



Citation for this collection:

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Interview with Mrs. Beatrice F. Davis (nee Beatrice Hume Farr), July 15, 1970, regarding her participation in the University of Delaware Foreign Study Program in France in 1931. The interviewer is Myron L. Lazarus.

Q This is a recording of the Oral History Program of the University of Delaware and we're interviewing Mrs. Beatrice F. Davis and your maiden name was what?

A Beatrice Hume Farr.

Q And this is an indelicate question, but when were you born?

A I was born in 1912.

Q Where is this?

A In Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Q And how long did you live in Wisconsin?

A Well, about eight years. I've lived pretty much all over the United States because my father was what I think nowadays would be called a systems engineer. He went to a very great many companies and firms and reorganized them and set up systems, so we lived in New Mexico and in Kentucky and New Jersey and Pennsylvania and New York--we lived pretty much all over the country, and I say I was born in Wisconsin, but I don't really think I can call the state as home. I hardly remember it.

Q Because you've been traveling. And you say your father was a systems engineer. He worked for what company?

A Well, he worked for a number of companies. He worked for [inaudible, sounds like something and "Ernst"] and Park Penn, Price Waterhouse, and a lot of companies like that. And then he did individual contracts with companies like Anaconda Copper and Vanwaldy [sp] and Reynolds Tobacco, and different places that were having organizational problems and he would go and stay a year or so and reorganize, [inaudible] As a matter of fact, I went through something like 21 schools in 16 years. This was a brutal educational process and . . .

Q Did this have anything to do with your interest in France or foreign study?

A I don't think so, no. I was always--I wanted to go in the foreign service and that's why I wanted to get part of my education abroad. And when I heard about the Junior Year Abroad Program at the college--I was going to Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts at the time, and when I was a sophomore, everybody was talking about a girl named Isabel Casavone [sp], and she was at that time--no, when I was a freshman, everybody was talking about Isabel. She was in France in her junior year, and that's the first I ever heard about it, and I thought to myself, "Well, when I'm a junior, that's what I'm going to do." So when she came back for her senior year, which was my sophomore year, I got to know her and heard a little about the wonders of study abroad and was determined that I would go in my junior year, and fortunately I had accomodating parents and they said, "Yes, if they'll accept

you, you can go."

Q Did she go through the Delaware program?

A And she went through the Delaware program, that's how I heard about it. Wheaton was a participating college and had sent, I think, several students in the preceding groups. I can't remember, but I think my group was the 11th or 12th group, I'm not sure. But it had been going on for some time.

Q You went in 1931.

A In 1931, and I can't remember, I think it was oh, 10th, 11th, something like that. It had been going on some years and was an ongoing and well known program at the time.

Q In Wheaton you studied--you were a political science major.

A Yes, um hmm. And a French minor, and I had had--oh, I'd taken French four years in high school, so I'd had six years. I was pretty sure I could handle myself that way. And I got permission from my major department, political science. Mostly it was French majors who went, but they let me go because I'd had more than the average amount of years of study of French before and it was a minor, and so I went. And it was everything I hoped it would be. It was a year that I really grew up.

Q Let me go back to one other question. You said you were preparing for the foreign service. Do you know what you wanted to do specifically?

A Yes, I wanted to be in the consular service. I wanted to be a consul and I had it all picked out, too, that I wanted to be a consul in Batavia. Batavia is now Djakarta. Well, I never made it. Actually, when I got out of college in '33, it was the depths of the Depression, there were no openings whatsoever in the foreign service in Washington, in fact there was a tremendous--we had a very small foreign service. There were only a few hundred, not even thousands of people in it at that time. Now I think there's something like 12,000 consulates, but then there were about 600. I took the exams and got on the waiting list, and in the meantime I got married. You know, it happens to girls. And then they were not making appointments for married women. In the Depression, if you were a married woman, you were supposed to subsist on your husband's efforts and I never did get into the foreign service. But that was the reason for going. But it doesn't really have much to do with what I got out of it, because what I got out of it was growing up and knowing myself. And I don't think any other single year in my life made as much an impression on me and made me--well, I hate to say that I'm a citizen of the world, but it took away a lot of parochialism that I had in my thought. And I don't think that I have ever been the same, and I'm sure if I hadn't gone I wouldn't be the same woman I am today.

Q You know, I've heard that remark from several people about the idea that you learn something about yourself, you grew up. Do you think--I can't quite understand how the program contributed to this.

A Well, in the first place . . .

Q I mean, you would have grown up anyhow.

A I would have grown up; I would have grown up in a different way. You have to remember that, you know, 30, 40 years ago, schools were in loco parentis then, colleges were, in a way in which they are not now. And you really just changed the supervision of your parents for the supervision of a house mother, so it was pretty much circumscribed activity. I didn't know I was hemmed in in any way, I thought I was a free agent. But when I got to Paris and lived with a French family and did not have to check in or report to anybody and was forced to live by the standards that I had already acquired, I found I could do it and I wanted to do it, and I felt a sense of growth as though no one was inhibiting me in any way in what I wanted to find out and what I wanted to learn. And I saw an old and established and different kind of social organization. France seemed to me very different from what I was used to at home, and I found a very great deal to admire and I found a very great deal which was at variance with what I expected to find. I had the stereotypes of the French either as money-grubbing people with a sack of gold under the mattress, or as a very profligate and free and easy kind of people with few morals. Well, I found out of course that this was absolutely not true at all and that the French family with whom I lived had the same kind of goals and the same kinds of warm family relationships, the same sense of--what shall I say--moral standards that I was used to. I found that the Western way of living transcended national boundaries. I had thought the United States was something unique or different and I thought these people would all be foreign and strange, and I found out that they weren't. In many ways they were far more sophisticated than the people I had known at home. And I found Paris just a treasure house of a whole past, and since I was a history major and I liked the thought of continuity. I liked the thought of walking in streets where other men who had made something of themselves had walked before. I just found the whole place a living museum.

Q Well, let's go back a little bit. I want to know a little bit about the preparation that you made before you went abroad.

A Well, actually they were very quick. It was in that winter of my sophomore year in college that from talking with this Isabel, the girl who had gone the previous year, I just had the strong desire to go, and I started to talk to my mother at Christmas vacation, and my father, and said, "Can I go? Will you let me go? Will you let me be by myself?"--you know. And they were a little nervous about letting their child depart in--my mother had ideas of France as a kind of sinful city of the Western world, I think, and she wasn't quite sure she wanted to let me loose in a city like that, and I kept saying, "Well, if you can't let me go now, you'll never let me go, and I'm not going to do anything I'm not going to do at home. But it will be a wonderful experience . . . please, please." And finally they said I could go. So I applied that spring to the University of Delaware. I forget--I think I must have written a letter and gotten a form, I don't remember all that. I do remember that I had to get the permission of my advisor, Dr. Hubbard, at Wheaton--my major advisor, and I had--the French Department had to say yes, they thought I knew enough French to handle it. And then, you know, you had to have a physical and get another vaccination, and a few things like that, but it all seemed to happen very fast, and the next thing I knew, in June I was off and away.

Q Now, you met in New York.

A We met in New York. There were 90, I think, in the group, and there were about 40 or 45 colleges represented.

Q Do you remember, by the way, any of the people whom . . .

A Yeah, I remember quite a few of the people. I haven't seen very many of them. I used to see them the first few years, oh, in the '30s when we would have reunions. But you know, everyone got married and everyone moved away and everyone's life took off in its own track, and I haven't seen any of those people since before the war. But I remember a boy named Martin Roder [sp?], who--I think he went to New York University or Columbia, he was from New York; and a boy from Brown named Sin Copans [sp?]; and a boy from--I think he was from Harvard, but he was from Boston, anyway, his name was Gardner Shaddock [sp?]; and I remember a girl named Dorothy Breck from Randolph-Macon; and Marian [sounds like Wood or Will] from Vassar--I mean there were a lot of them. Well, they meant so much to me. We were so keen on what we were going to do, and everyone--it was as though all of us had all our pores open for new experiences to pour in. And we were sharing what we thought--and what was then--a privileged and unique experience. Nowadays with everybody popping off to Europe for, you know, three week package tours, practically everyone you know has gone to Europe. But then not everyone had, and we did feel that in some way we were privileged.

Q Was there much of a camaraderie in this group?

A Very great, a very great deal. We were all excited about what we were doing, and we were all--of course we were 18 or 19 years old and everything looked as though it were bathed in a golden light. We could see nothing but just an ever-increasing and exciting world to live in. It was just a different world, it wasn't this world. There were some things that were bad. I remember in that summer--we spent the first summer at the University of Nancy, which was . . .

Q Let's get to that in a little bit. Can you remember much about the meeting in New York?

A About the meeting in New York? Not an awful lot. We met at a hotel and I don't really remember very much. They said that on the boat we would get the names of the families that we would live in and so forth. It wasn't very much of a meeting.

Q Was there much indoctrination?

A No, not very much.

Q Who was the director?

