of Tito's dispute with Stalin.

Our first six months were spent in a room and bath at the Excelsior Hotel in Belgrade. We took Serbian lessons early every morning. At long last we were assigned a comfortable house, fine for us and limited entertaining. We had two servants, a cook and a maid, with whom Marty communicated in Serbian. They lived in our attic. Our friends and contacts grew rapidly.

We soon got caught up in the diplomatic social whirl, intensified by our political isolation from the communist leadership. Marty made friends easily in the diplomatic community. Unlike Moscow later, we were able to make a few Yugoslav associations as well. .

Marty and I had now been married six years, intentionally without children. After looking around among our friends, we decided this was the time to start a family. Shortly thereafter I was asked to travel to the southern part of the country visiting social security and veterans' beneficiaries.

Marty was already pregnant, the roads were rough and narrow, the jeep was bumpy, the seats hard, and there were not always hotels or rest stops enroute. We spent the first night in an ancient Serbian monastery and the second parked in the jeep in the mountains overlooking Albania. Marty didn't seem to notice inconveniences. Our travels continued to beneficiaries near Titograd, Budva, Dubrovnik, and Sarajevo.

In the fall Marty went to Munich during the height of the Oktoberfest for her confinement. She will never forget the massive bunches of grapes and heaps of whipped cream gobbled up by women shoppers still affected by the hungry war years.

We had moved into our rented house in Belgrade before Peter was born. In order not to clutter our long drawing room, we three squeezed into a tiny bedroom (8'x10'): Peter's portable crib, a double bed, clothes hooks, and a wood fired stove which provided the only heat for our bedroom and bath.

Marty hosted many memorable dinner parties there with our share of gaffs. Unknowing, we invited two mismatched British and French couples. The Brit was in correspondence with the French wife, an affair widely known but not to us. Marty innocently created another stir when she told the New York Times correspondent that most of the U.S. Embassy favored Stevenson in the 1952 election, a lead story that embarrassed our chiefs in the Department. We were amused and Marty learned fast from these experiences.

Marty and I accompanied Ambassador Allen to the summer capital in Bled. At a wedding party of notables Marty got a good glimpse of Tito as his "taster" was preparing the President's plate. Our Belgrade assignment gave Marty a chance to get to know well if not intimately a full panoply of Europeans, the British best of all. The wife of the British Ambassador, Sir Ivo Mallett, leaned on charades for after dinner entertainment. The French Ambassador threw the most elegant dinner parties. At one such party to which he felt obliged to welcome the new German Ambassador, Ambassador Baudet deliberately invited no senior American diplomats, only lowly us. The German Ambassador, seated next to Marty, took a shine to her and he liked to speak English.

We made some life time friends, German as well as English. Some of the sturdiest party goers were Dutch and Belgium, and the Greeks and the Italians, the most ingenious. Lawrence Durrell attended many of these parties and spoofed the diplomatic community in Esprit de Corps.

An attractive and easy going hostess, Marty was instrumental in our getting acquainted with many people who played a role in our life later such as Myra and Tim Johnson, Woodruff Wallner, Ed and Millie Kretzman, John Baker, George Allen, Jake Beam, Carl and Elsa Doering, Joan Mallet (later Farqhuson).

Marty took languages more seriously in Belgrade because one's linguistic skills determined one's friends and associates - and she was not to be left out. Her "working" knowledge of Serbian was of no use in the diplomatic corps; few members spoke or wanted to speak it. Nor was Spanish of much use either in Belgrade. Tito had no relations with Franco Spain (only the defeated Republic). Few members of the diplomatic corps spoke Spanish, and most Italians turned up their nose even though they understood a great deal.

French was then the elite language of diplomacy in Belgrade despite American political and economic ascendancy. Marty and a friend began a fairly intense study of conversational French which she has continued intermittently throughout her life. It stands next to Spanish as her favorite language.

Foreign languages have never been much of a value to her in the abstract, but are mainly avenues to friendships and human experience. Marty readily switches when somebody wants to speak with her in English. Marty has survived as a polyglot because she is a natural mimic and totally unimpeded by linguistic formalities.

