

5-14-1996

Interview no. 912

Kathryn Byrd

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Interview with Kathryn Byrd by Michelle G. Benavides, 1996, "Interview no. 912," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

Mining in Mexico
Oral History Project

Kathryn Byrd
by Michelle G. Benavides

May 9, 14, 1996

B: This is an interview with Kathryn Byrd. The interview, by Michelle Benavides, is part of the Mining in Mexico Oral History Project. The interview is taking place at the home of Mrs. Byrd at 5030 Acacia, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Today's date is May 9, 1996. Okay, everything seems to be in working order, so I guess we can make a go of it. Before I start asking you about your experiences in mining camps, Mrs. Byrd, perhaps we can start by having you share with us a bit of biographical information. If you can tell me when and where were you born, please.

K: I was born in Savannah, Georgia, April 7, 1928.

B: Was your family originally from Savannah?

K: No. My father was from Florida and my mother was from New Mexico. My father came to New Mexico in the [19]20s, I don't know the exact date, bringing a tubercular younger brother with him. In those days it was felt that tuberculosis patients would have a better chance of survival in this climate. He didn't survive. My father stayed for several years. He worked for the highway department. He was an engineer, also, a civil engineer. He met my mother and then he returned to Florida. I guess they had a long-distance

courtship. She went to Florida and married him. I don't know why they were in Savannah, but I know they were because I was born there.

B: What was your father's name?

K: John López.

B: John López?

K: Yes.

B: And your mother's name?

K: Jesse Schmalhousen.

B: How do you spell her last name?

K: S-C-H-M-A-L-H-A-U-S-E-N. Interestingly enough, her father was the superintendent of construction of Elephant Butte Dam. She grew up at Elephant Butte Dam because it took many years to construct. She went to grade school at Elephant Butte Dam in a one-room school house. Later, after the dam was built, they moved to El Paso. My grandfather was involved in construction projects in Mexico, but he left the family in El Paso. My mother went to El Paso High School and to Texas Western College. It was a junior college when she went there.

B: Well, she was a local girl then?

K: Yes, she was.

B: So she moved back to New Mexico and that's where she met your father?

K: No, then my father and my mother went back to New Mexico. It's really strange. My father's name is López and, of course, he didn't speak any Spanish because the Spaniards who

settled in Florida those many centuries ago had long since ceased to speak Spanish. None of them know any Spanish. So he comes to New Mexico where everybody expected him to speak Spanish and he couldn't. My mother, Schmalhousen, was the New Mexico girl and my father, López, was the one from the East. So that was rather strange.

B: That's something. I guess they gave him a hard time for not speaking Spanish?

K: Yes, they did. Not only that, but in those days, I remember he told me on the way over his brother was so ill and he worked his way over to New Mexico. He didn't have any money. He had a car and he would stop and he would get a job and he would work long enough to get them enough money to go on a little farther to get to New Mexico. He stopped in Texas and went to apply for a job. My father was, you know, fair with hazel eyes, and had what he called a Roman nose. (laughs) He applied for a job and they said, "Yes, we need an engineer right now." Then when he told them his name, they said, "Oh no, we can't hire you." Because his name was López. So he went to another place and he used a different name. He used a family name, Rutledge, and, of course, they hired him right away. So not only did he have a hard time for not being able to speak Spanish, but he had a hard time simply because of a name in those days, because of the Hispanic name.

B: Did he ever talk about that much?

K: I know he didn't like living in the West because of that. He

felt out of place. He and my mother were divorced when I was in my early teens. Then he went back to Florida and he stayed there.

B: Whereabouts in Florida?

K: West Palm Beach.

B: When they divorced did your mom go back to El Paso?

K: No. She didn't go back to El Paso. When they divorced we were living in T or C [Truth or Consequences, New Mexico] and my mother started working as a welfare worker, you know, a case worker for the welfare department. That's what she did. Later on, after we children- I have a brother and a sister- were grown and gone she remarried a man from here, from Las Cruces, who actually taught at the University. And he died quite a long time ago. I think about over twenty years ago, twenty five years ago. She's lived here ever since.

