

Interview with Eileen R. Donovan

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AMBASSADOR EILEEN R. DONOVAN

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Q: Thank you Ambassador Donovan, very much, for agreeing to this interview. You had a fascinating career and I'm looking forward to interviewing you and learning more about it. I think it would be most interesting to begin briefly about your Army service in Japan and then how you entered the Foreign Service.

DONOVAN: Well, this could be a long story but I hope it isn't dull and I'll keep it as short as I can. It was fun for me anyway. I don't know whether it will be fun for other people to listen to. Lets see now how short can I make this.

I was teaching school, teaching high school history in Boston when WWII broke out. When Pearl Harbor Day came I gave up the academic circles and went and joined the WACs as a private. I went down to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and trained and was lucky enough to be sent to the Officer Candidate School in Des Moines, came out as a 2nd Lieutenant. Then I did various things in this country, like teaching at Oglethorpe such fascinating subjects as Military Customs and Courtesies and Articles of War and things like that. Then I was assigned to recruiting, went back to Massachusetts and opened a little office up in Springfield and talked to the Rotary and the Kiwanis and all the men's clubs because it

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was the men who didn't particularly want their daughters or their sisters to join the Army. They thought they were going to be immoral or something I guess.

So anyhow, then I was taken out of that when they had a sudden need for a training officer in New England and went into the training business for WACs in service. I worked out of the First Service Command Headquarters in Boston and when an unusual opportunity came (which everybody said was foolish for me even to think of—but I did) to go to the University of Virginia, followed by the University of Michigan in Japanese language and area studies. Somehow or other I made it. There were four women and 250 men, all senior officers in the class. So off I went to University of Virginia and then to University of Michigan. When that was finished, I spoke Japanese well enough to get along. That's quite different from reading it which I didn't at all, beyond about the second grade kanji, that's all.

So early in 1945, just a few days after the surrender on the Missouri, I went into Japan to be part of the SCAP Headquarters. I guess everybody knows what the SCAP is don't they? Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. That was General MacArthur himself. Anyhow, because of my education experience I went into the Education Division of his Civil Information and Education Section and spent the next four years working with Japanese women. General MacArthur had authorized that women were eligible for the Imperial Universities, but that didn't make any difference at all because they didn't have the basic training necessary to pass the entrance exams for the Imperial universities.

So to make this story even shorter, if I can, I discovered that there was a total difference in the educational programs for girls. They were two years behind the boys in every subject, even in the textbooks. For example, they were fifth grade arithmetic textbooks for boys and fifth grade arithmetic for girls, but girls were just about third grade level. It went on and on like that right up through the first eight years. So being curious I wanted to know why this was. So, they told me that it was because the girls had to spend so much time on cooking and sewing. They spent hours each day on cooking and sewing so there wasn't time for arithmetic and science and history and language. So I found, and other people helped

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me to find, a young woman who had studied on the West Coast of the United States, a Japanese lady, who was an expert in home economics. She said she could revise that curriculum so that they wouldn't have to spend half the time on the useless things they were doing and they could learn just as much. So, anyway, that's about a change at the lower level and then it went on and on and we got people over from organizations like the International Association of University Women to help work on the curricula of the few existing schools for higher education the girls were in, they called them colleges. They were mostly what we'd call senior high school or junior college grade.

It took some three years of this. I had all kinds of interesting experiences, I was the first western woman to go into Hiroshima and try and see what could be done to revive some of the totally destroyed educational institutions there. All kinds of interesting things happened, but that's too long a story.

Somewhere along the line there was a telegram to all the generals that came from a man who signed it Marshall, Secretary of State, saying that there were six people somewhere in the Far East who had never come back to take their oral exam for the Foreign Service. I was among the six—the only woman, of course. The telegram said that if these persons would come back before the end of April (it was then mid-April) they could take the Foreign Service oral.

Q: What year was that?

DONOVAN: 1948. The telegram said if you can find them and if they will come back, they can fly on a “space-available” Army flight. When my boss saw the telegram he said, listen, you go back to your hotel room, (he knew I had to have a language and they wouldn't take Japanese because it was not a “world language” then) study your French (that I hadn't had since high school) and I'll send you over a bunch of records to get the sound back and you just listen and listen and get the sound and the pronunciation back. Then somebody sent me another bunch of fresh records. This all went on for about a week until there was

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a “space available” for the trip back. Another friend, who collected Time magazines—had for years—went home and cut them all up and gave me sections like the Middle East, Indochina, Vietnam, Latin America. She cut them up to make a book which I studied on the way back on the plane to make up for the time I'd lost learning what was going on in the rest of the world outside Japan.

So, to make a long story short, I got there on a Saturday morning and I sat down before the table that we all know with three men in front and two on either end and me, the victim, in the middle. They sat on the end, they told me, because men candidates get a little nervous and have a muscle, pulse or something in their temple that throbs. They like to see that.

So, they started right in on me and said, if you want to join the Foreign Service, why don't you marry a Foreign Service Officer? I said, well I might do that eventually, but meanwhile what does one look like? I've never seen one. So, I don't know whether they thought that was flippant or funny but they said, well do you know that if you did marry you would have to resign? And I said no, I didn't know that. I said, I don't think it would bother me much because the man that I would marry would insist that I resign anyway. But I said, where do you find this written? He said, it's right in the Foreign Service regulations. And I said, what are those? They had asked me lots of questions that I couldn't answer, like who were the six Hidalgos of Latin America? Things like that. So, I established myself as knowing nothing at the beginning then somehow I struggled through the French very, very badly. But, they passed me somehow or other.