Europe's Center - Germany (1954-57)

After home leave in the United States we moved in 1954 to the High Commission for Germany (HICOG) soon to become the American Embassy in the bucolic town of Bad Godesberg. Nearby Bonn, the temporary capital of West Germany, was the seemingly quiet geographic center of Western Europe and link to Berlin, the tense divide in the Cold War. Outwardly life in Bonn was placid but our Embassy was involved in negotiations with Paris, Berlin Belgrade, Vienna, Warsaw, and Moscow to mention only a few. There was, of course, many momentous issues, such as the decision over German rearmament.

In Bad Godesberg we stayed in one of many six unit apartment buildings overlooking the Rhine. The view from our living room was the ever changing panorama of green lawns stretching to the banks of the Rhine, the unending barge traffic, and the forested west bank sloping up to the Siebengebirge. We walked up one flight to our spacious two bedroom apartment. Marty recruited our cook, Elfrieda, through one of Katrina's old friends from the prewar German foreign service, whose husband was now chief of protocol.

Our social relations with German officials tended to be a trifle stiff. In the main we got along well with German officials, but prejudices from the past on both sides could mar our relations. The English, who had suffered so in the war, sometimes avoided social contact with the Germans.

We had good family relations with the Carl Doerings, friends from Belgrade. We remained in touch with them, their son, and grandson as late as 2006. As usual, Marty got along well with everybody, and never having studied Nazi Germany, her ties were not complicated by the historical past. Our friend Elizabeth Seip, Marty, and other wives organized regular evening talks in our apartments with young students, most from the University of Bonn which gave us insight into the new generation.

Most of our friends came from the American Embassy. Since Germany had then and thereafter such importance in American foreign policy, these diplomats later played an important role in American policy. Marty was popular and active in this isolated diplomatic community. Regrettably we had little contact with the famous chef, Julia Childs, whose husband was stationed there and had not yet achieved great fame.

We traveled widely in Germany, Berlin, Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, and Austria. Marty took up skiing and we had skiing vacations thereafter in Austria and France.

When our tour in Bonn was completed we moved to Detachment R, a U.S. Army operated school for Soviet specialists in Oberammergau, Bavaria, presumptively to prepare us for an assignment in Moscow. We had a small apartment near our class room buildings. Marty brought a maid from Bonn to look after us there. We also had a guest bedroom for friends, including a British diplomat from Bonn accompanied by a ferocious dog.

The Passion Play occurs only one year in ten, and fortunately this was not our year. Nevertheless, off season business continued unabated. Marty was delighted to have met the hotelier who played Jesus. Marty took up skiing and we both went through, or more accurately, began the trials and tribulations of beginning skiers on the Zugspitze and more intimidating slopes. Unfortunately, Garmisch had a warm season with too much thawing followed by ice.

Marty had one of the most frightening moments of her life when we drove down the mountain from Oberammergau to Garmisch. We were traveling in our veteran six year old Chevrolet, purchased in Detroit on the eve of the Korean War. At the top of the mountain and at accelerating speed I put my foot on the brakes but there were no brakes. We had lost them all, including the emergency brake. We gathered speed around every curve. I desperately tried to shift down to check our descent. I was prepared at every curve to crash deliberately into the mountain wall to check our speed but shifting down with my full strength from third to second, and then second made scary turns barely possible. Marty's heart, like mine, was in her throat. When we sailed out at the bottom there were no cars to crash into and within a mile or so we came to a stop.

After three years Marty was comfortable speaking German, had visited much of Germany and West Berlin, and was ready for new challenges. When the course was concluded, there were no openings in the Embassy in Moscow. More officers had been trained for Moscow than there were "slots", and we had been in Europe for six years. So we returned to Washington to our first and what proved to be our last assignment in the "Department".

Family and WorWashington (1957-60)

Our three year stint in Washington was demanding, stimulating, and trying . Marty's life was anchored in our 1890 Victorian house on Highland Place at the top of the city. Cleveland Park's cooler altitude had attracted the capitol's favored residents during President Cleveland's term. Our house had a broad shaded front porch, right for gin and tonic's in the late afternoon. A hundred feet away was the Cleveland Park Club whose tiny swimming pool and spacious club house suited growing families.

Peter was four and Holly came along a year later. One would think that, in addition to giving birth to a daughter and caring for a son, Marty had her handsful furnishing and settling our "new" five bedroom house.

One entered through a long entrance hall. On the left was a tall staircase and high window across the side of the house. A powder room was tucked under the staircase. On the right, was the dining room and it's fireplace. The living room was across the back. A country kitchen and large pantry were in the back corner of the house next to an add-on one car garage.