A The director was Dr. Brinton, George Brinton, and I remember meeting him in New York, and then that year the director of women was Miss Littlefield. Miss Littlefield was on the faculty at Wheaton, so it was in a little way an advantage for me. I knew her before; I had had her for two courses in French

in my freshman and sophomore years. And she had succeeded a Miss Tatch [sp]-- well, no, not succeeded, was the assistant to Miss Tatch, who was from Wellesley. And Miss Tatch and Miss Littlefield were there, and Dr. Brinton. But you know, there were 90 of us milling around, saying goodbye to our parents and really wishing to push our parents out of the way, we could hardly wait to get on that boat. "Goodbye, goodbye," we were on our big adventure. And I really don't remember anything much in the way of indoctrination.

Q You mean there wasn't any speech on what you should do or anything?

A Sort of a speech of welcoming us, a speech that said, you know, "This is going to be a significant year in your lives," but there wasn't anything about how to behave. I think that--in one way--I don't remember anyone telling us how to behave vis-a-vis the French people or a French family. It was assumed that if we were, you know, relatively well educated and well brought up, we wouldn't do anything too horrible in the way of breach of manners.

Q Well, they must have learned since the first trips, because in the first trips they were fully indoctrinated on what to do and what not to do.

A Were they? Well, I don't remember anybody telling us anything very much at all.

Q What was your trip like? I mean, what was the name of the boat?

A The boat was the Sumaria. It was a small [inaudible] of about 20,000 tons. And--well, it was the first time I had ever been abroad or ever been on a ship to sleep overnight, and I thought it was really exciting. And it took quite a while--I think it was eight days or something like that. And we really had a halcyon voyage, everything was perfect.

Q What do you mean, everything was perfect?

A Oh, the weather was perfect and we were happy, and I don't know . . . we were meeting new people.

Q This was the time when you began to meet each other.

A We began to meet each other and know who you wanted to live with, you know, you began to make friends and say, "Well, now, maybe we can live. . . ." We knew we were going to be placed in French families, but sometimes there were two or three to a family, especially in the first three months. And people were pairing off and--it was sort of divided as far as the sexes--there were about the same number of girls and boys. Everybody was pairing off. It was fun.

Q Um hmm. What was Mr. Brinton's role? He went over with you.

A Yeah, he was the director. I don't remember seeing him on the boat. I really don't remember. I just remember playing games and walking, and you know, those horse racing games and shuffleboard and deck tennis and all that kind of stuff. It was just a happy time. I don't remember anyone

telling us too much. I think we had a few meetings in the ship's dining room, but nobody--I don't really remember much about it at all. I had no sense that we were ambassadors or that they were going to be judging our country by us or anything like that. No one seemed to put any great pressure on us. Well, we landed in Le Havre and we went to Paris for a couple of days and that was . . .

Q What was the purpose of this few-day stop in Paris?

A I have no idea. We stayed, I remember, in a hotel in the Place de la Republique. And all I remember about those days is that a girl named Louise Rothschild, just walking. We decided, I can remember as plain as anything, that the best way to learn about a place was to see it through the soles of your feet. That was our little expression--"We'll see Paris through the soles of our feet." And we walked and walked for two days. Then we got on a train and went to Nancy and then the very next day we began.

Q This Rothschild, where was she from?

A She was from Wheaton, too. And Louise Rothschild I still am in contact with. I don't see her too often, she lives in New York, but everytime I'm there I call her up and sometimes I see her and sometimes she's busy and I don't. She now works for the U.N. and she has been over to Israel as a U.N. observer--she's done quite a lot with her career.

Q Well, what was Nancy all about?

A Well, Nancy was--I think we were there about three months, and that was an intensive drill in language. We studied phonetics. I remember we all used to get together, our little group, in a large auditorium, and Mademoiselle Sangenet [sp] was her name, would make us sing French nursery rhymes, you know, things like [recites a few words in French] . . .

Q Who was this lady?

A Well, Mademoiselle Sangenet was on the staff of the . . .

Q Of the University of Nancy.

A Well, not at Nancy. She was a part of the University of Delaware foreign study thing. They had a headquarters, you know, in Rue de [inaudible French street name] in Paris, and there were a number of French professors who, I guess, picked up a little change on the side by acting as directors to the students in the group, and we were assigned to one. Well, Mademoiselle Sangenet was on the staff, and at Nancy she drilled us in phonetics and pronunciation and vocabulary, and one of the ways that she did it was making us sing. It's a lot easier to sing in French than it is to talk in French. It's easier to pronounce, I don't know. We took courses in composition, and we had to write a theme every night, and composition and grammar and vocabulary. And we had some rather general lectures on French history and French art, French culture, you might say, and we were supposed to learn how to take notes properly, you know, [inaudible - French phrase] . . . it was just an outline we were supposed to learn, the French way of doing it.

Then we'd have to write precis the next day so they could be sure we understood what we heard, and this was to train us so that we could take notes on French lectures because when we got to the Sorbonne we would be taking definite courses in subject fields, not just in the French language. You would take it history or economics, you know. And the work in Nancy was exceedingly intensive. It seemed to me we were in class most of the--like from eight to four, I mean they were very intensive days.

Q Was there a lot of homework involved in this?

A Yes, we had to do homework every night, write a theme . . . oh, dear. And they were graded every day, and one good thing about it, you got your themes back with the grading, and it was carefully done so that you could see where you made your mistakes and you could benefit from your own mistakes. There's nothing more frustrating than to turn in a paper or an exam and have the professor never turn it back, so you got a "B" or a "C" and you don't know what was wrong because they don't turn it back and they don't But at Nancy you got them back the very next day while it was still fresh in your mind, and if you had any questions, you had an advisor to go to. And I would say that the instruction was really very good and you did learn by your mistakes. And there were a lot of things that the group arranged for us, visits to museums, . . .

Q This was around Nancy?

A Around Nancy. I remember we visited the World War I battlefields. We went up to a little place called Toul one day . . .

Q Was that Tours you said?

A No, Toul, T-o-u-l; Tours, you know is down in the wine area. But we went up to Toul and they were dedicating a monument, a statue, in the middle of this little town. And there were French generals and the American ambassador and everyone was there. You know, it was only 12, 13 years from the end of the war. As far as I was concerned, World War I was ancient history, because I was six years old when it ended and now I was a full-grown college student. It seemed like it was ancient history, but it wasn't very long in the past. And Nancy still bore the scars of the war. The University of Nancy--there was one wing that hadn't been repaired, you could still see bomb damage. It was the wing in which the library had formerly been housed and the library wasn't open. There wasn't really that much of a library for us to use. And the hill that I lived on, the Rue de la [inaudible French street name], the roadway was still scarred with, you know, craters where bombs and things had fallen. Nancy still bore the scars of the war. And it was a garrison town. There were a lot of French soldiers there in those awful pale blue, horizon blue uniforms that looked like they were made of [inaudible] . . . I felt so sorry for those French boys. We didn't have very much to do with them, but we saw them around all the time. That--and another thing--was my first glimpse of what you would call . . .

Q Why wouldn't you have much to do with them?

A Because we had so much to do all day long. We never got a chance to talk

to them. There was so much to do at the university. And of course the university--it was a summer school. Only the students from Czechoslovakia and Poland and England and--oh, all over. I met quite a few. In fact, the place where I lived, Madame Fromier [sp], she had several students boarding there. I lived there and there was a young man from England--I don't know where he went to college--his name--his last name was Hedges; I don't know what his first name was because we always called him Hedges. And there were two Czechs; one's name was [Polish name]--you can see how much this impressed me, because I can remember all these names--and the other one was [Polish name]. And they lived there. And there was a fellow from Hungary, too, and he was--his manners were so stiff and so formal, and he was not very much at ease with any of the rest of us. The rest of us seemed to have a camaraderie of youth and we all got along pretty well, but this boy from Hungary was so formal and stiff. He hardly talked to us at all, and he thought we were really very stupid, I think, and very silly, because he never took part--after the evening meal and after we had finished our compositions for the next day, we used to go down in the garden and sing. We'd sing songs like "The Raggle Taggle Gypsies," that was Hedge's contribution, an English song; and "Riding down to Boston on the Bangor Train," that was ours. And things like--oh, we taught them a lot of American things, like "Working on the Railroad," you know. We'd sing things like "A Long Way to Tipperary," and "You Tell Me Your Dreams, I'll Tell You Mine," all these old songs. And this boy from Hungary never--I don't even remember his name because he was always upstairs studying and he didn't approve of us at all.

Q What was the purpose of the other foreign students there?

A Well, they were all taking . . .

Q Were they doing the same thing you were doing?

