



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Judy and Mike Canning

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Interviewer: Stephanie Deutsch

Transcriber: David MacKinnon

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

DEUTSCH: This is Stephanie Deutsch. I'm with Judy and Mike Canning at their house on Fifth Street and it is February 4, 2009. I'm going to start by asking you Judy and Mike each to tell me a little bit about where you are from and what brought you to Washington. Judy way don't you start.

J. CANNING: OK. I grew up in Evanston, Illinois. My father taught electrical engineering at Northwestern [University] and my mother was an ophthalmologist, so I grew up with a Mom who's a doctor which was sort of unusual in the 40s and 50s. It was a great place to grow up. I went Denison University in Ohio and majored in German. And because I was majoring in German of course my one goal was to get to Germany and live in Germany. So I applied for a scholarship, post graduate, studying in Germany and I got one that was given by the German government, and that is what brought Mike and me together, so I'll let him ...

DEUTSCH: Can I ask you few questions? So you lived in Evanston, Illinois?

J. CANNING: Yes.

DEUTSCH: Sort of a suburban environment or ...

J. CANNING: Yeah, it's the first suburb north of Chicago, so it's an old, old suburban kind of like Bethesda [Maryland]. It's a wonderful place to grow up and of course you think the whole world is like that until you move away and realize it isn't.

DEUTSCH: Yeah. And what got you interested in German?

J. CANNING: You know it's pure happenstance. I took German in high school because my mother knew German. She and also majored in German in college. And I only took it because ...

DEUTSCH: Was she of a German family?

J. CANNING: Her grandmother had come from Germany. And she loved her grandmother. She didn't really speak German at home. She learned it at school. I decided to take it because she could help me with it. That's the only reason why. Then when I got to college I continued taking German and I did well in it and my professor flattered me—talked me into majoring in German. So I thought I would become a high school teacher of German, and I never did.

DEUTSCH: And so where did you go in Germany on your ...?

J. CANNING: Well I chose to go to Berlin. The scholarship was from the German government. You could choose wherever you wanted to go, so to the Freie Universität in Berlin. But before

that I went to a—they call it Goethe Institute which of course it here in Washington. But they also have them for foreigners to study German in Germany. And I went to one in the foothills of the Alps south of Munich for two months. And then up to Berlin.

DEUTSCH: So you came to Washington first—or no, no, you went to ...

J. CANNING: No that was all pre-Washington, pre-Mike ...

DEUTSCH: So you're studying German in the foothills of the Alps. That sounds wonderful.

J. CANNING: Foothills of the Alps and then Berlin which just the most exciting ...

DEUTSCH: And what time was this?

J. CANNING: This was '63, '64, so it was the year after both of us graduated from college.

M. CANNING: Very soon after the wall [Berlin Wall] had been put up. So the tensions were still there.

DEUTSCH: And so you met in Berlin?

J. CANNING: We met on the ship on the way over.

DEUTSCH: How romantic!

J. CANNING: [laughs] Full of students on their way over to study in Germany.

DEUTSCH: What was the ship, do you remember?

J. CANNING: MS Berlin.

DEUTSCH: So it was a German ship?

J. CANNING: Uh huh.

DEUTSCH: And what were you Mike—pick up with your story.

M. CANNING: I was born and raised and spent my whole life till I was through college in Fargo, North Dakota, which is the biggest town in North Dakota, but it is not the capitol. In those days it was—when I was growing up—it was probably 30-35 thousand people. It's an agricultural state but we lived in the only town that was a town. It had no agricultural connections. I went through high school and college at the local state university, North Dakota State University, and graduated from there in mathematics. And the reason I ended up in the German connection was because to graduate in my arts and sciences category I had to have—I had to be competent in a foreign language. And I literally kind of picked out of a drum German as an option. I had no particular reason. And a German professor I had for three years in college

was kind to me and I thrived and he basically urged me to consider a scholarship opportunity in Germany which I hadn't thought of. I was wondering what I was going to do next. And in fact I ended up getting a German grant too after my application. A little bit different from Judy's but a similar pattern provided by the German government. It's like a German Fulbright program. Similar, but for a year's study in Germany after graduation.

DEUTSCH: What did your parents do, what kind of ...

M. CANNING: My dad worked for the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company for his whole working life. He was an Annapolis graduate [U.S. Naval Academy] here and then ended up—born and raised in [North] Dakota—but ended up coming back to Fargo with—married my mother in '31 and raised a family. She was a housewife. And we were four. I was the middle son of three. And had a benign, wonderful upbringing in the Midwest. We don't call it the West out there. It's the Midwest. But, and famous for its winters of course which we survived nicely.

DEUTSCH: Yes. Winter sports, did you do ...

M. CANNING: Oh sure, skating especially. But every sport, I was a big sports nut. But I was interested in a lot of things including the rest of the world. But I traveled nowhere. I had—when I graduated from college and I had never been anywhere but Minneapolis, Minnesota, and had had no travel at all. Judy had been ...

DEUTSCH: Wait a minute; just wait a minute [laughter from Judy]. You talk almost as fast as my daughter.

M. CANNING: Okay, sorry.

DEUTSCH: Lots of things including the rest of the world.

M. CANNING: Right, especially.

DEUTSCH: But you'd been nowhere but Minneapolis?

M. CANNING: Right. So the German prospect, and especially getting the scholarship, was a godsend. I didn't know how much but I thought, well this is going to be interesting and I'll try to do something different with it and maybe it will open my eyes; it would change my life completely.

DEUTSCH: Also you said that you had majored in math but you knew by the time you graduated you didn't want to continue—in math.

M. CANNING: Right. I was in math because I was good at it and I would naturally want to it. And I still enjoyed it but I realized its life and employment opportunities were very limited. And I had become by that time, as a young man, a dilettante. I was interested in three dozen other things. So math was in fact how I applied for the grant and basically that's what I was supposedly studying, but was kind of an excuse. And so I ended up in New York on August 23, 1963, and ended up with the same table with Judy Canning—Judy Jones at the time.

DEUTSCH: And the ship was full of students?

J. CANNING: It wasn't just a student ship. But there were lots of Americans going to Germany to study and German students who were returning home after studying in the States. So we had fun.

DEUTSCH: Oh it must have been so much fun.

J. CANNING: A lot of fun, a lot of learning, a lot of hanging out, a lot of ...

DEUTSCH: A lot of late night drinking

J. CANNING: A lot of joking humor. As someone said on board, having no clue that Mike and I were interested in each other, "Oh a lot of ship board romances that are going to fall apart as soon as we set foot on land."

M. CANNING: German soil

DEUTSCH: But yours did not.

J. CANNING: We said nothing.

M. CANNING: [laughs] We kept it to ourselves.

J. CANNING: We continued to see each other.

DEUTSCH: So you got to Berlin.

J. CANNING: Well we ...

M. CANNING: We were separated. I went to a—was assigned, selected and assigned, to a university in the southwest corner of German called—in the town called Tubingen, the University of Tubingen. And it's near Stuttgart. It's a famous—in German it's a famous university town. A little bit like the old Student Prince [operetta] stuff. And that's where I went to study mathematics. But Judy and I were keeping in touch and I realized that her life in Berlin

was far more interesting than mine and I made an application to switch at semester break to Berlin. And indeed they let me.

J. CANNING: For strictly academic reasons.

M. CANNING: For strictly academic reasons of course [laughter]. Actually the sponsor didn't care. They in fact encouraged people to go to Berlin because it was still a divided city and very tense. So the second semester I was in Berlin in the same section of town where Judy was. So we were students together at the time.

J. CANNING: Yeah, and I have to say it was living in Berlin that made us both realize how we loved big cities. Because neither of us—I mean I grew up like next to Chicago but we didn't go into Chicago that often frankly. If I did it was with my parents or with some friends to go to the movies, so I didn't take advantage of the cultural life of Chicago as a young person. But in Berlin we just—we went to the symphony, we went to the—three operas. Counting both sides of Berlin, there were three opera houses. We went to all of them.

DEUTSCH: Did you go to the east [East Berlin]?

J. CANNING: Yeah.

M. CANNING: Readily.

J. CANNING: Oh yeah, but you had to go through the checkpoints, Checkpoint Charlie and a couple—one or two other checkpoints. It was all very serious and they would look at you very grimly as you handed your American passport over but—yeah, we would go through to buy tickets and then go back to whatever event we bought tickets for.

J. CANNING: I guess it wasn't—the circulation wasn't easy the other way?

M. CANNING: No,

J. CANNING: They couldn't come out; East Germans could not do that but they had let us in.

M. CANNING: Well after the wall in fact Berliners from the West couldn't go to East Berlin.

J. CANNING: That's right, only foreigners.

M. CANNING: They were banned.

J. CANNING: Yeah, you had to have a foreign passport to cross.

M. CANNING: That was part of the problem. No easy—we had—you had—you couldn't spend the night. You had to go over and come back, but you could do it in a day.

DEUTSCH: So you loved Berlin?

J. CANNING: We loved it. We just took advantage of—uh, the museums, the art, wonderful parks. We just ...

M. CANNING: What we found, what Berlin provided too—the thinking about it, well although we weren't cognizant of it at the time, we realized how much we shared, which was almost everything. [JC laughs] We—our tastes were amazingly congruent; quite surprisingly so. Needless to say that's helped the marriage of some 40 years or so. [laughs]

J. CANNING: Yes it has.

DEUTSCH: So how long were you in Berlin?

M. CANNING: A little over a year. We came back ...

J. CANNING: We were in Germany a year.

M. CANNING: Yeah, we were in Germany, yeah that's right. And we came back on the same boat, the MS Berlin back in September of '64. And I, in the meantime, had—was interested in—well I should—a key thing here, but another thing that Berlin did was introduce me to the idea of the foreign service which I had never thought of before.

DEUTSCH: Did you encounter American foreign service people there or ...

M. CANNING: Not so much—well yes, but what I really encountered was institution called the America House which in other countries was called the American Center. It was the little bit of America with a library and program space and exhibits and so on that projected America to Germans. And there were lots of these around the country but I had discovered one in Tubingen and in Berlin. And I was fascinated by them. In fact I went to attend their programs all the time which were in English and German. And we went to films and other things. And I basically—the thought came to me, “Hey, this is something that really interests me. How can I find someone to get me this kind of job; pay me to live in foreign countries and learn foreign languages?” [SD laughs] And so I came back with the idea of applying for the Foreign Service which I did, I guess maybe just as soon as I got back I applied. But to help—well I had to get a job first. Pardon me; do you want to straighten out my chronology?

DEUTSCH: Go ahead.

M. CANNING: First of all I had to get a job and I was thinking of maybe it would be easier for me to get into the Service [Foreign Service] if I was in Washington. So how do I get a job in

Washington and I—my credential was mathematics—so I applied for and got a job as a mathematical statistician at Census Bureau out in Suitland. And so when I came home in September I had a job offer as a GS [U.S. Government General Schedule] employee to work as a statistician at the Census Bureau. And I had accepted it and came—was barely at home and came back here and got a bedroom in District Heights [Maryland] and lived there and basically got a ride with my old landlady to the office. In the meantime I was applying to the Foreign Service to switch. And then ...

J. CANNING: Let me catch up. So after I got—I decided I wanted to get a masters in German. So I decided to do it at Northwestern [University] and live at home. I moved back in with my parents and walked to school because we lived near the Northwestern campus. So I had started work on a masters in German. And then—we were planning to get married the next June. We had just begun to talk about wedding plans in June when Mike got a call from his draft board for a physical.

DEUTSCH: This was ...

J. CANNING: Yes, this was when the Vietnam War was beginning to heat up and you were already—you started working here in Suitland at the Census Bureau. And when you got that, was that October or November—may have been November?

M. CANNING: No it was the first notice. But you're mixing a couple of things up here.

J. CANNING: Okay.

M. CANNING: The first notice which I called her about was because I was single, I was available—this was 1964, perfect timetable to get snagged. And I basically urged that we get married because married people were not being taken at that time.

