

BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Mrs Beryl Juchau (née Eastop)

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Ronald Juchau retired 2nd December 1979.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MRS BERYL JUCHAU (NÉE EASTOP)
RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY PATRICK SALMON

Foreign Office career stages

Foreign Office Library	July 1939	
Foreign Office Cypher Room		
Washington	June 1944-March 1946	
Geneva for one month working at British Consulate on behalf of the UNRRA Conference	June/July 1946	
Resigned on marriage to Ronald Juchau	August 1948	
Postings thereafter as wife of Ronald Juchau:		
Oslo	1948-1951	
Budapest	1951-1953	
Lisbon	1953-1956	Son, Paul born 27.08.1955
Benghazi	1956-1958	Daughter, Claire born 26.06.1958
Home posting	1958-1962	
Milan	1962-1966	
Detroit	1966-1969	
Barcelona	1969-1973	
Home posting	1973-1977	
Alicante	1977-1979	
Ron retired	2 nd December 1979	

PS: This is Patrick Salmon and I'm sitting in Worthing talking to Mrs Beryl Juchau [on Thursday 16 February 2017] about her life in the Foreign Office and, Beryl, I'm going to start with your upbringing – your childhood even – and the background to your joining the Foreign Office.

BJ: I was born in Southgate – part of London – and when I was three years old we moved to a home in Hatfield, Hertfordshire. When I was eight a little sister came along and we had a lovely family: mother, father and two children, a dog and a cat. Very sadly, when I was ten my father died – he had meningitis – and our lives changed completely.

In those days there were very few benefits for widows, so my mother had to turn around and get a job. We had to sell our home, and our family were wonderful: I was then brought up partially with my grandparents and my sister was brought up with my mother's sister, an aunt. After a little while I then moved again to live with an aunt, by which time I had passed what in those days was called a scholarship, and I attended a grammar school in Southgate which was called Minchenden. And there I stayed for five years: I took what was called matriculation; but at the same time, on the advice of a friend's father, because I didn't know what I was going to do afterwards, I sat the Civil Service exam. That was in the April 1939 and out of the blue I heard that I'd passed the Civil Service exam; and one Saturday morning – and I must say here now I had not left school – it was in July, and along came a letter asking me to [short break in recording] . . . and this letter, to my delight and amazement, asked me to present myself on the following Monday morning at 9.30 to the Foreign Office: to the Library of the Foreign Office. I had not even left school. So I started my life in the Foreign Office.

Foreign Office Library, 1939

The part of the Library that I was designated to was not in the main building but in Queen Anne's Mansions, and there . . . [break in recording]

PS: We're just starting the recording again, and we've reached the point where Beryl joined the Library, working in Queen Anne's Mansions, and I was now going to ask Beryl: what was your

work at that time?

BJ: In those days we scrutinized – read – every newspaper and every edition from London and also the provinces – the Birmingham Post, the Glasgow Herald, the Yorkshire Post – and through doing this we selected which articles would be of interest to the various departments in the Foreign Office, i.e. the American Department, General Department, Far Eastern Department, and these press cuttings would then be sent across to the main building by King’s Messenger, probably twice daily, I think. There were five of us in this little department and I stayed there for a year. I learned a great deal of the day-to-day workings of the Foreign Office at that time, but I felt that I would like to be more involved since then – we’re talking now about 1940 – the war had turned quite frighteningly and . . .

PS: I’m going to interrupt you there because I want to ask a little bit more about your work with the press cuttings. How much guidance were you given: what were you told to look out for?

BJ: The head of department – there were only five of us, there were four of us and the head – who to be perfectly honest was a really rather aggressive Irishwoman, but never mind – and politically we must realise that this was the run-up to the war – I started in July and of course . . .

PS: Were they already worried about the idea that war might be coming?

BJ: Oh, everybody knew the war was coming, yes. We’d had the business in 1938 when Neville Chamberlain thought it was peace in our time, poor man, so everybody knew, already. I think the air raid wardens started and all those sort of things because everybody knew it was going to happen and therefore . . . It was also known as the Phoney War because nothing happened: there were no air raids or anything like that then, and none of us knew what was going to happen in the future of course, and perhaps it was just as well that we didn’t.

PS: Did you at that time have any contact with the main part of the Library: did you ever go into the main building?

BJ: No, and that was one of the reasons why I put in for a transfer because I wanted to be there.

PS: So you never came across the famous Librarian Sir Stephen Gaselee?

BJ: No, I didn't, although there was a story going round that Sir Stephen wore red socks, which in those days was quite unusual!

PS: I believe that was true, that story. So the Library got too boring for you, basically: so what did you do then – what did you apply to do instead of the Library?

