

Foreign Service Spouse Series

DAGMAR ODEHNAL KANE

Interviewed by: Mary Louise Weiss

Initial interview date: March 9, 1987

Q: (This is Mary Louise) Weiss, on March 9, 1987. I'm interviewing Mrs. Dagmar Kane at her home in Washington, DC for the Foreign Service Family Oral History Project.

Dagmar, would you like to tell me a little about when you came into the Foreign Service, where you were, and was your husband already in the Service when you met him and you were married?

KANE: My husband was in the Foreign Service already for several years when we met. And he liked it, the type of work, the traveling, contact with people, prestige, and responsibilities of it, and also power of his position. So did I. I also have very personal reasons. I loved my husband and did not marry him because he was in the Foreign Service, but I entered the Foreign Service because I married him.

It was in Prague in 1936, and this was not such a simple matter as it is now. This time, especially in cases like mine, when I was foreign-born, not even an American citizen yet, certain very strict regulations had to be observed. Our marriage had to be approved by the State Department in Washington after thorough investigation of my whole past - my family background, education, character, and so on.

Q: Did you expect that? Did your husband tell you there would be that kind of an investigation? Did it bother you in any way?

KANE: No, he didn't inform me about it, but it somehow didn't bother me, and finally the marriage was approved. So, I was not worried about it anymore.

Q: And how long were you in Prague?

KANE: We were in Prague for four years first, and then we were transferred to Washington. But that time people were not transferred very often. Some stayed in one post for twenty or more years, and so I, too, believed that we would always be in Prague. And it was only because of the war that we were transferred for the first time.

Q: And you went from there to?

KANE: From there we went to Washington.

Q: Were you in Washington very long? Or was that assignment a transfer point?

KANE: No, it was a definite assignment because it was during the war, and my husband then was assigned to Office of Strategic Services, so we were here in Washington during the whole war.

Q: Was there a wives' course when you came to Washington?

KANE: No, there was no wives' course, and there was no written or oral instruction concerning duties of a wife. She was simply considered to be a lady and expected to behave like that, but she was left to her own judgment what to do.

Q: Did you feel at that point that you knew enough about being a Foreign Service wife, (and) you knew what the expectations were? Or did you find you had a need to seek the help of other Foreign Service wives now that you were in Washington, to ask them questions about it?

KANE: Well, I really didn't have much idea what was expected from me. Otherwise very similar situation because there was no course or anything, so we always tried to do our best under the circumstances. We were sort of fishing....

Q: Pretty much on your own.

KANE: Pretty much on our own, yes. But I had some language training, for instance, from my college. It was in French, German, English, Czech, Slovak and Spanish, as part of my general education. But then later I took some more lessons in several languages. (Narrator learned several additional languages during her Foreign Service years, but was not fluent in these.)

Q: At a different time?

KANE: At a different time. I found additional fluency in languages very helpful. Many times the opening sentence in the native language was like an icebreaker to future friendships.

Q: Very well expressed. So you were in Washington a few years during the war period.

KANE: Yes.

Q: Then what came?

KANE: Then came assignments to London for my husband, Prague, Mexico and Venezuela.

Q: Did you accompany him to each of those posts?

KANE: (To) some. I didn't go with him to Korea because of the children. The State Department did not encourage families of teenage children to go because there was no U.S. high school there and the children would have to be shipped to Japan to attend the American School. We would have been separated from them if we had gone to Korea. So, from all aspects, it was better for me to stay here for two years with the children and be together in our own home, and they could attend McLean High School.

Q: That was a long time to be separated from your husband.

KANE: The time went very fast because the children were all so busy and had activities after school. It was not really so bad. Because their father was away, we were even closer to each other. It was a very interesting time when they were growing up so fast.

Q: Did you find in those years you had much in the way of representational responsibilities?

KANE: Not in the beginning, but later, yes. All activities were private or public; they were really representational. As the Foreign Service wife, I became a public person or public property. Whatever I did, or the other wives did, was always regarded as not only personal or our own, but as an American also, or wife of a diplomat, also. So how I or the other wives entertained: how we took part in charities, or culture, art, literature, sport, fashion, was part of representation, and the activities, of course, increased with my husband's advancements in his career and changes in posts. The State Department did not make any specific recommendations in regards to my activities.