DEUTSCH: And you were planning to get married anyway.

M. CANNING: Right, so we rushed it up. You agreed.

J. CANNING: Well, you called and said, "Do you want to get married quickly?"

M. CANNING: Really fast.

J. CANNING: And by that time I kind of actually didn't care whether I got a masters in German. I sort of—back in the academic world it was okay, but it didn't kill me to—the idea of giving up my academic career.

M. CANNING: I felt terrible of course.

J. CANNING: Yeah. And so we decided to get married at Christmas time.

M. CANNING: It was the only time I had any leave.

J. CANNING: And my mother handwrote the invitations to our wedding. [laughs] And we got married the day after Christmas 1964.

M. CANNING: Because I had no vacation time.

J. CANNING: In Evanston, Illinois, in the chapel of the Congregational Church.

M. CANNING: We came back to our humble ...

J. CANNING: No honeymoon.

M. CANNING: No honeymoon at all. We came right back to Suitland and to our garden apartment and I started work.

DEUTSCH: And so this was the first time you'd been to Washington Judy?

J. CANNING: Yes.

DEUTSCH: Or did you go on the eighth grade trip?

J. CANNING: Oh, with my parents when I was little.

DEUTSCH: But basically ...

J. CANNING: Oh I was so excited about coming here. I was so excited and I remember the National Geographic that—when we were planning that fall—came out with a feature on Washington and they had a wonderful map that actually showed buildings on it.

M. CANNING: Downtown.

J. CANNING: We used that map for years ...

M. CANNING: Decades.

J. CANNING: ... getting around DC, that National Geographic map from the fall of '64.

M. CANNING: And while I landed in Suitland because that's where the job was, I didn't care about Suitland. I was on the bus. I had no car. But I was on the bus every weekend to come downtown to just do the tourist stuff which is what I did all the time. And we both did together after you came.

J. CANNING: After we were married, yeah. We would take the bus which would come in along Pennsylvania Avenue. So we go through Capitol Hill on our way downtown. In those days we would go to the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution, Constitution Hall] to see the symphony.

M. CANNING: Concerts.

J. CANNING: Or National Theater and of course just eat out. Movies; there were so many movie theaters downtown.

M. CANNING: Yeah, a lot.

J. CANNING: WPAS [Washington Performing Arts Society] was performing. Where did they present at Constitution Hall also? Yeah.

M. CANNING: Yeah. We went to Arena Stage too.

J. CANNING: So I have a vivid memory—winter, it wasn't that long because we eventually got a car—of walking from the DAR—winter—in high heels ...

M. CANNING: From 11th Street

J. CANNING: ... you know, in a short skirt; didn't wear pants to a concert in those days.
[laughs]

M. CANNING or DEUTSCH: No, no.

J. CANNING: So walking across the Ellipse from DAR, across the Ellipse in freezing weather over to 11th Street where we would stand waiting for the bus to Suitland, late at night [laughs], freezing.

M. CANNING: Midnight.

J. CANNING: You can do that when you are young. [Mike laughs]

M. CANNING: But we were—the draw to Washington was obvious even if we weren't quite cognizant about Capitol Hill but we had a sense of it.

J. CANNING: And then you had applied for other jobs.

M. CANNING: Right. When then the Foreign Service thing happened rather quickly. It doesn't happen this way anymore, but I'd applied maybe in September. I was given—I took the exam, the big all day exam I think I took in October or November. And by March I was already ready for an interview, and which is very fast turn around. But it did work in the sense that this

happened because I was in Washington and they had people that were ready to call you in. So I had my oral examination in March of '65 and was told immediately on the spot that I passed. And so it was a question of which class do you want to join. And they said I could join as soon as May and I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa I need to finish up my other job and could I join a later class," which is what happened.

J. CANNING: And so you ended up working at the Census Bureau for about a year total.

M. CANNING: About a year, total.

J. CANNING: Right. Wasn't that long.

M. CANNING: Yeah, I gave them that much. And then switched in—by August of '64 [ed: August '65]—I was in the Foreign Service Class. And Judy was—what were you doing at that time? You were volunteering downtown weren't you?

J. CANNING: Oh, well we had moved in. Well then ...

M. CANNING: Oh that's right.

J. CANNING: So when he changed jobs we wanted to live in town and we rented the downstairs of a tiny little house on G Street Southeast.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: It's still there right off of Sixth [Street Southeast]—the downstairs where I saw my first mouse ever in my life [laughter]. And maybe my first cockroach, I'm not sure.

DEUTSCH: And so you had just chosen the Hill because you'd passed through it on the bus and you ...

J. CANNING: You know we're trying to... I think we visited somebody who had moved here and liked it.

M. CANNING: Yes. A friend from work had moved from Maryland to DC and loved it. And I think we also stopped by to see his place on a weekend.

DEUTSCH: So you said G Street Southeast?

J. CANNING: Uh-huh.

M. CANNING: Yeah, between Fifth and Sixth [Streets].

J. CANNING: Uh-huh. And we had a little VW [Volkswagen] Bug by then. Remember there's a tremendous, heavy snowfall that winter; winter of '66 probably.

M. CANNING: Yup.

J. CANNING: Our little Bug was buried for two weeks and when it was unburied it started up like that [snaps fingers] you know, wonderful VWs.

M. CANNING: [something] snow drift.

J. CANNING: That was a big January ...

DEUTSCH: That's a commercial, isn't it?

J. CANNING: Oh.

M. CANNING: You said it.

J. CANNING: And there were still two movie theaters on the center block of Penn [Pennsylvania Avenue Southeast]. We went to both of them across the street from each other.

M. CANNING: Yeah, the Penn and the Capitol.

J. CANNING: Because there used to be more retail shops—women's clothing and men's clothing stores. Old fashioned retail...

M. CANNING: For our movie fix we usually went to the Circle Theater downtown on Pennsylvania [Avenue NW].

J. CANNING: And the big old theaters down there too.

M. CANNING: They were all around in those days.

J. CANNING: Disappeared, the Warner and others, yeah.

M. CANNING: Sure, so that was a big draw.

J. CANNING: But was our introduction to Capitol Hill; Sixty, fall of '65 through May of '66. Then we went overseas.

M. CANNING: I got my first assignment to—the training was ...

DEUTSCH: Let me just ask you about your foreign service. Had you chosen to specialize in USIA (United States Information Agency), or was an option then?

M. CANNING: Yes, yes it was. You were supposed to pick either the category, or the cone it's called, in which State Department area you wanted to serve, or USIA was an operation; a separate box. And I didn't—I had a sense of the State Department but I was much more interested in USIA because it sounded like more fun and it jibed with what I had seen in Germany; the idea of an outreach institution that talks about your country with other people. That

interested me far more. So I didn't want to be a State Department officer, so what I joined at the time was an independent agency, although I was in the Foreign Service. We were all Foreign Service Officers, same ...

DEUTSCH: So what was your first job; your first post?

M. CANNING: After we had language training, which we had for Spanish, we went to Nicaragua. That's the place I was assigned. And my first year was—I was a trainee, so I was in an embassy in Managua, the capital. But I bounced around to different sections and I did cultural work and press work and fiddled around with other parts of the embassy and was the assistant to the ambassador. I did a miscellany of tasks for about a year; all being mentored all the time. I was a very green, what 24-year old, and just learning I guess.

DEUTSCH: You were saying that that was—all—the first post for all Foreign Service officers was called junior officer ...

M. CANNING: For USIA.

DEUTSCH: Only USIA?

M. CANNING: Right.

DEUTSCH: Okay. So they got to work in all parts of the embassy which was a great opportunity to see what everyone else did.

M. CANNING: And what you didn't want to do.

J. CANNING: Yeah. So that's also and it was only a year and you moved on.

M. CANNING: Right. Typically these assignments were six months to 18 months. Mine was a year, which was common. So the summer of '67, after a year in Nicaragua, we were assigned to Peru; to Lima, the capital. And my job there was called the Student Affairs Officer, which is basically an embassy liaison person with Peruvian universities. And I also ran a book program. It was a very—it was a large staff in those days and I was a very minor, lower level echelon person, but I had the best job in the mission because I traveled more than anyone else, because I got to visit universities all over the country.

DEUTSCH: So it was outreach to Peruvians here?

M. CANNING: Yes, uh-huh. And uni—academic institutions generally.

DEUTSCH: Isn't it tragic that we're not doing these things any more?

M. CANNING: We did this job; doesn't exist anymore. It hasn't that for years.

DEUTSCH: It seems like such a no-brainer.

M. CANNING: It is a no-brainer.

J. CANNING: I know.

M. CANNING: It is a no-brainer. I wasn't even the only one. There was another—I wasn't the only Student Affairs Officer. We had another American at a big cultural center downtown who was working there full time with other students who were taking classes.

DEUTSCH: And so what was it like to live in Lima in 1967?

J. CANNING: Well was a shock going there from Managua where you have sun all year around. You just have the rainy season when it rains for an hour and then the sun comes back out. We moved to Lima right when their so-called winter started. And their winter means that clouds in—starting around June 1st, the clouds move in off the ocean. They hit the coast, which means Lima, and the mountains, the Andes are right there, so they can't move for about five or six months. So, I got there, I think, on the last sunny day and it was cloudy for the next, solid four months. And then the sun started—well I found it was depressing to me. And I wasn't working. I hadn't found my little niche, so it was kind of depressing for me and I just read a lot of books until I found something to do and the sun started coming out again [laughs]. Eventually I ended up teaching English as the second language at the main university there. Their night school, their classes for working people [who] took classes at night. It was just wonderful. I enjoyed it so much meeting people on my own plus the cast of characters who were living there teaching English as a second language. Almost anywhere you live there are the expatriate Americans, expatriate Brits, whatever. And they're characters [laughs] and we met a bunch of them. That was fun. And then I completed the Spanish course there at the embassy. They always had classes. Any embassy had language classes.

M. CANNING: Yeah, we took some training before we went down there.

J. CANNING: Yeah, I had Spanish before we went to Managua. I continued in Managua. I finished the class in Lima and then, because every day I walked past the Alliance Française on my way home [laughs] I went and signed up for French classes because I had taken French in college and I said, "I have nothing else to do." So I went back to French, which was really fun.

DEUTSCH: You're becoming quite a linguist.

J. CANNING: And then delving into the culture of Peru; the fabulous pre-Columbian cultures, and learning about them. And wonderful museum collections where you could really start figuring out what's the difference between the Mochica and Timou. [laughs] So we enjoyed all the pre-Columbian history, learning about that and visiting some of the sites. It was wonderful. Machu Picchu ...

M. CANNING: Cuzco.

J. CANNING: When we went to Cuzco—of course you have to acclimate yourself to the altitude. And then we went on to Cuzco. We didn't do any of this hiking the way people do now [laughs]. We took the train or whatever. And we went thinking it would just be a day trip and we were so in love with Machu Picchu because—we'll just spend the night. Well there was no room at the inn. It was one hotel. They were full. So we slept on the ground on the grass overnight.

M. CANNING: Totally awake all ...

J. CANNING: And I got the worst cold of my life [laughs]. But worth it.

DEUTSCH: But you saw Machu Picchu!

J. CANNING: Worth it, oh!

M. CANNING: And the sun coming up through the dew was something.

J. CANNING: Yeah, and before it was real crowded. I mean, we've never been back. It was not that crowded when we were there. Magnificent place!

DEUTSCH: So, Peru.

J. CANNING: Yeah, Peru. And then our daughter was born there. Then I got pregnant and I had a baby. So then I was busy.

DEUTSCH: Yeah that would keep you busy.

J. CANNING: But then Mike was assigned back here after just two years. So Elizabeth was born right after Christmas of '68-'69. March, I think we left there in March of '69 and visited our families. And then—State Department used to have apartments in Columbia Plaza [23rd Street and Virginia Avenue NW] for people—we could have free I think for a month while we looked for housing.