Marty and I had the front bedroom and bath, there was a large study next to us, and Peter's bedroom and bath were on the back. Holly's crib was on an enclosed porch above the living room. There were two bedrooms and a bath on the third floor. We loved that house even more than our houses later in Hamilton, New York (1835) and Pittsburgh (1874).

In her spare time, Marty worked three days a week as a speech therapist at the St. John's Development Center for Children in upper northwest Washington nearby. Most of her children were four and five years old and learning to speak. Marty hired a former trusted employee of friends from Belgrade to take care of our children and the house in her absence.

Marty also hired a law student to work ten hours a week in exchange for board and room. We had several student's, one at a time, during our stay. They lived in our third floor bedroom and bath. Marty fixed their food along with ours but they ate later in the kitchen. One student, particularly, took care of and loved baby Holly. I kept a white waiter's jacket for him, and he served at cocktail parties and dinners.

We had a varied social circle made up of friends from Belgrade, Germany, and earlier and now especially from Cleveland Park. There were people from all parts of the country, in many professions, and often involved in public affairs. Lawyers, financiers, and especially journalists, and civil servants. After we left Washington in 1960, we remained in touch with several. Our time with the foreign service was drawing to an end.

Shifting Careers - Colgate (1960-63)

Marty and I had always made family decisions together. Perhaps, the most difficult was that of leaving the Foreign Service. We both agreed that we were well treated and enjoyed the foreign service. At the same time I had trouble with our dependence on the bureaucracy and, sometimes, domestic politics. We also believed that academia offered better long term prospects in our case. We remained in the federal retirement system on the chance that we would return to government service some day.

Colgate University offered many of the things we wanted. During the months preceding our departure from Washington and after in Hamilton I was so rent by the decision that I was functioning minimally. Although I kept working, Marty led the family cheerfully and skillfully .

The transition was facilitated by vacations we spent during the two summers before and after in Bethany Beach Delaware. We three families, all having been together in Germany, rented a double house hear the Beach, six adults upstairs and seven children on the first floor. A cook and one nurse maid came with us. We had rollicking good times.

In many ways Hamilton took Marty back to her small town roots. She always said that Hamilton was her favorite place and that she could have lived there forever.

After the first year we bought a Greek Revival house (1835), whose tall columns could be seen across the green from my office. Spring came late and summers were cool. Snow drifts were high and cheery well attended fireplaces were everywhere.

Marty became involved in the activities of the town as well as the gown. We chaperoned fraternity parties, made friends among a talented faculty, and valued the acquaintance of local professional and business people. Marty was a member of singing and acting groups. We saw a lot of President Everett Case, a long time member of the Eastern establishment, and his wife, Jo, the daughter of Owen D. Young. Many national figures came to Colgate, such as Earl Warren, Adlai Stevenson, William Rogers, and Norman Thomas.

Our stay in Hamilton was interrupted when Everett Case resigned to become president of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. In the meantime, I had learned through my Columbia professor Philip Mosely that the Rockefeller Foundation was looking for a political scientist to join their group at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia. This was a romantic and challenging opportunity. Marty and I took leave from Colgate, stored our furniture, rented our house, and began an 18 month assignment in Colombia.

Back to Latin America - Cali (1963-64)

Cali , Colombia was then and remains in a "revolutionary situation", a tropical paradise rent by bloody violence. The Cauca Valley was as beautiful as ever, like a huge park with exotic plants, flowers, trees, and wild life. During our stay we rented a large walled townhouse at one end of town and later a country place on a river near the Bull Ring. We had two servants; the house never could be left unattended.

Cali was experiencing the Violencia. The authorities struggled to maintain order in the face of grizzly murders, rampant theft, and political instability. Care of our ten year old son and 5 year old daughter was a heavy burden on Marty's shoulders. Unhurt during our stay, the children loved Cali, and so did we. Each of us had our own parrot to match our relative height. Club Campestre, the country club, was a safe haven. Protected by a tall fence and armed guards with dogs, the kids could roam freely with little supervision. Marty swam and took golf lessons and eventually got respectable scores.

Social life was active and led mainly by the representatives of well known major American companies. Most of Marty's friends in Cali were from business families. The churches also played a role as did the U.S. consulate. The American consul was an old friend from the foreign service.