Q: As a Czech-born wife did you feel it was difficult to put yourself in the role of an American, or a representative of the American diplomatic service?

KANE: No, I welcomed it with a great pleasure and joy. I felt very proud being an American. I always had to explain that I am American although I don't speak the language too well, but I was always proud to be American.

Q: Were there any things about representational responsibilities that were difficult for you?

KANE: Yes. My whole attitude toward representational activities and their values changed very much over time. I entered the Service in pre-war peace, and continued under the Nazi's occupation and other circumstances. In pre-war time the social and cultural interests prevailed, while the situation under the Nazi's regime demanded sympathy and help from me to the suffering victims, and also from my husband.

Q: That's very interesting. How would you rate representation by Americans compared to that of other diplomats? Were you at a disadvantage, or....

KANE: That would be very difficult to compare American diplomats with those of other countries. It would take books to describe various situations and behavior of individuals. In general, the Americans were usually more relaxed and less formal, more open, more practical and more decisive; sometimes maybe a little too self-confident, but they were doing excellent job. But it really depended who the other diplomats were; some were brilliant and some inferior, like in any other fields.

Q: Did you find at any posts where you were that the military had advantages in representation - bigger allowances, or were giving fancier parties, or anything of that sort that bothered you?

KANE: Well, it did exist from time to time, but I think they were privileged to have it, and they deserved it because they did a very hard job. Their function was very difficult. They had to fight the war, to be exposed to the worst things that happen in life, so I think their functions were in place. Also, they were different in time of peace and time of war. In peace they were representing the healthy vigorous element of American people, and in war they were a very strong force of a big and powerful nation that played a very vital role in the world. Whenever I met the military I was always impressed by their correct and highly ethical behavior. Sometimes, of course, this was a little bit over(done), like right after the war in Europe the military played a very important role to grasp the chaotic situation in bringing some order.

Q: Maybe we learned something from them as they learned something from us.

KANE: Definitely.

Q: Tell me about your children. Where were they born, and did they go with you to every post? How were they educated, and so on?

KANE: Our children received an elementary education mostly in Prague and Eagle Pass, Bogota, and later in McLean, Virginia. They also attended high school in Montreal, and then later George Washington University, the University of Maryland, Radford, and General Motors Institute of Technology in Detroit. And all have degrees.

Q: Were they with you at all your posts?

KANE: Mostly. Yes.

Q: Was their education paid for by the government? That is, were there schools available where you were when you needed them for your children?

KANE: Schools were available, but we paid for the schools and also for the transportation.

Q: You were able to give them a private education.

KANE: Yes, but they also received some scholarships from Foreign Service Association.

Q: Was there an allowance, or were you paid for education travel for the children at times when you were not together?

KANE: No, not as far as I know. We usually paid for this.

Q: So when you were overseas they were always with you until college?

KANE: Yes. When they were little and we were overseas, then we had help to take care of the small children....

Q: Was it adequate help? Did you feel safe? Did you feel they understood about caring for American children the way you wanted that kind of care? Was there a language problem, or anything of that sort?

KANE: No, the care was mostly physical, really, and the language was not any problem. The children learn languages very fast; they forget them very fast too. But they adjust very fast

Q: What did the children have in the way of recreation in their free time and after school and holidays?

KANE: They did all the things other children did. They had a lot of contacts with the host country children through school, church, sport, theater and other cultural activities. And the languages were not obstacle. I describe in my book how it was not even necessary in order to communicate. With the little children they speak with hands, they laugh, and so on, and that's sufficient.

Q: I hope that later on you will tell us a little more about your book. This is a book of your own memoirs.

KANE: Yes. I describe their situation a little bit.

Q: We'd like to hear about that. When your children were at an impressionable age, were drugs a problem at any of the posts where you were?

KANE: No, there were no problems with drugs or alcohol in American community at the time, nor in host countries. This problem did not exist at all at that time. They are really part of the last several years only.

