

Quotes from Interviews

About the Project

- I. Format
- II. Issues

- A. Restlessness

(X: 32:02:27-)

One of the things that keeps coming up is...curiosity about the other, but also a sense of restlessness...men for centuries...having the choice to go overseas, but for we women...it's a brand new thing [for such greater numbers of us choosing to live overseas] so I'm curious to see how people are coping.

(X: 42:18:00-42:27:00)

How with greater amounts of choice, you have greater expectations...

Pre-Wired

- I. Personality Descriptors

- A. Patsy (T: 10:57:00-11:06:00)

I think I'm a gypsy. Really. I enjoy it.

- B. Judith (W: 35:07:00-35:11:00)

I'm a floater. I could stay here, or I could not.

- C. Elaine (V: 11:55:02-12:29:28)

I don't know if I was prewired, but I think, certainly if your parents have come from overseas, it makes a big difference. My dad's from India; my mom's from Britian. My dad moved away when he was 20 to go to Britian. Met my mother. Got married. So in my family, it wasn't a big thing if you traveled because we were always traveling throughout the summer, we had relatives in different places, and I had a British passport too...it was always in the background...

- D. Cathy (W: 43:51:00-43:53:28)

...but I like temporary...

- E. Andrea (Y:

No, I didn't think that. I can't imagine being anywhere for the rest of my life...when I was telling my mom that I was going to a job fair, she said...we're surprised that you're still in the U.S. anyways...

- II. Tales from Childhood

- A. Pam (D1: 12:52:20-13:32:00)

I was raised in a Southern Baptist tradition...and every summer, we had the missionaries come talk about these places all over the world. And I sat there with my mouth and my eyes as big as they could be, listening and taking it all in. And I would sit outside on my doorstep at night and watch the planes go by, thinking, I want to be on those planes. That's where I want to be. I want to be as far away from this spot on earth as possible.

- B. Sharon (D1: 13:45:26-15:54:14)

I remember the first time I went home to tell my parents that I was going to live overseas...I had a set of geography books that had belonged to my grandfather...they were actually published right before the turn of the

century...I do have them now...I would flip through those, and I was just entranced.

Why Overseas

I. Career

A. Dierdre (T: 04:51:00-05:09:00, 05:40:20-06:01:00)

What prompted me to go overseas? It was the glass ceiling...I'd gone as far as I could. Been at the school for a long time. Loved the school. Loved being there...I kept on applying for jobs at school, and the headmaster and all of the leadership positions were taken by males...I couldn't get any further so I decided to look elsewhere.

B. Sheila (B1: 41:01:11-41:50:15)

I'd done everything I'd wanted to in the States [by her mid to late 30's]...where I was administratively was good...education-wise I was working on my doctorate, but decided I didn't want a doctorate. Instead...I have 3 masters degrees so I broadened it instead of deepening it...I had properties I had invested in...the school I was working at was progressive...but I needed something more.

II. Escape

A. Barb W (D1: 02:31:01-03:13:00)

I gotta escape. And I thought what do I love best. The most fun I've ever had in my life was when I went to Europe for a summer...and I thought, I gotta get overseas.

B. Lorraine (V: 26:38:00-27:57:00)

Part of mine, initially, when I left, was that I didn't like it at home. I had a slightly difficulty family. Now I'm close to my family, but I wasn't close to family then. I went to university as far away as I could go and still stay in the same country, and I would go home maybe once a year. So I think, at least initially, it was getting away from something that wasn't a great situation.

C. Cindy (B1: 30:20:00-31:14:17)

My mother was the youngest of 7 children, again a very poor family, and she very keenly felt her disadvantage. And so I think I grew up under the shadow of her wishing she had more or better...I don't think she every meant to communicate that to me, but I saw it indirectly in the things that she didn't say or do. My mother is not a risk-taker, in the slightest, and I saw that and even though I was a very fearful child, I kept thinking that I gotta at least take a chance because this is what happens if you don't take a chance.