But when they got on to Japan, of course, I could take off on the fast track, which I did. Since they apparently didn't know anything about occupied Japan, they found it quite interesting. So the time went by quickly, two hours went by as a matter of fact, and then when I came out I made a beeline for the ladies room and so did they—the men's room. One little man who was a “public member” who was still in the corridor said, I'm not suppose to tell you this, you have to wait and get notice from the Department as to

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whether you passed this exam, but he said, I can't help it, I want to tell you, that we passed you unanimously and with the highest honors and that we have examined 200 women in the last two years and none of them has passed until you. So I flew home to Boston for the weekend in a cloud of glory. It took me several years to figure out that it was so close toward the end of the line that somebody finally said, well good lord, we'll have to pass one woman, somehow or other.

So anyhow, whether or not I was really brilliant or rather it was just time, I don't know. So then I went back to Tokyo and went to work in USPOLAD which, as you know, is the Office of the Political Advisor liaising with the Japanese government. Then they sent me back to Washington where I was in an office called the Japan/Korea Political Public Affairs that doesn't exist anymore because somebody thought that pretty soon there would be a peace treaty and somebody had better be in the Department who knew what General MacArthur was doing all this time and what his plans were for the future. Of course didn't happen that way, the Russians were, what's that lovely word they love to use, they were intransigent. There wasn't any peace treaty for several years. Then the Korean War came and they separated the Japan/Korea desk. They gave Korea a desk of its own.

Then I was assigned to Manila as Second Secretary and Political Officer. That's where my new boss greeted me with the words, "can you type". I said no, I never learned to type because I figured if I did I'd have to do it. So he said, well we need a typist much more than we need a brand new political officer, but anyway, never mind that. So, of course, that turned out to be a fascinating time because there was a President named Quirino who was a terribly corrupt man. The Filipinos had nominated a bright young man from the barrios named Mag Say Say to run against him. So there was a very exciting election which happened then. The women wanted to vote, too, so for them I invited the members of the League of Women Voters to help them to prepare for elections. This is a long story but Mag Say Say won by a landslide. I didn't know until much later that there was a military colonel in and out of the embassy in Manila who after the election they kept calling "General Landslide". Actually, it was a Colonel Lansdale who was a part of the

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“Agency” and he helped out in that election too. I didn't know that at the time. I was Chief of the Political Section by then.

Q: You were head of the Political Section?

DONOVAN: Yes, I was an FSO-5 and just by accident, by luck I guess, a lot of these things are by luck you know. If you're in the right place at the right time, something happens, and if you're not there you miss out. Well that was the time in 1953 when they instituted the horrible procedure called the “RIF”, “reduction in force”, and the man that was to be the Chief of the Political Section got RIFed and so I became it. They were pretty exciting days. I don't know how I ever did these things now.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

DONOVAN: The Ambassador was a man named Spruance who was a Navy Admiral hero of WWII who arrived there the same day that I did. Then they had a DCM who was really running the place. Ambassador Spruance's interests were not at all political and he was interested in the land reform, things like that.

Anyhow, nobody knew what was happening down in the south in Jolo in the Sulu Sea which was inhabited by Moros or Muhammadans who had been in the Philippines for centuries. So, one of those Filipino senators whom I got to know quite well was from that district and he was going to fly down and he said he'd take me with him. I could go down and see what the Moros thought about Mag Say Say. Unfortunately, he had to cancel his appointments and I got a telegram in Zamboanga saying he wasn't coming. I wasn't going to turn tail and run back to Manila. So, I got myself a passage as a deck passenger on a cattle boat going from Zamboanga to Jolo overnight. There was only one cabin on the ship and the captain offered me that. It was his. I thought, I'm not going to get into a dark and lonely room. So I said, no, I much prefer the fresh air and I slept on the deck. I didn't sleep but I lay down on the deck with a whole bunch of people they called commercial travelers, salesmen and roosters and goats. The roosters started crowing at 4 o'clock in

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the morning and then I walked with a heavy suitcase to a country hotel. (That was a defect of mine which I tried to correct, always carrying too much in case I needed it.) And, I went and called on the Governor and told him that I had been coming with the Senator but he couldn't come and could he list to me a few people who knew the area who spoke English because these Moros didn't speak Spanish; they didn't speak English either. They spoke their own language. So, he put me onto a man that was a Catholic priest, a British fellow who had been there for his whole life. So, I went around for two days talking to people and most of them could only say, "hello Joe", which they had learned after WWII. But, there were enough who could, so I could go back and say Jolo will go for Mag Say Say. So, that was a very interesting period. You see I'm rushing this, but you don't mind that do you?

Q: No, that's fine.

DONOVAN: Is this alright?

Q: It's fine because I think the primary interest is in the years as Ambassador.

DONOVAN: Well, anyway then I was assigned to Milano as Economic Officer. The "studbook" as we call the Biographic Register had a little item in there that I taught economics in high school, as well as history. So, somebody's eye lighted on that and I became an economics officer. Well, the level of economics that I taught was, what's the difference between goods and services? What's the law of diminishing returns? And, for that I used an example, the second ice cream cone doesn't taste as good as the first. So, you can see the level. And, I was kind of scared stiff to go to Milano as Economic Officer and I protested to the Department of Commerce after I had read the prime problem was convertibility of currency. I said, I don't know anything about that. I'm not competent to be an Economic Officer in a city of the importance of Milano. So they said, don't worry, there's a Treasury Attach# down in the Embassy in Rome who will take care of all those things. So, it ended up that what I did mostly was commercial work, very dull. That was my least favorite post.

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So, then I was lucky again. I got an assignment for a year as a Foreign Service Institute Fellow to Harvard, graduate school, which was then the Graduate School of Public Administration, and is now the JFK School of Government and has been for some years. So, I went home to Boston and spent a year there and worked a little extra hard and managed to get an MPA degree which was quite something in those days because Harvard had not yet acquired Radcliffe and there were no women, except in the School of Education which was always more or less co-educational at Harvard, were very few women in any other disciplines. So, I did that and I went back to the Department to the Research and Intelligence. Is that what it is still called?

Q: INR, yes.