M. CANNING: Temporary.

J. CANNING: And we started walking on Capitol Hill, pushing the stroller as many other couples have done [laughs]. And back in the '60s they didn't have the multiple [real estate] listings, so we went to Barbara Held, maybe one other. We were not—nobody showed us this house. One Sunday, beautiful Sunday in April, we walked passed this house and saw the for sale sign. Knocked on the door. A woman was renting the house getting ready to move and she said, "Sure, come on in a look at the house." We looked at it and the next day went to see, it was Carriage Realty. And the price was right and the size of the house was right and wow, we felt so lucky.

M. CANNING: I'll qualify that with the fact that we we're sure we could—we didn't think about buying a house at first because we couldn't possibly afford it. I was making a government salary. Judy wasn't working.

J. CANNING: It didn't occur to us... We were still in our 20s... who buys a house in their 20s?

M. CANNING: How could we possibly afford a house? We were wondering where to rent. And so we were looking at houses to rent because we had a growing family. But we wanted a big apartment, whatever. And the Hill seemed to offer that prospect. But buying didn't work until we actually went into a couple of the places and they gave us the particulars of financing, which we had not known about. And, "Oh really?" And the question was, "Could we put money down?" In fact is we had saved a good bit of money in Nicaragua where there wasn't anything to spend it on. So we had a nest egg. We didn't know we did, but we did. Now I ...

J. CANNING: It began to click. Just to say back in Managua I taught fourth grade at the American-Nicaraguan School. And that's how we were able to save some money.

M. CANNING: And pocketed her salary. So we basically—realtors who were pros convinced these novices that they could afford a house. And we did very—with great trepidation we bought 21 Fifth Street [Southeast].

J. CANNING: Oh I wouldn't say trepidation.

M. CANNING: Well I was worried about it.

J. CANNING: I just remember the real estate woman talking to us saying, "Well, have you considered buying?" showing us that we could in fact afford.

M. CANNING: Could swing it.

J. CANNING: It hadn't occurred to us to buy, really.

M. CANNING: No, no, we would turn around

J. CANNING: She encouraged us. I don't think she made the sale though.

M. CANNING: She didn't.

DEUTSCH: So this is the house you bought in 19 ...

M. CANNING: '69

J. CANNING: This is the house, number 21 Fifth Street SE.

M. CANNING: Kept it ever since.

J. CANNING: It had, what—had the interior walls, had the little front hall. Big divider between front and middle rooms

M. CANNING: Pocket doors there which we didn't even know about.

J. CANNING: The back or the kitchen was fairly big. It's bigger now because we took in the dog leg when we remodeled. And then ...

DEUTSCH: It's very wide.

M. CANNING: That's another story

J. CANNING: Well this is 21 [21 Fifth Street SE]. In '97 we bought number 19. But we lived in 21 for 30 years [laughs]; whole time the girls ...

M. CANNING: With two kids, yeah.

J. CANNING: Whole time the girls were at home we lived in 21. So yeah, so ...

DEUTSCH: Okay, so you've just bought a house. You moved in. You have a baby.

M. CANNING: I'm working on Latin America affairs back here seconding my work overseas. Judy decided to get a useful degree and went to library ...

J. CANNING: Yeah it was later, '70.

M. CANNING: '70-'71 and got a master's degree at Maryland [University].

J. CANNING: From '70 to '71 I was out at Maryland getting a MLS, Information Library Science degree.

M. CANNING: For purposes of work wherever else we might live.

J. CANNING: Yeah I was just working for a handy degree ...

M. CANNING: A practical ...

J. CANNING: Something that would be useful overseas [laughs]. That's really why.

END TAPE 1/SIDE 1

TAPE 1/SIDE 2

DEUTSCH: Mike talking about Judy going University of Maryland—Library Science.

J. CANNING: I just want to say every time I see somebody pushing a stroller—not every time, but frequently you see a young woman pushing a stroller. I just think back to those days when we were doing that and that, you know, were happy days.

M. CANNING: Well when I was working downtown ...

J. CANNING: And we were learning about the Hill. We just fell in love with Capitol Hill.

M. CANNING: That's right.

J. CANNING: We thought it was the most wonderful place to live.

M. CANNING: She was commuting to library school at Maryland from here. Handling a little baby, Elizabeth, and had another baby on the way. So she was really busy.

J. CANNING: Yeah I took Elizabeth to a woman who lived on 17th Street, I can't remember her name right now, but who took kids in her home; took care of kids in her home. So that worked out nicely. I would drop Elizabeth off there and then I got pregnant while I was in library school and had Rachael then—also in December 1971. Both of our girls were born in December. They won't quite let me forget that.

M. CANNING: Tough on Christmas [everyone laughs]

J. CANNING: I wasn't planning that, it just worked out that way somehow.

M. CANNING: No. It was good for tax reasons.

J. CANNING: So Rachael then was born in December of '71 so that was about six—five or six months after I got my library degree. I wanted to get a job here but I knew we would be leaving the country again in summer of '71. So I did not get a job here. And I took Elizabeth to a pre-school. It was over in Southwest [DC] and it was co-op. And I can't remember the name of it.

DEUTSCH: River Park.

J. CANNING: In the Methodist Church. Wait a moment; I'm saying the right church? It wasn't River Park but it was the co-op. I couldn't get her into some of the closer pre-schools. They were

fully booked, so there were quite a few Capitol Hill parents and we took turns baby sitting for each other and other kids.

M. CANNING: I had to also. I had to go to the classes.

DEUTSCH: Mean part of the co-op?

M. CANNING: Yeah.

J. CANNING: Yeah, and working part time, helping out at school.

M. CANNING: And that's when we first discovered the baby sitting co-op which an institution like no other.

J. CANNING: Oh yes. That would probably be the first Capitol Hill community group

M. CANNING: Collective.

J. CANNING: What would we have done without that? It just saved our lives [laughs]. It was fabulous.

M. CANNING: It's because—it allowed us never cramp our entertainment style because we always went out a lot and the co-op permitted that.

DEUTSCH: And we accepted every Saturday sitting job because you would get an extra hour.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: And then we chose not, usually not to go out on Saturday ourselves. So we got ahead.

M. CANNING: So we made out like bandits.

J. CANNING: So those chits were more valuable than any money [laughs].

M. CANNING: That was the first taste of the co-op. By summer of '72 I already had a new assignment and it was going to be—and it sounded fascinating—I was going to go to Uganda in East Africa. A new place where of course we had never been. It was deemed English-speaking so I didn't have any language training. And we went there in August of '72. And I was basically the second person in the office until—well actually by the time I landed the political stuff had already hit the fan. This was where Idi Amin Dada was ruling and he had taken over the government with a coup the year before. And by the time we landed he—there had been an invasion from the neighboring country, Tanzania. The place was in turmoil. Basically the American Embassy

started to close back dramatically. The Peace Corps was kicked out. AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] left, and we were left with a rump embassy of which I was one.

J. CANNING: It was only in the course of a year from the beginning.

M. CANNING: This happened over a year.

J. CANNING: When we got there he [Idi Amin Dada] had just issued the order that all Asians, meaning people of Indian or Pakistani heritage, descent had to leave the country. It didn't matter that they were born there. He declared them non citizens and they had to leave. So, one of our first sights of downtown Kampala was the lines of people in front of the British High Commission, the Canadian High Commission, the Australian—the U.S. Embassy trying to get visas to get out.

M. CANNING: Trying to get out. And anyway it was a difficult time. Although somewhat contradicted by our living circumstances which were exquisite.

J. CANNING: We were only there for a year but we had an absolutely wonderful year against this backdrop of horrible things happening, especially to Ugandans. On a regular basis we would hear of a prominent Ugandan who had been found murdered. The chief justice was dragged out of the court and his body was found in the Nile [River] eaten by crocodiles.

M. CANNING: Crocodiles.

J. CANNING: A chief surgeon was dragged out of surgery from the chief hospital there and never—murdered or what ever. Head of the Red Cross was found in a burned out car. Horrific, and yet we were not personally touched. It was a small embassy. A lot of us were young with young kids. We would get together frequently. The ambassador opened up his pool to embassy families every afternoon.

M. CANNING: And residence.

J. CANNING: We could go up and use his pool. So here we all are with young kids every afternoon we are up at the ambassador's pool with our kids playing. It was almost schizophrenia our own personal lives—

M. CANNING: Yeah, were kind of of idyllic.

J. CANNING: Plus Kampala and Uganda is one of the most fertile countries in the world. Everything grows there. You put a stick in the ground, it grows, it blossoms. So there's bougainvillea, there's flowering bushes, it's green everywhere. It looks beautiful. And of course,

we lived in two different houses that one year. And where we were living is where Westerners lived, so the housing was very nice. Of course we all had live-in servants because that's what you did, and they were begging for work. So, yeah, our personal lives were lovely but horrible things were going on. The other thing that made it nice for me is that I worked as a volunteer librarian at Makerere University. That's M-A-K-E-R-E-R-E, did I spell it right?

M. CANNING: Uh huh.

[They go through the spelling again.]

DEUTSCH: University?

J. CANNING: University which had been set up by the Brits to serve to East Africa, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

M. CANNING: Uh huh. Yup.

J. CANNING: But by the time we get up there, there were all the tensions between those three countries. It was mainly just—mainly Ugandans that were studying. They had a wonderful medical school. I worked in the library at the medical school. And there were many researchers from other countries doing very important research there; a certain kind of cancer, *cosi sarcoma*. There were people doing this important research on that. So it was a very lively environment. I worked in that library four mornings a week. I just went in and said, "I'd like to work as a librarian. You don't have to pay me." I more or less said when I was available. And they were happy to get me because they'd lost a chief librarian who was Asian. Was kicked out of the country this incredible—the guy who ran the medical library was kicked out. I didn't replace him but I was just another body to help out. And I met such interesting people. Ugandans, all the Western doctors who were working were very interesting people.

M. CANNING: Mixed [Western doctors]. It was probably the best university in black Africa at the time.

J. CANNING: It was a great year for us, but then ...

M. CANNING: Tensions arose with Idi Amin and us and the West who he denounced on a regular basis and eventually we had to be evacuated before he would basically ...

J. CANNING: It was one of the Arab-Israeli wars; '73.

M. CANNING: It was the '73 war during which he was so strongly Arab, pro-Arab and so anti-American and Israeli, Amin was, that he—we feared, we convinced Washington or Washington

convinced us to bail out. So we were—we set up and were evacuated from there. The kids and family left.

J. CANNING: Well Amin had threatened to throw Americans in jail if we went—if we sent troops to help Israel. Something like that ...

M. CANNING: Which we of course never did.

J. CANNING: One of those threats which we laughed at. When you're living there you think... You know, this is Amin, we just—crazy statements.

M. CANNING: Another stupid thing.

J. CANNING: Well back here they said, “We're closing the embassy.”

M. CANNING: They were terrified.

J. CANNING: Yeah, they didn't want all their diplomats in jail. We just thought it was funny. We didn't take it seriously.

M. CANNING: And so we became exiles next door in Nairobi, in Kenya.

J. CANNING: The first thing they did, they sent all the spouses, which in those days meant wives [laughs], and children to Nairobi. And we were in a hotel for two weeks while they silently and—closed up without informing Amin.

M. CANNING: Closed up. We never told him personally.

J. CANNING: Last minute that they were leaving. So then all the guys came over to Nairobi and they got to ...

M. CANNING: They were disbursed around the world.

J. CANNING: We were able to stay because they found a job for Mike in Nairobi. So, oh we were so happy. We didn't want to leave. We just wanted to stay in East Africa.

M. CANNING: We wanted to stay in East Africa, so it worked out and I became the press officer eventually in the same USIA operation. More or less what I was doing the same in Uganda before. And that was another two and a half years we were there with our family and settled in.

J. CANNING: An idyllic place to live with small children. Live-in help; game parks ...

M. CANNING: Handsome housing.

J. CANNING: Good restaurants.

M. CANNING: Wonderful weather.

J. CANNING: Up-to-date movies in English [laughs].

M. CANNING: Yes, that was another English-speaking environment. I could have—it would have helped to have Swahili but again there was no language training deemed necessary.