D. Kendra (S: 46:37:00-47:10:00)

But it was scary. You know, I made out a will...I mean a real will, not one that I did by hand. She [my daughter] was kinda like, what's that all about? And I said, I'm on the other side of the world. I said, I need to know that everything's ok. It's not like we're just 6 hours away on an airplane. This is a bit further. And plus, it's about time that I do something like this. But I think we both realize that risk is what a good life is all about.

III. Escape Expectations

A. Kathy B (W: 48:48:00-49:37:16)

Just society seemed to expect that you're suppose to get married, and after a certain interval, you're supposed to have your children, and then...you go down this one line. I think that's why I can't stand our current Prime Minister in Australia because to me he's trying to get back to that time where you are trapped in a 1950's time warp...the little woman at home, not take jobs from the men...you felt people were trying to hem you in...that you were expected to fit in this box, and I don't think anyone fits into a box very neatly. You have to trim off the hanging out bits.

B. Kendra (S: 39:18:00-40:37:15)

You have to remember I'm older. Most of my friends, by the time they were 21 or mid 20's, were married. And so for me to even be out on my own, as I was, was really unusual. My parents...I know a thought that I had in my second year, besides leaving for Sweden, was I really wanted to go to graduate school. My father would say, well why bother, you want to get married. Not that it was necessarily true for everyone of my generation, but there wasn't a lot of support...somehow what I learned was...following your bliss, you're going to land with your feet up anyways and that you're going to get the type of life that you want and THAT should really be the focus because I think that the type of person that's infused with the energy of this is the life that I wanna live, is gonna do alright. I think the focus on occupation might be the next thing down the road.

C. Sharon (D1: 24:04:00-24:58:00)

Things that I was looking for...the escape part would maybe be from family expectations and getting a little more distance. You have to remember when I went—no email—the places with no telephone—my first job was in Tripoli, Libya so a bit cut off. I was getting rid of some expectations, but I just had this feeling, I didn't want my life to be ordinary. I didn't want to ever get to a point, where I'd look back on my life, and I'd...have the years blend together.

D. Jennifer (X: 15:28:00-16:31:00)

I had this idea that I wanted to be somewhere else...I didn't know where...I knew that in Canada, financially, I was not getting out of a hole. On my teaching salary, I couldn't make ends meet. I couldn't pay my student loans and my rent and maintain my car...and I was really angry. And only very recently have I been able to release the anger related to finances because I supported my ex-husband through school, and he owes me, you know, what I make in a year. I'm sure I'll never see it. And at the time, it was a hell of a lotta money. Now it's not so much money...I can handle it...it's the cost of doing business...it's what I learned.

E. Carmen (E1: 1:00:29:21-1:00:25:00, F1:00:00:00-00:47;18)

I was actually doing my PhD in Italian Literature when I met my husband. And in some ways, I traded one passion for another...my passion for Italian Literature for the decision to marry him and come to China. So the first time I came to China was in 1997 to Shanghai and that was really difficult. He was working a lot...and I knew no Chinese. He was spending his time almost exclusively with Chinese, working long, long days...but somehow we got through that...then I spent part of the fall of 1998...in the bowels of

Beijing...Chinese housing, 6th floor walkup. He never made it easy for me. He was testing me to see if I really loved him...to remove me from everything that was near and dear to me, whether it was the nice teaching job I had in the wilds of New Hampshire or...going to Italy...

IV. Following Someone

A. Elaine (V: 13:27:15-14:58:00)

Then I moved to Brussels. And that was hard because of moving away and moving into all of his friends although our friend Natalie had moved there at the same time so similar situation—the two guys had lived there for two years, and their significant others come along. It was a little bit of an adjustment for all of us because they were use to doing whatever they wanted, and now they both had two girlfriends. It was a hard transition because people just saw us as the girlfriends...so I didn't get a lot of respect...then we decided to move from there...and that's when we moved from Beijing. And it was nice starting a new beginning because we were both fresh...I wasn't the lagging spouse...I had my own identity.