Q: Did you talk with your children about their role as representative Americans?

KANE: Yes. They loved this very much, and they made contacts with other children very easily, and they really enjoyed the life whatever it was. They even enjoyed our trip after the war across the ocean when we took the first vessel available from New York at that time.

Q: From where? It was the first one after the war?

KANE: The first one with civilians, and it left New York. It was SS Erickson, her last voyage, so it really went all over the ocean, but we didn't mind. They had to travel over some fields infested with mines, and so we had to do exercises on the deck every morning with the lifesavers and things like that, but they found it very amusing.

Q: They knew why the drills were going on? They understood what the danger was?

KANE: Yes, they were old enough to understand, or I thought they did, and they did not object to it, and so it was sort of exciting. Not for me. I didn't travel with my husband this time. I was alone with the children.

Q: Oh, you were? Were there other Foreign Service families on that same voyage?

KANE: Two of them. One with little children.

Q: That must have been a help, to feel that you weren't the only one doing something....

KANE: Oh, yes.

Q: Where were you headed for; what was the destination?

KANE: To Marseilles.

Q: Was your husband posted there?

KANE: No. From there we then had to find the transportation to Prague. He was in Prague already.

Q: He had already gone to Prague, and you were joining him later.

KANE: Yes.

Q: About household (staff), did you have servants at every post?

KANE: Yes, we had many servants throughout our lives, and they played significant roles in our daily routine, making it possible for me especially as a wife to be free to participate in many desirable activities. Some of the servants were very well-trained, reliable, proud of their profession, and did a very good job. Some others were just the sad opposite. They changed from country to country, also political situation. Strangely, right in the beginning of my husband's career in pre-war Prague when he had only a very minor position at the consulate, I had hardly any social obligations except of being invited to a few formal occasions. We had more servants than in 1960 when my husband reached a peak of his career as the chief of the largest section at the consulate in Montreal, being the third one in rank right after the Consul General and one political appointee.

With his increasing responsibilities and his promotions, the necessities of good servants increased because there were heavier demands put on my participation in social, cultural and charitable functions. Yet, we did not have any regular live-in servants, and I did shopping, cleaning, cooking, and so on, by myself. But [it] was because the style of life changed from 1936 to 1958. Many servants were replaced by appliances like electric stoves, microwaves, blenders, washers, and so on, and I started relying on commercial caterers, or things like that.

Q: Was it difficult to find servants when you went to a new post? Or were they pretty much available?

KANE: No, they were, wherever they existed, very easily available. They even came to the embassies to ask for the positions. Like in Caracas we had four live-in servants....

Q: Live-in? Did any of the servants you've had over the years cause any problems for you?

KANE: Yes. Well there were cases, but not too many. They were really isolated cases. Like, for instance, under the Nazis many of the servants were paid by the Nazis to spy on the employer, so....

Q: Were you aware of that?

KANE: Yes, we were. And also sometimes under other regimes they were instructed to destroy some properties, and things like that, but as I said, in these isolated cases and these unpleasant cases, were far outweighed by positive advantages of having good help at home.

Q: Did you have to teach them your own routines, or did you find some of them were experienced enough with Americans?

KANE: Some of them were professional, and so I didn't have to instruct them in any respect, and some of them needed a little more instructions, but altogether it was really wonderful to have servants help at home.

Q: Having servants wherever you went, did that give you time, did you want to have free time to pursue some of your own interests, or to help in the community? If so, how did you use your time?

KANE: Well, for the first few years, when my husband was a junior officer I had plenty of free time. I like to participate in social and cultural activities and enjoyed them. I also liked to study the history, art and folklore of the country of our assignment. I did some volunteer work, and believed that this was important. The host country did approve, and usually appreciated my work and encouraged it.

Q: Were you ever in a country, and if so which one, where your volunteer work was not welcome?

KANE: No. It was always very welcome.

Q: And you did enjoy doing that.

KANE: Yes, and also, for instance in Montreal, in my husband's advanced position, I did not have any of my free time except for our annual leave in summer vacation. But I enjoyed being very active member of American Women's Club in Montreal, as well as the Canadian Women's Club, and a special charitable society in the consulate that we had, supporting the children in the hospital. And I also was a member of the auxiliary of the St. Mary's Hospital. In all these organizations (we) had at least once a week working sessions, in numerous elaborate projects on monthly and yearly programs.