B: So where did you attend grade school?

K: In what was then Hot Springs, New Mexico. It is now known as Truth or Consequences.

B: In high school, also?

K: Part of it. Then at that time my mother was transferred to the Socorro office. Then I spent a year in Florida with my father, my junior year. My senior year I came back here and finished high school. Then I came here to college here in Las Cruces.

B: NMSU [New Mexico State University]?

K: Yes. State College.

B: And what did you study?

K: Well, actually, I changed my major frequently.

B: Don't we all?

K: Haven't we all? I didn't get my degree, but I ended up with education. Then I did teach.

B: Here in Las Cruces?

K: No. I taught in Socorro. That's when I met my husband. He was going to school there.

B: Here at NMSU?

K: No, at Socorro. And I was teaching.

B: How did you meet him?

K: How did I meet him? Now, this should be really memorable, shouldn't it? How did I meet him? I wished you had asked him that instead of me because...

B: He may tell me a different story. (jokingly)

K: Then he could be the one that can be embarrassed for not remembering. You know, I don't remember how I met him.

B: That's okay.

K: That's terribly unromantic, isn't it?

B: You'll remember, probably after I leave, and you can call me back and tell me.

K: I'm going to ask him if he remembers. I'll bet he doesn't remember, either.

B: Well, did you have a long courtship?

K: Well, I think so. About three years.

B: That seems to be a long time.

K: Yeah. It is, especially since unlike these days it was truly a courtship, you know, and nothing else. (laughs)

B: So you had your courtship in Socorro?

K: Yes. We went together for three years.

B: Was it love at first sight?

K: Oh, no, no. I liked his roommate.

B: Who was his roommate? Do you remember his name?

K: Well, I didn't like him that much. Yeah, I remember his name, Dave. The trouble was that Bob, [my husband], had a car and Dave didn't. Dave had to borrow Bob's car every time we went out and it got kind of...sometimes Bob wanted his car for himself. So it got to be too much trouble and I decided to go straight to where the car was. (laughs)

B: So you courted in Socorro?

K: Um-hmm.

B: And he was studying engineering at that time?

K: That's right.

B: What kind of engineering?

K: Mining.

B: Mining engineering. So do you remember when he proposed to you?

K: I don't remember exactly when, but I remember what he said. He said, "You wouldn't want to marry me, would you?" And I said, "Oh, yes I would." (laughs)

B: So that was his formal proposal?

K: Yes, that's about as romantic as he gets usually.

B: And what happened after that?

K: Oh, I don't know how long it was after that, maybe another year before we got married, maybe six months, I don't remember how long it was. Then he still had to finish up his senior year at school. I was teaching. And when he graduated, he went to Mexico. He went to Charcas, [San Luis Potosí, Mexico].

B: Did you have any idea when you married him he was going to be a mining engineer? That you would end up in such a far away place?

K: No. I don't think I thought about it that much. But I know when we finally- I was his secretary. So when it was his senior year and we were writing looking for a job we both became more interested in the foreign offers than the others. We decided then that it would be fun to go foreign. Once we got that bug, we weren't too interested in domestic offers.

B: So you went and lived in Charcas. And he was working for which mining company?

K: American Smelting, AS&R [American Smelting and Refining Company].

B: Once he was offered a position, how much time was there until you left to go down there? Do you remember?

K: Oh, maybe a couple of months, I don't remember exactly.

B: Was there any preparation involved? Were you told just to show up here at such and such a date?

K: They sent us some information on what to take and not to take.

Needless to say, we had very little to take. We didn't have any furniture or anything like that. So we just took our personal possessions and our housekeeping things, which we'd received for wedding presents. You know, that's essentially what we took with us.

B: Were you able to speak to anyone before you left that had been there?

K: Not there, but in Socorro I did speak to a couple of people who had lived in South America about what foreign living was like. I don't think I talked to anyone who had been in Mexico.

B: Did they give any good words of advice that you heeded?