B. Cathy (W: 04:39:11-05:22:23)

I came as a trailing spouse...my life plans were certainly changed...my ex-husband fell in love here with a 26-year old, and after 28 years of marriage, I suddenly discovered that my life plan was certainly not what it was going to be, and I just stayed. I stayed one year at a time.

C. Cinder (Z: 03:30:00-03:53:00)

I could not do what he's doing, and I admire that he can do it. I could not go to a new country and not have a job. I would have to have a job because ironically enough, I'm a security monger, and it would freak me out not having a job.

D. Julie U-W (F1: 01:26:15-02:23;00)

It is interesting because I came here a single, working, female adult, bound and determined that I was going to continue working, but the nature of the beast here in China is that someone has to be the one that cares for the family because the person with the job is never around...it's 24/7, night and day, it's intense. If you want to have a cohesive family, someone has to be the roots.

E. Peggy M (F1: 03:09;00-03:41:00)

But I know, at least for myself, it was...which of us had the job that was going to support the family...I never would have guessed that I would not be working...that I would stay at home raising the kids...that was not was not going to be the thing that I was doing so I find it ironic that I've become a stay at home mom...it's like how did that happen?

V. Grew Up Overseas

A. Heike (E1: 56:09:00-57:20:00)

I was born in Baghdad with a German passport. My mother is Dutch; my father is half French/half German, but we all have a German passport. And then I grew up in Southeast Asia—Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, and then my father send me to Germany to study. He said that you have to get to know your passport country so I studied there for awhile, and there I met my husband who also is an expat. He grew up in India, America, and England...his father

was in Beijing for 16 years so he always wanted to come to China...this is the second time around. First time 8 years, 2 years Jakarta, 4 years Vietnam, now 6 years Beijing again.

VI. Had to

A. Cinder (Z: 05:18:00-05:30:00)

If you didn't do this [teach overseas], could you be happy if you came to the end of your life knowing that you hadn't done it. And I just had this feeling that I had to do it.

VII. Improve Life

VIII. Interest in China

IX. Putting a Human Face on the Other

A. Celine (V: 03:54:00-04:52:04)

Before I came, I was kind of frightened. I know the political things here because of my political background. Three generations of Nationalist Chinese Generals in my family, and I was very actively involved with the Taiwan government in the States. I was the most active Asian person in Nebraska. All my friends were kind of worried...senators, the governor, they were all worried about me coming here, and I was kind of scared too...many incidents of people with my background getting arrested...but it turned out to be much better than I expected.

B. Jennifer (X: 05:09:00-05:14:19)

The initial impetus for going overseas is that I've always been fascinated by the other.

Challenges to Lifestyle

I. 3 Types of Expat

II. Choices

A. Jennifer (X: 28:30:00-32:00:28)

...and what do I want out of my life? Why am I doing this? And I kept reminding myself, professionally it's a good move. Personally, who knows what's going to happen. It's such an unknown. And then I got here, and I'm looking out my window in this suburban nightmare...oh my god, I gave up a view of the Mediterranean for a view of my neighbor's living room. Oh my god, what did I do?...Then I got to the school...the school is fabulous, the professionals are fabulous, and I say, ok I can handle this...and then two weeks ago, I hit my first wave of culture shock...so I went back to Lebanon...and I know that I left Lebanon with my head and not my heart, and I hope it was the right decision, but I'm not sure [begins crying]...we're here, and we want to be here, but we want to be somewhere else as well...

B. Jennifer (X: 32:36:00-33:42:00)

[Privileged, educated] women in our age group...we can have it all. I need a man for nothing in my life...not economically...not to get around...not professionally...I don't want for anything, really...but I need a man in my life because I want a companion...because I would love to build a family...we can have it all, but we can't have it all because you just can't have it all.