A No, they were just taking summer courses. They were going back to their own universities. This [Polish name] went to Charles University in Prague, and he was just taking a six-weeks course to improve his French, which needed improving. Our French on the whole, which surprised me, was better than these Eastern European people--at least we thought it was better. We could understand each other and couldn't understand them. But that was good, too, in a way, to meet all these different people and to--we used to tease them. That boy from Czechoslovakia, [inaudible], he didn't know anything about the United States and all he did know was about red Indians and gangsters, and we would let him think that, you know, daily we had to duck behind a bush or a tree to avoid being tomahawked. We let him think it, and I remember telling him one time--he had a--this may sound silly, but you know, I was only 19--he had an idea that maybe in a year or two when I finished college and he did too that he would come to the United States and we would get married. This was never my idea, because I knew absolutely that I was an American and I didn't want any part--I just wanted my year abroad, I wanted to come home. I wasn't involved in anything like that, but he was. And he was very insistent and very persistent. And I remember telling him with the straightest face, and he believed me, that such a thing couldn't be because everything was so efficiently run in the United States that when you were born you got a number, and a little boy born two years before, they got a number, and later on those two numbers came together and that was the way--you know, I was already taken. And I can

remember telling him that and this boy believing it. This is how I think forty years ago--of course there was the press. The international radio wasn't much, and the news--what you knew about other countries was not nearly on a par with what we know--or can know--now if we want to. You can find out now about anybody or anybody's society. But then you could easily make anybody believe anything you wanted them to believe about the United States. Most of them were quite curious about it but knew very little, very little. All they knew were movies, and most of the movies, if you remember at that time, were hardly what one would call realistic. And they showed--most of the movies showed the United States as a kind of musical comedy land which everything always turned out perfectly in.

Q Do you think that's changed much as to other people's view of us?

A Yes, I think so. I've been back, of course, many times to Europe since then, and I think there's a much greater understanding of what the possibilities of life are here. But the strange this is, I still think Europeans think the possibility of a good life here still exists. And we may feel that our problems are almost insuperable, that they're shaking our country apart, that they're tearing us apart, that they're polarizing us, but even as long ago as just two years ago I found many, many people in Europe who still think that there is more freedom and more possibility of realizing oneself here than we tend to believe. But at that time I think it was still a land paved with gold with red Indians around--and gangsters, they formed a large part of the popular impression of the United States, because, of course, they were in the movies. It was still during Prohibition and about all the news I ever remember seeing in that year about the United States was something that had to do with gangsters or Prohibition. You never saw any good news about the United States.

Q Tell me more about the family you lived with.

A Well, in Nancy it was just Madame Fromier who was an old lady, a widow.

Q What kind of a house was it?

A It was a house on the side of a hill. It had a tile roof and it was--oh, I don't know--a kind of a plaster outside, very French looking. It had--when you came in the floors were mosaic tile. There were no carpets, I remember that. It was rather sparsely furnished, and the kitchen had a kind of a--oh, it had an iron wood-burning stove, or a coal stove, I don't know what it was. And the sink had a pump handle, and it was a red--sort of like red sandstone slab only about two inches deep. We just went in there occasionally. We didn't have much to do in the kitchen. She had a little maid, a little young girl, 16 or 17-year-old farm girl, from one of the little towns around Nancy, and this little girl she thought all these foreign students--I think she thought of us as rather glamorous persons, because she always wanted to hang around in the evening and hear what we were doing and talking about.

Q How many were at this family?

A Well, I was there, Louise Rothschild, and a girl named Dorothy Dezer [sp] from the University of Delaware. She was from the University of Delaware. And this Hedges and another boy named Bob Davies, he was from England, too.

His father came over that summer to see us, and he came over the day that England went off the gold standard, and I never saw three people more actually shattered, or as the French would say, abasourdido [sp], or absolutely [inaudible] when England went off the gold standard. Of course I didn't understand what that meant at the time, and couldn't understand why they were so upset, really I didn't know why they were so upset. And of course there wasn't much reason for being upset, because the world went on just the way it was going to go anyway.

Q How was your relationship with this--I won't attempt to repeat her name . . .

A Who?

Q The landlady, the lady you . . .

A Madame Fromier? Oh, she was a darling person. She was very loving, very friendly, very interested in everything that we were doing, and she--I don't know, after a very short time, we felt very close to her. In the evening she'd tell us stories about France, about Lorraine and about what the war was like. She lost one of her sons. She had a son living in Nancy; he and his wife and a little boy about four years old used to come up for Sunday dinners. They were a very close family, and of all the French people I have ever met in all the years at that time and since, I think the Fromiers accepted outsiders into the intimacy of their home more than most French people do. Most French people are--in my experience, I can hardly, you know, say what all French people are like--but most of them reserve a kind of sense of privacy about their families and their own homes, and one of the advantages of the Delaware group was the fact that you did live in a family and at least did get to see something about family life, that is the relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, mothers and sons and so on. You don't see that if you go to a foreign country and live in a dormitory. This is one of the reasons why foreign students here, I've always tried to have them in my home somehow, do something for them, because it's a sterile thing to go to another country to study and never see anything but a hotel or a store--a public place. You don't really get the feeling. But Madame Fromier and her family were very generous about allowing these young foreigners into the relationships that existed. And she would plan things for us, which she didn't have to do as a landlady, you know, picnics. And there was a place in Nancy called Nancy [inaudible, sounds like "Canal"], and I really don't know what Nancy [inaudible] could be compared to here, but kind of like an amusement park without the amusements, or a beer garden without the beer. It was a place where you could go in the evening, and there was a band and you could dance, it was outdoors and there was lights strung around in the park and young couples strolled and you could get things to drink and eat. But it wasn't really a restaurant or eating place. It sort of did what the boardwalk does for young couples now, only it was less--you know, it wasn't so commercial. It was a public park with a band and a dance floor. And Madame Fromier--well, that was one of the things that she insisted, that we all be chaperoned. We couldn't have dates--the girls in the house--and go off without a little bit of previous arrangement with her. So one of the ways she did that was she would take us all to the Nancy [Canal ?] and she would sit at a table and we'd go off and dance and . . .

Q She was the chaperone.

A And she was the chaperone. She did things like that for us. And she would take her son and daughter-in-law and the little grandson, on Sundays we would take trips. I remember one day we took the train and went to Strasbourg. And she packed a lunch and we went to a sidewalk cafe and she ordered beer and when we unwrapped our paper sandwiches and sat there, I don't think the waiter liked it very well, but you know, it was an inexpensive way for her to--she did a great many things for us.

Q Now, were there any other trips besides the battlefields and Strasbourg?

A Well, we had a--well, let's see, we went to Verdun, which was a battle-field, and we went to Toul that day that they were dedicating the monument and they had a parade and all sorts of thing. We went to Strasbourg. We went to Luxembourg, and that was fun. That was like going to a comic opera. The uniforms of the policemen, the white gloves on their hands, the chateaux and the castles climbing up the mountainsides, 'cause it's quite hilly and rocky. That was delightful. [Inaudible], you know?

Q A rather make-believe country.

A A make-believe country was exactly what it was like. And in all the years I've never met anybody who went to Luxembourg. I feel that was a very nice thing to do. I feel that, you know, I'd have something in common with Madame [sounds like "Nestor"], if I ever met her. But I never found anybody else who on a tour in Europe--a lot of them go to Liechtenstein, but I've never heard of anybody stopping off in Luxembourg, so I've always been glad that I did. But it was very much like the Chocolate Soldier or [sounds like "Grafstag"] or--well, things that kids nowadays wouldn't know anything about, but Grafstag [?] or Ruppert and Hentzal [sp?] and all those sort of super-over-romantic novels of the early 20th century all came to life in Luxembourg. It was worth going to see. When we got down to Paris, of course, the group arranged a great many things for us. But there weren't so much--you know, Nancy is a provincial town, and other than the [inaudible - sounds like Pepinier], which is the main square when Stanislaus--Stanislaus, of course, was the big figure in 17th-century Lorraine, and he left his mark everywhere. Well, . . .

Q You're talking about Nancy, now.

A In Nancy, that was about the only things to see. There isn't a magnificent cathedral there. Oh, we did go to Metz to see the cathedral, and we did go to [sounds like "Lans"] to see the cathedral. And I think we did that--yes, we did that from Nancy.

Q How would you compare the Wheaton College with the University of Nancy? If there is any comparison.

A There's no comparison. Wheaton was at that time--Wheaton now only has about 1500 students. It's highly selective. It's all girls, of course. It's in a small New England town. It's on a very compact and beautiful campus with, you know, really lovely buildings. But Nancy . . .

Q What was it like at Nancy--at the university?

A At the university? It wasn't nearly as organized. You went to the university and you [inaudible] and disappeared back to your house. There was very little organized activity. In fact, in my experience--I went to Nancy that year and then, you know, I went to the Sorbonne and the Ecole de Science Politique, and then years later I went back to study at the [inaudible, sounds like "Ashie"] Nacional, and I took some courses at the Sorbonne that time, too. There isn't the same organized sense of what you might call school spirit or alma materism. It doesn't . . .

Q Strictly the courses.