Foreign Office Cypher Room, 1940-1944

BJ: Well, I put in an application for a job in the Cypher Room. And, the Cypher Room being part of Communications Department, I was very delighted when I was moved to part of the Communications Department which was called the Editors and Distribution Department. There were three departments in the Communications Department: the Cypher Room, the Typing Pool and then latterly, coming along, the Editorial, where we read the finished article which had been typed and then distributed – the copies – into the red boxes for His Majesty the King, the Prime Minister, everybody. There were lots and lots of boxes – I can't tell you how many – but this is how it was.

PS: So it was a very intensive operation?

BJ: It was intensive and we didn't work 9 to 5, we worked 24 hours but on different shifts.

PS: So you might have been working through the night sometimes?

BJ: Oh yes, in fact, as the air raids became worse and it became more and more difficult to get to the Office in time for the shift, the Office provided bunk beds in the basement of the India Office, and we did 12-hour shifts with a 4-hour rest period, and therefore we slept in the basement of the India Office and it didn't do much for one's digestive system I must say: but we

all did it and it was very necessary.

PS: Thinking about food, where did they feed you in the Foreign Office: was there a canteen?

BJ: There was a chap called Dave who came in and would bring the most unsuitable sort of things for the night shift. However, it kept us going: sandwiches and whatever was available. You must remember that this time food was starting to get quite short, in wartime. Also I personally took sandwiches. I was living at that time with a friend of mine who had been posted into the Wrens and her very dear parents, who lived in Palmers Green, had offered me her room, and I lived there, which was very happy from my point of view because by this time my mother was now living in Huntingdon and I wasn't able to move there.

PS: Were you in danger of being bombed: were there bombing raids over the Foreign Office?

BJ: Yes, very much so.

PS: Where did you go when the bombs fell: to an air raid shelter?

BJ: Well, further down the line, when it became too difficult to work on the first floor, then the Cypher Room, in fact Communications Department, were moved down into the basement of the Foreign Office.

PS: I see, so where were they on the first floor when you first joined: what part of the building?

BJ: The Cypher Room was where the Locarno Room is now.

PS: So they divided the Locarno Room?

BJ: The Locarno Room was divided – partitioned – into the three departments. And yes, it was not particularly popular to have to move downstairs, but it was safe. I know the lighting was appalling; the air was almost impossible: it was sort of reconditioned air. I know at one point

that the Secretary of State, who was Anthony Eden, came down quite often – but I know he came down this particular time and was asked ‘What do you think of the air, sir?’ And his reply was ‘What air?’ And it was not good but we just got on with it; it was necessary – we were incredibly busy. You must remember at this time that all European capitals were under German rule apart from Stockholm and Lisbon, Bern and the Vatican, so it was busy-busy but in a different sense.

PS: We are just resuming the recording, and at this point we had got to the end of your work in the Communications Department. When did that come to an end and why did you leave?

BJ: Again, by this time I was working in the Cypher Room: I had moved from the Distribution Room and I was enjoying it tremendously despite the discomfort of being in the basement of the Foreign Office; and at this time our Embassy in Washington were needing staff because the war had escalated so much, and so every few weeks four members of the Cypher Room – and we were all female of course by that time – were moving out to Washington, and in June 1944 I was one of those four, with Miss Henwood, Doris Bastin and Dorothy Hegarty. And we left England – or Euston Station – on the 16th of June 1944 to travel to Glasgow and there we boarded the Queen Mary and this was absolutely amazing in my view. I had never travelled further than the Isle of Wight and to board a beautiful ocean liner on the Clyde was like a dream.

Cypher Officer, Washington, June 1944-March 1946

We sailed quite far south and zig-zagged the Atlantic because there was a threat of U-boat attack and we arrived in New York on, I think it was, the 23rd or 24th of June. Part of our cargo – if you can call it cargo – was a lot of young German prisoners-of-war. You must remember that this was not long after D-Day, and these young men were being taken to Ellis Island, and that again made quite an impression on me. I spent two days in New York – we had to go to the Consulate to draw some money – and we had no idea where we were going to stay, but Caroline [Haslett], a famous authoress [probably a pioneer electrical engineer, who wrote several books:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_Haslett] who was on board, was very kind, and she advised us to stay in the Hotel McAlpin, where we stayed, it was all very safe; and we enjoyed the sights of New York, and then took the train down to Washington where a very dear friend of

mine, Wilfred Thomas, with whom I had worked in the Foreign Office, had arranged for me to share an apartment on 17th Street with a Canadian girl and another English girl. Then I started my life as a cypher officer in the British Embassy in Washington.

PS: What was it like working in the Embassy in those days? It must have been a huge organisation.