C. Jennifer (X: 42:50:00-)

Women of our age group...we have so many choices, it's bewildering...I just finished reading Persephones I + II, which is a comic strip memoir...her experiences growing up Iran as the revolution starts, she leaves at 14 to go to Vienna...and in one scene, she goes to a grocery store...she gets to the grocery store, and she's absolutely overwhelmed because in Iran, there was nothing in the grocery store...what I choose...and I think it's interesting comparison to our experience...we're in the grocery store, and we can have EVERYTHING we want, but we can't have everything we want because our cupboards only hold so much stuff so we have to make choices...and deciding which choices are best for me as a human being is what I'm struggling with now...

C. Shelia (C1: 13:12:00-13:46:02)

We have a whole group of women [at the school]...[they] go through the empty nest of the kids, the husband always being gone, and they're in a foreign country. And I look at it sometimes and wonder, are you doing the things that you really want to do?

D. Debbie Dickens (E1: 36:16:00-35:41:00)

In Shanghai I had a friend who's marriage dissolved...she followed her husband around the world for their whole marriage, raising her family, really sacrificing any career that she could have had because she was a trailing spouse, and then in her 50's, her husband takes off..."

E. Joelle Dietrick (E1: 37:31:00-37:47:15)

Part of where this project is coming from is that I grew up with a lot of parents who were divorced, and the mother had to figure out something for a career because the marriage didn't work out."

III. Distance from Family

A. Jennifer (X: 03:16:20-03:32:23)

It's not the town that I grew up in so I don't have a base there, I'm very disconnected from the community when I visit my parents, aside from my parents and my extended family who I love dearly, but who increasingly do not understand the kind of life that I'm living.

IV. Family Illness

V. Fate—How the cards fell

A. Julie U-W (E1: 54:05:00-54:31:00)

You know, it's not what we expected, but it's the way the world has moved. A lot of Chinese are coming back to China. A lot of people who went to the States, to Europe to get their degrees...that was going to be the sweet land and the land of opportunity. They have looked at China and what has happened in the last 10 years and realized that the opportunity for them could be here.

B. Joelle Dietrick (E1: 57:30:00-57:45:25)

What keeps coming up is that you make these plans for your life and then life happens...how your goals when you were younger differed from what unfolded?

C. Heike (E1: 57:45:25-57:49:04)

If you grow up as an expat, you don't make any plans.

VI. Fatigue / Hidden Stresses

A. Sharon: D1: about 15:25:00 *I got to a point—not now—at a point where I left Zaire to go to Dubai. There were many things about that move that were a bit rough. Zaire was in a lot of turmoil. We had 4 pets...there was just a lot of logistics. We reached Dubai, and it was like paradise because it was just so much more modern. In Zaire, we didn't have a telephone. We make like 2 or 3 phone calls out of that country in 4 years. Seriously we were cut off. Get to Dubai, Telephone works. Dial. And I actually looked at my husband and said we were never packing and leaving. That wore off. And since then, I haven't had that feeling of fatigue...While we were in Dubai, we got the house in North Carolina...When we were Africa, believe me, we enjoyed our summers. Africa was hard. I loved it, but when we were in Dubai, we enjoyed our summers less...they were traveling, traveling, traveling, living out of suitcases...this was after many years of doing this dream travel thing. I just felt that I needed to get an anchor back.*

B. Jeannie (Z: 55:57:00-57:00:12)

There are definitely challenges to living overseas, no matter where you are...cause I do remember when we lived under so much pressure, and there was one foreign service officer who bought a gun...it was a very scary time...he freaked out and shot up his whole apartment, and that's when they said, it's time for you to go back home. That was in Columbia. We went over to Equator to visit some friends, and it was so interesting, as the plane landed, just this incredible burden lifted off of me, and I wasn't aware that I had been living with that burden. But it had just become a part of who you were in Bogota...what you adjust to because there is no other alternative...