A It's strictly the courses. And as a matter of fact, I don't--in many of the courses, they don't take attendance, you have little or no contact with the professors. Professors are beings of a superior order, and they do not relate to or intend to lower themselves, let us say, to talk to students. Now, a very brilliant student may become a protege of a professor, but the average run of the student, they don't know you're there. And they don't take roll, they don't care whether you come or whether you don't come. The only thing is, you show up at the end and regurgitate on an exam everything that you were supposed to have ingested during the course, which was quite different, even then, from the way Wheaton taught.

Q Did you ever get to know any French professor? At Nancy or at the Sorbonne--did you ever get to know . . .

A One--well, two. One at the Sorbonne and one at the Ecole de Science Politique. One I forced my way into knowing him. I wanted to know him. I wanted him to know who I was. And this was a man named Andre Siegfried, who was a man of some significance, because he had--at the time, he had significance; how much he will figure in history I don't know. But he had held many positions in French governments--as you know, they were like a revolving door during the '20s and early '30s; French governments rose and fell every five or six months. But Siegfried and Tardier [sp] were two men who were--whenever they juggled the cabinet were apt to wind up in a cabinet. Did I say Siegfried was the one? It was Tardier--Tardier was the one that I really wanted to get to know because he was in the paper a lot, and I wanted him to know I was there--I don't know why. It wasn't anything--he was a rather austere person, but I wanted him to know there was a young American in his class and that I didn't always hold to all his views.

Q What did you do, just go up and . . .

A I just kept going up and introducing myself, and I would speak to him and nobody spoke to French professors. And you know, it was three months before he would deign to say "Bon jour" back to me. But the other one at the Sorbonne was a man named Monsieur Duchey, and he taught art, and he was a delightful person, but he was an artist, you know, and his whole aim in life was to communicate. And he did. I don't think you can teach art, really, without communicating with people. But you can stand up there and pontificate on economics or international law or history and lay down a dictum that the students will have to accept.

Q This is now the Sorbonne you're talking about.

- A Both. Now at Nancy, you see, we were only studying the French language, and it was drill, drill, drill.
- Q But you had some art and literature.
- A A little. They weren't courses. They were a series of lectures that ran through that summer, different people, and the purpose of that again was to attune our ears to . . .
- Q The language.
- A The language, and to a lecture, so that you could pick out and take notes of the significant points. But the classwork during the day was just drill. And it was hard. I can remember at the end of three weeks thinking if I heard another word of French I was just going to let out one loud scream. I wanted to talk English and there wasn't anyone to talk to, except our own group, and we had been asked to promise, you know, solemnly, on your word of honor, that you would not speak English among yourselves because it would weaken the whole program of trying to prepare you in three short months for an academic year in Paris. And I think most of us did try very hard not to break the word, and we did talk French among ourselves, although occasionally if we couldn't think of the right word, we'd throw an English word in. But we didn't go--you know, get out and walk home together and talk English, because we knew we would break down what was trying to be taught to us. But it was difficult and you missed the sound of your own language. But I think we all knew that it was the only way to prepare. And I remember one morning about--after having been there a couple of months, Louise came down to breakfast and announced loudly that she knew she was over the hump because she had dreamed in French that night and not in English. And we all found that after a certain length of time, too, you did stop depending on English and you would think in French first. What you had to get over was thinking in English and translating into French. You had to get to the point where you thought directly in the medium that you were going to use to express your thoughts and convictions.
- Q You were taking all your notes in French.
- A And we were taking all our notes in French. And they were being severely marked. I mean, the grading was very rigorous.
- Q How did the students do in terms of grading?
- A Oh, I really don't know, because I forget. I didn't care, you know, about what the rest of them were doing. One of us got washed out at that point and that could have happened if they had determined that you were not able to carry the load in Paris. I think they really would have sent you home, they said so. The ones that lived at Madame Fromier's with me, this Dorothy Dezer from Delaware and Louise Rothschild and I, and a girl named Sarah Lodge--she was from Louisiana and I think she went to--she either went to Sweetbriar or Randolph-Macon, someplace in Virginia. And we all managed to do very well. I did very well--I mean, really, you're asking me. I came out very well. They graded on a score of 20 and I think I came out with 19, so I had nothing to worry about. Louise had maybe an 18, Sarah just squeaked through--she had 16, and below that you

were kind of out. And Dorothy Dezer did well. Dorothy Dezer had a lovely accent. She had a--you know, just could pick it up. And we did very well, but we worked very hard. I mean, it was exciting and fun, but we did work very hard. We knew that we wouldn't be able to stay for the whole year if we couldn't handle ourselves in the language, so we did concentrate. And while we were in class, nobody fooled around, because the penalty was too great. The penalty wasn't failure, it was having to go back and do your junior year in your own college in the United States instead of having this lovely year all to yourself, you know, in France.

Q By the time you were through in Nancy, though, you were ready for the Sorbonne.

A Yeah. By the time we were through--we went down at the end of September and started at the university at the beginning of October--I think all of us felt extremely confident that we could handle any subject from A to Z, you know, anthropology to zoology, just let us hear the words and we would understand them, we were sure of that. And it was true. We may have made-- I'm sure we did--made mistakes in grammar at times and--but we didn't have any difficulty in talking to anybody about any subject, or in comprehending anything that anyone said to us.

Q Did you ever have any other contacts with people you met at Nancy later on?

A Later on? No, I never--well, yes, that's not true. Madame Fromier had a son who had married an Englishwoman and they lived in Paris. They had a child, too. And this son who lived in Paris was an artist, and his name was Jacques Fromier, and his wife's name was Nellie. And Nellie was an Englishwoman who had been working in Paris as a [inaudible French word], you know, buying gloves and handbags and scarfs and things for some store in England. She was like an overseas buyer. And she met Jacques Fromier and married him, and was desperately for England--not very happy living this--she was on the left bank in a little street called the Rue de [inaudible French street name], which was a very--you know . . . well, it certainly wasn't easy living there. It was pretty much of a poverty--what we would call poverty, and I think she called it that, too. And she was with a man whose income was very uncertain, who was very erratic, a nice guy, but all he cared about was taking his easel out and painting and if sold a painting, fine, if he didn't . . . he wasn't an artist of note or anything. And she had a rather thin life. Well, Madame Fromier gave us her name and address, and when we went down we went to see her. And that contact kept up during that year, but Nellie Fromier became a kind of a problem, because she only wanted to see these American students so she could speak English and we didn't want to go anywhere where we had to speak English. And she would come around or send us little [French word], you know, little notes in the mail, "Come and I'll make fudge for you." She had some idea that fudge was a terrifically American thing and that she could tempt us to come down and talk English if she would make fudge. That's the only contact. That has nothing much to do with it. But I never saw anybody from Nancy--well, Mademoiselle de Sangenet, who taught us there, came to Paris, and she was at [inaudible] and I saw her sometimes, but she wasn't . . . and Mademoiselle Savage, of course, whom Dr. Brinton married later--not the year we were there, but a year or so later he married Mademoiselle Savage. Mademoiselle Savage was kind of a--

I don't know, business agent, I guess. I don't know what she did, but she had . . .

Q She was a secretary.

A She was the one if you--you know, if your allowance didn't come--we had money that was deposited and we got money from the group and we got tickets from the group for plays and the opera and things like that. If your tickets didn't come or the money from your mom didn't come, or your laundry was held up or something, you went to see Mademoiselle Savage and she straightened things out down at the [inaudible, sounds like "glocier"].

Q You didn't have any contact with Mrs. Brinton later on?

A No, I never saw her in this country, I don't think. In fact, I would be hard-put to think of her as Mrs. Brinton, because she was just Mademoiselle Savage to me. And I was surprised when--she was so little--did you ever see a picture or see her?

Q Yes, we interviewed her.

A Oh, did you? She's a little, tiny person, and Dr. Brinton was a tall, very large person, you know, and they were kind of the Mutt and Jeff over there. But she was a person who really seemed to relate to every one of the students. She was--which was another thing, you know, you were told the French people were so aloof and this, that, and the other, and Mademoiselle Savage certainly was not and neither was Mademoiselle Sangenet. Everyone with whom we came in contact did treat us like other human beings, and this was the most amazing thing of all, that there were--you approach people, French people, or I don't care, German people--not Germans, I had a bad time in Germany that summer--but . . .

Q When you were in the Foreign Study Program?

A Yeah. We had a weekend that was free, or a few days and . . .

Q This was when you were at the Sorbonne?

A No, we were at Nancy. And Louise and I decided that we would take a Rhine trip--you know, a Rhine boat--so we went to Strasbourg, crossed the river, and there was a little town across from Strasbourg called Kale [sp?]. And we wanted to get a Rhine boat there and go up to Cologne--we wanted to see the cathedral and so forth in Cologne. And we got over in Kale--you didn't have to have a passport at that time--or a visa. You had to have a passport, but no visa to get into Germany, so we got in. This was just at the beginning of Hitler. And as we went through--I was with Louise--and this beast took her passport and read the name Louise Rothschild and spit at her. And we turned around and came back. We never set foot in Germany. So I can't say anything about them--maybe I would have found some [inaudible] . . . but that was enough right there. We weren't even in their blasted country and they spit on her and spit on her passport and we knew why they were doing it, so we just--all of us just turned right around and came back. Hedges and Davies, these two English boys, were with us, and Louise and me and Dorothy Dezer, none of us went, we just turned around and

and came back. So I never have been to Germany and I never did get the Rhine trip up to Cologne, but I really don't care, because I don't really think even after all these years that I could cross that river and not think of that incident. I know, you know, you can't forever condemn a whole nation, but it left a mark on me, and I'm sure it did on the others.