BJ: Very, very busy: it was equally as busy in a way as the Foreign Office. We worked four-day shifts: we worked four days and had four days off. It was extremely busy, as you can see by the photographs: there were an enormous amount of staff. Lord Halifax was our Ambassador and he and Lady Halifax were very, very kind. I was incredibly homesick my first few weeks: it seemed such a long way away from everything I knew and understood and without kind people like the Halifaxes it would have been very difficult to have coped, I think.

PS: What did the Halifaxes do for people like you?

BJ: Well, one example is that when we did night duty – and there would be only four of us doing night duty – Lord Halifax would come and sit on a desk and chat to us, and reassure us that all was well at home – whether it was or not! And they would invite us any time there was a celebration like Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving: they would invite any single girl to share with them – they were like a surrogate mother and father in a way. I was very young and became very happy there: I enjoyed it. My social life got better as time went on.

PS: What could you do socially in Washington at that time?

BJ: A lot of it was due to the Americans. They are, as you know, a very hospitable race, and a lot of them who lived in – I'm not talking about people who worked in the Embassy – just American families who lived, a lot of them, in Chevy Chase in Maryland, would ring the Embassy and say if there are any English girls – British girls – who are lonely, we would be happy to entertain them. And this is how I made friends: and I made one particular friend – her name was Dorothy Batdorf – and we used to play tennis on the tennis court in the Embassy and we would go to the

movies, we would go out to eat, and I kept the friendship with Dorothy for many years: so much so that when as a family we were living in Milan, Dorothy came out and stayed with us for a while, which was very lovely. Other social events: I visited Stors in Connecticut in the autumn to see the autumn colours, and that was to the cousin of a friend of mine at home. I visited Columbus, Ohio, with a friend from the Embassy – we stayed on a farm; and I also remember with a great deal of happiness visiting Wisconsin, which is a beautiful State, and it is no wonder that Norwegian Americans all settle in Wisconsin: it has lakes and pine forests – beautiful. That was a lot of my social life . . .

PS: That sounds wonderful.

BJ: I did do some work!

PS: Let's go back to the work: let's go back to Embassy. Who did you come across in the Embassy apart from Lord and Lady Halifax? What about the other senior officials there? Do you remember any of those?

BJ: Well, as I say, Donald Maclean . . .

PS: Donald Maclean is the obvious name . . .

BJ: He was Head of Chancery.

PS: What was he like as a person?

BJ: He was very, very nice.

PS: Everybody says that, yes.

BJ: And I remember, I hadn't been in the Embassy very long and – this is very mundane – I was wearing a grey skirt and a little red jacket, and he and I seemed arrive at the Embassy gate

together, and he said ‘Good morning, you’re Miss Eastop aren’t you?’ And I said yes, and he said ‘You look very smart today’. So I said ‘Thank you very much.’ He was such a kind person.

PS: That’s good to know. And did you come across his wife and family as well?

BJ: Yes, his wife, and he had two small sons: one of them was Fergus; I don’t remember the other son’s name. And they would invite us – again, on a Sunday, if you were doing nothing, you would come and have a sherry or even lunch.

PS: She was American, wasn’t she?

BJ: Yes, she was. I believe she left him for Kim Philby . . . along the line.

PS: Yes, I think she did, but much later, in Moscow.

BJ: Yes, much later. I find it very difficult to understand how it happened.

PS: Of course the time he was in Washington, when you were there, was about his maximum time as a Soviet agent: it was when he was most busy, and actually most effective.

BJ: Yes, exactly.

PS: Then he moved on after the war to Cairo where he was already breaking up.

BJ: Yes, I think that’s what happened.

PS: So the tension was enormous for him. But everyone who worked with him says the same as you. And I’ve read memoirs which say the same.

BJ: Yes, and he came from a lovely family. I believe his mother’s family came from Hertfordshire, a place called Much Hadham.

PS: That's right – and his father had been a government minister very briefly: Sir Donald Maclean.

BJ: Unbelievable, quite unbelievable.

PS: And nobody at that time could have imagined such behaviour.

BJ: No, absolutely not. I could almost say that one felt, in his company, comfortable, really comfortable. And – one other thing I did – I learnt to ride; there were stables quite near us in Rock Creek Park and I used to enjoy riding. And you're young so you do everything that's available, just like they do these days.

PS: So you had very busy office life and a very active social life.

BJ: Yes.

PS: Is there anything else we should talk about, about your Washington years?

BJ: Well, there's one thing I would like to say. As you know, the colour bar was still . . .

PS: Very much operative?

BJ: Very much there. We didn't notice it in Washington DC but if one took a bus from Washington DC across the Potomac to Virginia, which I did several times because I had friends in Virginia, there was a white line at the back of the bus which all the black people on that bus had to get behind before the bus reached Virginia. And that I felt was unbelievably awful. But apart from that, most of the time I spent in Northern parts, so I didn't go South at all, so I didn't know what else went on.