DONOVAN: INR and from there I went to the Senior Seminar on Foreign Policy for a year. While I was there I had been reading about the goings on in the English-speaking Caribbean where they were trying to get a federation going of Jamaica and Trinidad and eight small islands. And, they had already established the federation. It was headquartered in Trinidad, but they weren't moving very fast. So I wrote a little paper on this when I had to write a paper on something and this seemed like an easy one. And, then I was assigned in 1960 as Principal Officer and Consul to Barbados and the eight other islands.

Q: Was that on the basis of the paper written?

DONOVAN: I think that's where somebody got the idea.

Q: Because you had yet no experience in the Caribbean area.

DONOVAN: None whatsoever. I had never even been there. So, it was a strange situation really. The post was Barbados, an independent reporting post. No embassy over it anywhere. That sounds like a really picayune place to send someone that just spent a year making policy in the Senior Seminar. So, it included the so-called Windward and Leeward Islands for Consular Affairs, as well as everything else. That meant Antigua in the north

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and St. Kitts, Nevas, Anguilla, Dominica. Going southward it meant Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and I was supposed to go from one place to the other and see how things were going. Well, it so happened that the person who had been there before me had been a civilian in the Army as a JAG lawyer at the Nuremberg trials and he didn't know anything about being a Foreign Service Officer or a Consul either, but he spent his whole time on visa matters. And it was the smallest place that you can imagine. There were four local employees, all white Barbadians and two Vice Consuls, who got there just a couple of days before I did, and me. That was it. There was no American secretary, there was no code room. When they sent us coded messages, they came on what was called a one-time pad. Do you remember that?

Q: Yes.

DONOVAN: One of the two Vice Consuls had to sit up all night and pour over this one-time pad. And it turned out it usually had nothing to do with us anyway.

Q: *What was the main mission of the Consulate General?*

DONOVAN: It was a Consulate then, by the way. It wasn't even a Consulate General. It changed in a couple of years. It had been to refuse visas, really. And, this poor man used to spend two days a week driving his car out to the airport to get all the other messages that weren't sent by code. He had not written a political report in a year. He'd written no biographical reports. So, I was sent down there really as Principal Officer and Political Officer and the two Vice Consuls continued to do the visa work. I've always been somewhat annoyed that so many of those poor people who were legitimate tourists had to be refused on the assumption that they didn't have a good enough job to come back to and they probably never would. Well, some of them never would, but when I think how easy it is now for hundreds of people from hundreds of places just to walk in and have no problem whatsoever. And, these were awfully nice people, of course the island was 97%

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black. They said it was less than that but that was because they counted the mixed people as white in their census taking.

I got to know, very well, all the officers of the government who were all black except the Governor General who was the Queen's representative, as you know. When I started off, nobody knew anything about these other islands. Nobody had written any books about them. The whole thing was under the jurisdiction of what I called EUR, in the department the Bureau of European Affairs and they were all hitched on as sort of an appendage to the Great Britain desk officer most of whom didn't give them too much attention. So, I started off on my peregrinations in the Leeward Islands transport planes, the biggest one of which carried 14 passengers. Well, anyhow there were all kinds of these Chief Ministers as they were called. Half of them had never been beyond the third grade. The Islands were colonies then.

Q: How was your relationship with the Governor General?

DONOVAN: It was fine because he was a very nice guy. But he wasn't calling the shots really. It was the Prime Minister, the Premier as it was then. So, I got to know all those black fellows very well on the other islands and on Barbados too. And, I did a lot of things that had never been done before. The four white girls that worked there, (the man that was there before me had told me, I met him once in Washington before I went down, he said, they're white because all the banks have white employees and the prestige of the Consulate demands that they be white employees, too). Well, the population is 97% black so the first administrative, managerial thing that I did was, as these girls got married (they were all about 21-22 and attractive) and they left, I had interviews and replaced everyone of them with a black girl. There was a fascinating guy who was the Mayor of Bridgetown, which is the capital of Barbados, and when I left he gave a speech and said, the day that I changed the color of the Consulate was the day that he knew I was going to be all right. Because there was very little socializing between the white people, who were mostly businessmen, bankers, bread factories, and things like that and the blacks. The

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whites down there were living in the 1850s, I guess, they considered that the blacks were somewhat inferior. But the blacks said to each other, this has to be changed.

The other big reason why I was sent there was that there was a thing called the Federation of the West Indies formed in 1958 which included Jamaica and Trinidad, as well as my eight islands. It was headquartered in Port of Spain and Grantley Adams who had been the Premier of Barbados had taken on the job to head up that and Princess Margaret, had come down to dedicate it. It opened in 1958 and they established a little thing called a USOM which was an aid mission to see if they could do something about loans and guarantees. It was to become independent in 1962.

Jamaica, which figured out that in the long run being the biggest and most prosperous island, it would be paying the most of the bills, decided to opt of the Federation of the West Indies. There were ten islands in that and a little while later my boys ran over to Trinidad expecting Williams to say, we'll get along with nine.

Then much to the surprise and horror of the other islands, the Premier of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams said, no, in this case one from ten leaves zero and I'm not going to stay in this Federation either. Trinidad's going to become independent. My boys were shocked and hurt and humiliated. And the way he did it too, he published it in his newspaper that this is what he was going to do, while they were sitting in the hotel room waiting for the meeting.

So, they then and there decided to form a thing called the Eastern Caribbean Federation which would be my eight islands. Well, the Department which had favored the Federation of the West Indies which would have been the best solution for all of them had it worked, decided they weren't going to support, any longer, an emasculated organization of small islands that would never be viable on their own. The Department, over British protests, said they were closing up their mission in Port of Spain. There wasn't any Federation for it to be a mission to, and closing out this one little they had was a loan and guarantee

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program for small businesses and farmers. They were closing that out too and that they told the British the best thing now is for you to keep all these islands. Keep them as colonies, it will be best for our security and defense and everything else. But the British had no intention of keeping them. They wanted to get rid of them.