There was much to see from Cali. We could drive up nearby mountains to cool weather or down to steaming tropical jungles on the Pacific coast. We had a short vacation to Laguna de la Cocha, a large lake near the Ecuador border. We both made trips to Bogota, Marty for emeralds. By chance, the editor of the best newspaper in town took Marty under his wing, offering to help her find an emerald, a favor she demurely declined.

Towards the end of our stay in Cali Edward Litchfield the Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, who came to Cali in his private plane and talked to me about coming to the University of Pittsburgh. Marty found this opportunity exciting and challenging, as did I, though it meant selling our house in Hamilton "where she could have stayed forever".

Golden Years - Pittsburgh (1964-88)

Pittsburgh was probably the most creative, and rewarding time of Marty's life as a wife, mother, and professional. She met many of her best friends in Pittsburgh.

Not surprisingly the first year was difficult, partly because our departure from the foreign service was a wrenching experience. Also we were crowded into a one bedroom apartment on the campus. Months later we bought a large Queen Ann Victorian townhouse built in 1874 on Westminster Place, many of whose neighbors were old Pittsburghers.

The appearance of our house was not up to the standards of our neighbors. In order that it would not continue to be the wreck of the street, we spruced up the outside and Marty worked hard to get it in shape.

Marty then began the climactic phase of her career, first as a graduate student and thereafter as a speech therapist. From the beginning she recognized that a masters' degree was essential to qualify for the best jobs in Pittsburgh or anywhere else. She enrolled in the University of Pittsburgh graduate school for speech pathology . That meant getting her cleaning help and being able to return home mid-afternoon for our children.

Like other graduate students of her age, Marty found it difficult to adjust to young professors with less professional and worldly experience than herself. She stuck it out, made a good record, and was popular with faculty.

With her masters' degree in hand, she was appointed an assistant professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Marty was delighted and drove the sixty mile trip to the University several days a week. In the winter the roads were covered with ice and snow; she never had an accident. She loved teaching and it was one of her favorite jobs. At the end of her second year the university offered her a permanent appointment which she regretfully declined because of the long commute.

Now with her Indiana University credential as well as her master's degree she was appointed the speech pathologist for the Head Start program in Pittsburgh. She made individual speech and language evaluations for many children in the program. .

When Headstart funds for speech in Pittsburgh were canceled, she was appointed Instructional Advisor in Speech and language for the Pittsburgh Board of Education. Her job was to deal with the speech and language needs of several hundred children in some 40 public schools. Marty visited all the schools in safe and dangerous neighborhoods, in good weather and bad. Marty became a recognized leader of speech professionals locally and the founder and first president of the South West Pennsylvania Speech and Hearing Association. Years later she was awarded the "honors" of the Association.

Meanwhile Marty's work was attracting attention elsewhere in the state. With the support of Elsie Hilman, Governor Dick Thornburg appointed her a member of the Common Wealth's Board of licensure for Speech and Language Specialists. She served as a member of this board driving to Harrisburg frequently during our last years in Pittsburgh and after our move to Washington.

Marty was as active socially in Pittsburgh as she was professionally. Many of her best friends, and these were numerous, were members of an informal reading group dubbed "the Greeks". One member was a best selling author of children's' books. Another was the headmistress of the local school for girls. There was also a psychiatric social worker, a mistress of houses in West Virginia and Cape Cod, and a leader in the local Presbyterian Church.

Marty and I had many friends who were business men, doctors, lawyers, and artists as well as University faculty. Marty was active in many of the activities of the Pittsburgh Golf Club, at dinners and dancing parties in the winter and around the swimming pool in the summer.

Our house and garden adapted well for large cocktail parties and dinners at first when we were building the Center for Latin American Studies, and later for our friends. The front of our house opened up into living and dining rooms with bay windows and glassed in front porches and hall. We sat as many as 24 at card tables for dinners, and many more for cocktails. Our garden, though inelegant, was large and inviting. Marty's chores entertaining were not as great as one might expect since we invited the same couple, who knew the house well, time after time to serve.

Marty was able to combine heavy professional and social schedules because she hired all the cleaning help she needed. I got breakfast every morning, did the dishes, the trash, and outside maintenance. Marty did the shopping and cooking.