PS: Did other people feel uncomfortable about that, do you think, other people in the Embassy?

Did you talk about it?

BJ: I don't think we discussed it; and the friends I was visiting in Virginia . . . an uncle of mine worked in the Civil Aeronautics Association, and at the same time I was in Washington he was in Montreal, but he had friends in Virginia and he had introduced me to them and that's how I was going there.

PS: We're just resuming our interview after lunch. I'm Patrick Salmon and I'm interviewing Beryl Juchau. And we've really got mostly to the end of your time in the United States, and one thing I was going to ask you about first was your return journey. When did you actually leave America?

BJ: I arrived in Southampton on the 26th of March 1946 and I was relieved and happy to be home in my dear country but it was a sad country after the privations of such a long war.

PS: Which ship did you sail back on?

BJ: The Queen Mary.

PS: Was that the same ship as you went out on?

BJ: Yes, it was.

PS: And this was the same time as Winston Churchill visited America . . .

BJ: Yes, it was.

PS: Were you perhaps on the same ship coming back?

BJ: I think he may have been, I really can't say definitely but I know that as we docked we were all asked to wait a while . . .

PS: . . . While somebody special got off the ship?

BJ: Yes, exactly.

PS: Because this was only a few weeks after his speech at Fulton, Missouri.

BJ: Yes, that's right.

PS: And actually, jumping about a bit, I notice that among your photographs you have a photograph of Clement Attlee visiting Washington, but that was somewhat earlier, wasn't it: when the Prime Minister visited Washington?

BJ: That's right. I think he came . . . I'm sorry, I can't actually remember; it wasn't that long after the general election.

PS: Yes, we can easily check the date. But it was nice to see that photograph, and all the other photographs that you showed me.

BJ: OK, so you're back on soil in Great Britain. Were you still working for the Foreign Office at that point?

BJ: Yes, I was, and I took some leave that was due to me and then a little later there was an UNRRA conference to be held in Geneva, and I was sent to work for a very short time at our Consulate in Geneva, which is beautifully situated on the shores of Lake Geneva, which was a very happy three weeks, I think it was, I remember.

PS: What sort of work were you doing there: the same?

BJ: Cyphering.

PS: Cyphering again. So that came to an end. Back to Britain again?

BJ: Yes.

PS: What did you do then?

Foreign Office Cypher Room, 1946-48

BJ: I worked in the Cypher Room back in the Foreign Office. Again, it was a busy time but nothing like as busy as it had been during the war, of course.

PS: Did you notice any other changes in the Foreign Office by that time?

BJ: Not really. No, we were still working in the same situation in the Locarno Room. And we were still sending people abroad: we had a lot of peacetime work to do, of course. By that time the United Nations had been formed in San Francisco, and there was a lot of work involving that.

PS: When you left London, Anthony Eden was Foreign Secretary; when you came back, Ernest Bevin was Foreign Secretary. Did you notice a difference of atmosphere?

BJ: I think it wasn't quite as matey, if I can put it like that!

PS: Ernest Bevin was less matey than Anthony Eden?

BJ: I think that was possibly because it was during the war . . .

PS: So the Foreign Office became more formal again?

BJ: Yes, very much so.

PS: Were you conscious of any other senior people around the building at that time?

BJ: Not really, no. I can't really recall . . .

PS: Because you would have been walking in and out of the corridor very close to the Foreign Secretary's office . . .

BJ: No, it was a little more as I suppose the Foreign Office would have been prior to the war. But it was enjoyable nevertheless, and I found myself a bedsitter in Alma Square which was very near the Office and near Lord's cricket ground, which was a great love of mine . . . And life became very pleasant. By this time I had become quite friendly with Ronald.

PS: Tell me a bit about Ronald, then. When did he join the Foreign Office?

BJ: He joined the Foreign Office in May 1946.

PS: So just a year after the end of the war.

BJ: Yes, just a few months after I came back from the United States. Then he, too, was sent to what I think was a Board of Trade conference – there were lots of conferences after the war – and I think he was, too, sent to Geneva and I was very envious of him because they stayed at the Beau Rivage. We were the poor relations!

PS: Were you both there in Geneva at the same time?

BJ: No, and he was there for a much longer time.

PS: And what was his job?

BJ: He was a Cypher Officer.

PS: Another Cypher Officer. But his background had been . . .

BJ: In the Royal Signals in the Army.

PS: Was his signals training of value when he started in the Foreign Office?