Q: What was your position? You were still there?

DONOVAN: I was still there. I was in the middle of all this.

Q: What position did you take?

DONOVAN: My position was that we should have supported the new Federation because it was better than each little island going independent on its own. It was then under the jurisdiction of EUR and Jamaica became independent in 1962 and Trinidad shortly thereafter. Then Barbados said it was going to. Oh, they had a lot of big fights in this Eastern Caribbean Federation as they had meetings here and there and it looked as though the whole thing just wasn't going to work. So, Barbados said it would become independent, either within or without a Federation. There was a young man named Erol Barrow who won the election on the platform on the independence. So, Barbados did become independent in 1966.

In 1965, having been there five years and in the middle of everything and very, very friendly with all the black leaders, there wasn't a one of them who didn't know me and like me. Every time they came to Barbados for some meetings, I had a dinner party for them. They didn't bring their wives but picked up another girl somewhere and called her my "comfort". I remember the great big Premier of Antigua, Bird, only came half an hour before the dinner. I said how nice, you're a little early, nobody else has come yet but they'll be coming along. He said, I just really came over now to ask you if I could bring my "comfort". Well that was the first time I had heard that word, you know, and I stepped back a couple of steps and said, I beg your pardon and he said yes. I said, well surely you can do that, I said, I'll have to do a little bit of table rearranging around here, but I can

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do that. He said, well I might as well go and get her now then because she's sitting out in the car. Every time I would go to these islands they would all say to me, do we have to do, have a communist revolution to get any attention from the United States? I said it begins to look that way doesn't it? Just at that time, it was 1965, EUR switched its responsibilities for these islands to ARA. ARA was all concerned with the Dominican Republic at that time and there was no one in ARA either who cared much about these islands in spite of my wonderfully prepared political and economic assessments every year as to what was going to happen if they didn't do thus and so. So I was to be assigned somewhere else. I left there in 1965, my first departure.

Q: Before you go on to that, what about was there any special reaction or affect on the Cuban missile crisis when you were in Barbados?

DONOVAN: No. We also had a little outfit there in Barbados which was theoretically under my command called the US Naval Facility "Oceanographic Research Station". There was a strong belief among the leaders of all the islands that anything that was sent out from Cape Canaveral would drop into the ocean on top of them. So I studied up on the principles of the ballistic missile trajectory and said how it couldn't possibly stop in the middle and drop. It would have to keep on its trajectory until it was going where it was going. They didn't believe that either. So then I arranged with the Department of Defense and the officials at Cape Canaveral to take all the leaders up on a trip there. So we met at various places and all of my boys got on the plane with me. I was always the only woman in any of these things, you know. Up we went and we were given the red carpet treatment at Cape Canaveral and then taken to the lift-off of a silo missile. They were given all kinds of briefings about how safe they were. So, they began to think maybe they wouldn't worry about that.

But there was little or no reaction, to your original question, to the Cuban missile crisis itself. They didn't pay much attention to that.

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When I got back to ARA, I thought, oh, before I go anywhere I'm going up and tell these people what they're doing wrong, what they should do instead, and how somebody should read my messages. (They had lost the last two political and economic assessments somewhere between EUR and ARA). There were still a lot of people in ARA who thought these islands spoke Spanish down there. So I made an appointment with the Assistant Secretary of State for ARA.

Q: Who was that?

DONOVAN: It was Bob Sayre then. Do you know him?

Q: I don't know him personally, no.

DONOVAN: He was a very nice guy. A man of few words. He never said very much but he listened and that's more than a lot of people do. So, I went up and I think I talked for half an hour about these islands and their leaders and what was going to happen to them. There was also a black power movement going on in Trinidad with a few repercussions in Barbados and more in Antigua.

So he said, where are you going? I said, I don't have another assignment yet. He said, well you're not going anywhere. He said, I'm going to divide the Office of Caribbean Affairs and create a new section called Commonwealth Caribbean and you're in charge. See what you can do. So that's how I got to stay there for several years.

All kinds of things were happening. Barbados' independence was coming to fruition. I went down with Chief Justice Warren to the ceremony in November 1966. They appointed an Ambassador to Barbados, a political Ambassador, who was not a success. That's all I care to say about that one. Early in 1969 I was one of six women in Washington who won the Federal Women's Award. At that time, Elliot Richardson had come over to be Acting

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Secretary of State. U. Alexis Johnson was his Deputy and Assistant Secretary of State. Elliot Richardson came over to do the awards presentation for me at the Statler Hotel.

Q: Had you known him before?

DONOVAN: He was from Massachusetts and that was the only connection that we had. But I gave a pretty good speech that night, a short one. And he got to know me. And then he asked me a couple of times to come and tell him about a little island called Anguilla which was part of St. Kitts. St. Kitts-Nevis, Anguilla, which had decided to secede from St. Kitts. St. Kitts had sent over some policemen, no armies of course, to stop them and there was a big fuss. London bobbies were sent too. There are a lot of Anguillans in the United States, mostly in New Jersey, who were calling their Congressmen about this terrible affair. So I had to go and brief some Congressmen and brief Elliot Richardson on what the hell was Anguilla and what was this all about. Nobody else knew to tell you the honest truth. So that brought me to the attention of more senior persons than had not known me before. I guess the Department submitted my name with others as the next Ambassador to Barbados and Special Representative of the United States of America to all the other islands that had not yet got independence. You couldn't be Ambassador to them because they weren't independent, but it amounted to the same thing.

Q: That was the beginning of the Nixon Administration, right?

DONOVAN: Yes. Elliot Richardson was an outstanding Republican. Alex Johnson stopped me in the corridor one day and said, Eileen don't get excited about the Barbados possibility because no one is going to appoint anybody that the Department of State recommends. It'll be a political appointment made by the White House. I said, I'm not excited about it, I'm just grateful that the Department would include me among whoever else. So, one day they announced that it was I. I would go back again. Sayre and others said, well we thought it was about time we sent somebody there who knew something about it and you seem to

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be the only one. He didn't say exactly that. I just made that up right now, but he did say someone who knew something about the area. So, off I went again.