K: Well, I got some pretty dumb advice from one of them. She told me, she said, "You know, you don't want them pawing. When you pack your boxes you don't want those custom inspectors pawing through all your stuff because they have light fingers. They'll take things. What you got to do is put on top of them a whole lot of sanitary napkins, which will disconcert them so much that they will leave your things alone." Well, it didn't disconcert them at all. You know, they opened up the boxes and they saw this full layer of sanitary napkins. I think they immediately became suspicious. They certainly went through everything. In fact, we did have quite a few things stolen on our way down when we went to Charcas. At Charcas it was pretty isolated...

B: Could you more or less tell me where?

K: In San Luis Potosí, in the dead center of Mexico, in the dead center of Mexico.

B: How did you get to Charcas?

K: Well, we probably flew to San Luis. I don't remember that. But the only way in and out of Charcas was by train. That was the only way to get in and out of Charcas. We went on the train. And at that time they had the wonderful Aguila Azteca train that travelled from Mexico City to Kansas City...the way trains should really be.

B: What was it like?

K: Oh, it was so luxurious. The dining room was just wonderful, you know, with the crisp, white tablecloths and the linen napkins and the wonderful food. It was decorated. The train was a work of art itself. It was decorated beautifully. Of course, our ride on the train was very short. I can't remember how long, maybe a couple of hours from San Luis to Charcas. I can't remember for sure. I remember my first sight of Charcas. I really didn't know what to expect, except I expected everything would be much more primitive for us than we actually found it. I was surprised at the amenities that were offered in the mining camp because I expected to be really roughing it.

I got off the train and on the horizon is this mountain over Charcas. And I looked at this mountain and there was this sort of a script on it, or some sort of legend, that I could see had been worn away over the years. You know, in my

mind I just pictured some wonderful ancient Indian ritual going on up there, so I was fascinated by this mountain. We got into Charcas. We were met, of course, at the station- I don't remember who met us now but my first question was, "I have to know about that mountain- it is so intriguing to me- and about the legend that's inscribed on it, and the significance of it all...the ceremonies that must have been involved." And he said, "What mountain are you talking about?" And I said, "Well, that mountain. That mountain right there." "Oh," he said, "you mean Pepsi-Cola Mountain." And I said, "Pepsi-Cola Mountain?" He said, "Yeah, that says Pepsi-Cola on it, but it's been raining a lot lately and they haven't repainted it this year." So that was my first really big disappointment. From then on I learned not to expect things to be too exotic or too uncivilized. They certainly weren't.

B: What were the housing arrangements like?

K: The main thing about the housing arrangement...the houses were comfortable, but the newest, lowest person on the totem-pole got the worst house, of course. The junior engineer always got the worst house. Each job had a house that went with it. There was a real hierarchy in the mining colonies then and where you lived depended on the job your husband had. I think it probably settled a lot of problems because it was just taken for granted. If your husband had that job you got that house and there was no two ways about it. The houses were

comfortable; hardwood floors, tin roofs, well-constructed, little gardens...most of us had vegetable gardens as well and, of course, we all had gardeners which makes it easy to garden. All the houses had maid's quarters. All the houses were furnished with the most God-awful furniture. I tell you, it was really lousy, the furniture, that's true. For that time, the bathrooms were modern. Our first house that we lived in, the bathroom was larger than the living room. The living room was the smallest room in our house. It was probably the size of this room that we're in now. One of my pieces of furniture that was given to me was an overstuffed chair that was so large that, although only one person could sit in it, it took up half the living room. The bathroom was huge. I swear the bathroom was really, really big. It was so big that that's where we kept our baby chickens when we first got them. And we had them in a great big box-like thing. It was a heater. And it was pretty cool in Charcas. It's at a pretty high altitude. It was always cool there...never got hot. It never got cold either, but it never got hot.

B: Was it fairly temperate?

K: It was on the cool side. Definitely you needed a sweater just about most of the time, but it never got cold. But we had to keep the baby chickens warm, so we had an electric heater in there. The bathroom was huge.