J. CANNING: I took Swahili.

M. CANNING: Judy did.

J. CANNING: I didn't use it very much, but I did study Swahili. And again an interesting place because it was an international city because of the UN [United Nations] Environmental Program...

M. CANNING: Program, UNEP.

J. CANNING: ... is based in Nairobi. So they had a big high-rise. We had international people working in environmental issues there. Very interesting.

M. CANNING: And you got another library job.

J. CANNING: And I—then again as a volunteer I worked for the University of Nairobi doing cataloguing in their architecture and urban planning section. It was a little part-time job that I did for free, cataloguing. That kept me busy.

M. CANNING: And we lived the life of Riley in one sense, especially Kenyan, but also all over the rest of Tanzania for that matter. We visited all over the country and all the game parks many times. And that was spectacular with the kids. It's a perfect place to take the kids too and get an amazing exposure to the wildlife.

J. CANNING: Unfortunately they were too small to remember it. Neither of them remembers game parks even though they went to many [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Oh that's too bad.

J. CANNING: Maybe Elizabeth does a times.

M. CANNING: And it was perfect weather almost all year long. It's highland. It's about a mile high.

J. CANNING: It's not tropics. East Africa is not tropical...

M. CANNING: It's right at the Equator, but not hot. I mean hottest is 80 on a dry day. But usually just benign. Beautiful nights, bursts of rain, but just a terrific place to live.

J. CANNING: Are we going into too much detail about it.

M. CANNING: I think so.

DEUTSCH: No.

J. CANNING: Okay.

DEUTSCH: So what happened then?

M. CANNING: Next assignment—I was due up in 1976 to go somewhere else and somebody told me that Tehran would be a good idea. And so—and it was a big burgeoning embassy, very important in the Middle East. And I said, “Okay.” And I’d talked to a couple of people who’d actually served there, who gave it good marks. And that was our next assignment. So we went there in August of 1976 and it turned out to be a—well personally for us our worst assignment.

J. CANNING: I was going to say several times I left with the girls before Mike did just so we could go back to Evanston and hang out with grandma and grandpa in green, pretty Evanston. In ’76 I did leave early—it was also Bicentennial year. I wanted to be back for the Fourth of July. We were in Evanston actually for that. The day after—our flight out of Nairobi had a stop in Entebbe, which is where the airport for Kampala, Uganda is. We stopped there at night and then we went on to London, and London to Chicago I guess it was. And the next morning I got up and read the paper, “Raid on Entebbe Airport,” the head ...

M. CANNING: No, “Kidnapping Entebbe,” the raid hadn’t happened yet.

J. CANNING: Oh, I’m sorry. The Israeli El Al ...

M. CANNING: El Al plane, yeah El Al plane from Europe was stopped in Northern, North Africa, I guess it was Libya, and was flying to East Africa, and some terrorists got on board and took over the plane—kidnapped the plane. No in fact, no pardon me, it was coming from Europe and they were going to go to Libya and Libya refused to let them land. And Amin, who was a big fan of the Arabs, said, “They can come where I am.” So they diverted to land in Entebbe, Uganda. And this plane full of a hundred and some people was brought into Entebbe that evening.

DEUTSCH: I must have been right after you had left?

M. CANNING: Right after she left.

J. CANNING: An hour or two after our plane left.

M. CANNING: So in retrospect we've thought many times that, if, but, if Judy and the kids hadn't left they would have been stuck.

J. CANNING: Timing ...

M. CANNING: It was the last flight of the night.

J. CANNING: Yeah and nothing took off at for several days.

M. CANNING: No, of course not. And there was nothing else to take off but the ...

J. CANNING: So that they held it for several days and then they had the raid, the Israelis...

M. CANNING: Right. And the Israelis, who were—because it was mainly Israeli citizens. Other people had been let go actually. But they—Amin was threatening them.

DEUTSCH: I do remember the raid on Entebbe.

M. CANNING: The raid happened after like July 7th or something. And Israelis did a bang up job and I had a minor relationship with it because I was handling press in Nairobi at the time and I actually saw one of planes that was eventually taken in to Uganda to pull people out; another El Al plane. In any case that happened after they'd left and I left another—a few weeks later. And we went to Tehran. Pardon, after the States we came back.

J. CANNING: ... back; vacation here ...

M. CANNING: And we did not get language training.

J. CANNING: So late August, or early September ...

M. CANNING: Early September

J. CANNING: '76 that we went to Tehran. And boy was that a shock after green East Africa we went to this gray—huge city, gray.

M. CANNING: Walled in.

J. CANNING: You hardly see any—the Iranians love gardens. They prize gardens, but they're behind walls. Very few public parks. There are a few, but for a huge city—as you drive around the city you don't see green. And that was kind of a shock. And the embassy had chosen an apartment for use. It happened to be a basement apartment. After coming from [laughs] living in Kenya with a big house and a big yard.

M. CANNING: Yeah.

J. CANNING: It was a shock. We ended up not liking Tehran at all and couldn't wait to leave. We were supposed to stay three or four years.

M. CANNING: Right.

DEUTSCH: And aren't we working up to the revolution?

J. CANNING: Yeah, yeah, we are, yeah.

M. CANNING: Oh yeah, absolutely.

J. CANNING: And so Mike pleaded with his, what career counselor whatever, and said, "I want out in two years."

M. CANNING: My advisor.

J. CANNING: And they agreed. So we did—I'm jumping ahead—we did leave after two years.

DEUTSCH: Was it mainly because of the living situation, just the ...

J. CANNING: It's a big, crowded, polluted city. The traffic jams never stop. And this is the '70s. It's probably much worse now. It wasn't just rush hour traffic. All day long because gas is so cheap. I guess cars were cheap. The Shah underwrote everything. I think they still do underwrite the cost of gas.

M. CANNING: Uh huh. Sure.

J. CANNING: So everybody drove a car. You couldn't get anywhere. It was just dirty, it was polluted. People in public were rude. In private ...

M. CANNING: We were deemed somewhat alien too. In a way we were never were as whites in black Africa. We were looked at more askance.

J. CANNING: Yeah.

M. CANNING: It was puzzling.

DEUTSCH: Isn't that one of the sort of interesting things about the kind of work you did too?

M. CANNING: Of course.

J. CANNING: I actually felt very uncomfortable when we were there with the huge American presence in Iran. There was a huge military presence. The embassy was huge.

M. CANNING: Contracting presence.

J. CANNING: We were over-represented in Iran. I felt it then, and I felt it every since. Too many Americans...

M. CANNING: Yeah, there was rancor, their potential rancor not only addressed to foreigners like us or our minions, but to their own government, which was hardly democratic. I mean the Shah was hardly a bastion of democracy. And obviously the benefits of the oil wasn't going to too many people in the populous. Whether the revolution could have been avoided—I think it might have, maybe could have if the middle class in Iran had somehow gotten together. But it didn't happen. And the thing I always remember indelibly is that the guy who replaced me as—I was the press officer in the embassy, again with the USIA—the guy who replaced me was one of the hostages.

J. CANNING: Let's just go back a little bit. Say our day-to-day life we didn't like, but in retrospect we both feel we got so much out of living there. I absolutely do not regret that we ever lived there. One of the things that we and others would do for entertainment is go to carpet shops. And they don't—when you went in they didn't expect you to necessarily buy anything. You would sit there. They would bring out tea, flat bread, cheese. And in the good days before we got there people said they brought out caviar [laughs]. Not by the time we got there. And their little minions, mainly little boys or servants, would bring—open up one carpet after another. And that's how you got an idea of what you like, what you don't like, quality ...

DEUTSCH: You started learning about ...

J. CANNING: Yeah, and a lot of just personal taste.

M. CANNING: Of course.

J. CANNING: So, and they would let you take the carpets home keeping in your house for a while, bring it back, keep it, whatever. That was great entertainment. After we'd been there for maybe six or nine months we did travel a bit. Whenever we could get out of Tehran it was wonderful. One of the great sites is Persepolis which is the ruins of the old Persian Empire.

M. CANNING: Persian Empire.

DEUTSCH: I've actually, believe it or not, been to Persepolis.

M. CANNING: So you know it?

DEUTSCH: Well unfortunately I was desperately ill. My friend Elizabeth whose father was in the Australian Embassy—this would have been in 1969—Elizabeth was living there. Her parents were in the embassy. And we took an overnight bus from Tehran to Persepolis.

J. CANNING: Oh my goodness.

M. CANNING: Wow.

DEUTSCH: And arrived early in the morning. But I was sick. I got digestive type situations, so don't have very good memories. I saw enough to know it was fantastic, but ...

J. CANNING: My parents came to visit so they were with us and they just plain loved it.

M. CANNING: The ancient capital of Iran, Isphahan, is a miracle. But that's not Tehran. Tehran was an overburdened over-polluted mucky place that had grown way too fast.

J. CANNING: We went to Isphahan a couple of times didn't we? We loved Isphahan. Oh the mosques...The tile work in Iran—any mosque you would go to the tile work....

DEUTSCH: Got a souvenir?

M. CANNING: You bet. We got souvenirs all over the house.

J. CANNING: Oh, I just think that's one of the glories of any art history is Islamic architecture. Architecture and tile work is just amazing, amazing.

M. CANNING: Decorative arts are the tops.

J. CANNING: All of those cultural things we ...

M. CANNING: We did okay musically to, actually, strangely enough.

J. CANNING: And I have to throw in the fact that I sang in the chorus of an opera in Tehran. Because under the Shah, the Shah decreed, "There shall be an opera, there shall be a symphony, there shall be a ballet," and built the hall where they performed I think to the great bewilderment of ...

M. CANNING: [laughs] Puzzlement.

J. CANNING: Puzzlement of most Iranians who didn't really understand what this stuff was.

M. CANNING: Care about this.

J. CANNING: But there was opera. He brought in opera people from, from Eastern Europe...

M. CANNING: Yup. They had a call for a singers.

J. CANNING: They put out call for Westerners who could read music. I didn't—we were singing in Italian. At that time I didn't know Italian. I learned it later. So we sang in the chorus of Nabuko, Verdi's Nabuko in Tehran. I just [laughs] ...

M. CANNING: Her credit.

J. CANNING: And I always remember it's about the ...

M. CANNING: Nebuchadnezzar.

J. CANNING: Nebuchadnezzar. And there is a chorus where the women are supposed to be—help me out here.

M. CANNING: Hebrew slaves?

J. CANNING: Well Hebrew slaves ...

M. CANNING: Oh no, Babylonian princesses.

J. CANNING: Babylonian princesses. And one of the women singing—not Babylonian—she was exactly what it said in the libretto: Assyrian.

M. CANNING: Assyrian.

J. CANNING: She was Assyrian. She was Iranian, Iranian Christian, Assyrian. And that's exactly what we were supposed to be in that scene [laughs]. The director got the biggest kick out of—he had a real Assyrian in the chorus. It was great fun. And we sort of got together; that group got together and we did some other singing together.

M. CANNING: Right, we had a chorus for a while.

J. CANNING: Chorus singing while I was there. So that was fun.

M. CANNING: My job was deadly. I was the press officer, but the country was hunkering down and the totalitarian lid was coming on if it hadn't already been there. So relationships with press were touchy, tense, not very fruitful. So another reason I wanted out because I thought the job was frankly a waste. I was wasting my time. I didn't have fun. I remember it negatively mostly for that reason. So we got out when we wanted to. Namely in '78.

J. CANNING: So I left with the girls again, ahead of Mike, summer of '78. When I left no disturbances in Tehran. Before Mike left in September they had the first, huge demonstration.

M. CANNING: In town against the Shah.

J. CANNING: Through Tehran, which you saw, right?

M. CANNING: I witnessed and then declared martial law. The prime minister was kicked out. And by the time I left in September it was—the place was going to hell. And then of course a few months later Khomeini came in.

DEUTSCH: That September our hostages were taken.

M. CANNING: No, no, the next year.

DEUTSCH: Oh the next year.