BJ: Very much so: in fact I think it was one of the reasons when he was discharged from the Army he didn't know what to do and he thought 'Signals, Army, Foreign Office: maybe there's some connection.' And that's how it happened.

PS: So you met Ron . . . When did you get married?

BJ: We were married in August 1948 and at that time, I must say, women had to resign on marriage! Which was very, very tiresome as far as I was concerned.

PS: And do you know how long that marriage bar lasted?

BJ: I don't know.

PS: Until the 1970s.

BJ: Did it really? As long as that! Yes, it seems a bit unfair but there we are, that was the rule in those days.

PS: So when you left the Foreign Office did you take another job or did you just become a housewife?

BJ: Well, exactly. Our first posting – we were married, as I say, in August, and on September 24th we were on our way to Oslo.

Oslo, 1948-51

PS: What was it that led Ron to get the job in Oslo?

BJ: He was posted abroad.

PS: Did he have any choice in the matter, or was it simply where you were sent?

BJ: It was simply where he was sent. I suppose it's the same now: you went where you were sent, no questions asked.

PS: I think there's a little more freedom now. So his entire career was being sent from one place to another?

BJ: Yes, and it was a very happy time. Norway was a sad country: it had been occupied by the Germans all those years; but we enjoyed our time there – the Embassy was a happy place; it was quite busy. I found the winters a little bit depressing – so many dark . . . about two hours of light, that was all. But the summers were gorgeous, and we did quite a bit of travelling, and our time there was really very pleasant. We made very good friends.

PS: British and Norwegian friends?

BJ: Yes, they were very, very friendly towards us. I did do some English teaching: teaching some young Norwegian girls, which was quite interesting; a very unofficial sort of thing, but it was very enjoyable.

PS: So when you went to Norway in those days how did you get there? There were no flights in those days.

BJ: There were no flights at all. We took a train from King's Cross to Newcastle and then we sailed – I think it was a Svenska Lloyd ship – to Bergen; and then, again, we took a train from

Bergen – not direct to Oslo: you couldn't do that – you had to go via Sweden and via Stockholm and back to Oslo. And we found a flat fairly quickly, but it was a shared flat: we shared with a gentleman whose name was Olav Aalholm and it wasn't ideal, but we were just the two of us and we enjoyed it, and it was on a street called Jakob Aalls gate. We travelled everywhere by tram until we saved enough money to buy a car. Once we had the car we were able to see a lot more of Norway.

PS: That was quite intrepid in those days – the roads weren't very good, I suppose?

BJ: No!

PS: Did you have many dealings with the senior people in the Embassy: the Ambassador and people like that?

BJ: Not really. Sir Laurence Collier was the Ambassador. Prince Charles was born – we hadn't been there very long when he was born – and the Ambassador gave a lovely celebration party; and Field-Marshal Montgomery visited – I think everybody was on tenterhooks as to what everybody was going to say – however, it was very pleasant.

PS: Because the Norwegians were very close to Britain in those days . . .

BJ: Yes, very much so. They almost looked on us as liberators.

PS: In some ways we were, yes. And they had been in London throughout the war, of course . . . So you came to Norway in 1948, and when did you leave Norway?

BJ: 1951. And then we were transferred to Budapest.

Budapest, 1951-53

PS: That must have been a huge contrast.

BJ: Completely: and in fact, to be very honest, I had no idea what it was going to be like in Budapest. Budapest itself scenically is a beautiful city, but the situation that we found ourselves in was anything but beautiful. We were shadowed all the time, we were confined to just 18 kilometres from the centre of Budapest and no further. Our car number-plates were bright yellow with blue figures so that everyone could see who we were. However, there was very little else on the roads – donkeys and carts and large Communist cars, that was all, really.

PS: Where did you live in Budapest?

BJ: We lived in a very lovely villa on Gellért-hegy, which is in Buda; the office was in fact in Pest on the other side of the Danube. And it was a very pleasant villa: we had a lovely garden with apricot trees, all sorts of lovely flowers. But the saddest thing was that the villa owners, who were no longer the owners, since in the Communist world all properties are nationalized: those owners lived in the basement of the house, and there was a mother and father, married son and daughter and two little children living in the basement, and we were rattling around in the rest of the house. It all seemed very unfair to me. They were very, very kind, but very short of food, and very short of freedom.

PS: Were you able to give them anything: any food?

BJ: In those days, if you weren't a card-carrying member of the Communist Party you didn't buy food or you bought it on the black market.

PS: How did you get food as part of the Embassy?