Q This was in '31 . . .

A It was in '31, in the summer of '31.

Q Um hmm. Where did you stay in Paris?

A In Paris? Well, at first--this is really funny. We were all given--we were placed in homes, and . . .

Q Did you have any choice?

A Well, yes, they asked you if you wanted to live on the Right Bank or the Left Bank, they asked you if you'd like to live with a Protestant or a Catholic or a Jew, whatever you happened to be, you know. And we said we didn't care, but we'd rather be on the Left Bank, somewhere near the Sorbonne. We felt the student quarter would be much more fun than being over on the Right Bank. So we said the Left Bank. So we got this place and Louise and I were placed in the same family. And the family--well, the man was a retired Protestant minister, and he was the president of the Blue Cross. Now, the Blue Cross isn't what it is here. The Blue Cross was a temperance union. And he had served in Algeria as a--I guess like a missionary, and had married a French Algerian woman. She had a great deal about her of the Arab, at least in appearance--you know, nose and--she always wore a shaw over her head. And she was very precise and they were very, very strict. And it turned out--we didn't have a very good time at all. Louise and I had a small Victrola, hand Victrola? You can tell how long ago it was, you know a record player, but you wound it up and you put records on it. And we used to buy all the popular records and play them. And they wouldn't let us do that, because it was sinful. And of course there--we had learned to drink wine with Madame Fromier, just a little wine mixed with water with our meals. But that was part of growing up, you know, we felt--we didn't want to get drunk, or go out and do anything wrong, but we felt that we should have wine with meals. No wine with the meals. And they wouldn't let us go to the movies. They took over and we were really having a miserable time, and we stayed there about one month. If we even laughed while we were doing our lessons at night, Madame would come upstairs and say, "[inaudible - French]," simmer down. She didn't want us to laugh. Well, we were really having a miserable time in that place.

Q What kind of a building was it? An apartment building?

A Well, that was interesting. No, it was a house. You came down this--well, it was off the avenue, the building, and we came down . . . and it was in a courtyard. You came through like a slight door--the door would be closed and like, you know, it was a wall. You came through that and there was a cobblestone courtyard there and there were about five or six houses around like that. They were very narrow and tall. We lived up on the

third floor. But it was kind of fun because we had casement windows that you could open out and look over the rooftops of Paris, and all the chimney tops--it was just like all the pictures you'd ever seen that Lutrillo painted or anything. But the house itself was dead and silent and cold and dark, and there weren't any lights on, there was never any music, there was never any laughter--it was absolutely awful. And so at the end of about six weeks we--Louise and I went to [inaudible, sounds like "La Glacier"], which was kind of like a second home, you know, and we saw Miss Littlefield and we told her we couldn't possibly live there anymore. And she said to me, "Well, you want to be in foreign service. You have to be tactful and you have to understand about people. You have to get to know them, you have to put up with all kinds--now you don't want to admit your defeat, that you can't set up good relationships with this family." I said, "I give up the foreign service, but I won't leave there for a whole year." There was an English girl living there, too, named Wendy Dew, and Wendy couldn't stand it either, and she left about the same time. But she didn't have any guardian angel like the University of Delaware to watch over her. So when we left, she departed and she went up to Alienne [sp] and went to some English school up there. I never did see her again. But anyway, we got out of that home and Miss Littlefield said, "If you can find a place--we have no more approved families. If you can find someplace that we'll approve, you can move." So Louise and I looked in the New York Herald Trib and we found an ad for--you know, offering to take in students. And we went over to see this place, and it was in a very elegant quarter, the [inaudible French name], which is over near the Etroit [sp] on the Avenue [inaudible] . . . and a very elegant place. And when we got there and we saw Monsieur and Madame Gotier [sp], we couldn't really believe that they wanted to take in paying guests. The apartment was very elegant; it was--oh, had balconies, you know, and had very high ceilings and pale gray carpets and gold satin furniture, all very [inaudible]. . . . But they were two lonely people and she--well, we got Miss Littlefield to come and see the place, you know, and she said the reason they wanted to have paying guests was because their last son had gotten married and it was so quiet and so dull and so dead and they wanted some young people in the apartment. I don't think they needed money, because they lived very high, wide and handsome. Madame used to have what she called her "Tuesdays." She played the piano very well and she'd have musicales, and she'd have people like *Thibaud* Jacques Tropol [sp] there, you know, very elegant. And so Miss Littlefield let us move and then we moved and I think we were the only ones of the group that lived over in this--you know, right off the Etroit. It was very handsome. And so one reason that that for us was nice was because Monsieur and Madame had, as I said, these married sons, and one of them had a country place and it was up along the Seine not too far from [inaudible], and we used to go up there on the weekends, and that was fun. We got to see a lot of the country. We went to places like Cannes, and Les Andelys, and Chateau [sounds like "Gayall"], all those places that we never would have seen otherwise. And that was fun. On the other hand, we didn't participate as much as the rest of the group did in the actual life of the student quarter, because we had to hit the subway to get home in time for dinner. And then we weren't allowed out after we got home unless we had permission from Miss Littlefield or Miss Tatch. I remember we were only allowed to go out if we dated American boys. Don't ask me why, but I think their feeling was that we would know what to expect and how to conduct ourselves with Americans, who would know about us, too. And I think they always thought

if we--well we knew all kinds, you know, Peruvians and Chileans and Greeks and Rumanians and Hindus--any of the group that we had fun with in the quarter during the day. And they wouldn't let us go out without a chaperone at night. And that was why this boy Martin Rhoder was so important to me. They would always let us go with Martin Rhoder and Martin didn't go with any girl and he was always willing to go along if you had a date, just as a third-wheel so we could get our permission and [inaudible] . . . but he was a good guy. Anyway, we lived over on the Right Bank then, and we always came home for the Tuesday musicales. And Madame always introduced as her American daughters, and we always helped pour--we really had a very . . .

Q It sounds very elegant.

A And we kept in touch with them. Yes, it was very elegant. It was really a delightful family and their married children were delightful young people, too. And although they seemed a lot older to us, they were, you know, 27 or 28, we thought they had one foot in the grave, I guess, but they were not more than 10 years older than we were. But they had small children and they seemed like another generation. But all the Gotiers were very nice to us and . . .

Q Did the food improve also?

A Oh, the food was wonderful. They had a cook and two housemaids, and we had--oh, our laundry was done there, we didn't have to struggle with that anymore, everything was just perfect. Well, getting back to the studies there, this was a thing that was . . .

Q We were talking about the food.

A Oh, the food was great. The food was great, and I still have some recipes that I use. I was smart enough then to know that someday I'd be married and entertaining and I'd want those recipes. I have two, one for a chocolate cake and one for champignon facil [sp], and every time I have a party I have one or the other. And I'm still riding 40 years later on Madame's recipes. But, no, the food was good and the service was good. And Louise and I had connecting rooms that had balconies that looked out on the Avenue [inaudible French name], we thought that was very nice. And Monsieur and Madame were delightful. In fact, they were so delightful that we used to often come home if we didn't have a class. He came home for lunch every day. His business was manufacturing brushes, and he had a couple of factories, one in the south of France and one in Paris. So they were very well-off, well-to-do people. But he came for a couple of hours every day and they were ardent bridge players and so were Louise and I, so we used to sometimes hoof it all the way over from the Left Bank back to our little nest and play bridge for an hour or so with Monsieur and Madame. Then in the First World War he had been the commandant of the City of [inaudible], which was a British base. And had picked up a lot of what we considered antiquated British slang. He used to like to interject that into his conversation. You know, "blimy" and things like that. But we didn't know what they meant anyway, but he thought they were very amusing. He was also a big help to us in our studies, because he was a very well educated person and he knew pages and pages of the French classic poems, dramatists, by

heart. And so, you know, that was a big part of our studying, [inaudible - sounds like "Corre"], Racine, Moliere, and he would just recite pages and analyze them--it'd be like having a Shakespearean scholar in your home if you were studying Shakespeare. Also, he really knew a lot about everything. He was just a walking encyclopedia, and he liked to talk and he liked to talk to us. And he was a very handsome man who looked something like--he was small, he looked something like I imagine General Foch looked like. But you know, extremely French and extremely neat, and he had a--he liked to talk--he liked to talk to young girls, to tell you the truth. He liked to expand, and he had a lot of fun with Louise and me. And he liked to teach. He was extremely--as most French people are--proud of his language. And he was very--he was after us all the time about phrasing or vocabulary or anything, because he loved his language and he was proud of it and he wanted us to speak it well. He wanted us to appreciate this [inaudible French word]. But he was a good friend to us, and Madame, she was charming, delightful, and his handmaiden from the word "go." Everything in that house revolved around making Paul happy. If Monsieur Paul was happy, the house was happy, and she was that kind of a woman. So naturally it was a perfectly happy place to be for the whole year.