VII. Free-Falling

A. Sharon (D1: 50:52:00-51:44:00)

But I think we do free-fall. I have such clear memories of people who will say, I envy you so much, please tell me about it, please, and you start to tell...and they start asking questions like, oh, so you are off to China, where will you live? I don't know. Well, what will the housing be like? I don't know. Well, do you think you'll be able to get...? I don't know. I mean everything's I don't know. I've never yet moved to a country that I've been to before...

B. Sharon (D1: 06:18:12-06:36:00)

But when I'm in China, I don't have such a the-way-its-suppose-to-be map in my head...and in all the other countries I've been in...and I find that really freeing...sometimes I feel like I can really experience life because I don't have this map in my head telling me how I should experience it.

VIII. Friendships

IX. Kids Raised in This Lifestyle

A. Cathy (W: 05:37:00-06:27:28)

My kids are older...we lived in India for 5 years...we have one child who doesn't tell people how she ended up in the United States because she knows people will be instantly tuned off...the middle child who will never leave Canada ever, ever, ever. She's happy in a small community...and a third child who's in Japan and never intends to go back to Canada because it was never

her home in the first place.

B. Lorraine (W: 09:34:00-09:43:00, 10:30:13-)

They're going to end up living all over the world. That's the only thing you have to face. They probably will...often home is where the parents. As long as the parents are getting along well, then it's fine, but if they're not, then it's really tough on the kids if they don't have that psychological security of parents. That why our jobs as teachers can be that much more because you're looking out for kids who might not...

X. Learn about Others

XI. Learn about Self

A. Patsy (U: 02:44:00-03:24:00)

You also learn a lot about yourself, living in a foreign country...how tolerant you are...

B. Karen (U: 02:52:28-03:29:00)

What your true frustration level is...you can hide a lot of your frustrations if you are in a very comfortable surroundings...your own culture...

C. Dierdre (U: 03:42:00-03:59:04)

You do learn a lot more about yourself and what you can do because you have to rely on yourself and your own resources, and you find out how resilient you actually can be...and how you can put up with a lot more than you thought you might.

D. Carolyn (U: 03:59:04-04:18:00)

I would say what scares me is how non-resilient I am. Sometimes I just catch myself being short...I may not have shown it, but I felt it and that matters.

E. Karen (U: 05:29:09-06:05:13)

I'm viewed as someone who's in control, but when I first came here, I'd cry in the market because I couldn't understand...I knew why I wanted to buy that tomato...it was a nice tomato...but they were telling me, what were they telling me? that I couldn't have it? was I paying \$100 too much? was I paying \$100? ...and tears would creep up, and I wasn't in control, and I didn't like that kind of me at all...then you learn strategies...

F. Joelle (U: 06:13:08-07:18:26)

The shortness...the easiest person to take it out on is the person that you know loves you unconditionally...how you pack up your stuff so it won't break, but you don't think about packing up your relationship...preparing it for the transition.

XII. Reinventing Yourself

A. Carmen (F1: 19:28:00-19:34:00,19:39:00-19:44:00)

In some ways, being in an environment like this give you the opportunity to reinvent yourself...I'm not sure how I want to reinvent myself.

B. Heike (F1: 20:11:14-20:49:00)

You do all these new things all the time, and you have the opportunity to...I think for some people who stay local wherever they're from, it's harder to get out of that sort of job or community there and to do something completely different...first of all, it's difficult to get out of the job...to get out of what people think of you...you're the typical doing whatever your doing. If you

want to do something different, everyone will look at you as if you are someone crazy. You'll have to fight in all directions to get to where you want to go...I think it's much easier if you move to a different country and start all over again.

B. Jeannie (Z: 57:37:28-57:46:00)

In Columbia, if someone said, are you American, you'd say no, I'm from Canada. It was just not safe to say you were an American.

C. Sharon (D1: 42:15:23-42:42:00)

[In Libya] so suddenly, I'm limiting myself in ways I would never have done in the United States, but it didn't bother me at all. It was just what you need to do because you are on this adventure. There's something liberating about being somewhere that's not yours, and I don't have to fix things here because it's not mine.