J. CANNING: That's confusing because that—wasn't it that fall of '78 when the first invasion of the embassy [of the United States] compound?

M. CANNING: No, no, it was February of '79.

J. CANNING: Sorry, February '79 the students went, invaded the embassy compound.

M. CANNING: Our office.

J. CANNING: And whatever government was in threw them out.

M. CANNING: Uh huh. A moderate government. It was not, it was run by civilians, not by clerics.

J. CANNING: Yeah. And by the time they invaded again fall of '79 ...

M. CANNING: Yeah, that's the one you—November of '79.

J. CANNING: it was almost completely new personnel in the embassy because they had pulled a lot of people out and then sent a lot of new people back to staff the embassy thinking that ...

M. CANNING: The worst was over.

J. CANNING: the worst was over, yeah.

M. CANNING: And it wasn't.

J. CANNING: Then the students invaded again and Khomeini supported their invasion.

M. CANNING: Yeah. It was random act which eventually anointed by the government. Anyway we were out. We were back here in Capitol Hill with the kids going to school at Brent.

J. CANNING: That's right. I also just like to throw in here—leaving—I was so happy to leave there, gray, brown Tehran [Mike laughs]. And I went back to Evanston, Illinois which in the summer is one of the greenest places you can be. Big old elm trees; it was just ...

DEUTSCH: Heaven.

J. CANNING: ... heaven, heaven. Go back to my parents for a while.

DEUTSCH: So you're back on Capitol Hill again and your children went to Brent.

J. CANNING: And I was aware that a lot of parents had worked very hard to turn Peabody around. And I wanted the girls to go to Peabody because I knew a lot of people who sent their kids there. We were too late because we live south of East Capitol [Street] and Peabody is north of East Capitol. I went over there and they said, "It's too late to apply for out-of-boundary." So that left us with Brent, which was fine. The girls went there and they were very happy. We were very happy with Brent, the teachers and everything.

M. CANNING: '78 to '82

J. CANNING: That's a good time. Rachael, who's the younger one, did four years there. Elizabeth did five, six—they had a seventh grade for a while at Brent. Sort of odd. I don't know why. So she did seventh grade. And eight grade; they started a middle school on the upstairs of Watkins. And they called it—that was Hobson, Julius Hobson Middle School.

DEUTSCH: Julius Hobson Middle School.

M. CANNING: That's where she went.

J. CANNING: So for a few years it was there and she did eighth grade there. And then it was a summer of '82 and we left to go to Italy.

DEUTSCH: Okay now wait a minute. Julius Hobson Middle School upstairs of Brent—upstairs of Watkins.

J. CANNING: Of Watkins and she was there from '81 to '82.

M. CANNING: Uh huh, as an eighth grader.

J. CANNING: Yeah. And then we would have had to decide, staying here, where does she go to high school?

M. CANNING: And that would have been the next decision.

J. CANNING: And we would have been faced with the private school...

M. CANNING: No, right

DEUTSCH: You didn't have to make that decision.

M. CANNING: No, right.

J. CANNING: And when we moved to Rome in late summer, August of '82, we had a choice of three English language schools that Elizabeth could go to. And I had already decided, based on research, which one she should go to.

M. CANNING: I had two jobs at the time in those four years. One was running a film acquisition office in USIA where we acquired products from television and studios. And then I switched to personnel, our personnel assigning people all over the world in USIA. A perfect place to position yourself to know what the next assignment would be. And so I sorted that out nicely to be—to get my—I didn't get myself, I had to be named, but I knew what assignments were available. Press officer in Rome was available, which one of the most desirable jobs in the Foreign Service, and that's what I got, so.

J. CANNING: I just throw—that period that we lived here, '78 to '82, I again worked as a free librarian. Volunteer librarian at the Textile Museum [2320 S Street NW, Washington, DC] one, sometimes two days a week.

M. CANNING: Uh huh. We reconnected with the baby sitting co-op of course.

J. CANNING: For a couple of years.

M. CANNING: Until the kids got old enough. Were we involved with other—first took kids ...

J. CANNING: Brent, in a school.

M. CANNING: Yeah, school was—in PTA, we were active in the PTA then.

J. CANNING: Very active, Brent PTA.

M. CANNING: Remember people from there, actually. And we also first had our connection with CHAW [Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, 545 Seventh Street SE] because our kids took classes there.

J. CANNING: That's right, yes. Well, and CHAW used to be at the Presbyterian Church [201 Fourth Street, SE]. So when they first started taking classes it was there. Then CHAW got the current building. And I remember going over there and paint—helping to paint when they were fixing up that place.

M. CANNING: Right, to move in. So they were there early—both kids taking ceramics and acting, and whatever.

J. CANNING: In fact, I told Rachael about this award [Capitol Hill Community Achievement Award] and I mentioned Rosetta—what’s her last name?

DEUTSCH & M. CANNING: Brooks.

J. CANNING: Brooks. And Rachael absolutely remembers taking ballet from her.

DEUTSCH: Oh my God!

M. CANNING: Both of our girls did.

J. CANNING: She said, “Oh I remember her, how wonderful she was.”

DEUTSCH: Will they be at the dinner, will your girls be at the dinner?

J. CANNING: I don’t know.

M. CANNING: We asked them.

J. CANNING: We invited them and we said we’d pay their week, but middle of the week is really hard.

M. CANNING: Yeah, both with kids.

DEUTSCH: Well I’ll tell Rosie that, she’ll get a kick out of that.

J. CANNING: Oh, I’ll have Rachael write up something. Rachael was delighted to hear about...

M. CANNING: She’s well remembered by our kids. It’s a nice connection.

J. CANNING: I’d forgotten about Rachael. So that was CHAW, our first time at CHAW.

DEUTSCH: So you were digging into the neighborhood that four years.

M. CANNING: Yeah, although ...

J. CANNING: Well the way most parents do at school. And we didn’t ever belong to a church.

M. CANNING: Sure. Yeah, we never had a church affiliation.

J. CANNING: We never had a church connection.

M. CANNING: But we also had in our minds—we didn’t think consciously of this—but we didn’t, we knew we were going to be leaving. We always knew our life was in and out. And so it isn’t as if we didn’t want to have cement ties or not, but in effect we probably distanced ourselves a little bit because we knew we were going to be going somewhere else. And it turned out to be Italy.

DEUTSCH: How lovely.

M. CANNING: Not bad.

END TAPE 1/SIDE 2

TAPE 2/SIDE 1

DEUTSCH: Okay, so you went to Rome and that was wonderful, 1986?

J. CANNING: Highlight! '82 to '86, so Elizabeth did all four years of high school at St. Stephen's School in Rome.

M. CANNING: In the shadow of the Coliseum.

J. CANNING: A wonderful, small academic high school that had been set up by an American from—a New England prep school was his model. But it was just a small, international school. American kids, other—it was right next to UN FAO headquarters, Food and Agriculture Organization, so a lot of international people sent their kids there. And I ended up working volunteer as a librarian, and then taking over and running—being the librarian for the last two years.

DEUTSCH: At the school?

J. CANNING: At the school, so I got into school library work, and wonderful. Other wonderful thing I did there was take a weekly class that had been—a series of classes had been set up for spouses, people who were working there, about Roman history. And we explored unknown Rome. I learned so much ...

M. CANNING: Everything.

J. CANNING: ... about underground, unknown Rome as well as just basic Roman history that was just a highlight. And then on the weekends I would take Mike and the girls out to show them out what I had found and learned.

M. CANNING: Discovered.

J. CANNING: So I would say Roman history is now just one of my favorite pursuits and pastimes.

M. CANNING: It's a passion.

J. CANNING: Biggest interest is Roman and ancient history. It was heaven. So, Elizabeth went there. Rachael actually went to a girl's Catholic school called Marymount which was near where we lived. We did not live in downtown, ancient Rome. We lived in the community north of the

Tiber [River] that had been developed probably post-war [World War II]. Most of the—
apartment buildings. Hardly anybody ...

M. CANNING: Part of it was built, part of it was built during the Mussolini era in the '30s.

J. CANNING: Okay. Hardly any houses. Almost everybody lived in apartments.

M. CANNING: Apartments.

J. CANNING: But these are big apartments we're talking about. Four bedrooms, very spacious. That's where we lived. And so Marymount School was out there taught by Marymount nuns who were American and Irish, and again, characters [laughs].

M. CANNING: And very international student body too again, for both kids.

J. CANNING: Yeah. So talk about your work. Because your work was really interesting there.

M. CANNING: Well it was. I was a press officer in the embassy and my basic job was explaining American policy, hard as that is always, to Italian journalists. Television, radio, print, magazines and all the rest. I basically was having lunch with, on the phone with, not emailing in those days, and seeing all kinds of people who were in the journalistic business. I'd have questions for them and they'd have questions for me. And we'd basically interpret the world, etc.

J. CANNING: But, Italian as well as other nationality journalists. You worked with Italian plus American press ...

M. CANNING: Oh yeah, but mainly Italian. No of course there was a contingent of American journalists there too. But my business wasn't essentially with them. They needed stuff officially from the embassy which I could provide.

DEUTSCH: But your business was with the Italians.

M. CANNING: But my business was with the Italians. And to try to introduce complexity in some of the more facile arguments about what American was and what our policies were. And it was a time of—a very tense political time because it was during the mid-'80s that were establishing the placement of intermediate nuclear forces, the INF, into Europe into several what we call basing countries, one of which was Italy.

J. CANNING: Remember that was one of Reagan's [U.S, President Ronald Reagan] big ...

M. CANNING: One of Reagan's big pushes, backed by Thatcher [England prime minister Margaret Thatcher] and others. And in fact they were eventually based in Germany and England

and Italy too in Sicily. That was a big topic. But there were a lot of other topics. Drug war stuff was back and forth, Mafioso connections in the U.S. and so on. A series of bi-lateral issues, all of which were very important and fascinating and which I dealt with on a daily basis. I had terrific American assistant and an Italian staff that worked with me that were fabulous. I'll never forget they were very well plugged in.

J. CANNING: You might speak about how important the Foreign Service nationals are in the Foreign Service.

M. CANNING: This is a good place to do it. The people don't, aren't aware of this, American diplomats overseas can and do depend to a great degree on people that are hired locally to work in missions. And I had a, perhaps, one of the best locally hired Italians anywhere in the diplomatic service. And a guy named Bruno Scarfi who was from Sicily. And he was in my—I had one office, he was right next to me and I could bounce anything off Bruno. He was so plugged in to the society. He was a little older than I was, but not much. We were both in our 40s. And he was—you could test anything on him or get an interpretation of something, a nuance in Italian. He was good at correcting my Italian when I tried to perform something in Italian or write a little item and did it work right. Was this translation correct? I could consult him on anything. And he could also kind of call up anybody in the country.

J. CANNING: He knew everyone.

M. CANNING: Or his assistant and say, "Hey Gustavo or Giovanni, what do you think." And he'd get me intelligence like that. It was quite amazing. And I had—the rest of the staff was also first rate. So it was a great group to work with. And we had a terrific effort, about six months, when I got to speak Italian pretty well and could ...

J. CANNING: He did. His Italian was really good.

M. CANNING: And I could communicate both—I would be bi-lingual in the office. I'd speak Italian and English to my staff all the time. Some didn't know English, so. But that—we had a camaraderie built up which was special. I'd never before or since had a job like that that was that rich, and rewarding, actually. And I met terrific people. Interviewed Gina Lollobrigida [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Good grief. Really?

M. CANNING: Actually she interviewed me.

DEUTSCH: Okay. That's definitely going into the introduction.

J. CANNING: Oh gosh.

M. CANNING: But I did. Actually she came to the embassy. She wanted an interview with the ambassador. She had to go through me. Anyway it was a great job.

J. CANNING: We loved Italy so much that we hardly traveled anyplace else in Europe, whereas other embassy people made a point of getting to Germany, going—driving here and there. We wanted to see all the little towns, every major town, every small town [laughs] every famous place in Italy. And we didn't. We left after four years not seeing everything we wanted to see. So we did.