B: Isn't that funny?

K: Yes, you wonder what they were thinking when they did that.

B: Your husband, what was his position when he arrived in Charcas?

K: It was his first job out of school.

B: So he was a junior engineer?

K: The junior engineer.

B: So you had one of the...

K: The worst. (laughs)

B: (laughs) The worst houses.

K: But it wasn't bad. The worst thing about it was that it was right next to the mill which clunked away day and night and it made an awful lot of racket.

B: Was it powered by steam?

K: The mill?

B: The mill.

K: No, I don't know how it was powered...maybe electricity, I don't know. I don't think it was steam. I hope they asked my husband that. I don't know.

B: Out of my ignorance- I don't know either -I guess the clanking was from the pistons.

K: I lived next door to it. It was a machine sound. It makes a lot of noise and runs day and night, day and night. The only thing that can make you really jump and be completely startled was it for suddenly to go off because...

B: The quiet.

K: Well, yes, and then you knew something was wrong. The mill ran day and night. If it went off something was wrong.

B: Were you given any type of welcome? Was there a reception committee?

K: Oh, everybody was wonderful to the new tenants in those places. Everybody there invites you out as soon as you get there. They're all so anxious to meet a new person and have new friends. The fun about living in a colony like that is that everybody there is your friend, whether you like it or not, whether they like you or not. You would do anything for each other. You live very close to each other. You would take care of each others' children. It's a very, very close-knit community.

B: Most of the mining engineers that were there, were they married?

K: We actually had a large group of bachelors in Charcas.

B: And where did they live?

K: In the hotel. There was a company hotel and a company club with a dining room. They lived in the hotel. They ate in the club. They had a teacher and a one-room schoolhouse. The children went to school there up to the eighth grade then they were always sent out to the States to high school.

B: What was a typical day for you like?

K: Ah, I'm ashamed to tell you. What a life, huh? There used to be a joke, "The only thing to be better than being a rich man's dog would be the wife of a mining engineer in Mexico."
(laughter) Well, there wasn't a lot of time for me before I had my first child, so that, of course, changed. And I don't

remember...my life could not have been very, very full before that. I think people in those places had children just out of boredom. (laughter) When I started having my children, well, that was my whole life although I always did a lot of other projects and stuff. I started a baby clinic in Charcas.

B: You did?

K: Yes, I did.

B: Tell me about the baby clinic.

K: Well, I actually got the doctor to help me.

B: Who was the doctor there? Do you remember his name?

K: Oh yes, I certainly do. Carlos Perea. He was a wonderful doctor and a wonderful man. He had agreed to see. And I got involved with a nurse from the village. We were going to just have a well-baby clinic and teach the mothers about childcare and nutrition. Of course, my source of everything then was Dr. [Benjamin] Spock; that was the extent of my expertise. But this nurse, who was a Mexican who lived in the village, loved this idea, so we started and the doctor agreed to see any baby that was ill. We managed to get medicine. It worked real well but, unfortunately, I didn't leave it. See, if you start anything like that the only way to know if it's successful or not, is if it keeps going after you leave. Then you know it's successful. And, unfortunately, that didn't happen, so it wasn't successful. And we moved to Taxco.

B: Was there a hospital in the camp?

K: Yes, a very nice, complete little hospital. We thought we had

wonderful care there, wonderful medical care.

B: Did you give birth to your children there in Charcas?

K: Robert, my first one, in Charcas. Then we moved to Taxco, which was a completely different experience because there was no mining colony. The people who worked in the mine there just lived wherever in the town, wherever there was a house that could be rented. And I liked that experience, too, because I liked living in the town instead of completely isolated from the community.

B: Back in Charcas, you said it was pretty much self-contained. For example, was there a commissary there if you needed to buy groceries?

K: No, there was no commissary. We bought our groceries in town, in the village, which was about ten miles.

B: So all of your food?

K: Um-hmm, and what we didn't grow. Yeah, we bought all of our food at the little... . And then, when possible, we liked to make trips to San Luis [Potosí, Zacatecas] and buy goodies because there were some nice groceries there in San Luis.