Speech therapy and entertaining were less important to Marty than our two children, Peter and Holly. We sent them both to private schools and colleges, Peter to Andover, later Harvard, and Holly to Ellis and later Boston University. Also they spent a large part of each summer in private camps, many with a tennis emphasis. Our budget did not provide for elaborate family trips by bus, ship, air or rail.

Most years we went tent camping . Lake George was our favorite. Usually we were able to reserve an island for ourselves, reached by a rented speed boat. We had a big tent for sleeping, and a dining shelter for meals. Marty helped set up camp: unpacking, pitching the tents, and cooking. She was a veteran camper.

We used our speedboat for water skiing. Marty tried that like everything else, but found the pounding of a speedboat against the waves hard on her back.

Another time we took Holly and a friend to Mount Desert, Maine near where Peter was a tennis pro. The swimming was bracing, we met old friends, and the crab sandwiches were superb.

On another vacation we took our tent to Montreal for the World's Fair. Marty's eighty year old mother came along and slept in the tent with the four of us. From watching her we discovered why Marty was so flexible and versatile. In fact, Marty was athletic: alert and agile in basketball, dancing, skiing and golf.

Two Pittsburgh couples who were our friends each had beautiful 35' sailing sloops. Due to their hospitality Marty and I crewed much of the East Coast: several times on the Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, Cape Cod and the Maine Coast. Marty learned how to crew and be comfortable in good weather and bad.

Marty's weight has varied only a few pounds during her entire life. She's has never been too fat - never too thin, and she rarely talks about diet or exercise. Her appetite varies little and she has exercised regularly and moderately all her life. In high school she was in the marching band, was a cheer leader and played guard on the Monticello girls' basketball team. Marty is an excellent dancer; she has been dancing with me since 1942. She learned to play golf in Colombia. Marty skied downhill in a dozen places in Europe and the U.S. , cross country in only a few.

Probably the reason she retained so much agility was that she participated in some formal exercise program all her life, usually in group settings, for example, in home exercise groups at the Pittsburgh Golf Club, Montebello, Georgetown University, Miami, and, before and after her stroke, Collington.

Visiting the Globe (1964-88)

Our best vacations were extended trips to Europe in the summer or on sabbatical leaves. Marty aimed at refreshing her memories of Europe and learning more about drawing and painting.

We decided early to spend much of our time in Paris. We both had studied French off and on and felt we could get along, if not elegantly. We found an apartment near Notre Dame on the Isle St. Louis through our friend Mary Potts, the wife of my Columbia classmate, Jim Potts, then a senior officer at the American Embassy.

We climbed five flights of stairs to reach this apartment which overlooked the roofs of Paris. It had a small living room kitchen and bedroom. The only toilet was located on the left of the front entrance door. In order to use it, one had to open the bath's double doors into the living room, which remained open during use. We gradually got accustomed to not being able to use the bath room when we had guests. There was no bidet, but in the hall there was a dusty lavatory a half flight down. As sophisticates know, the French do not often use the facilities at hosts' homes.

Early every morning before breakfast Marty sent me to a baker on the street below for fresh bread and pastries. We often went out to dinner and of course, when the lines were not too long, to the famous ice cream parlor nearby. Spending our time investigating Paris foot by foot, Marty and I had little time for entertaining. We did invite to dinner one Parisian couple who spoke not a word of English.

When they arrived at 7 pm Marty greeted them and kept talking in gallic sounds until 7:35. What she was saying was understandable, but our guests were a little puzzled by her outburst. After they left I asked her why she talked so long. Marty said she was afraid she wouldn't understand their replies.

Marty enrolled in a drawing school with a fancy name which had classes every morning drawing or painting nudes. She liked it but could not always understand her Instructors who spoke only French. They were not professional teachers but full time painters who earned their keep instructing. After we had been in Paris a while one of her classes fell on my birthday. When I returned from my office at the University of Paris, the walls of our apartment were covered with Marty's drawings of the nudes.

Parking on the Isle St. Louis was impossible most days except Sunday. So we did not park our Audi there during the week, returning from excursions in time to park early Sunday and leave it there for the week.

Our Audi made it easy to drive to Ver sur Mer in Normandy to make first direct contact with Jean Pierre Dupont, the ward and heir of my father's sister, Reva Blasier Laussel. Reva's husband. also deceased, had directed a large passenger and freight shipping company (Lykes line) . Their main residence was in Paris, but he aslso had offices in LeHavre near Ver. After the Germans occupied France, Reva brought Jean Pierre, as a child, to stay with her in Veras the child she never had. When Reva died after the War she left their house in Normandy to Jean Pierre.