XIII. Returning Home

A. Lorraine (W: 36:36:00-37:25:00)

It's one of those things you worry about...how easy is it to make friends when you go home cause this is artificially easy. Lots of people have just come. Everyone's been in this boat. People are willing to try to include you. When you go home, and I've heard this from other people, like from Australians who've gone back to Australia, even if they have little children, that gives you some connections, even if they've gone to their hometown, they've found it quite uphill...

B. Cathy (W: 37:25:00-38:15:08)

In between India and China, we found that in India, because it was very small...we made friends very quickly...because there were things going wrong in the house or there was a drought—these huge things—and you were very connected. And then we went home, and into suburbia, and I remember having a block party...inviting everyone...they all came and said it was lovely...they left...that was it...we waved, you know...but people are not willing to accept you until you've been there quite a while...

C. Judith (38:23:00-39:35:17)

We have a lot of friends back home, but...the ones we spend the most time with in the States...they're real happy that we're there, and we're real happy to be there, and everything's rosy and great. We stay with them for a week or ten days...but it's kind of a false atmosphere...

C. Jeannie (Z: 58:36:00-59:14:00)

A friend who is from Indonesia, who's American husband is with the foreign service...they were assigned back to Jakarta...she was so thrilled to be there...the terrorist bomb Bali, and the embassy says, you have to be evacuated. She says, why, I'll just move in with my family. You have to be evacuated. Her husband had to stay and work. She and her children had to fly back to DC--just in time for the sniper! And her kids said, mom, we felt totally safe in Jakarta, but here in America, they cancelled everything because of this sniper. What are we going here?

XIV. Telling Stories

A. Sewing Group (U: 28:12:00-28:36:00)

Here's a good one: how do people respond to your tales from abroad? That's nice...I'll put the cup of tea on...and would you believe down the road, that's shop has closed, I couldn't believe it...how's china? Good.

XV. Who's Career?

A. Carolyn (U: 26:38:00-27:55:26)

My sister...had a hard time moving from New Zealand to the States...of course in the States it's not easy to get work, legally...she was in the bank, out of school, had children, then her education so she did her bachelor of education while she was working...then she moved to the states with no hope that she can work for some time...Phil's life was going on, the boys' life was going on, and her life just stopped.

B. Jennifer (X: 34:35:28-34:56:12)

...it's reasonably incompatible. I'm allowed to have a career and be a mother, but career choices mean things like moving around the world...for people like us with our education from our socio-economic background with our curiosity about the world. And if you are with a partner, who's career takes precedence?

C. Peggy/Julie U-W (F1: 24:15;12-25:06:22)

And I'm actually glad that I had the opportunity to spend this time with my kids...and what's stopping you from starting to work later on?...Exactly, I can go back to work any time I want or come up with something new...but it's the economic independence...and that's what your husband has, and maybe it's different for a marriage where you come from the same culture, but it's that mutual respect. You're not earning the same bucks...it's not power; it's respect...mutual respect in a relationship.

XVI. Urgency to Learn

A. Jennifer (X: 58:25:00-59:01:17)

This urgency to learn as much as I can...you know, sometimes I ask myself to what end? Well certainly as an educator, it helps me as a professional...I'm helping build world citizens...the students in my classroom...they're in the global scene, and they're going to stay in it...it's fabulously exhausting, and satisfying as you know...

Role Models

I. Stories about Our Mothers

II. Stories Told by Our Mothers

A. Rhoda (B1: 27:08:24-27:08:24)

That the stories mother's tell their children set the pattern for those children's lives. So I have friends whose mothers told them cautionary tales. You know, be careful, I knew so and so, and they got in trouble because they did this. My mother didn't tell me cautionary tales. My mother told me heroic women tales. From the time I was a small child, even the cats, that my mother told very funny stories about her family cats, but they were always female cats, and they were always very smart, and they always did things to outsmart everybody else.