Q: Did this please you, after all the other experience you'd had, to concentrate so long and stay in a relative small place?

DONOVAN: It did at the time because I could see that although it was small, it was very important and that it would be very important to the United States Government in the future. Cuba was looking right over the shoulders of Grenada. They were sending in advisers.

Grenada, by the way, became independent in 1973 and they had a really strange type named Eric Gairy who had been the chief Grenada politician for years. So, he was then the Prime Minister of Grenada. So, I went over to the Independence celebrations since I was our representative to Grenada also. There was so much trouble and so much fighting and so much opposition to Gairy in Grenada that the Department decided not to risk the lives of important Congressmen and people to send a delegation. I was the only representative from the United States. Of course, I'd known Gairy for many years by then. He was a friend of mine too, although I thought he was a weirdo. Barbados appointed a Senator to represent it. He said, I'm not going over there and get shot. So, he didn't go either and Grenada's big plans to have the whole world, everybody except the Queen of England at their ceremony, didn't work out.

But the Department did say, however, we will assign a Security Officer from Caracas, Venezuela, to accompany you. I remember this dinner where the ceremony was to take place at midnight and they moved it farther away from the town, out on a hillside, and we had dinner at a hotel on the beach. I was at the head table on the right of Mr. Gairy. There were no windows or screens or anything, just the waves on the beach at our backs. Of course, I couldn't say that the officer from Venezuela was a security guard, so he couldn't sit at the head table. So, he sat somewhere down in the back of the room where

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he wouldn't have been any help anyway. I thought in just about ten minutes now there's going to be a rat-a-tat-tat. People are going to come up from the beach with machine guns and they are going to decimate this whole head table. I thought, it's been fun anyway. Then the lights went out in the hotel. Everything was going wrong, but they didn't attack. Mr. Gairy said, now you all can see just as well by staying right here and you can watch the fireworks on the hillside. Well, of course, we couldn't see a thing but it didn't matter.

So, then the British accused Gary of a crime that I've never heard of before or since. It's called "squandermania". It just meant throwing money to the winds that wasn't his and keeping some of it. Then there was a change of government in Grenada and a fellow named Bishop, who was the head of a movement called the "New Jewel Movement", who were out and out communists but they didn't admit it, took control of the government. I never knew him because I left there in 1974, the next year.

But I did know what was going to happen in Grenada. I remember sending it in an airgram. My mother, who lived with me there, was an artist. I'd been telling her about Cuba and Grenada and she drew for me a black and white pencil sketch of Cuba looking over the island of Grenada. They were helping it build a great big airstrip. It needed an airstrip, heavens knows. Instead of that awful ride over the hills on down to St. George's. The road was all potholed. This airport was 10,000 ft and much, much bigger than Grenada's potential tourism. My mother drew this picture of Cuba and then she drew a picture of the big brown Russian bear over the heads of Cuba and Grenada and I sent that in with airgram from Barbados. I think it was probably the only airgram that was decorated with a cartoon as an enclosure. I thought, somebody will pay attention to this. Nobody did. Anyway, what did I do after that? I retired.

Q: Why did you retire?

DONOVAN: I retired because I had had a terribly bad fall. I had broken every vertebrae in my back and I couldn't stand up straight. I was leaning over from the waist and I thought,

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how can I get in one of those little planes and go over to these islands and go over those rough roads. I said, I just can't do my job anymore. Although I wasn't quite 60, I decided to retire. That pleased the Department no end, especially the man that was Acting as Director General of the Foreign Service, because they were trying to get people out. You know how they have these periods?

Q: Yes, they're in one now too.

DONOVAN: Are they trying to get people out or are the people wanting to go out?

Q: They're really pushing people out, particularly even earlier Class 1, those who didn't make it over the threshold into the Senior Foreign Service. Who was this Director General at that time? Was it Palmer, who has been Assistant Secretary of Africa.

DONOVAN: No.

Q: How big, when you went to Barbados, how big had the office gotten by now, when it became an Embassy?

DONOVAN: Now it's huge. When I was there, as I told you when I first went, it was tiny.

Q: When it was still a Consulate?

DONOVAN: Yes, then it became a Consulate General a few years later, but it still didn't have any code room which it got when it became a Consulate General. It had no Marine Guards and the Prime Minister of Barbados said we didn't need any; nobody was going to shoot us. I really didn't think we needed any either. It had no AID Mission, all of that. After the Grenada affair, then the Department really got excited about the whole area and then they gave a little, either an Embassy or a branch of our Embassy, to Antigua, which Chief Minister Bird had been asking me for years and there was no chance of any such

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thing. Then they established an Embassy in Grenada, and then established a Regional AID Mission which is headquartered in Barbados.

Q: But when you were Ambassador in Barbados, what other agencies were represented?

DONOVAN: Toward the end they had a little one-man USIS office. They also had a whole bunch of Peace Corps people. That's a whole other long story. Barbados said it didn't want any Peace Corps and I thought, well you don't need it as much as the other islands. Some of the other islands said they didn't want it either. So, quite early in the game they sent a Peace Corps Mission to St. Lucia. Sargent Shriver, who was head of it, and his wife, the Kennedy girl, Eunice I guess, came down to inspect the Peace Corps Mission in St. Lucia. I went over for that. Then Barbados decided it wanted a Peace Corps, but Barrow didn't tell me. He was supposed to be my friend, and he was, but I guess he didn't want to tell me that he now wanted a Peace Corps. So, he went up on a visit to Washington and went to Peace Corps Headquarters and they said, sure they'd send him one. So, he came back and announced it in the press the next day. Then it turned out that the person who told him that didn't have the authority to do so and they canceled it out. Well, he was furious. It left him looking pretty silly, you know. A year or so later they got a Peace Corps group. We had 280 volunteers in all the islands.