We telephoned Jean Pierre and his wife Nany from Paris. They invited us to lunch in their ancient 17th century house. As we walked in I gasped to see my families' pictures from the 1930's forward spread over floors, walls, and furniture. .

Jean Pierre and I had the same "grandmother", Blanche Blasier. She often visited Reva in Paris and Vers before and after the war. Marty enjoyed working with Jean Pierre in his kitchen; he had been trained for a time as a French chef. Fish was one of his specialties and Marty wanted to learn. We enjoyed collecting muscles which were harvested off screens on the beach nearby, and eating them by the dozens.

We visited the Duponts often during our trips to Europe. My aunt and uncle, Reva and Bob Lausalle bought that house when their original house was destroyed as the British retook the German fortifications. At one time Jean Pierre hosted our entire family at Ver: Marty and me, Peter and Ann, Holly, plus Holly's french friend, Francis (who piloted his own plane to Ver). Actually, Emily, Peter's first child, was born nine months after a visit to Ver.

Another time the Dupont and Blasier families (Marty, Holly, and Cole) rendezvoused in Amelie les Bains in the the South of France. Jean Pierre and Nany visited us in Pittsburgh and Washington, and Jean Philippe stayed with us for a time in Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, during all these years Jean Pierre was patiently building two memorials, one honoring Admiral Byrd's 1927 transatlantic flight and emergency landing in Ver, and another the British landing on Gold Beach against the Nazis in 1944. For his remarkable efforts the British awarded him the Order of the British Empire at their Embassy in Paris.

Holly and her friend Betsy joined us in Paris and we later drove to Belgium to visit the John Renners, the deputy chief of mission in the U.S. Embassy in Brussels. We later swam off Dutch beaches on the North Sea. From there back to bicycling in the Loire Valley. Our most exciting encounter was the huge stabiles at the entrance to Alexander Calder's residence. Later we all visited Venice, Marty and me for the umpteenth time.

France has always been one of Marty's favorite places, may be the most. So that's the reason you have read so much detail about visits there. While we were living in Germany, Marty traveled to Paris to spend several days with Katrina while they both shopped and went from cafe to cafe.

Obviously, it's not practical to describe Marty's life in all the places she's been. One can divide her life abroad in three parts: 1) residence for more than a year, 2) residence for one or more months, and 3) tourism.

Marty's participation in the planning, renting, hiring, shopping, cooking, and entertaining was vital, especially in the residence categories. In each she had to cope with foreign languages.

Marty's ability as a mimic and a speech therapist made it easy for her to imitate speakers, but grammar never interested her, a handicap partly offset by a good memory. She became quite fluent in Spanish and was on the way in French. Her Serbian and German were rudimentary but very serviceable for her needs. Her attractiveness and congeniality made her always a popular conversationalist whatever the language. In her short visits to Russia her knowledge of Serbian, that is Cyrillic, made it easy for her to read signs in Russian. Here's the list of the languages of the countries of her residence:

Serbian:Belgrade (2.5 yrs)

French: Paris (twice for 4 mos)

Tourism. Like so many of our friends, Marty has taken vacations and traveled all her life. Here's a partial list of her travels in Europe: Venice (many times) Trieste, Rimini, Milan, Lech (skiing), Garmisch (skiing), La Clusaz (skiing), Hamburg, Rostock, Prague, Woerterzee, Cannes, St. Paul de Vence, Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Majorca, Rome, Siena, Lisbon, LeHavre, Prague,London, Edinburg, Dublin, Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, Tallin, Berlin, Leningrad, Moscow Her only tourism in Africa was a trip up the Nile.

She has also visited many cities in Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Colombia. Her tourism in Latin America also includes Panama, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, and many Caribbean islands.

On the around the world voyage of Semester at Sea in 1986 she visited: Lisbon, Athens, Istanbul, Telaviv, Cairo, Bombay, Dehli (by plane), Colombo, Hong Kong, Beijing (by plane), Kobe, Tokyo (by train). As the wife of the academic dean for Semestrer at Sea's around the world voyage Marty frequently acted as hostess at on board events.