Q: Do you think the host country nationals knew about all of this marvelous work you and other women were doing, and appreciated it?

KANE: Yes, they did. Like I said, all these women in (Canadian) Women's Club, and American Women's Club, Americans, Canadian, Yugoslavian, they all worked together very often at the hospitals. They appreciated very much.

Q: Did you prefer that, or your social activities, one over the other, as you did community volunteer work?

KANE: No, I really enjoyed both of them about equally, but sometimes I became exhausted, very tired, and I just was very tired.

Q: Did you make any close friends in this work where you were posted abroad - not necessarily in the work, but just in the contacts? Did you make social friends of your own (through these contacts)?

KANE: Yes, especially with these women's clubs. Meeting so many women, naturally I made many short-term friends. There were some long-term friends, too, but it is always much easier to meet people in person than in writing, and so after a while people give up. I still write to several friends, but not very many, really.

Q: Were most of your associations with host-country persons or with other diplomatic families at post? Or did it depend on the post?

KANE: It depends on the post, At some posts there were hardly any, like in Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass there was only one other diplomat in the Mexican Consul(ate), and my husband American Consul also. While in Montreal there was whole stack of diplomatic (associations).

Q: When it comes to finances and expenses, did you find that most of your official expenses, representational, were covered by the allowances, or your husband's salary?

KANE: Yes, my husband's salary usually covered our expenses, but did not allow very much for saving. His only income was from his Foreign Service salary. I had my own little private income from the dowry from my parents, but that, too, I sometimes had access to it, and sometimes I did not. Sometimes all property was confiscated under the war situation, something like that. Some of it I again recovered; some I did not.

But one way of saving was accomplished by buying a house instead of renting. Really this way we accumulated some little assets that were very helpful for the next posting, things like that. So, instead of paying rent and not having any result, we bought a house. The first one was \$12,000, in Arlington. Yes, we paid down I think about \$600. It accumulates; and then after about four years we already accumulated about \$2,000.

Q: Intelligent way to do it.

KANE: And practical way.

Q: Did you find that because of any financial restrictions you had to strain or live differently from your other American Embassy people?

KANE: Of course there were some differences in salaries and income of different individual diplomats, or business people, or military, and so on. But that never was of deep concern to us. We were able to live within our means. We knew that some people were better off financially, and some were less fortunate than we were. But we were always keeping within our salary to our satisfaction. There were no....

Q: Did that include your wardrobe for social affairs in your official life?

KANE: Not very much. I always liked certain type of clothes that last long, the classical type. I bought the best I could afford, and then I wore them for long time. And so I always had enough to wear, and also, all our posts were in civilized countries, and so fashionable clothes were available.

Q: Do you have a profession that you have used when you were abroad, or in Washington? Any kind of paying income of your own from work?

KANE: No, I never had a paying job in my whole life. Not in overseas, nor in the United States. And I don't know if I would have accepted or looked for a paying job. I had more than enough to do as it was. If I had selected a job of my own, I would have to reduce my duties of a Foreign Service wife and mother of my children. Of course, after the children finished their education at the University of Maryland and so on, I could have had my own job, but by this time I was quite old already, and was also involved very deeply in volunteer work and studies that I liked. Also, when I was still young, wives were not even permitted to have a job of their own at the embassies or consulates or outside. If they insisted the husbands had to resign, so I didn't have really a choice...no.

Q: But you accepted the responsibilities of the wife of a foreign diplomat, and made the best of it, and seemed to have enjoyed what you were doing.

KANE: Really I was always working hard, but I never got paid for it. I was active in arts and crafts and member of Seton Guild that was very busy and very involved in hard work.

Q: That was here in Washington.

KANE: Yes, and it still is. Then in Bookfair at the State Department and then on one-to-one basis I was sending packages to Europe and things like that. And during the war I was involved in making bandages for the soldiers and knitting gloves (as a member of SVU, the Society of Arts & Sciences, providing medical supplies and clothing for Czech-American servicemen and refugees).