Q: Did he blame you?

DONOVAN: No. I don't think he blamed me.

Q: Because he hadn't told you?

DONOVAN: No. I don't think so, I don't think so.

Q: Did you have any agency, CIA, in the Embassy?

DONOVAN: No.

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Q: So you didn't have any of the traditional bureaucratic rivalries in your Embassy, I gather? Because you didn't have enough other agencies represented?

DONOVAN: We had, of course, from the beginning, the US Naval Facility. No, not while I was there. There has been a succession of political Ambassadors. There was a career man who was there for a few months, but he wanted an assignment in Latin America and he had a Spanish name so he got it. But, some of the others were pretty sorry specimens. But one of them had enough clout in the White House to get a military attaché complete with plane assigned to Barbados. So, that was the end of the Leeward Island Air Transport. Anytime that Ambassador wanted to go to any of the other islands, which wasn't very often, he had a plane. And, of course, the Consulate people could go in his plane to the other islands to issue visas or to refuse them as the case may be. But that was after I had left.

Q: From a couple of things that you've said, I got the impression that you didn't feel, even as Ambassador, that your views and your assessments, your predictions, were being given much consideration in Washington. Was this a frustration?

DONOVAN: That was true, but I didn't know it then. One of the mistakes I made was in not giving myself more clout in Washington. I never called them on the telephone to ask them for anything. I took them at their word when they said only a flash telegram will go to the Secretary of State, you know, a real emergency. When I think back, I realize that I didn't throw my weight around enough as far as Washington was concerned. After I wrote those masterpieces of polished prose that were my political and economic assessments for a year, and I spent hours on them as you can well imagine, I should have gotten myself on a commercial flight and gone up to Washington and said, hey, what about this? What are you going to do? What do you think? In that respect, I didn't realize that I could have had more clout. I didn't realize that I was not just a poor forgotten orphan down there. It was a little better after I became Ambassador. Those first years when you imagine—

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no American Secretary. I finally got someone sent down under the title of Administrative Specialist because they said we weren't big enough for an Administrative Officer.

Q: Did you ever learn to type?

DONOVAN: No. I refused to do that. So I finally got a fine girl sent down as Administrative Specialist and then she was the one who undid all the telegrams and would get a call from the naval facility in the middle of the night saying they had something that was urgent for us. Those first months or year, we didn't even have a desk for an American Secretary and when she first came down we had an orange crate standing on end with a piece of green/beige blotting paper on the top of it. Now, of course, I should have gone out to the best furniture store in town and ordered a secretary's desk and chair and billed the Department, but there wasn't any money in our budget for that. There wasn't any money for anything.

Q: Speaking of influence in Washington, you must, given the length of time you were in the service, you must have had a lot of contacts in the Department in Washington, too, that if you had wanted to throw your weight around more you knew people to do it with.

DONOVAN: Yes, I think I did. But, I didn't do that. As I say, it was a mistake. We all make them I suppose.

Q: I think it's a rather common mistake among Ambassadors. They don't realize how much clout they have if they really use it.

DONOVAN: I remember we had a visit from the redoubtable Congressman Rooney during that first year, who came down with his nanny, Bill Crockett. Do you remember those days? Anyway, Congressman Rooney said, I have four things to say to you. One, I don't see why we should have any office here anyway. Two, I don't see why there should be a woman in charge of it if we do. Three, you asked for an American secretary. What do you want an American secretary for? And, four, who paid for these fish? We were up at my house where there was a little pool about a diameter of six feet and there were little fishes

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in it. There were a few little dark brown fish that had been swimming there ever since the day I arrived. I don't know what they were—minnow or what. Nobody ever fed them or anything. He said, who brought these. He said, don't you know the Department doesn't pay for goldfish. I said, one, they're not goldfish and, two, they just.... He said, how did they get here? I said, I guess they came by spontaneous combustion long before I got here. He looked at me kind of oddly and he said, well, don't be like the wife of the Ambassador in London who was charging the Department for the goldfish around the house. He said, you know what she did? I said, no. He said, she pulled all the goldfish out and made them into manure and charged the Department for the manure.

Q: Did you get many congressional visitors?

DONOVAN: Yes, quite a few.

Q: Did you have to take care of them?

DONOVAN: Oh, yes. Most of them were friendly enough though. You know, I must have had a way with them. It sounds conceited, but even grouchy old Rooney listened to me when I told him about the Federation of the West Indies that was in the process of forming over in Port of Spain. I gave him my spiel about the importance of the area, which I felt was true. And, he paid a little more attention and eventually, as I say, it was after he left that I got this Administrative Assistant who was an American secretary really, you know. Those were the days. I think if I have had any success, and I guess I have when you look back at it, one of the reasons is because you like people and know how to deal with them. You don't look down at anybody and you're not afraid of anyone either, without being aggressive, you know.

I remember my first inspection as being in charge of a post was in Milano where the former Consul General, a wonderful guy named Paul Tenney, did you ever know him, had gone back to work in the Executive department of EUR. So, I was the Economic Officer but I was also in charge, Acting Consul General for almost a year before they sent someone

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up. So, we had an inspection. That also was a small post with very few amenities. So, this guy walked in and his name was Bernard Gufler. They used to nickname him "old gruff Guff". He had some things to say to me, too, right at the beginning. He said, it's only fair to tell you that I don't approve of a woman in this kind of a job in this city. And I said, well I'm sorry about that.