M. CANNING: Right, but we made a pretty good bite out of it.

J. CANNING: Yeah. We're both culture vultures I guess. Mike especially loves art and really knows the history of western art. So he knew a lot of the Italian artists and he was so excited to see all the Renaissance painters.

M. CANNING: It's a—I think of a parallel. Excited as I was—as a kid I loved African animals but had never seen any except in the circus. And then I went to East Africa and saw them all in life. And that was a kick, an ecstasy that I hadn't felt before. Similarly going to Italy and seeing the masters that you can't see anywhere else but Italy because they are on the walls. The great Renaissance painters—

J. CANNING: Frescos you mean.

M. CANNING: Yes, especially frescos—was the same kind of ecstasy. Oh my god. There I finally can see [makes a noise] whoever.

DEUTSCH: Okay, so what came next?

J. CANNING: Back to Washington.

DEUTSCH: Back to DC.

J. CANNING: Yeah, I must say every time we learned we were coming back to DC I was excited because I knew we'd come back to this little house. We knew where we were coming back to whereas most Foreign Service people had not bought a house. Or if they had it was out in the boring Virginia suburbs where they didn't know anybody.

DEUTSCH: They didn't want to come back.

J. CANNING: Whereas we knew we were coming back to a neighborhood and people we knew...

M. CANNING: Yeah, and a house we knew.

J. CANNING: ... a community, so ...

M. CANNING: A minor but helpful point. Never the whole time we were in the Foreign Service and rented our house, which we always did, we never went a month without rent.

J. CANNING: Right

DEUTSCH: Wow.

M. CANNING: Always, I mean because it's so well located. It's Fifth Street for God's sake. I mean there is always a demand for this neighborhood.

J. CANNING: So then we were back here '86 to '89 and Rachael was entering sophomore year of high school and she went to Edmund Burke.

M. CANNING: In northwest [DC].

J. CANNING: And that was a good place for her.

DEUTSCH: What year was that?

J. CANNING: '86

M. CANNING: Fall of '86. When did you start working up there first year?

DEUTSCH: She was probably in school with my step-daughter.

J. CANNING: Oh yes!

M. CANNING: Of course!

DEUTSCH: Yeah.

M. CANNING: Of course she was.

J. CANNING: No wait.

DEUTSCH: Yeah, because Sarah was born in 1970.

J. CANNING: I'll be darned, '71.

DEUTSCH: Yeah, yeah.

J. CANNING: Isn't that funny. I didn't—I'll have to ask Rachael.

DEUTSCH: Sarah ended up marrying her Edmund Burke sweetheart who she reconnected with at the 10-year reunion.

M. CANNING: For heavens sake.

DEUTSCH: Martin Johnson.

J. CANNING: Oh my God, isn't that nice.

M. CANNING: For goodness sake.

J. CANNING: Lovely story [Mike laughs]. Well my cousin taught English up there for years, Carolyn Lawlor, do you remember Carolyn? She helped people get into college too.

M. CANNING: She was a counselor.

DEUTSCH: Yes. Yeah I think—well Sarah would remember.

J. CANNING: And she just retired. She was there for many years. So, yeah, Rachael was there and again ...

DEUTSCH: And your older daughter was in college I guess.

J. CANNING: And she went off to Northwestern [University]. Because we didn't think we were coming back here. We thought we'd have another overseas assignment.

M. CANNING: In fact, yeah, yeah, I thought good assignment which didn't work out [laughs].

J. CANNING: Yeah, Mike was assigned to Berlin, which would have been ...

M. CANNING: Head of the office in Berlin.

J. CANNING: which would have been so fabulous for use to go back to Berlin. And unfortunately the head of his agency who was one of Reagan's best buddies, was ...

M. CANNING: Buddies. Charles Wick.

J. CANNING: Charles Wick, had met somebody on one of his ...

M. CANNING: Trips.

J. CANNING: ... a Foreign Service person who had also applied for the job in Berlin, who did not have German, but Charlie Wick had met this guy and liked him. So the personnel department had chosen Mike for that job [Mike laughs].

M. CANNING: You don't have to put this in.

DEUTSCH: No I won't.

J. CANNING: Charlie Wick who should have signed off on it, said, “No, no, I want this other guy.” He didn’t know Mike, Mike, you know, didn’t know Mike. Even though Mike already had German. So in the middle of German training this other guy quit [laughs].

M. CANNING: Retired [laughs].

DEUTSCH: German is too hard.

M. CANNING: Whatever,

J. CANNING: Anyhow, but you know things work out for the best ...

M. CANNING: Of course.

J. CANNING: ... so we ended up coming back here instead of going to Berlin.

M. CANNING: I came back and was in the training program. I lucked out really. I was selected for special training program in the Foreign Service called the Senior Seminar which is a year, an academic year of terrific learning broadly about—not only international affairs but about domestic affairs. A great reintroduction to the United States. It’s a year-long seminar run by the students. There were about 25 of us picked from all over ...

J. CANNING: To say it was State Department, USIA, military ...

M. CANNING: Defense, military, agriculture ...

J. CANNING: ... FBI, there was an FBI guy.

M. CANNING: ... FBI, a mix of government people that were just at senior level who were put together to basically find out about the United States. And we did it in—we had a terrific time organizing our own programs. We had money and travel and it was fabulous. And after that I ended up—I was assigned as head of USIA’s publication division or the magazines we produced around the world. And I did that for two years.

DEUTSCH: And Judy, were you volunteering or what did you do?

J. CANNING: You know I did volunteer with a group called Reading is Fundamental which would put books in school—have like book fairs for kids. I did that for maybe a year or something. I was not finding it fulfilling at all. It was something I kind of stepped into and didn’t know how to get out of. Until I got a phone call from Edmund Burke saying that our librarian had quit in November and didn’t say yes at first. But then I did. So I stepped in as—back being a school librarian. That must have been the fall—let’s see we came in ’86—the fall of ’87, so ’87,

'88, '89, so I was there almost two school years as the librarian. So both of my daughters had the privilege of having their mother be the librarian [laughs] where they went to school.

M. CANNING: Could tell them to shush.

J. CANNING: I don't think either of them really minded because they both got rides to school for one thing.

M. CANNING: No [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Rides to school.

J. CANNING: Rides to school and, yeah. It worked out okay.

DEUTSCH: So then are we ready to go overseas again?

J. CANNING: Yup.

M. CANNING: Oh yeah.

J. CANNING: You know what, we need to speed it up.

M. CANNING: Abrupt. Yeah I was hoping to go in the next year, 1990, at a new assignment. I was working on that. And I was basically called and selected, against my own desires, to be the head of the USIA office in Argentina, in Buenos Aires. I didn't try—I tried a little to get out of it but you're supposed to go where you're assigned and I did.

DEUTSCH: Why did you want to get out of it?

M. CANNING: Because I was looking forward to the next year and I didn't care about going to Argentina right away. Plus our life would have been messed up and so on. But by then Rachael had already—this was November of—we left in ...

J. CANNING: Rachael had started Haverford [College in Pennsylvania].

M. CANNING: She had already started college in '89.

J. CANNING: Started college.

M. CANNING: She had already packed her off. So both kids were out of the house and in fact I could go. And we left in, I think it was October of '89 to go to Buenos Aires.

J. CANNING: We have to say it was fun to get back to Spanish ...

M. CANNING: Oh yes.

J. CANNING: because we had Italian in our heads...

M. CANNING: Yeah, it was all mixed up.

J. CANNING: ... and returning to Spanish, which we had known. The way it came back was just wonderful. It's like it residing in a place in your brain that you don't know you can tap.

M. CANNING: Uh huh, right.

J. CANNING: And all you have to do is hear a word from a teacher and it's [clicks fingers], it's back like that.

M. CANNING: Yeah.

J. CANNING: So that was fun getting back to Spanish.

M. CANNING: And we were there just about a year. And it was interesting enough assignment and a fascinating country and city. A great cosmopolitan city which we loved. But I was—I'll let Judy tell the story. I was canned by the ambassador.

J. CANNING: Mike could—it was a very unusual situation and Mike could not please this ambassador. Could not please him and the ambassador asked for Mike to be replaced. And he was replaced and we heard later that he didn't care for the next person who came either. So it was a difficult time, you know, something—it's like being fired [laughs].

M. CANNING: Personal life. I was effectively.

J. CANNING: And it did affect his career because he ended up not being promoted when he thought he would be promoted.

M. CANNING: Promoted in my due time.

J. CANNING: He had to retire before he probably would have.

M. CANNING: I landed okay in that I got a job as the second ranking person in the USIA operation in Brasilia, Brazil. But I had to come back to Washington and we had to be here a while we both took language training.

DEUTSCH: More language training.

M. CANNING: Portuguese this time.

J. CANNING: Portuguese, Portuguese, yeah.

M. CANNING: Which was fun.

J. CANNING: So let's just say it—excuse me, '89 to '90 there. The fall of '90 we came back here. We got really lucky because our renters had just decided that wanted to break the lease [laughs].

M. CANNING: Which we accepted.

J. CANNING: Coincidentally [laughs]. And so they wanted to move and we were able to get back in our house. We were back here about seven months, the summer of '91, and you went to Brasilia.

M. CANNING: I went ahead of time, yeah.

J. CANNING: And I came a couple of months later.

M. CANNING: Right. And we were there two years till '93.

J. CANNING: Brasilia two years. And liked it.

M. CANNING: Uh huh.

J. CANNING: Not the most exciting place in the world.

M. CANNING: Not Brasilia.

J. CANNING: Brasilia.

M. CANNING: But a fascinating country.

J. CANNING: Yeah, it's not like Rio [Rio de Janeiro] but it was a beautiful climate.

M. CANNING: Again, highland.

J. CANNING: Highland, just sun in the day.

M. CANNING: And the country of course is a big as we are, so it's fascinating to go from one end of it to the other, which we did. We got a lot of trips out of it. I had—my job required me to visit our branch offices and consulates, so I got a lot of travel out of it. And we retired out of there, out of Brazil in '93. Came back to Washington permanently back in our 21 Fifth Street house.

J. CANNING: And always happy to come home, always happy to come back here, always.

DEUTSCH: And, so what have you found to fill your time since then?

J. CANNING: Well in the fall of '93 then we were both looking for some volunteer activity. We knew we wanted to find some volunteer work here.

M. CANNING: I didn't care about working full time anywhere. I was ready to do something loose.

J. CANNING: Yeah and I briefly considered, you know, getting a job as a school librarian and I just couldn't get enthused about it. I thought—we discussed our finances. Mike had good retirement from the Foreign Service, so I didn't feel the need that I had to work, and I would rather choose to do some voluntary activities. So the first thing we started doing was Food and Friends which delivers meals to people with HIV or AIDS. And it was really to make sure—well people who were really sick with AIDS got nutritious meals. By the time—we did it for 10 years from '94 to 2004.

DEUTSCH: Delivering meals?

J. CANNING: Delivering meals once a week

M. CANNING: Once a week. On Capitol Hill. Our jurisdiction was Capitol Hill,

J. CANNING: Yeah, the kitchen was nearby where we picked up the food. And we did sort of an extended Northeast Capitol above—below Bennington, below Florida, the far Northeast.

M. CANNING: Yeah, above H [Street NE] a lot.

J. CANNING: We really got to know that neighborhood pretty well.

M. CANNING: Got to know Northeast very well.

J. CANNING: Such nice people and where we were, you know, sad cases. But by the time we were finishing they had extended their mission to serve people with life-threatening diseases, so we were delivering to people mainly ...

M. CANNING: Shut-ins. People who were just not that mobile.

J. CANNING: ... cancer or ill with other things. We were never privy to the—privacy.

M. CANNING: No, no, no. That wasn't our business.

J. CANNING: But anyhow that was very rewarding. And then in—from '95 to 2000 I was a court-appointed special advocate which is called by the acronym "CASA." I was a CASA volunteer. And I worked with two sisters who lived, again not far away, with a great-aunt.