B: Did you have problems with that because it's not like there was a Furr's nearby where you could just hop in your car and go buy a bag of flour?

K: No, I didn't. We got wonderful fresh vegetables. The meat wasn't good, but we learned innovative ways to prepare it. No, I thought the food was fine.

B: Did you do much cooking?

K: Yes, I did. In Charcas actually is the only time- no, I have cooked another time. A real cook, a real true cook, was in Charcas, who also moved with us when we went to Taxco. She was a real cook. I didn't do a lot of cooking in Charcas because she was a better cook than I was. So in Charcas and Taxco I really didn't do much cooking, hardly any.

B: How long were you in Charcas?

K: Three years.

B: Who planned the social activities for the colony? Was there one person that took it upon themselves?

K: We had a club. We were all members of the club. I don't know if we paid dues or not...I suppose we did. And we elected a president and a secretary and probably a treasurer every year and then we planned all... . Oh, my goodness. The social life was really involved. We had a very, very complicated social life...dinner parties all the time. And we would dress up for the dinner parties. Sometimes the women would wear long dresses. You go next door to your neighbor's house for dinner...long dresses, candles on the table, very formal, very nice, which is easy to do when you have servants. Then at the club we would have dances, you know. There were traditional parties all through the year; the New Year's party, the Mardi Gras party, the Valentine party, the Mother's Day party, you name it, you know, the 15th of September party, the Cinco de Mayo party. Any excuse was a good excuse for a party. We partied and partied all the time and entertained a lot in our

homes. And we wouldn't tell each other our recipes.

B: Or do like my mom. I'll ask her for a recipe and she'll give it to me and leave out an ingredient on purpose, so it would come out the same.

K: I've heard that there are people that did that. Now we knew better than to ask even for recipes because we wouldn't tell each other.

B: It was a well-guarded secret.

K: It's because we all saw the same people all the time. If you had a special recipe you didn't want everybody making it all the time, so we were careful with our recipes.

B: Was there a library in the mining camp?

K: There was.

B: Where did the books come from?

K: The States. In those days, most of the people in the mining camp were Americans. We also had a movie every week either Friday or Saturday night, it must have been Friday, every Friday night. They had a movie projector and a movie was sent in and they put up chairs in the clubhouse and we would all sit there and drink beer. There were some enterprising children who would make popcorn and sell it to us and we would drink beer and eat popcorn and make comments all through the movie. Everybody would say, "Oh, yeah, well look at that, it looks just like so and so." Oh, I'll never forget the time there was a movie about Africa and it showed this giraffe loping across the plains and somebody yelled out, "Looks just

like Pajaro!" That was my husband's nickname.

B: Pajaro?

K: It means bird in Spanish. "It looks just like Pajaro on the tennis court!" My husband loved tennis. Most everybody played tennis there. I didn't...I got pregnant shortly after we got there. I never wanted to play tennis. In fact, the women didn't play tennis, just the men did.

B: That's odd.

K: The men played tennis and we'd all go. It was a great occupation after work. We'd all meet at the tennis court and sit and drink beer and watch the men play tennis.

B: That was your recreation. Was there swimming?

K: We had a swimming pool, but it was too cold to swim. It was always pretty cool in Charcas. Of course, the pool wasn't heated. And it was huge; it was a very large pool of cement.

B: As in olympic size?

K: Yeah, and very deep. And that water never got warm enough to get in it...just the little kids up to about the age of reason. When they got up to the age of reason they no longer got into that pool; it was freezing cold. We always found a lot to do, we really did.

End of Tape One

Side A

Beginning of Tape One

Side B

K: And if we had a visitor, a female visitor, we'd all be terribly interested in what she was wearing, where she got it, and how much it cost. Then, of course, all of us went out once a year to the States. And that's when we would buy our clothing. Of course, we were restricted by the salaries our husbands made. They weren't well paid, but we lived very well on not much money.

B: Was the housing paid for by the company?