Restoring Ties: VA & DC(1988-1995)

In 1988, after 24 years in Pittsburgh, we decided to return to Washington. Marty had more to lose and less to gain by the move than I. But she loved Washington and several of her best friends lived there. And, as always, she was prepared to sacrifice for the family or for me. I fear she suffered some for two years until we found a well located town house and had reestablished ties with the city, old friends and new.

Meanwhile, we rented a country house, Rumbling Bridge, part of a family compound of Pittsburgh friends in nearby Ligonier. We especially valued Ligonier because we were able to see Emily, our granddaughter growing up. Peter courted and later married Molly Alpert at Rumbling Bridge. Our grandchildren, Louisa and Gavin, came along much later.

Rumbling Bridge was a roomy three bedroom clapboard house with log burning fire places and a large porch in the rear. It was surrounded by trees with no other houses in sight. It was much cooler and breezier than Washington in the summer and colder and snowier in the winter, the last ideal for skiing at nearby Seven Springs.

After we left Pittsburgh we often spent weekends in Ligonier keeping in touch with many of our friends that way. We came often in the summer and for skiing in the winter. On Fridays, I would take the train from Union Station to Brunswick Maryland. Meanwhile Marty, the resourceful driver that she is, would meet me there. We would drive to Jean Bonnet, a pre-revolutionary Inn near Breezewood for dinner in winter before a crackling fire. We arrived home to Rumbling Bridge before 10 pm. We got up early on Monday morning in time for me to meet the Shady Grove Metro arriving at my office by 9:30 am. Marty would make her way home in rush hour traffic.

Marty and I kept that house for several years. As our friends, schedules, and obligations in Washington grew we drove less and less to Ligonier, not even once a month, and seldom summer and winter vacations. Giving up Ligonier was hard but loosening still further ties to Pittsburgh. Ligonier helped us bridge the gap between the two places. Ultimately, we had to choose between Ligonier and Washington.

Marty would have been delighted to return to our house on Highland Place when we first returned to Washington except that it was far too large, and would have cost a million dollars. We couldn't find anything suitable in the District and under the pressures of getting settled we bought a beautifully designed condominium in Alexandria with a distant view of the Potomac River. Also it had direct subway connection to my office. Perfect, except we were not living in Washington.

With me away all day at work and bereft of her Pittsburgh roots, Marty faced a difficult adjustment. Our weekend visits to Ligonier helped bridge our move, as did contacts here with two of her closest women friends from Belgrade and Bonn. She also continued her occasional trips to Harrisburg for the licensure Board.

Marty had long been a member of the Cosmopolitan Club, Eleanor Roosevelt's Club in Manhattan which had ties with the Sulgrave club in Washington. Her membership permitted us to stay in the Sulgrave Club on visits to Washington. After we moved to Washington Marty joined the Sulgrave Club. We frequently dined there, often having a chance to meet speakers and public figures. One was a fascinating 20 minutes alone with Secretary James Baker.

We made friends with a few other couples, especially Alan and Flavel Boyd who had been a member of President Johnson's cabinet. We met interesting people in their homes in Washington and Deep Creek.

Soon after our return to Washington, Marty joined Common Cause a citizens' lobbying organization, promoting open, honest and accountable government founded by John Gardner and supported by civic leaders such as Archibald Cox, Fred Wertheimer, and Derek Bok. Marty spent one or more days a week there maintaining contact by telephone with its members, soliciting their views and informing them of Common Cause positions on major issues. In particular, she asked them to call, that is lobby, elected officials on public issues. Her telephone "beat" for several years was North Carolina.

The president of Common Cause briefed volunteers every week. These meetings provided insight into political issues and personalities essential for volunteers who had to field all kinds of questions affecting the organization. Marty enjoyed having an inside tract on Washington politics as well as an association with high minded citizens who shared her views. Although unrelated to Common Cause, Marty helped out in the Kerry campaign of 2004.

Now well located in Washington itself, Marty was able to meet new people and reestablish ties with old friends. Her acquaintance with national figures grew by leaps and bounds through residents at Collington and speakers in Washington. Our neighbors included Charles Percy, William Crowe, Robert Ball, and many others.

USA Next - Washington (1995- 2001)

After we had both retired for good, Marty insisted that it was not too late to see our own country. We celebrated this insight first with a week in San Francisco with bus tours to the coast and wine country. Another time we made a trip by plane and car to the Southwest: Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Mesa Verde, Yellowstone . We visited Denver and my old stamping grounds in Jackson Hole. Once we took our grand daughter, Emily, on a cruise to Alaska.