Q Did you meet anybody else of the artistic world . . .

A *Maude* Well, yes, a lot of them, but I don't remember their names. I only remember Monsieur Pipol and he used to come with his violin and she would play. And she had some other friends who played and they would frequently play piano duets--not two pianos, because she just had one, but it was really very nice. And she used to take us--well, they went to concerts a very great deal and they used to take us with them. They lived--oh, not too far from the [inaudible - sounds like "Salplayel"] and we used to go to much of the concerts there with them. But moving over there got a lot of advantages that some of the other--that some people living on the Left Bank wouldn't have. Their families wouldn't include them, or wouldn't possibly be able to afford to include them.

Q Or have the contacts . . .

A Or have the contacts. And it was the same way when the Gotiers went up to see Maude and Claude--Maude was the daughter-in-law and Claude was the son who lived up near [inaudible], they always took us. And this was a delightful little property, a little--a small chateau which had belonged to Maude's father, who was a baron--Baron Something-or-other. But you know, everybody in France has got some connection--any well-born person some connection with an ancient title. Anyway, it had been in their family for a very great many years, and it sloped down to the Seine and they had a little landing there and a little rowboat--kind of a Rencir kind of a rowboat with [inaudible] and two oars, you know. We used to go down and row on the river there. But it was fun. They had a tennis court and we used to play tennis and it was really very very . . .

Q Chic.

A Yeah. And Maude's father used to be there. And he fancied himself as an English country squire. He wore knickers and he always had a pipe in his hand and he carried a walking stick when he walked around his acres, which

were few in numbers, by that time I don't think they had more than four or five acres, but a nice property, you know. But he felt, I think, himself something like Soames Forsyte. And he also sprinkled his conversation with Anglicisms, and I think they got as much pleasure and kick out of us as we got out of them. We had a very good relationship, and for a long, long time--I didn't lose track of them until in the war. And up until about 1942, you could get letters through. But then after that, you know, well, I guess after the Vichy government, I don't know whether they ever got into unoccupied France or still were in Paris, but no letters got through, and when the war was over, I tried, by letters, but I never could find them. And the first time I went back, I went around to 38 Avenue Von Braun, but I couldn't find anything. They had left during the war and no one knew where they were. There was a new concierge, and I just lost track of them completely. There was one thing I maybe could have done. One of the daughters-in-law, Madelaine, who lived in Paris with her husband, Michelle, her father at that time was the manager of the casino at Monte Carlo, and I've often thought that maybe I could have found out something through that. But I never thought of it at the time, you know. And now it's so many years. But [End of side one of tape.]

. . . Judaic, Christian, Western historical development.

Q Just different enough.

A But it's just different enough. And it--to the [inaudible] in your life when you're 18 or 19 years old, when you don't have preconceived or set prejudices or opinions that can't be changed by experience. You're not so set in your ways. Now, I'm sure--my father was what was called a 100%-er. You know, he just thought that America was 100% right in everything. He was also a Republican, as you can imagine, and he thought, you know, that this was the last, best hope on earth, and maybe it is, but it isn't perfect. But you tend to think--or you did tend to think . . .

Q Well, you mentioned before that . . .

A The time to go is when you're not all jelled and caught and congealed in a pattern of living, when you can see that there are more than one way to live, to be, to eat, to dress, to think. And that's what that year did for so many of us. And as I said, there weren't so many people moving around the world. There wasn't all this to and fro and back and forth and up and down as there is now. Everybody it seems to me is on the go. And also I think television has made people--there are no new sensations. I think that maybe this is part of the reason that young people are hanging after drugs, because there are no stimuli, they've had them all one way or another, vicariously through television or the news or something. And so many kids have had so many travel experiences. They've all been to California or the Shore or to Florida or the Islands or something--everybody's been everywhere.

Q But they haven't lived in a country . . .

A But they've never lived there, they've never stayed and lived and tried to find out what made that particular little section of the world tick. Well,

now, when I went, every sensation that impinged upon me, even the taste of the wine, you know, or the way the food was served, or the way the table was set--all those things were just the simplest things. The kiosks where the newspapers were sold--now, I must have seen pictures of those in the National Geographic or in newsreels or something, but it all seemed new and--you know--different way of doing things. But it wasn't different to anybody. Nothing's different. The world is so small now that I think you almost know. When I go to new places now, I always have this feeling of deja vu, as if I'd already been there, because I've seen it so many times. I've never seen the Taj Mahal, but I can tell you, I could walk down that reflecting pool, and I'm sure I wouldn't feel one-tenth of what I felt the day I got off the dock at Le Havre, because I've seen that so often now. You know?

Q Do you think that makes people today any more cosmopolitan? You made your point with the idea that you can understand someone of another culture, you know.

A I think we all get it so vicariously in so many ways that there's nothing that is as new. I think that in a lot of ways our children's tastes are jaded before they're even grown up. I mean, they're used to so many things that they accept things without--without the wonder.

Q Well, what about the provincialism, do you think that has gone, or do you . . .

A No, I don't think it's gone. I think you need to go and live away and live in another country. I don't think that--in fact I think an awful lot of our attitudes now are being frozen for us into molds. You know, you either swing with this generation and believe in the generation gap, or you're just out of it. And I don't, you know, don't want to have to believe that we have to polarize like that, but I think that's provincial. I think polarization is provincial. I think if we knew more about our own society and each other, let alone the world, we wouldn't polarize and we wouldn't be so provincial and locked in our own attitudes and beliefs. The best thing this year did for me was--and I don't know whether I've done it or not, but you know, you hope--not to get locked into believing that any one way, that my country was right, or that the French were necessarily right. I don't think that. That one year, though, made me aware that there's more than one way to skin a cat, and more than one road to Rome, more than one way to salvation. That there is more than just the American way. And that while some ways may be better than others, they're not always suitable for every person. For instance, we may still believe the American way is the best way to run a mass society, but I'm not sure it's the best way to try and impose it on let's say a Southeast Asian people. In other words, that year the thing I got most out of it other than loving the French language and the French people and having through the use of the language a whole great literature opened up to me that I wouldn't have been able to explore otherwise, both practical benefits, and the other, the main benefit was the fact that I no longer feel that I can judge any people by a standard that--unless I have examined it myself. How can I say? Because I found him so different from what I expected. How can I say what the Spanish are like, or the Greek people, or how can I hate the Chinese because somebody says you should? I haven't been there to see them, I don't know. And I think this is a benefit from that kind of education and I think all kids

that get a chance to travel alone or wandering with their parents, but go for a year, at least a year, and be free to imbibe of that alien surroundings and [inaudible] . . . culture, whatever.

Q But it still takes somebody starting with the point of view that you had--there are people who travel and are still . . .

A Sure. There are people that travel--they travel--how many people have you met--and I've met, and all of us--who've taken that "If it's Tuesday, it must be Belgium" trip? Well, they go carrying their American prejudices and they come home saying well, you know, we do it better here, our telephones run better and so on and so forth. Well, if you go with the idea that the good, the true and the beautiful is efficient telephone service and pure water and well, whatever you want to call it . . .

Q Well, you're also saying, aren't you . . .

A You're going to come home with it. But if you go with the idea that you can find the good, the true and the beautiful in humanity and look for it, you're gonna find it.

Q But don't you also have to do it in some depth?

A You can't do it in three weeks, one day in Brussels and the next day in [inaudible] and the next day in Paris and then hit Florence in the afternoon so that you can make your hotel in Rome by night. That you can't--you know, this is terrible. It's the same as, I suppose, if a European came here and tried to see the whole United States in three weeks, you can't do it. Time is part of the learning process, and time can't be . . .

Q Or just living with it.

A Yeah, you have to be there. I took some friends to Europe once about four years ago who had never gone, and they wanted to do the grand tour and see everything in--I forget, five weeks or something like that. And I said, "Well, if I'm going to go with you, you're gonna let me show you what I found out, and we're gonna go only three places, because you will come home with just a blur of impressions and you won't know anything about it." And we did, we were in London, Paris and Rome, 10 days each place. And they have come--they are sure, they've gone back since, that that's the right way to go the first time. You don't come home with all disconnected blurred impressions. And as I say, if you don't stay any length of time, all you see are stations and public transportation and hotels, what's that? And stores--all those people that go on those three-week trips, they hit a town, all they want to do is shop. Run in and buy a souvenir for Aunt Molly or something. That's not learning.

Q You've got to make that whole list, too, I know that.