I had given him the Consul General's office to sit in and I had moved back to a small office that was the Economic Officer's office that I had held before I moved into the big office. But his visit was a day ahead of schedule so he sat down at the desk and he opened the drawer. I had never used the inside of that desk. I had always just used the top for my in and out stuff. There were a bunch of cards wrapped in an elastic band, calling cards, and he said, what are those? I said, those belong to Paul Tenney, the previous Consul General. He said, how long has he been gone? I said, oh about three months. He said, well you don't need these anymore and he picked them up and threw them in the wastebasket. And I said, well as a matter of fact I do need them. I said, all of his business contacts are on there and I said, that's a very valuable bunch of little cards. It's true I haven't used them yet but I'm sure I will. I went over to the wastebasket and picked them out and said, do you mind if I take these into my own office and he just glared at me.

And, he said, look at all this dust in here in this drawer. You know where they have little pieces of wood with round holes to hold paper clips and things? It's standard in any desk. He picked that out and underneath there sure was dust. I had never opened the drawer. Well, if he'd given me another day I would have sent someone in to wash out the inside of the desk if I'd thought of it—which I probably wouldn't have. So, he left a little early that day so my secretary and I rushed up and took out the wooden things and scrubbed them all off and scrubbed the inside of the drawer and then went in early the next morning and put them back. He came walking down the corridor to where I was sitting with these two pieces of wood in his hand. He said, who cleaned these up. I said, well I think some leprechauns must have come in the middle of the night. Well he thought that was funny and he burst into this great loud laugh you could hear all over the office. Well,

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I think that something changed there you see. He was an Irishmen and I think the idea of Leprechauns coming in ...

So then everything went to hell that week. We were having the American traveling group which was doing "Oklahoma" come to Milano. I was having a little dinner party for him and his wife, who was a very nice lady, and a couple of others and then we were going to the theater for "Oklahoma". But, during that day, the husband of the lead girl called me and said his wife couldn't move her legs. She was paralyzed and he thought she had polio. There wasn't any polio in Milano or anywhere else in Italy that I knew of. I said, we'll get a doctor. There's a woman doctor a little farther north here who specialized in polio. Well, they had a very excitable man who was the director of this company. Talk about temperament! When he called me on the phone I was sitting with Gufler. He said, I want an American doctor. I don't want any Italian doctor. I said, there aren't any here. There's a medical doctor in our Rome Embassy. I said, I could call him and ask his advice, which I thereupon did. He said, I can't come up there. That woman doctor knows more about these things than I do anyway. Then he called me again and wanted me to come down to where they were rehearsing. So, I excused myself from Mr. Gufler and went down with a new Administrative Officer who had just come in the day before, Sam Gammon, you knew Sam, with his little notebook writing down notes of whatever the inspector said. So, by that time the whole cast was in a state of hysteria. The director said, I want you to tell me whether we should put the show on tonight. I said, well really that's up to you. You're the director. I said, there's an old slogan, "the show must go on". But, if you want to, cancel it. He said, I'm not going to cancel it, you're going to cancel it. It was not canceled. I did get the doctor from whatever place it was, almost up to Switzerland.

Then at the dinner party I had two little ceramic coffee pots from Japan, one of which I didn't use because it had had a broken handle and it had been glued on. So, it was getting later and later and I said, we're going to really have to go to get down to that theater on time. I asked the date I had, a single man up there that I used to go out with, if he'd pour the coffee and he picked up the wrong pot and he held it over the cup of Mrs. Gufler and,

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of course, the handle came off and the coffee spilled all over the table and some over the front of her white satin long dress. And I said to myself, well there goes the inspection, right there. Well, it really spattered. It went all over the tablecloth but it spattered on her dress. We got out kleenex and everything else and she said, "I don't think it will be all that noticeable." She was a very nice lady. So, off we went to the theater. Well, by that time word had gotten out in this crazy cast that the leading lady was not there because maybe she had polio. And, there was a sense of panic all around the theater. Then this director came to me and said, you'll have to explain to this audience what's the matter. My Italian was not very good, but I thought that I probably should do that. So, I went up and in my stumbling Italian—Guff didn't speak Italian either for which I was very glad—I explained that there had been an illness but that there was no need for any panic and that this wonderful play would go on just as usual and all those that were milling around the lobby to come back to their seats. We got through that somehow.

The next morning the doctor came down and the next afternoon the girl died. From polio. She said she must have gotten it in Naples where they were before. Well, there were no more shows. I think there was only one scheduled anyway and then there were all kinds of, you know, I won't describe it to you. Then they said they would have a funeral Mass, a memorial Mass on Saturday. I would have to represent Ambassador Luce who couldn't come up from Rome.

That was the day the inspector was to leave. So, we had planned, half a dozen of the Embassy staff, to go over to Verona to see the outdoor performance of Aida, which is so terrific over there. So, he came in and said I'll be gone before noontime. He was driving his own car. And he said, I want to tell you something. No man could have handled this week any better than you did with all the other things that were going on (really the usual things). He said, I'm going to give you top rating—which was a four, they went one to four—and he said, I'm also going to tell you that I have never done this before in my life. He said, I've given the second top rating. Well, after that I got promoted after a long wait, after

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that report of his. Now you see that was just by luck that he was there and that he changed his mind and that leprechauns came into the act at the beginning.

Q: Summing up Ambassador Donovan, could you say something about what was your most satisfying experience in your Foreign Service Career and then maybe the most frustrating?

DONOVAN: Well, I suppose the years that I spent in the Commonwealth Caribbean, watching this marvelous development toward independence and watching the people grow and getting to know them. I knew them so very well. I knew them better than, except for the Japanese I think, I knew them better than I had anywhere else. Of course, the Islands are so beautiful also. For anyone who loves to swim and walk along the beach it's a great place to be. But career-wise, I think, of course I was there for such a long time, it all adds up to five years one time, five years another time and then in the middle working on the area, although not in it.