BJ: In those days the British Army, as well as the Americans and I suppose the Russians, were still in Vienna. And therefore, because the British Army were there, NAAFI were there. And so once a month one of the local Hungarian drivers would drive a van to Vienna, complete with a shopping list for basic things like flour and sugar, tea and coffee . . . I even learned to make my own bread, which was quite useful. Also we bought canned food there: canned milk and canned

fruit and stuff. So we were very fortunate in that respect: much more fortunate than the Hungarians. I believe in the old days they used to be called the fruit forest of Europe. Well, poor things, their fruit and vegetables, on the whole, all went back east.

PS: So when did you leave Hungary?

BJ: We left Hungary in 1953: we were there for two years.

PS: That was the height of the Communitisation process.

BJ: Yes, and the Revolution started in 1956, and I remember so plainly shopping in the market, perhaps for the odd lettuce or something like that, and there was a lot of German spoken among older Hungarians, and I remember this particular lady said ‘When are you coming to save us?’ And we didn’t in 1956.

PS: No, absolutely not. So that was really quite a traumatic period?

BJ: Oh, it was very traumatic. I’d never realised what Communism really meant until I saw it . . . it was tragic. We had two occurrences at the Legation, as it was then. One of the girls who worked as a translator, and her name was Marie – I became quite friendly with her, although we were advised not to be too friendly with people – she suddenly didn’t come to the office any more. And she never did come to the office any more. And one never knew what happened to her. And exactly the same happened with one of the van drivers. It was unbelievable.

PS: But the Embassy itself, or Legation as it was . . . Who was your Ambassador, who was in charge then?

BJ: It was Robin Hankey.

PS: And what was he like as an Ambassador?

BJ: He was lovely. It wasn't an Embassy, it was a Legation, so he was the Minister. And whilst we were there the King died – King George VI died – and we arranged quite a large memorial service for him in the bank building that doubled as the Legation, and invitations were sent to all the Hungarian notables in their government . . . We thought they wouldn't come but they all attended, and then later, of course, it was the Queen's Coronation and we had a lovely ceremony for that, and again all the Hungarian Communists came . . .

PS: Well, they knew they were going to get a decent meal, I suppose at that point!

BJ: We were allowed – and when I say allowed it really was a question of being permitted: you had to put in an advice note to the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Commission to travel to Vienna – and we did this probably every three or four months – and that was like paradise.

PS: Even under quite strict occupation conditions?

BJ: Absolutely, yes. We had to drive without stopping, which was quite difficult because there was very little petrol: you had to make sure you had your petrol, and up to Hegyeshalom, which was on the Austro-Hungarian border, and then on into the bright lights of Vienna, which really were absolutely lovely, and it was such a happy time. We would stay in almost the best hotel that we could afford; we would visit the opera. The opera house had been pretty devastated during the war, but they had done a pretty good job on it, and it was fully up and running by the time we were there; there was lots of lovely food and one time coming back on a Sunday evening we had bought our Sunday newspapers in Vienna; we arrived at the border and the border guards did nothing but take away our Sunday papers and destroy them in front of us – and for that Mr Hankey made an official protest to the Hungarian Foreign Affairs.

PS: Because you should have had diplomatic immunity, shouldn't you? They should not have tampered with your goods?

BJ: No, they shouldn't have done it. That was one little episode. Otherwise we became very close friends with the Americans and Swiss – they were the only other Westerners there – and in

fact it was the time when Cardinal Mindszenty had taken refuge in the American legation there, in fear of his life, of course. And among our own colleagues we became great friends simply because we felt that we needed something other than this tremendous lack of freedom. If you haven't freedom, you have nothing.

[Break in recording]

PS: We are just starting again, and we were finishing talking about Budapest, and of course Ron then went on to a number of other positions. Could you give me a quick idea of the sort of jobs he had, the places worked?

BJ: When we left Budapest we were posted to Lisbon, where again he was the archivist, and we were in Lisbon for two years, and then Benghazi, where we were from 1955 to 1958, and that was during the time of King Idris: that was before Colonel Gaddafi. Ron then became the 'elevated' Vice-Consul. It was a very small Vice-Consulate because the main Embassy was in Tripoli. But the Ambassador, although he mostly stayed in Tripoli, did come to Benghazi for just a few weeks, and that was so that the Cyrenaicans didn't feel like the poor relations compared to the Tripolitarians.

PS: So nothing has changed then?

BJ: No! Then we had a home posting after Benghazi. Benghazi is where my daughter Claire was born: she was born in the Seventh Day Adventists' Mission in Benghazi, run by the Americans who were absolutely lovely; and then when she was ten weeks old and Paul was three, I flew back and Ron came back by car and boat home. We had four happy years at home.

PS: Where was Ron working at that time?

BJ: In the Foreign Office; he was in Consular Department.

PS: Where were you living then?