M. CANNING: In Northeast.

DEUTSCH: Is this like being a guardian ad litem.

J. CANNING: Sort of, yeah. Very similar. It was formed as a volunteer organization to help children who had been removed by the court from wherever they were living because of abuse or neglect. So by the time I picked them up one sister was with a great-aunt, one was in a foster situation which was not good. And I took them both—I was assigned one, I picked up the sister because I knew she needed help and for—every week I took them to at least one appointment, you know, therapy, counseling. I went to their schools. I talked to their teachers [laughs].

M. CANNING: You represented them in court.

J. CANNING: I did kind of what a parent should do and then every time they had a court review I had to write a report for the judge to read and go to the court.

M. CANNING: Stand in for them.

J. CANNING: Yeah. Go and ask any questions the judge had. So I did that for five years. Both girls graduated from high school without getting pregnant [laughs]. One went ...

DEUTSCH: Are you still in touch with them?

M. CANNING: Tentatively.

J. CANNING: One called me recently and left a message and I haven't been able to reach her.

M. CANNING: Connect.

J. CANNING: And one got a scholarship to college and I presume she graduated.

M. CANNING: She married.

J. CANNING: Both of them have had children, have had kids.

M. CANNING: Yeah, yeah.

J. CANNING: But anyhow, it was very rewarding. When I look back at it now I wonder how I did it. But I know at the time it didn't tire me out. It's what I absolutely wanted to do.

M. CANNING: Well, we were in our—still in our 50s. Meanwhile I got my second—my real second career, mainly reviewing for the *Hill Rag* [local monthly newspaper]. I answered an ad in the *Rag* when I came back in '93 because they were advertising for a movie reviewer of all things. Something I wanted to do all my life. And I sent them a little CD and a review of a movie in town and they hired me, John Keith [Fagon] and Melissa [Ashabranner]. And I've been doing that for—it'll be 15 years in August. Oh, it was 15 years last year.

DEUTSCH: How many movie reviews do you do a year?

M. CANNING: I probably do—it's now monthly so I do I'd say 30 to 50 depending.

DEUTSCH: Wow. You go to a lot of movies.

J. CANNING: Oh yes, [laughs] for free.

M. CANNING: Last year in '08 I went to 161. The year before I went to 174. That's fairly typical.

DEUTSCH: That's a lot.

M. CANNING: That's a lot. That's my job [laughs].

DEUTSCH: That's two a week.

M. CANNING: Yes,

DEUTSCH: No that's three a week.

M. CANNING: Roughly. And yeah it's great. I love doing it. Thank heavens they hired me to do it. It's really terrific. And in that time I've become a member of newly formed Washington Area Film Critics Association and we have an annual poll which we just completed. So I'm having a good time, and I still go to the movies often. Judy goes when she wants to, so.

J. CANNING: Yeah, I'm more discriminating.

M. CANNING: Than I am. But that's my—that's what I always say is my second career, movie reviewer.

DEUTSCH: And you started the Films on the Hill.

M. CANNING: Right, as a—just my biggest spin-off of our own interest. That was a confluence of events of a friend of ours, somebody we befriended who has collection of 16 millimeter film and another friend of hers ...

J. CANNING: We should back up because it was our involvement in CHAW.

M. CANNING: Yeah. Let's talk about CHAW first. That's Judy's show.

J. CANNING: Yeah. I started singing with the Capitol Hill Chorale when they formed in fall of '93 I think it was ...

M. CANNING: Uh huh, that's right.

J. CANNING: ... right after we came back. And they asked me to represent the Chorale on the CHAW board because for a long—many years—well even now I think it's under the auspices of the CHAW, the Chorale.

M. CANNING: Associated, right.

J. CANNING: So I went on the CHAW board representing the Chorale.

M. CANNING: In '96,

J. CANNING: And then I just sort of [laughs] ...

M. CANNING: Segued.

J. CANNING: ... stayed on the board as just a regular board member. And then another board member, Marilyn Kaufman, had met John Stone who owns this incredible cache of films and was looking for a place to show them for free. And that's really how it happened in '99 when Films on the Hill was born.

M. CANNING: Right, September. We're coming up on our tenth year.

J. CANNING: And John Stone and the woman who helps him is Annette Graham. They're the ones who do all the work...

M. CANNING: Graham.

DEUTSCH: So it's still going on?

M. CANNING: Oh yes. It'll be having its tenth anniversary this year.

J. CANNING: They show films there about three times a month.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: We tend to help our with the Saturday showings. They do do some others...

M. CANNING: Yeah. And help publicize.

J. CANNING: We put up posters around the neighborhood.

M. CANNING: Yup. I do intros, that sort of stuff since I'm the resident loud mouth. But to get back to CHAW—well anyway Films on the Hill was a continuum from '99 till the present and it's still purring along.

J. CANNING: Still going.

M. CANNING: And its money—it's totally volunteer operation. The small fees cover the minimal costs we have and all the rest goes back to CHAW to help its programs.

J. CANNING: We don't pay for the films. We don't pay John for showing them. It's all ...

M. CANNING: Yeah, we've gotten some modest grants from the foundation [Capitol Hill Community Foundation] which has helped. Three times actually. How about your own involvement on the board?

J. CANNING: So I was on the board of CHAW then from what, '96 until?

M. CANNING: 2002.

J. CANNING: 2002. And we went through that difficult time when ...

M. CANNING: Well the difficult time, she's not talking about it, but after a disastrous hiring of a director in '97 he was kicked out. He was canned actually.

J. CANNING: Well the first difficulty was '97.

M. CANNING: Yeah, right. Pardon me, when somebody left quickly. And then the next director was a bomb and had to leave after less than a year. And so in '98 CHAW was headless. By that time Judy had become president of the board.

J. CANNING: No.

M. CANNING: No, you weren't yet?

J. CANNING: No, Ann Richards.

M. CANNING: Ann Richards was, sorry. But anyway in '98, summer, fall, Judy volunteered to be the acting director at no pay. And CHAW was maybe six figures in the red. Or at least five.

J. CANNING: Oh I don't think it was, yeah, I don't think it was ...

M. CANNING: At least five. They had real problems financially. The place was hanging in there.

J. CANNING: A lot of unpaid bills.

M. CANNING: Many, many—which we discovered. Never been touched by the previous director. And basically with her working there, I'd say close to full time, with some staff members.

J. CANNING: No, no, no. I want to correct this because some people say [laughs] I did more than I did. I stopped by on a regular basis to make sure the bills were paid and to talk to the bookkeeper. Caren Anton, let's get her name in here. C-a-r-o-n.

M. CANNING: E n, wait a minute, C-a-r-e-n.

J. CANNING: C-a-r-e-n. Anton, A-n-t-o-n was the bookkeeper who, you know, she saved me. Let's put it that way. She helped me to save CHAW because she could tell me what, you know ...

M. CANNING: Where the money was.

J. CANNING: She counted things that I didn't know anything about.

M. CANNING: Yeah. Where was the money going and not going.

J. CANNING: She was just a wonderful, wonderful person. So I just made sure the bills got paid. And I called up our creditors and what I learned the simplest thing—running a small business—if you just make a phone call to somebody you owe money to and acknowledge that—they are so happy to hear a human voice. It's just that unpaid bill and hearing nothing that is so upsetting.

M. CANNING: They're willing to negotiate.

J. CANNING: Yeah, and I would tell them we will pay you. You may not get it ...

DEUTSCH: It might take us a while.

J. CANNING: Yeah. And they were so understanding, everybody we owed money to. And then Ann Richards and I took out a loan ...

M. CANNING: A loan.

J. CANNING: ... well what we called it. We were the guaran...

M. CANNING: Guarantors of like a bridge loan from the National Capital Bank.

J. CANNING: ...tors—bank for \$10,000.

M. CANNING: Just mainly to pay staffers.

J. CANNING: Which again CHAW, over time then, CHAW was—this is after '98—was able to pay off.

M. CANNING: We started, because they had not done—Judy started getting grant writing going again which helped also.

J. CANNING: Well so much had not been done.

M. CANNING: It was a tough year but basically it came off in '99 during which the board finally—by then you were president I think—you've hired a new director.

J. CANNING: Yeah, so, uh huh.

M. CANNING: So we had a director by '99.

J. CANNING: '99 then we hired Jeffrey Watson who was there for five years. He really helped CHAW come back.

M. CANNING: Solidify.

J. CANNING: Revitalize the place. We paid off our bills.

M. CANNING: And you left the board—yeah and basically left it in a reasonable fashion. And you left the board in 2002. You stopped singing in 2000 with the Chorale. One other CHAW connection—we still have connections there. We're still active there in many ways besides Films on the Hill. We ran for two years what used to be the Winter Revelry, which was a neighborhood fest at Christmas time.

DEUTSCH: Sure.

J. CANNING: House tour.

DEUTSCH: House tour.

M. CANNING: House tour, exactly. House tour and party.

J. CANNING: Party I think of it [laughs].

M. CANNING: House tour and party. And we did that for two years which is a big job getting a lot of volunteers.

DEUTSCH: It is a big job.

M. CANNING: Like the CHRS [Capitol Hill Restoration Society] house tours with a slightly different tack.

DEUTSCH: Holidays

M. CANNING: Holiday affair. So that was another contribution to CHAW in the late 90s.

J. CANNING: And then you started working for—on the board of the Restoration Society. What year was that?

M. CANNING: Right. I was in 2001 I think, I was asked to be the budget chair. They needed somebody to do their—somebody was stepping down and they needed somebody to be on the board. And I accepted. It wasn't onerous. And then eventually after serving on the board for several years, I was asked logically to become the treasurer, which I currently am. And I took on that job in 2005 and I'm still in that position looking to for a new—somebody else to do it.

J. CANNING: Looking for a replacement [laughs].

M. CANNING: It's a dogged, kind of thankless task but sort of "somebody got to do a job." But I've learned a lot about the Society.

J. CANNING: I'm going to say the hours you have put in treasurer is like a part-time job. I mean it's so many more hours than you thought would be, right?

M. CANNING: Than I expected. Yeah, it is. It can be demanding. And to keep the place running smoothly. It's doing fine as an organization.

[Ed: several statements were removed to preserve privacy of individuals.]

M. CANNING: Anyway that's the Restoration Society which is still ongoing and we participated in the house tour all the time. We usually manage a house or so and taken advantage—been going on it forever as a community event.

J. CANNING: Brings us to the Village, Capitol Hill Village.

M. CANNING: Finally, yeah. The Village which is the most recent enterprise happened by chance on the street [laughs]. It's serendipity.

J. CANNING: We bumped into Geoff Lewis. He said—talked about this Beacon Hill Village [Boston] idea—"why don't we start that here? You want to do that?" And we just about ...

M. CANNING: Kind of fell into it.

J. CANNING: We hadn't thought about retire—when we're older what would happen.

END TAPE 2/SIDE 1

TAPE 2/SIDE 2

J. CANNING: Same time we were talking to Geoff and offered to let us meet in their basement office space. And Geoff rounded up a few other people, some who we knew, some who we met for the first time. And before we knew it within a couple of meetings we decided to incorporate, to form ourselves as board, to apply for nonprofit status.

M. CANNING: Select a name, look for a logo. This was started in—the first meetings were May of 2006.

J. CANNING: May '06, and that summer we were ...

M. CANNING: [makes a click sound] Busy, yeah.

J. CANNING: ... just amazing how quickly things grew.

M. CANNING: We met every week and we had all kinds of tasks—about a dozen of us. And it really churned it out.

J. CANNING: I think we surprised ourselves. I don't think anybody thought we would move so quickly.

M. CANNING: No, move with such ...

J. CANNING: And the key thing, when we look back on it, was getting the nonprofit status ...

M. CANNING: Status.

J. CANNING: ... which—what's the name of the lawyer?

M. CANNING: Allan Dye.

J. CANNING: Allan Dye got in record time for us which meant we could do fund raising. And Mary Proctor and others got together to write that fund-raising letter that went out—was it December of '06?