A Yeah, you make the list. But I think if--I've always been very sorry that I didn't send my daughter. I have one daughter who is married and has three children, but she wanted to get married and not finish college, and so she got married in her junior year--she did finish college, but she never got her year abroad because by the time she was out of college she

was pregnant and I couldn't send her . . . so they never got to go. And Bruce and [inaudible] did that to themselves; they could have that year, but they chose not to. And I'm not saying that their choice was wrong, but I wish that she could have held off for a year falling in love, meeting him, let's say, so she could have had her year. There was no way for me to give her that gift once she had made her own commitment. On the other hand, I didn't do anything to stop her making it, because that was her life, not mine.

Q Let's go back to the Sorbonne and tell something about that.

A Well, the Sorbonne . . .

Q It's a famous university.

A . . . is a famous university. It's a hallowed university. To compare it with any kind of an American university I find very, very difficult. Even a large urban--the only large urban university that I know well is the University of Pennsylvania, and there's no comparison. There is no organized campus life. There are no fraternities, no clubs, no organized athletics, none of the [sounds like "panoply"] that goes around college life in this country. The library is utterly miserable, really. The Bibliotheque San Genvieve [sp] has a fine collection, but it serves something like 26,000 students and it's got seating room for about 500. You could never get a book there--you can never even get it. It's very difficult. All around the quarter are bookstores. Now at the University of Pennsylvania there's [inaudible], what else is there? That's it. Nobody buys books because you've got an endless library and plenty of place to study and to go and you go there. In Paris I found out that if I needed a book or wanted a book, I had to buy the book. You couldn't get it in a library. So you did a lot of your studying sitting at cafes on the sidewalk, which was very different. And we had a little group that always met at a certain one and they were a mixed bag, I must say--South Americans, Greeks, Eastern Europeans, English, Americans, French, everybody. And we'd--you know, it was like a continual bull session, really, we would all meet there and talk and thumb through our books and compare things. It was a very different way of living and studying. And the classes were mostly tremendous lecture classes--two or three hundred.

Q This getting together in a cafe, that was a major part of it.

A That was the major part of it. The classes themselves--you'd go to your class, let's say in 18th-century French philosophy, and there'd be 300 students there, one professor, and he sat way down on a platform and you were in an amphitheater, like a theater, you know, with tiers. And everybody would--there'd be a lot of commotion getting settled at the beginning of the class, and you'd wait for the professor to come in, and if he was a little late, everybody would begin to shuffle their feet on the floor, make a big roar--that was a sign of student impatience. Then he'd come in and he would lecture, and when the lecture was over, he would get up and bow to the class, and everybody would get up and go out.

Q He would bow.

A He would bow, and that was that. Now, if you didn't take notes--and lots of people didn't, and lots of time you couldn't hear--there wasn't any amplification, and if you were way up in the peanut gallery, you didn't hear too much. Besides, you were probably making a date with somebody to meet somewhere. But nobody paid much attention to those lectures, because you could go right around the corner to the Rue [sounds like "Siflo"] and there was like a printing place. They had--you could buy the lectures. You could buy mimeographed copies of the lectures. And why . . .

Q Did these come off the press right after the lecture, or from last year . . .

A From last year. I don't think many of those lectures had been changed for years, especially if it was in a subject like 18-century French philosophy. Nobody was saying very much that hadn't been said about it, so the lectures were pretty standardized. And you could buy them, and everybody bought them; it was like 20 francs for the course, you know. And so the learning was more by rote. You just knew that you had to know what was in those lectures for the exam and that was that.

Q You didn't do any outside reading . . .

A No, no bibliography, no outside reading, no assignments, no nothing. Now where the University of Delaware supplemented that so that we could get transfer credit to come back to our colleges, was we had the Glacier [sp], this nice little building--it had been a private home. It had a small library there and we had professors. And you were assigned to one. And he would give you assignments relating to your various courses, and that is where we got, really got our grades for transfer. And you had somebody who was like an American professor, somebody you could talk to and somebody you could see, somebody . . .

Q He gave you the grades?

A Yeah. And he gave you reading lists, and he helped you the way--now you go into a class and the first thing you get at the beginning of a term is a mimeographed bibliography and a number of topics that you can investigate, or you have to by the end of the second week come up with a topic and have it approved by the professor to write your term papers or or something. Well, that kind of thing wasn't done at the Sorbonne. It was done outside through the Glacier, through them.

Q They gave you the tests, too.

A No, they didn't really give us tests. They graded the papers. And then you took your exam at the end. Now, I went also to the Ecole de Science Politique, because I wasn't a French major, I was going to have to pick up some courses in economics and history and political science in order to keep my major alive when I came back for my senior year. So I went to the Ecole de Science Politique, which was--is a part of the University of Paris as the Sorbonne is a part of the University of Paris, a school within the university. And it was run somewhat differently. There the courses were smaller. There was never, in any course I was ever in in a French university, or even when I went to the [inaudible - sounds like "Ashibe"] Nacional for that course, any class participation, no class discussion,

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nobody ever raising a hand and raising a question, nobody ever disputing the professor, the professor never being put on the spot to answer a question. There was absolutely no rapport between student and teacher. The teacher was always in a superior position, and the student was always in an inferior position. That is to say, he was always, you know, at the feet of the master. And this was different from what I'd had, of course, in my first two years in college, but I accepted it, that was the French way. I mean, there were no rebels among us. I mean, we were perfectly willing to take what was given. But the interesting was at the Ecole de Science Politique, the examinations were oral, and they were public, and this was something that I had never undergone. And at the end, you had about 20 minutes--obviously, they can't give you a whole day for an exam--but you can say an awful lot in 20 minutes. And I remember taking a course with Andres Siegfried . . .

Q When you say public, it was public in that the other students . . .

A Other students or anybody could come in off the street. And lots of times people like postmen or you know would come in out of the cold just to warm their feet.

Q Really?

A Yeah, there were always people sitting in the back during the exam. But you would go down, there were three--it was generally in the amphitheater and the desk up front would have three professors back of it and you'd go down and they'd ask you a question or two. If you were on the right track and your answers were going good, they'd [inaudible] . . . you know, you can tell very quickly if someone is talking who knows the subject matter or if he's bluffing--much faster, I think, than if you're writing. But if your first answer was weak and showed a lack of comprehension or was absolutely wrong, then they would probe a little deeper and you'd have a bit of difficulty. Now, I only remember feeling somewhat--well, I had a strong sense of trepidation the first time I went to one of these. I thought I'd probably be tongue-tied and wouldn't be able to say a thing. But this is something that's never happened to me, you can imagine. Once I got going, I was all right. At the Sorbonne, they were written exams and very much like the kind of exams you'd get here, too, you know, three essay questions and you write until your hand is cramped and then the hour is up and you turn the paper in and go out and say, "Oh, I could have done so much more if I'd only had more time." But the thing that you missed the most . . .

Q What were the courses that you took at the Sorbonne?

A Well, at the Sorbonne I took a couple of courses in French history--they were, you know, two semesters, and I took French history from--oh, I guess from the Protestant Reformation--modern history, in other words, and that was divided in two sections from like Francois I to the Revolution and then the Revolution to today. And then I took courses in French literature. I took classic French drama and the French novel, and a course in 19th-century poetry. Then I took a course in the history of art and that was--the professor was--oh, he was a wonderful person. I never got to know him at all. His name was Monsieur Ernet Schneider [sp]. And the man, this Monsieur

Gettie [sp], the little artist, was assigned, I think--I'm not positive, but I think he was paid for by the group to take--because Monsieur Schneider's class was a huge class, couple of hundred in it, for the lectures. But the University of Delaware group met with Mr. Gettie once a week and he would take us to--oh, places like [inaudible - sounds like "San Je Manoley"], or Fontainebleau, Versailles, Luxembourg, the Louvre, he would take us and show us the things and lecture right then and there. Well, none of the other students taking that course, as far as I know, had a private guide that went right along with the course. And Mr. Gettie was the only French professor I ever got to speak to, other than forcing myself on Monsieur Tardieu [sp], saying, "Bon jour, je suis [inaudible - French]." So . . .

Q Well, what courses did you take at the . . .

A At the Ecole de Science Politique I took--well, I took a course in American economic history, and I did that on purpose. I thought it would be interesting to study my own history from another point of view, and it was interesting. And Andre Siegfried taught that course. I don't remember the names of any of the other people in that . . . that I took. And I took a course in commercial law and I took a course in European diplomatic history from the time of Grotius, Hugo Grotius in the 17th century, and that was interesting because at that time [sounds like "Aristide Briand"] was foreign minister of France and was pushing for a United States of Europe. He had been the architect of the Locarno Pacts and very active in the League of Nations, and this thing was--diplomatic history was focused on the concert of Europe, and the balance of power and leading on up to the League of Nations and the idea of a United Nations. And that was, you know, that was an interesting course. And they had--at the Ecole they had outside lecturers for that course, too. And that was Monsieur Tardieu's course, and Aristide Briand lectured once to that class. So I did see him. He died either that year or the next year. He died that year, 'cause I saw his funeral. And that year Monsieur Doumer, who was the President of France, was assassinated and he was assassinated after having opened a book fair, a publishers book fair? And Louise and I had gone to the book fair--it was not very far from where we lived, on the Avenue [sounds like Von Braun], so we had gone over to the book fair. And we had been gone only about an hour when they were crying the news on the street that Monsieur le presidente had been assassinated at the book fair, and we felt very close to history. It would be as though you had been in the Ambassador Hotel an hour before Robert Kennedy was assassinated. You would feel you had been close to him. We felt we'd been very close to history. But there were lots of things like that that made you feel that you were at the center of things. And the group arranged many things that were pleasant for us. They had a dinner for us one time at the Petit Trianon in Versailles, and I don't remember the functionaries who were there, but like the Prefect of the department or something and . . .