BJ: We lived in a little place called Emerson Park, which is near Romford: Romford-Brentwood area. And it was very convenient: there was a small railway which took him to the main station at Romford, and then up to Liverpool Street, and I think Dr Beeching came along and closed that little railway later on: I'm not sure about that.

PS: So that home tour ended in 1962, and where did you go after that?

BJ: Milan: we were posted to Milan.

Milan, 1962-66

PS: What was Ron's job there?

BJ: He was First Secretary and Consul. But there were three Consuls: there was Ronald and there was a Cultural Consul and there was a Commercial Consul.

PS: So that was a pretty big post?

BJ: It was a very big posting and the head of post was Consul-General: Peter Stephens. It was a very busy posting, and during the time we were there the powers that be held a British trade fair which was very interesting: the Duke of Edinburgh came out as did Anthony Armstrong-Jones.

PS: . . . Who had just married or was about to marry Princess Margaret?

BJ: That's right. In fact he had married her, because their daughter Sarah had just been born. It was a busy, busy posting. The children attended the international school there, and lots of Americans there too. We enjoyed Milan and more especially we enjoyed getting out of Milan and when I say that I mean we were so near Lake Como, and even Maggiore and Garda. We had a fabulous time there, and at the same time very busy. Lots of entertaining, which was enjoyable: I was lucky enough at various parties to meet one or two quite important people.

PS: Important Italians?

BJ: No, most of them important opera singers! A lot of Italians too: we had a lot of Italian friends. We used to try to get down to the Adriatic for the summer time because Milan gets very hot and very humid in the summertime and the children were quite small. I used to go down to Rimini on the Adriatic coast, and we also visited other parts: Florence, Venice of course, Rome. But Milan itself was a very busy city and very enjoyable: I loved my time there. We learned Italian: Italian is a beautiful language and easy to learn; and, strangely enough, we went on to Barcelona later on: I found Spanish much more difficult. It's similar but much more difficult.

PS: After Milan, your next posting was . . .

BJ: Detroit

Detroit, 1966-69

PS: And you went there in 1966.

BJ: Yes.

PS: And what was Ron's job there?

BJ: He was First Secretary and Consul.

PS: That was an interesting time to be in America.

BJ: It was very interesting in two or three ways. It was in those days a very industrial city. All the outer-lying parts of Detroit: the automobile industry was really at the top of it: Chrysler, General Motors, Ford. And very wealthy people who were all involved in the automobile industry lived in Grosse Pointe, which is where we lived. And downtown Detroit was a pretty

sad place: it was at the time of the race riots, unfortunately.

PS: So you were aware of them happening?

BJ: Oh, very much so. There was curfew: we weren't allowed to be out after a certain time; it was quite a dangerous time, particularly for Americans. A sad time too, really. And it was sad because some years afterwards we returned to Detroit on holiday to stay with some neighbours of ours where they had built really nice little urbanisations for the black people who were there with cars in their garages and their front yards all like little gardens, and that wasn't that many years afterwards.

PS: So things got better . . .

BJ: They got much better – then of course recently it has gone down quite badly.

PS: And the Vietnam War was of course reaching its height: did that impinge on your life or work?

BJ: No, not really. And there was a Presidential election while we were there, when President Nixon won the election. Yes, it was a very interesting time and we enjoyed America and the Americans, and saw how sad some of it could be.

Barcelona, 1969-73

PS: So the next place was Barcelona. Did you move straight to Barcelona from Detroit?

BJ: No, we had a home posting . . . No, I'm sorry, in 1969 we left Detroit for Barcelona.

PS: So that was quite a big change.

BJ: Yes, it was: a tremendous change, I can tell you! Not a happy change as far as I was

concerned because it was then that the children had to come home to school.

PS: So they had gone to local schools up to that point?

BJ: Yes, they went to the international school in Milan and they went to American schools in the United States.

PS: But they got to the point where you really felt they had to be educated in Britain?

BJ: Yes, because we didn't know whether there would be continuity of education anywhere else. Had we known, there is an English school in Barcelona, but that wouldn't really have suited Paul – so Claire went to a school in Bexhill, Charters Towers, which I believe is no longer there, and Paul went to a school in Northiam, which is now known as Frewen College, but in those days it was known as Brickwall.

PS: So from 1969 when you went to Barcelona both the children were in boarding school.

BJ: Both the children were in boarding school, yes.

PS: Could you see them often? Barcelona is not that far away.

BJ: No, it isn't, and I did a lot of commuting, and in fact we bought a small apartment, believe it or not, just over here, so that there was an anchor here. They couldn't come out for every holiday.

PS: They came out for some holidays?

BJ: Oh yes, they came for Easter and summer, and we were here for Christmas. And again, Barcelona was a big and busy city.

PS: Was it a busy Consulate as well?

BJ: Yes, a very busy Consulate.