Frustrating, I don't know. By the way, the Japan experience, which was before the Foreign Service, was also extremely rewarding. We did a lot of things over there and I did some things myself that I'm fairly proud of. That was very satisfying. I don't know that I found any place really frustrating. I liked Milano the least, but that was because I was doing something I didn't much care for, being an Economic/Commercial Officer in a city that should have the reputation that London does for its fogs. Day after day, except in mid-summer, the fog wouldn't lift until ten o'clock in the morning and then it would come back again at four. Of course, I enjoyed going to La Scala, especially when I got invited by somebody who bought the tickets. Milan was the least enjoyable, I think, although I don't say it was frustrating. I don't think I could say any place that I've been was frustrating. Sorry about that.

Q: Let me ask you an historical footnote kind of question on Hiroshima. What was the date that you went there?

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DONOVAN: It was early November 1946.

Q: 1946, so it was just a little over a year after the bomb. What were the effects of the Atomic Bomb that were still in evidence then?

DONOVAN: Everything was still in evidence. The city was nothing but a bunch of shambles. I went down with a male officer. I was still in the Army then, a Captain. He was concerned with adult education and I was concerned with just education. We were met by the officials of the city in these beat-up charcoal-fueled old cars. These officials introduced themselves, they were all men. They were the Chief of police and the Mayor and head of the Department of Education, all these miscellaneous officials. They apologized very deeply and said, sorry we have no place to meet, which was pretty obvious because there was nothing but debris all around. But, they said there's a little island out here in the Inland Sea where there is a nice little temple and we'll go out there. We had to take a ferry boat to get over. So, we went out, I guess it was about three o'clock when we got out there. We sat down and had the usual refreshment consisting of little "mikan", you know, tangerines, and tea and sake which I didn't drink. They were drinking sake and beer and that's a terrible combination. Then I asked a few questions like, is your family still here? The man would say no, my wife and three children were killed by the bomb, ha ha ha ha. It turned out that almost all of them had lost their families and there they were being so hospitable out on this little island where nobody in the world knew where we were. I said, well when are we going to get to the meeting? When are we going to start? They said, oh, we're not going to do that today. We're going over to the city of Kure tomorrow and have the meeting over there in a building.

They said, you're going to stay here all night. By that time it was five o'clock and it was getting dark, quite dark and night had fallen. It was in November. I said, oh no, we can't stay here. We had neglected, because John had missed an earlier train to stop in Kure where they had a British installation. We were supposed to stop and check in with the British. Otherwise, it was all American around Japan but that was British. So they didn't

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know where we were and I said, well we really have to go back tonight. And they said oh no, no, no and they all laughed again. They said, we know what you're thinking but we have separate rooms for you and Captain Nelson. That wasn't what I was thinking about that time. Captain Nelson was enjoying himself, by the way. I said, no we'll have to go back right now. They said, no we can't. The ferry stopped running at five o'clock. I said, well there must be another boat. I said, we really have to get to Kure tonight. Otherwise, the British would set out a search party for us. They probably have already called GHQ Tokyo and said, where are these characters, and Tokyo wouldn't know. So, they found a little boat. It was an outboard motor about 12-feet long and they sat John and me on the center of the seat, and they all stood up. The boat was rocking. The darkness was black and we went out about 500 yards or more and I said, John this is going to be a Japanese revenge party. I said, no one knows where we are. These guys are now going to take revenge on us for the loss of their families. I said, is there a lose board down on the floor there? I said, you might as well make an effort to defend us but we're going to be in that water in a very short time. Take it from me, this is our last night on earth. Well, he became serious very quickly. Then the laughing stopped and there was deep silence. And I thought, it's coming John, and then suddenly the motor started up again and off we went across the bay or whatever it is to the railroad station. We bade them all farewell and said we'd see them in Kure in the morning. We got in about ten o'clock at night to a very, very angry British officer (for which I didn't blame him a bit).

So, the next morning the whole group that was in Hiroshima and a whole bunch of others—I don't know who they were—all assembled to hear what the United States Government was going to do rebuilding schools and we had a very nice meeting. We left at the end of the day and they gave me a little cheap wooden tray as a parting gift. You know they always give gifts. You could buy one in any store in Tokyo for about \$3 US then but that didn't matter. They had chiseled in the back of it, "To Captain Donovan, The First Western Woman In Hiroshima Since The End Of The War" and I treasure that. There it is over there.

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Q: The one on the stand?

DONOVAN: Yes. Now that was an interesting two days, wasn't it?

Q: Was there any signs on the people of the bomb, radiation, burns?

DONOVAN: No. Well we didn't see anyone, you see, except those people that met us.

Q: You didn't see that many people?

DONOVAN: No. We didn't see anybody really. We got in these little cars and went out to the place where we got on the ferry boat. But that was before the Foreign Service.

Q: I know you've been very brief, about all these interesting experiences. Is there anything we might not have covered that you would like to add? I already know of one of the things you'd have done differently. You'd have thrown your weight around as an Ambassador. Are there any other things you'd have done differently in your career?

DONOVAN: No. I might have latched on to a nice tall interesting looking man who wasn't already married or engaged to someone else if one came along, but none did. In my day, many women did not date married or engaged men, and I was one of them.

Q: What year was it, too, that in the Foreign Service a woman officer could get married and not have to resign? It was pretty late.

DONOVAN: You know there wasn't any such rule, ever, in the Foreign Service regulations or anywhere else. It was just tradition.

Q: Is that right? Did you look it up at one time?

DONOVAN: Oh yes. I determined to find that, you know, when these examiners had said. well it's in the Foreign Service regulations. And, I said, what are those? But, there was a

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rule somewhere, not in the regulations, that you couldn't get married after you got in. Then you had to resign. You couldn't get in if you were married.

Q: That was in the regulations?

DONOVAN: No. I don't know where it was, but that was a rule that was changed in 1971. I do know that because I read it somewhere recently. That's when they had all these what they called "Tandem", husband and wife going to the same post if possible, and annoying all of the others who thought they should have had the job.

Q: They get a lot of the bigger, and sometimes better posts because you need a big post because they can't work for each other and those things. But, I think it's good. It's the wave of the future really.

DONOVAN: Oh yes.

End of interview