K: Yes. The housing was free and, of course, the utilities. Servants were very inexpensive. Food was inexpensive. We suffered no hardships, really.

B: Did the laborers live near the mining camp where you lived?

K: They lived in the village.

B: So there was no separate camp for them?

K: No. They just lived in the village where we went to shop. The men didn't go to the village there to get a haircut. The barber would come around to the house. I think my husband told Noel about that.

B: I don't remember. I don't think he told him.

K: All I know is that all the guys would go sit on the front porch and the barber would come up and they'd put a chair on the front porch. Then he would whip out his cape, whip out his scissors, and his mechanical clippers. They'd sit on the

front porch and he'd cut their hair on the front porch because then it wouldn't mess up the house.

B: What about the women? When they wanted their hair done where would they go?

K: There was no place to go.

B: So were they pretty adept at styling their own hair?

K: Probably. I never worried much about hair. Of course, you can look at me now and tell that I don't worry about hair, but at that time my hair was very long and I did it up in braids. I don't remember much about hair. I've never worried much about hair.

B: You mentioned that the women dressed up when they went out to dinner at someone else's house. I sensed that being so far away, what would stop you from wanting to go around in flip-flops and shorts the whole time instead of getting dressed up, doing your hair, and putting make-up on?

K: It was a funny thing that appearance was pretty important. There was the uniform that we wore in the day.

B: A uniform?

K: You could say that because we all wore it.

B: What was this uniform?

K: The uniform was a skirt- we didn't wear slacks- a blouse, a cardigan because it was always cool in Charcas. And what do you call those shoes? The white and brown oxfords that laced up? They have a name.

B: I don't know.

K: The pumps are called spectator pumps, but I can't remember what the oxfords were called, the white and brown oxfords. And socks. We wore socks.

B: Anklets?

K: Anklets. We wore anklets and those shoes, and we wore a skirt, and we wore a blouse, and we wore a sweater. That's just what we wore.

B: What if you deviated from the norm and decided to wear something else? Were you ostracized?

K: I don't know. I suppose somebody wore other things. I don't remember, but it just seems that that's what we all wore for day to day living in the camp when we weren't going anywhere. Then we would get really dressed up for one of our parties or one of our dinners. We really, really dressed up.

B: Who was the mine manager back then?

K: Art Hall.

B: Was there a Mrs. Hall?

K: Yes, Helen Hall. They were wonderful people. They left there to go to South America. They're still alive. They're in their nineties and they're in Tucson.

B: So did she write the social calendar for the mining camp?

K: Well her influence was great. Everybody cared a lot- I'm talking about the women- about what Helen Hall thought of them.

B: Why? Because she was the mine manager's wife?

K: Yes, exactly. That was why. There was a hierarchy there as

I told you. There was a definite hierarchy.

B: Did you know that before you went?

K: Oh, no. I didn't even know it for a long time. (laughs) It took me a while to realize because I was pretty naive and pretty unaware of that sort of thing. Everybody cared a lot. It was very important to be invited to their house for dinner. You know, that was very important. As far as setting the mores for the whole colony, the club, we had the president and all of that. But she was very influential in the lives of the women.

B: I've heard tales about mine managers' wives. Some took it upon themselves to dictate things that the women did from the time when they woke up until the time they went back to sleep.

K: You know, I don't think that she did. She was quiet, but her presence was known and felt, definitely.

B: Most of the women in the mining camp, what was the age bracket? Were they all your age?

K: I was twenty-two when I got there. I was probably one of the youngest there. We had people in their forties and fifties, from twenties to forties and fifties. I don't remember anybody much older than in their fifties.

B: Were there any romances in camp? For example, you said there was a lot of single engineers there. Did they ever meet someone and fall in love and get married there?

K: Yeah. My cousin came down to visit me from the States and she fell in love with one of our friends, who was a bachelor

there, and they got married.

B: You're kidding. Did they get married in Charcas?