Our residence in Washington made it easy for us to visit the nearby mountains in Virginia and the beaches in the east. For several years we stayed at Wintergreen, not far from Charlottesville, Virginia. Located 1,000 feet above the valley, Wintergreen resort was excellent for skiing in the winter and for cooler temperatures in the summer. We have also often taken long weekends to a comfortable English style hotel on the beaches of Ocean City, Maryland.

After I retired from government service we left Washington temporarily for two winters in Coral Gables Florida. I worked at the Center for Interamerican Affairs led by Ambler Moss, an attorney and former Ambassador to Panama. We rented an apartment on Miami Beach from my Pittsburgh colleague, Carmelo Mesa Lago. It was only steps away from the vacation barge where the murderer of Versaci was apprehended. Every morning Marty walked along the beach front greeting each passerby, an often unrequited gesture.

The second winter we lived in Kendal nearer Coral Gables. Marty joined a health club near our townhouse and worked out daily: tights, top, weights, and sweats. Later we reveled in the warm breezy climate and saw virtually all of Miami's sights.

Another of our contracts was with the International Executive Service Corps; for this we needed to go abroad again. I was retained to visit and write a report on the progress of a project to rebuild the ancient Library of Alexandria Egypt. We stayed at a Hotel from whose balcony overlooked the Mediterranean. Marty watched dozens of Egyptian women fully clothed from headscarves to skirts at beach length. Encumbered by these long dresses, they played waist deep with their children. She also commented on their handsome young husbands immaculately attired in full Arab headdress, white robes, and gold jewelry on their necks, chests, and fingers.

Marty accompanied me part time on several assignments to Russia, usually only for a few weeks. Knowing the Serbian cyrillic alphabet, she was able to read some signs in Russian. Marty often walked in our local neighborhood and shopped in grocery stores. Soviet plumbing was a standard conversational gambit. Like Muscovites, Marty would join a long line, not knowing what it was for. She was secure in the knowledge that whatever it was, it would be useful. One time the line turned out to be for lemons, another time, toilet paper. For her, visiting Russia was an unforgettable experience.

Meanwhile, Marty was growing more attached to our townhouse in Wesley Heights near New Mexico Avenue. We were in fact only two blocks away from the first house we had bid on, unsuccessfully, in 1957. She liked our little garden in back and in summers the community swimming pool. Once again, with a car of her own, she was free to visit old friends and haunts wherever she liked. Or she could take a nearby bus to Common Cause. But she recognized that soon we would face old age with its cares and challenges, including two often used flights of stairs.

Savoring Retirement - Collington (2001 - 2008)

Like many foreign service and military officers, Marty was fatalistic: not expecting to stay in any place for very long, willingly accepting outcomes, making the best of what comes. So it was in coming to terms with the outcome of our search of retirement communities in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC.

We rejected Florida as too hot most of the year and too far from our children. In spite of it's hot summers, Washington, unlike Pittsburgh, has virtually everything else: government and political center, rich in museums and theaters. And many of Marty's friends are here.

Collington Retirement community to which we moved in 2001 is a country retreat with easy access by metro to all of metropolitan Washington. Our cottage overlooks a long meadow backed by a huge forest. A lake and pond anchor the 126 acre property populated by deer, foxes, rabbits, squirrels and colorful birds. There is an olympic length swimming pool, bank, library, beauty shop, convenience store, a large auditorium for lectures. musicals, and other entertainments. Our cottage is flooded with sun light and a terrace overlooking a long view. Our garage is accessible from the den. Best of all are the people: old friends and new from the foreign and civil service, military, academics, journalists, and business men.

Marty always preferred to live in a small town, like Hamilton, New York. Now she has at last found one in Collington, this time "permanently". Her daughter Holly comes down from New York frequently and Peter's family is four and a half hours away. Both can make it for weekends. Although Marty likes to travel with new sights, new sounds, new food, and new people, she can take it or leave it. Foreign service officers who have dashed around the world making war and making peace enliven conversations at Collington. And academics can be counted on to fill long pauses with colorful explanations.

While Marty likes and enjoys life at Collington fully, she is already looking forward to her next trip, this time a cruise from Los Angeles to and in the Hawaiian Islands.

End of interview