Q: Was that abroad?

KANE: No, here in Washington.

Q:How did your husband feel about your role in the community work? Did he share your interests in doing that kind of thing and spending your time that way?

KANE: Yes, he fully approved of that.

Q:Did you feel you were one of a team, or did you both feel you were a team, sharing responsibilities of the Foreign Service when you were abroad in representing the U.S.?

KANE:Yes, yes. We always both had very strong sense of responsibility, and he approved what I did, and I approved what he did. But sometimes there were situations, as I describe in my book, when I was not informed at all. Like, for instance, when the Nazis closed American Embassy in 1940. It was in Prague, and they ordered all the personnel of the embassy to leave the country within 48 hours, and my husband didn't tell me anything about it. Of course it was obvious that they were there and we were living under them for almost two years.

Q:(Was he) trying to protect you?

KANE:No. But at this time I was in the hospital having a baby. And so of course he wanted to spare me the shock of learning all of a sudden that I lost my home, and he lost his job, and we lost everything and we are just hanging in the air. So he wanted to spare me the worry. Then later he told me, "I didn't want you to worry." But I found out through other persons, and that was a shock.

Q:Your baby was born just in time?

KANE:Just in time, yes.

Q:I was wondering if you felt that most American diplomatic officers tried to keep their wives informed of the national political scene, or what was going on if there was any impending danger, or the possibility of evacuation, or whatever. You just said that in this case he was just trying to protect you, or trying to keep the shock from you, which was very understandable under the circumstances. In general, did he keep you informed, or did you ask questions about things if you sensed that something was imminently dangerous?

KANE:Yes. Well, when situations were so obvious, then the wives could not help being informed. But some husbands discussed the situations with wives more, and some did not. My husband usually talked with me about the situation. But it is hard to say.

Q:There are times, I suppose, when it was difficult for them for security reasons.

KANE:Yes, that's right. They could go only to a certain point, but the wife has to observe the situation. Usually (it is) so obvious.

Q:But generally he shared his side of things with you.

KANE:Oh yes.

Q:It sounds to me as though you were a very responsible and conscientious and productive Foreign Service wife. How do you feel about your role as a wife, looking back on it now?

KANE:I really don't know how I would rate myself. It is very difficult to be your own judge. I always try to do my best under the circumstances. And this sometimes was difficult and I made mistakes. I took the hardships with the advantages of the Service as they came. Sometimes I resented the pressure, but still I always felt to be proud and privileged of my position.

Q:Have your children ever talked about that? Do they ever look back or reflect on their Foreign Service life as something that was beneficial, or something that they would never want to do themselves? Have they ever talked to you about that? Or have you ever asked?

KANE:I think they were very proud of the parents being in Foreign Service, but each one chose own career according (to) their inclinations. Like our son is automotive engineer, one daughter is professional (in) mathematics, and one was geographer and now she is mother of five children.

Q:I wondered if any of them ever said it was a life they wish they had not had, or that there were so many problems or difficulties that they resented or regretted?

KANE:No, they never objected to anything. They took these things as they came.

Q:Thank you, Dagmar. Are there any other comments you have?

KANE:Yes. I still would like to characterize a successful Foreign Service wife. I think that a rare balance of human being, intelligence, decisive, reliable and responsible person with a lot of common sense, wife's interests, willing to participate in her husband's and her country's goals, her children's welfare, makes a good Foreign Service wife. The career doesn't basically change her character. It is more her own willingness to contribute more than to receive, but it's wider. The Foreign Service career is career full of unexpected changes and hardships, but also excitement, variety and glamour. Wife who is willing to face it could be classified as a good successful wife.

Q:I'd like to ask you one little question about your ambassadors' wives. Were many of them wives of political appointees who knew little about the Foreign Service, or did most of them appreciate what you wives were going through?

KANE:Most of them were really seasoned political appointees, and very well informed, and helped many experienced...

Q:Were they understanding of your way of life?

KANE:Yes, yes, very much understanding and very cooperative and very friendly. I think they mostly were just wonderful human beings.