PS: This was the last years of Franco, wasn't it? Franco died shortly after you left, I should think.

BJ: Yes, Franco was still in power when we arrived. There again, it wasn't anything like Budapest but it was quite well disciplined in that . . . no more than fifteen people gathering together and all that sort of thing.

PS: And of course Catalonia was a famous place of opposition.

BJ: Yes, exactly. But it was an interesting time and I enjoyed it as much as I was there, but I wasn't there all the time, of course.

PS: And then after Barcelona you did have a period at home again.

BJ: After Barcelona we were home for four years, yes.

PS: And what was Ron doing then?

BJ: Ron was working back in the Foreign Office, in Consular Department, and he was in fact quite involved in problems with football hooligans: the Foreign Office took it under their wing to . . .

PS: British football hooligans abroad: with their behaviour?

BJ: Yes. I don't want to name any particular one, but let's say Leeds United or Liverpool United fans going out to play Rome. There were a lot of problems and that had to be solved somehow, and Ron was given the job of trying to sort it out. In fact it worked quite well in the end.

Everybody knows: the bottom line is alcohol. And as long as they could keep the fans away from

the alcohol it worked!

PS: So basically he helped to solve that problem. That alone is quite an important achievement. And then his last posting was in . . .

Alicante, 1977-79

BJ: Alicante. Alicante had been an honorary Consulate, and a chap called George Outhwaite, a lovely gentleman, had run it in the most terrible sort of offices: to have the Union Jack outside was quite frightening! However, the powers that be again decided that it should now be a career Consulate because of the amount of British people who were living in the province. It's a huge province and there were 35-45,000 expats living there with the attendant problems that you get when elderly people move to a foreign country and one of them dies. And so you've got hospitalization, or trying to get them home, or in many cases they couldn't afford to come home because what they had to buy at home . . . they'd not be able to pay for what they'd get for their apartment, whatever. So it was a busy post: Ron was only there for two years. Our Ambassador in Rome [Madrid] was Antony Acland and they came and visited us: Lady Acland – she sadly died, Ann Acland: I think he remarried.

PS: Yes, he did.

BJ: She was a lovely lady; and we were lucky: we made again a number of friends; Ron was very busy with all sorts of problems. I too was able to help: there was an organization called Help which had been started by an ex-diplomat who lived in Javea whose name I cannot remember: Charles somebody. And that meant if people were hospitalized – in Spanish hospitals then, maybe now, you were nursed but there was nothing else: so they needed people to help with feeding, washing, all the attendant things for someone who's hospitalized – and I spent quite a lot of time in local hospitals with local people whilst we were there, which was good: it was good to have something to do. I don't know now – I think there may have been a care home opened in the area somewhere, I'm not sure.

PS: For British people?

BJ: Yes: it might be something to do with the Red Cross, I'm not sure. So we left – Ron's birthday is the 2nd of December, so on the 2nd of December he was 60.

PS: And in those days you had to retire at 60.

BJ: And we came home. And that was the end of a very varied and interesting career. And our son has always said travel was his best educator, and it really is.

PS: Well, I think we are reaching the end, and it's been a fascinating conversation, but I'm just wondering if there's anything else you'd like to add, reflecting on your life?

BJ: All I can say is that as far as I was concerned it was a happy life.

PS: As far as you are concerned, it's a good institution . . .

BJ: It's a good institution. It may be different, it may be very different . . .

PS: But it served you well?

BJ: That's right. I must just say, Patrick, that when I first started in the Foreign Office in 1939 – July – gentlemen were wearing black trousers and waistcoats and hats. And when we went back many years later, there they were in jeans and t-shirts!

PS: Well, you were probably there on dress-down Friday! That's one of the great innovations: that you can dress down on Friday. . . But the rest of the week we tend to wear suits . . . and a tie. So we are still fairly respectable.

BJ: Well, I can tell you if you walked across to the care home where my dear husband is now, he will be sitting there in his Middlesex Yeomanry tie. He says 'I don't feel dressed if I've not got

a tie on!'

PS: Well, good for him.

BJ: I wish you could meet him! He was a very good sportsman: he played loads of squash; he played tennis until he was 75; he latterly played golf – not very well. He played cricket for the Embassy team when we lived in Lisbon; he painted pictures very, very well, and did so many things – was a Rotarian. And now it's as much as he can do to get into a wheelchair. Sad.

PS: It is very, very sad. However, he had a very rewarding career: a very useful career?

BJ: Very much so, and when he's home that's all we do: reminisce. If we can remember people's names!

PS: I think we'll stop the recording there. I must thank you, Beryl, it's been a fascinating experience: my very first experience of interviewing anybody. I've been very lucky, I think, having you.