M. CANNING: Uh huh. November, December.

J. CANNING: Offering people the opportunity to be founding donors, or founding charter members ...

M. CANNING: To Join. Charter members.

J. CANNING: ... at big bucks, one, two, three thousand dollars.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: And the money started coming in. December, January, February ...

M. CANNING: Into Spring. Yeah, the shocker was that—I mean for us—is a brand new—although this is Capitol Hill, a vibrant, lively, interested neighborhood with people who are willing to commit—but in the space of December to April we raised more than \$160,000 from neighbors. We didn't get anything outside it was totally ground-up.

J. CANNING: So starting—we knew we did not want to run this thing as volunteers. We knew we wanted to hire somebody to run it, which meant you had to have a certain pot of money in the bank. So by January we were forming a search committee to look for a director because we knew we had the money.

M. CANNING: Yup, I was on the search committee along with others. And by May we had selected Gail Kohn and she happened to be the right choice.

J. CANNING: Gail Kohn is K-o-h-n.

[Everyone agrees that is the correct spelling]

M. CANNING: And that was another marriage made in heaven ...

J. CANNING: Another master stroke, because Geoff Lewis met her on the airplane going up to a conference.

DEUTSCH: I heard that story, it was so...

M. CANNING: Right, serendipity, amazing.

J. CANNING: Literally and she has been absolutely incredible!

M. CANNING: Stellar.

J. CANNING: Stellar.

M. CANNING: And the other side of the story, as you know, is that the Village has in fact become for the nation, I think, a model volunteer organization. It's got professional, Gail, who's well paid and is a good boss and knows her stuff. But basically the place survives, not on a shoestring, but on modest finances because everybody pitches in. There are dozens of volunteers to do dozens of things. And the membership is growing slowly, but still growing.

J. CANNING: Actually your article in the February Rag talks about how—what volunteers do.

M. CANNING: Describes about—exactly. Right, I don't have to say anything because it's in the paper. That's what I'd tell you anyway. Because I did a statistical compilation of what we'd done in our first year.

J. CANNING: I guess we could just say our role until we were off the board in May or June of '08 ...

M. CANNING: June, Uh huh.

J. CANNING: ... our choice to just rotate off. But we did, we worked on membership, I guess you could say getting the word out.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: So we held many meetings; inviting people to our house to learn about the Village over drinks, snacks, or tried to get invited to other people's homes where they would invite their neighbors in.

M. CANNING: Right, to talk. Or to run public meetings.

J. CANNING: So we did quite a bit of that.

M. CANNING: With Gail, after she was hired, we were kind of the public face of the place in the sense of introducing people to the concept and urging them to sign up. And a lot of them have. The membership is over 200 by now.

J. CANNING: It continues to be—we'll never have to stop ...

M. CANNING: No, pitching.

J. CANNING: Yeah, the Village will always have to try and get the word out that it's there and as people—members will get older and die and you need to always be bringing in new people.

M. CANNING: Uh huh, absolutely.

J. CANNING: One thing that has been heartening is to find out how many people are joining for the social network aspect because we wouldn't have [guessed?] that ourselves. We feel like have our group of friends. We have each other. We're a married couple. There a lot of people who are not part of a couple. They've retired. Maybe their social network was at work and it's gone and they're looking for a social network.

DEUTSCH: And this was sort of an unanticipated—

J. CANNING: Yeah, yeah, it's been really nice to see that.

M. CANNING: You could argue that it's maybe the most important thing the Village does, actually.

J. CANNING: Well, one, [laughs] because it's also helping some people who really need help in their homes, you know.

M. CANNING: Of course, yeah, indeed. They're really getting their money's worth out of their membership.

J. CANNING: Well only Gail would know the number of people who are actually using in-home services because of their physical state. I would guess is ten. I mean it's not a huge number.

M. CANNING: Uh huh, yeah, yeah.

DEUTSCH: Small.

M. CANNING: Probably never will be that big.

J. CANNING: So many more are calling the office to get the name of a plumber, electrician or help in fixing something around their house.

M. CANNING: Sure. Uh huh, which we do ourselves. We're both volunteers and members and users.

J. CANNING: Or they call for rides, rides to appointments.

M. CANNING: Right, yeah, which we do also. And currently though we're not on the board we don't need to go to board meetings anymore. We've certainly do that enough. We remain active volunteers. Judy basically is the organizer for events for the Village and prepares a calendar every month of programs and social events. And I'm still in the communications side and help with writing articles like the *Hill [Rag]* one piece and I was on the original design of our brochure and that sort of stuff, so we keep our hand in and are plenty busy with Village activities ourselves. And we've met dozens of new people.

J. CANNING: Yes this is the other fun thing. You think you've lived here, for what, almost 40 years—it is, this year is 40 years.

M. CANNING: Forty years this year.

J. CANNING: Although not continuously. So you think, oh, okay we know almost everybody. Well of course you don't.

M. CANNING: Right.

J. CANNING: Nobody knows everybody. And we keep meeting new people who have also lived here 30 or some years. So that's been fun. I think we brought you up to date [laughs].

M. CANNING: We've been ...

J. CANNING: We didn't mention our grandchildren, which is the light of our lives. The fact we have five. We now have five.

DEUTSCH: Oh my gosh, I'm so jealous.

J. CANNING: And our daughters don't live here.

DEUTSCH: And you grandchildren, where do they live?

J. CANNING: Skokie, Illinois, which is outside Chicago, near Evanston, and south of San Francisco. A suburb south of San Francisco.

M. CANNING: San Mateo.

J. CANNING: And they keep producing children so it's been ...

M. CANNING: Yeah, least lately.

J. CANNING: They're of an age [laughs] when this ...

DEUTSCH: That's what they do.

J. CANNING: ... yes, so we travel. We have to travel.

M. CANNING: That's the best.

DEUTSCH: You have to travel to visit the grandkids.

M. CANNING: Yeah, they come here.

J. CANNING: We travel there more than they come here.

M. CANNING: They're not as mobile as we are.

J. CANNING: Yeah. It's easier for us to travel.

M. CANNING: Yeah, we're not—our life is kind of defined.

J. CANNING: And that's really the happiest part of our lives right now is our grandkids. It's just such a kick. You can bore people to tears talking about it [laughs]. So I try not to.

M. CANNING: Yeah, we don't need to talk about it. It's for our own pleasure.

J. CANNING: I try not to. I just had to throw that out [whispers]. Because it's an important part of our lives.

DEUTSCH: Oh absolutely.

M. CANNING: One, another Hill event that we fell into but which we still cherish is we do a big Derby Day [Kentucky Derby] party every year in our back yards. In our back yard and our neighbor's. We inherited this when the former renter used to have a small Derby Day party to which we were invited and we used to attend. And then eventually another couple bought the house and we eventually built a new fence with a break through and combined them into one big party which we've been doing now for about a decade or more. And it think it will be ten years this year. It's the Fifth and A—sorry Stephanie—it's the Fifth and A nexus.

DEUTSCH: I was actually invited. Marsha Cromwell invited me the year we moved into our house.

J. CANNING: Well, oh.

M. CANNING: Oh really.

DEUTSCH: Because we moved in like three days before the party. And I went. I don't think David went. I went. I've been.

J. CANNING: Good, alright.

M. CANNING: Okay, okay so you've—fair enough.

J. CANNING: We don't mean to be exclusive.

M. CANNING: No.

J. CANNING: One year we figured we had more than 100 people and it was just too—it was just too ...

M. CANNING: [laughs] But anyway it's a good, fun day. It's in early May.

DEUTSCH: Do you serve Mint Juleps?

M. CANNING: We do, absolutely. That's one of the things that's a must. We always have Mint Juleps. We always have ham and biscuits. We have a terrific pot luck. It's the best pot luck on the Hill, I think, although other neighbors would say the same.

J. CANNING: [laughs] Everybody brings something.

M. CANNING: It's fabulous. The drinks are of every kind but it's really—and we have the event—we have TVs all over with the horse race going and—it's a big deal. We have great fun.

J. CANNING: There's a rumor that there's betting done, but we have no comment on that [both laugh].

DEUTSCH: One thing we didn't talk about was buying the second house.

J. CANNING: Dorothy Williams owned number 19 for many, many years. Probably since the 50s. And, actually Marsha Cromwell and I were involved in—she had a stroke in summer of ...

M. CANNING: '95.

J. CANNING: ... '95 and Marsha and I were involved in sort of helping—she had no family—anyhow, helping in the hospital and rehab and so forth. She did come home and she died a few months later. So, she left it to a woman who was like a daughter to her who had lived on the Hill but had moved to California many years since. Mary Lansing—and we came to know Mary like a daughter to Dorothy, very well because she was in and out of here. And we said to Mary; Mary inherited the house. Dorothy left the house to her. Mary said, "I'm never moving back here." I

said. “Mary, when you’re ready to sell the house, call me before you call a realtor.” [laughs] We did this deal on the phone. She called John Formant.

M. CANNING: In late ’06 [ed: must be ’96]

J. CANNING: Somebody from his office went to the, what do you call it?

M. CANNING: Title company.

J. CANNING: We went the title company without a lawyer, which everybody said you should never do. I mean we agreed on a price.

M. CANNING: On the phone.

J. CANNING: It was just done.

M. CANNING: It was the most—easiest Hill transaction that I think anyone has ever seen.

DEUTSCH: So you bought the house next door and turned them into one—created one big house.

J. CANNING: Well, that house had been two apartments for years and years and years. Even when Dorothy lived there it was two apartments. So we decided we didn’t want the upstairs. We wanted to expand on the first floor. We didn’t need more space upstairs. So we have kept the upstairs as a rental unit. And our current renter worked on the Obama [President Barack Obama] campaign. He’s now in the White House executive office [laughs].

M. CANNING: It was two years later in ’99 that we broke through, in the spring of ’99, and opened this dining room chunk and combined the downstairs.

J. CANNING: And we only took one wall down. So it was relatively inexpensive. We didn’t move plumbing or electrical stuff.

M. CANNING: No. Nothing. Yeah. It was a renovation done on time and on budget [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Must be the only one.

J. CANNING: Yeah. It was amazing. Everything worked out beautifully.

M. CANNING: And we have been enjoying it ever since.

J. CANNING: It’s great for entertaining. On Derby Day and we’ve been—other big events.

M. CANNING: Yeah it’s like your place. It’s very entertainable or has come to be anyway. Another reason we’re not going anywhere [laughs]. We’ve got too much invested in the house.

J. CANNING: I know your daughters are elsewhere and you think well when you're much older ideally you'd like to be near one of your kids, but with Capitol Hill Village now and—I guess we'll stay here. Who knows. You never know what's going to happen when you're really old.

M. CANNING: Right. Too many other connections.

J. CANNING: Make those decisions when you get there. But certainly with the Village there and if it thrives and continues to grow to be financially, you know, solid, we'll be able to stay in our house.

M. CANNING: Right. I'm sure we share the feelings, clichés of everybody else who has ever been honored about Capitol Hill. We feel exactly the same way. There's no better—I'm sure you've said something similar when—in your remarks as I remember them actually. That combination of urban life and urban vitality with neighborhood feel; can't beat it.

J. CANNING: Aren't we lucky? That's how I feel. Aren't we lucky to live here?

M. CANNING: You bet.

J. CANNING: To have bought when we decided to...

M. CANNING: [laughs] Oh yes.

J. CANNING: Here's the other thing I like to think. When we bought this house we bought it on one lowly government salary. I wasn't working. Mike was very junior. A junior government salary. And we were able to buy a house here.

M. CANNING: Yeah. That has changed.

DEUTSCH: That's too bad.

M. CANNING: Yeah, we lament that fact. As lucky as we were.

J. CANNING: On the other hand it surprises me how many young couples you do see who have been able to afford it.

M. CANNING: We ain't going nowhere [laughs].

DEUTSCH: Anything else you want to ...

M. CANNING: Any questions?

END OF INTERVIEW