Q:It sounds to me as though you had a very well-rounded and rich and positive experience in the Foreign Service.

KANE:Yes, definitely, definitely.

Q:Thank you.

(After we finished this interview, Dagmar said she would like to add her thoughts about the importance of diplomacy now. A separate sheet, dated June 16, 1987, has been inserted with the transcript.)

KANE:Yes, I would like to characterize a successful Foreign Service wife. The image of her changed drastically within the last fifty years since I became one. In the time of my entry, the Foreign Service wife's role was to be supportive of her husband's career. She did not have her own, and was not even permitted to have one. She concentrated on making him comfortable, looking fashionable, have social graces, and make desirable friends, entertain, do charitable functions, be interested in culture of the assigned country.

Today the opposite prevails. The wives are encouraged to build their own careers, be independent, have own goals. Yet I think if they wish to contribute some of the talents to the benefit of their country, welfare of their children and comfort for their husbands, they are very welcome to do so. The Foreign Service life is full of unexpected changes, hardships and frustrations, but also excitement, glamour. If the wife is willing to accept it as is, and expects to give more of herself than to receive, she could be considered a successful Foreign Service wife.

Subsequent interview date: November 19, 1987

Q: This is Mary Louise Weiss, at a second interview (with Dagmar Kane at her home), on November 19, 1987.

I first met you in the Writers' Group of the American Foreign Service Women's Association (AAFSW). Had you done any writing before you joined the group?

KANE: I wrote many letters because I was always separated from my family by long distances, and so I wrote many, many letters. But then when I joined Writers' Group I wrote a few short pieces that, according to my own judgment, were very bad - bad grammar, didn't have any style, and so on. But I wanted to write.

Then all of a sudden my husband died after a long-term illness after a heart attack. It was after the funeral when all people were already gone, I was alone sitting in the dark room, and was exhausted physically and mentally, and I just couldn't even think. And then I looked at the piles of condolences on my desk, and I hated even to think about them initially. But it had to be done.

With my first letter the page was smudged with my tears, and I just gave up. I couldn't even finish the first sentence. The next day I knew that I had to do it, and I thought to myself, "Well, I will write about five today." When I opened one and started to read, it was very short. It just said, "We send you our sympathy and we think of you." At that moment I had a change of heart. I realized that the people did this for me, that they thought of me, and condolences were expressions of their friendship and feelings for me. And they took the time to get the paper, to sit down and write it, get the stamp, and walk to the mailbox - all for me.

I was really touched very deeply, and I counted how many friends I had. So I decided I will write answers, and it would be the first thing I would do (each day, and I did) more and more and more.

Then somehow I wanted to write more, and show them that I appreciated what they each wrote. With each letter somehow I felt better. Some of the letters had even nice mementos about how people remembered (something) happy forty or fifty years ago. I was so touched that I, too, remembered. These little morning sessions became almost like a little ritual. I became used to them, and I wrote about thirty minutes every day. It was so nice that even after I finished all the condolences, I was still writing. I caught myself scribbling on the loose-leaf paper my opinions about things, or remembering certain affairs It made me feel so good. Before I realized, I had a whole book written. I had about 300 pages...of mementos. Then I realized that they were just a bare draft. I started to rewrite them, revise them and put a little more essence into them. I'm still doing it now.

Q:You brought to the Writers' Group for critiquing those pieces you were writing?

KANE:Yes. Some of them I did bring for evaluation, and I appreciated all the comments that I heard. Some were very encouraging, and some were critical. That I appreciated too, because they were leading me to be better. They improved my grammar and my style, my expressions and ideas.

Q:Did you have the idea for a book at that time, or collecting these thoughts and memoirs into a book of any kind?

KANE:Not such a clear image of it. It started with a little piece here and there, and it accumulated into something that I didn't expect. Since I had that material, I would like it to be coordinated into one book.

Q:For publishing, or for your family only? What kind of idea did you have for it as a collection?

KANE:I really don't know. I just had to write it; it made me feel good. I think in the first place I wrote it for my children and grandchildren, for my friends, and maybe some people in the Foreign Service might be interested or some individuals from Czechoslovakia....