Q This was the government of France.

A Yes, and the group--we always called it the group, the University of Delaware Group, the group--arranged that. The group did a lot of things for us. They arranged--they took us to the Lido one time--it's the only time I've ever been to the Lido--so we would see what a Paris nightclub was like. Well, of course, that's a very nice, cleaned up Paris nightclub.

Q You didn't go to the Folies-Bergere?

A No. We could if we wanted to, I guess. I never went. I have never been even now. I've never wanted to go. But we did go to the Lido and they did take us up to Place [inaudible - French] and Monmartre [sp] and we had dinner at La Mer Capperine [sp]. And then the group arranged things like trips to Chartres and that I think is a magnificent experience for anybody, but I think the French--I don't think anybody has ever understood it better than our own Henry Adams. And fortunately the group advised all of us to read Henry Adams before we went to Chartres, so we knew what we were looking for.

Q Education [inaudible]?

A Education . . . well, not the education of--but he wrote a book on Chartres. Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres, it's called. And the group arranged for all kinds of . . .

Q You went to the opera, didn't you?

A We used to go to the opera in [inaudible - French] regularly and the [inaudible] and the [sounds like Opera Comique] and they would send--we'd get tickets periodically in the mail and [inaudible] you'd see what you had to go to that week. But, you know, it was really great.

Q You mentioned one other school--I thought you did. Were there three schools?

A Oh, no. Years later I went back to France and I went to the National Archives of France, just like our National Archives conducts training courses--this is something you and John should go to sometime. John, you know, you ought to apply to it, for the [inaudible] technique, because you, I'm sure could get it. I did it and applied out of the blue, but Dean Harvey said--this was only about ten years--well, you know, it wasn't too long ago--said, "You'll never get it. They'll never give you a scholarship." I said, "They won't if I don't apply. I'm gonna try." So I did. And I got one--there's a [inaudible] technique that's given every year and it's a four-month course, It goes from January to April, and if you're accepted, the French government pays the whole thing except your transportation. I got I think \$175.00 a month, which was enough to pay for my hotel and meals. I lived on the--I lived in the [sounds like "Mairie"], you know, workingman's quarter on the Right Bank, which was a real nice place to be. And they take you on a ten-day tour of the Chateau country of the Loire, which is really a deluxe trip, absolutely superb, visiting all the departmental archives there. And it's an intensive course in archival management which is quite different from the way we manage archives, 'tis true. But all the fundamental concepts come out of the French experience, the [inaudible] primitif and the [inaudible]--you know, and it was really great. No, but when I went there to school, again the instructor is the instructor and you always know it. And even though these were mature persons, many of them were archivists of their own home country, still there was a very deferential attitude on the part of the class toward the professor, which is quite different from the attitude that prevails in this country. I wouldn't say that in American classes there's an attitude of disrespect for the professor, but there's more of an attitude of equality, that the professor is there to teach, but to learn as well. And there's nothing like that in France. I don't think

*John Coffey
Archivist at
U.S. National
Archives during
this interview.*

any professor ever crosses his mind that he might learn from a student, unless maybe it's a Pasteur or somebody working in a lab situation where a student might possibly initiate an experiment that would result in something.

Q How did you use your experiences over there?

A When I came back? Well, the first thing, I never used. . .

Q What did you do when you came? You had your senior year . . .

A I had my senior year. Then in my senior year I got a fellowship to go to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, but unfortunately, my father died and I had this wild sense of family loyalty that I shouldn't go off for another year, I should come home and be with my mother. I had three younger sisters all to go to college. In fact, one of them was in her second year, and the other two hadn't even started. So I thought my duty lay in coming home and you know, being a [inaudible] and a support to my mother. Well, that may have changed my life more than any other decision I ever made, because I'm sure if I had taken that year and gone to the Fletcher School, I would ultimately have gone into the foreign service. But I didn't. I came home, and the first job I got was with the Curtis Publishing Company. And I did market research, which was as dull as dishwater. And I hated it. So about two years later, I got married, and then I didn't do anything except join the Alliance Francais [sp?], so that I could meet French people and keep the French somewhat alive. And I have always bought a lot of books, French books, because it's one way you can keep your vocabulary, but you lose some of your facility, you lose the--oh, you know, the currency. But it comes back after I'm in France for about two weeks; it comes back. But anyway, you have to--that part has stayed with me. But as to having used the year for anything except to be a person, no, I have never used it, you know, to teach French, or to conduct groups abroad, or to write about France. I have used it as an enrichment, I would say. And it has opened up to me the French mind and thought in a way that just learning French in this country could never do. In other words, when I read in French literature now, I understand--I think I understand--the driving forces back of the--I understand the author's mind better, his mind processes better, what he's trying to say better. And I feel that having lived in France and having learned the language well enough, literature--I would say the equal of English literature, it's very different, but a powerful, rich and extensive literature was opened for me. I'm really only regretful that I don't know more languages. I would like to be able to read in Spanish and Italian and German, too, and not be dependent on translations. This is one permanent benefit that has come to me, because I am a reader and because I like to read, that I'm not confined to translations, that I'm not confined to one literature. But I've never used it in a monetary way. It has never made any difference to me in the kind of jobs that I got.

Q Could you give us a little thumbnail sketch of what you did, actually?

A Well, as I say, I worked for the Curtis Publishing Company for a couple of years, then I was married, and for about 18 years I stayed home. And I had, as I said, one daughter and I had the usual suburban housewife

kind of life. I raised that one child and had a nice home and a good husband, lots of friend, played a lot of golf, and played a lot of bridge, did a lot of shopping--didn't do very much of anything. When my daughter went to college, I found out within about six months that I didn't really have very much point to my existence. There wasn't any reason to get up in the morning, there wasn't any reason to keep our house in A-1 condition, there wasn't any reason . . . I had one focal point in the day, and that was when my husband came home at night, have a good dinner. And this isn't enough for anybody. And so I thought, "Well, I've got to do something." I was--how old was I? About 44, 43, something like that. I thought, "I can't spend the next 20 years of my life getting one meal and day and thinking that that is enough to pay your way in life. It isn't enough to pay for the space you take up on this earth." So I thought I'd better do something and I thought that to--you know, the education that I had had, of what I could do with it. Well, a 23-year-old Bachelor's Degree isn't going to take you very far, and I thought the best thing to do would be to refurbish it by getting a Master's Degree. So I went to the University of Pennsylvania. I thought I'd take it in economics--don't ask me why. I really had no idea what I would do with it, but I would get a fresh degree. And I had gone--I'd taken about four courses toward this Master's Degree in economics and I realized that I had no goal and that this was a foolish thing to do. All I was doing was staving off the moment when I was going to have to make a decision about my life. And in the meantime I talked to everybody I knew about, "What am I going to do with my life? I have nothing to do with it," and Jack was saying, "Aren't you happy anymore?" I said, "I'm happy with you, but I'm not happy with my life." And finally I talked to of all people, my sister, who was a librarian, and she said, "Why don't you go to library school? That is one degree that can make use of every particular subject background that you have, including languages." Well, I thought that was pretty good advice, and I went to Drexel. Well, I got the Master's Degree in library science and from then on I just have had an increasingly interesting and active professional life. And I know that part of the success of that life has been the fact that I have had this experience. I use it a good bit now. The library that I'm in now is the College of Physicians library, and our collection--we buy without regard to language, and we have about 20 languages represented, and we offer library service that includes abstracting or translating or researching in foreign languages. And I get quite a lot to do in--it's a funny thing, if you know one language, too, you can fiddle around another one. I was working with some material not too long ago, and I thought to myself, "Oh, I'm getting along just fine in this language. I wonder what it is I'm translating?" I was having no problem at all. I had to turn the journal over to find out what it was. I knew I didn't know what the language was. It wasn't French. It had a lot of Latin in it, but I wasn't quite sure what it was. And I turned it back--it was Rumanian. It was a thing published in Bucuresti. But it is funny, if you've learned one language, at least a Romance language, you can fiddle around with the other ones pretty well. So now my chickens are coming home to roose in one sense. The effort I made to learn that one language is helping me a very great deal to find my way around in the indexes and bibliographies of a number of languages. And I'm sure that wouldn't have come to me without this experience, because other librarians on our staff who do not have a language facility have difficulty when they get outside the English tools. So that's the, you know . . .

Q Well, I don't want to take up too much more of your time. I thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]