These things may not be very important now.... I don't know. But all that I want to do now is to do a good, almost professional work, if possible, so that my piece would be ready to read if somebody would be interested enough to read it. This is for the time being my most important point.

Q:Did you have any of the stories you had written during this period published?

KANE:Yes. I had "The Birth of a Citizen" published in the Foreign Service Journal [January, 1985], and now our group has a book put together and there are two articles written by me in it [AAFSW Writers' Group, A World of Difference: A Collection by American Foreign Service Women (Hagerstown Bookbinding and Printing Co., Hagerstown, MD, 1987)].

Q:A good feeling.

KANE:It is a sort of mixed feeling. It is very good to have it published, but then it is very bad (if nobody will read them and feel) that maybe my pieces are not good enough, especially if I read the other pieces that are of professional (quality).

Q:You are continuing with the collection of your own memoirs now?

KANE:Yes, I do. I do them over and over again, hoping that eventually they will be good enough maybe to have published, too.

Q:Are they more than just memoirs of your life, your childhood and Foreign Service life? Is there more to it than that?

KANE:Yes, definitely. What I would like to do, in the first place, is do it little bit like (family) chronicles, history of my own family; and my husband's family would be recorded to some extent. Then it would spread over to the country I came from, describe the geographical position, and the cultural and historical facts. I think (these) are the most important points of it. Then I would write about my childhood. I would like to describe some of the historical roles of the country, how people observed some of the special occasions. Also I would like to write about my father and his profession.

Q:What profession was that?

KANE:He was a military man, and he was an agricultural man. He knew the agriculture; it was his job. It changed very much. I would like to capture the time when he was in his prime years, and how he cared because it was a beautiful profession. I would like to describe the life of the peoples in the country, how they lived. And then a second volume, if possible, would be about the Foreign Service.

Q:Dagmar, tell me how you arranged the beginning of your book. What comes first in the book - the history of the family, or the background of the estate the land, the place?

KANE: First comes the history of my family, then comes the history of my land, the beautiful Moravia located in the center of Europe. I tried to describe the prehistorical times, then the various tribes (who) walked through this region, and some of them settled there and left some statues and jewels and crafts....

Q:What was that area called at that time?

KANE:(At) that time it really didn't have any specific name, but in the 8th century and even before in the 6th, really 6th and 7th, gradually it became settled by Slavic tribes. In the 9th century it became known as the Great Moravian Empire. I'm describing the history of it, and then later I'm including some of the rulers, kings and queens and emperors. One of them was Queen [Eliska] Rejcka, who was (a) very outstanding woman in the history of Moravia. Then I'm describing later history of the country. Now it is one province of Czechoslovakia.

My family lived there for many, many centuries, always in the country. I would like to capture the life in the country because it changes so much, and my children and grandchildren don't have any idea of how the life was when I was still young. (She returned with her son in order to show him her family house and the countryside where she grew up.) This is all that I would like to include - legends and stories, and also describe the geographical position, the beauty of it....

Q:Coming up to date including your Foreign Service life, to the present perhaps?

KANE:Yes, as far as I could go. I would like to keep it up until the point that it might be published or I will stop writing.

Q:I'm sure it will, Dagmar.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: William Kane (Deceased)

Spouse Entered Service:1931Left Service:1966You Entered Service:1936Left Service:Same

Status: Retired spouse (widow)

Place and Date of birth: Mikulovice, Moravia, Czechoslovakia

Maiden Name: Odehnal

Parents (Name. Profession): Jan Odehnal and Emilie Brunsvik Odehnal

Schools (Prep. University): Private tutors, Lyceum in Brno, Ernest Denis School of French, Several other private schools for girls, colleges.

Date and Place of Marriage: November 14, 1936, Brno, Moravia, Czechoslovakia

Children:

William John

Loretta

Eva

B. In Washington, DC : Seton Guild; volunteer member Czech/American Society providing medical supplies, bandages, warm clothing, etc., to military during World War II; member SVU (Society of Arts and Sciences) benefiting Czech refugees, AAFSW Bookfair.

End of interview