K: No, they got married in T or C. She was from T or C. Then she went to live in Mexico with him. They had a little girl and then he got a fellowship to, I guess it was MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. So they went up there. They took their maid with them because she was pregnant. Their maid, by the way, had been my maid. When we left for Africa, I gave her my maid. (laughs) This maid, lived in Boston for a year.

B: You're kidding. How did they get her there?

K: I don't know. I guess at that time they probably lied and bribed. I don't know. Anyway they did get her there because my cousin was very sick. She was always sick for the nine months of her pregnancy and that's why they took her with them. She loved it up there. Then they went back to Mexico. Then when their little boy was about two years old, Stan was killed in an automobile accident in Mexico. So yes, there were romances there. That's the one I happened to be the closest to.

B: Did you play matchmaker?

K: Heavens no! We didn't even realize it was going on. We thought she was being nice to him because he was our friend and we thought he was being nice to her because she was my cousin. We were the last people to know. Other people saw it, but we didn't. We just thought they were being kind to

each other because of us, which wasn't true at all.

B: Isn't that something? Was there any problem with crime?

K: I suppose every now and then a maid would filch something. And probably in the mine; I think they might have had thievery from some of the workers. I'm sure they did.

B: How about vices like prostitution, drinking, gambling?

K: Well let's see. We all drank (laughs) and we only gambled when we raised money for charity. It was no big deal. There were some poker players in the colony who played for what we considered then pretty steep stakes. The women played canasta or bridge. We always played for money but it wasn't much; it was very little. I'm sure they had prostitution downtown. Obviously, I was so sheltered I didn't know much about it.

B: Well, you were a young twenty-two year old. Did you all attend church there?

K: No. I guess the only people who attended church were the Catholics who went to the village. I don't think there was any other church there. No. There wasn't any other church and nobody had services in their homes. Nobody was that religious. Sunday morning was just a day to play tennis.

B: That's how you all spent you Sundays, playing tennis? Did you ever have the opportunity to take excursions to other areas?

K: When we lived in Charcas, no. We truly didn't, just to San Luis. We loved San Luis.

B: It's a beautiful, beautiful place.

K: We loved it and we liked to go there but we couldn't go very

often. For one thing, we couldn't afford to go very often and then when the men got time off, when they got their vacation, we'd come up to the States and go to the dentist, and go to the doctor, and do the shopping, visit the family. When we were in Charcas we saw very little, just a few ranches around. As I said, there were no roads, no airport, just the train in and out.

B: Were you ever bored?

K: I don't remember being bored, not in Charcas. When I was bored I was in Nicaragua, but that is another story.

B: Which we'll get to later. How often were you able to come back to the States?

K: About once a year for two weeks.

B: That's not a long time is it?

K: No. And it no longer happens with people who work foreign. They get a lot more vacation than that and a lot more perks that we didn't get in those days.

B: Well, when you came here you said you went to the dentist, to the doctor, et cetera. How did you pay for it? Did you have insurance or were you forced to pay for it out of your own pocket?

K: I think that during the time we were there. That's when the insurance companies first came into being. And we did have insurance, but not for the dentist. I think it was Blue Cross. I can't remember exactly when we got it. I think we didn't have it when we first got there and I think sometime

later on we did. I don't remember the dates.

B: And you would come to El Paso on vacation?

K: Yes.

B: Where would you stay in El Paso?

K: Well we usually stayed in Las Cruces with my mother, but we had doctors and dentists in El Paso because Las Cruces was pretty small then, too. See, everybody in Las Cruces went to El Paso for their doctors and dentists and shopping. So we just stayed with my mother and then we'd do those things in El Paso.

B: Were you ready to go back at the end of those two weeks?

K: Oh, yes. We always looked forward to going back. We did.

B: How did you feel when you were here, after being away for so long?

K: Now are we talking about when I was in Charcas?

B: Yes.

K: Well since then I understand that there was television here in the States then. I wasn't aware of it. I don't think my mother had it. I'm not sure. I understand that they had television here in the early [19]50s but I certainly don't remember it. It seems to me that it was later than that, that it became so ubiquitous. Well, we just thought the stores were wonderful. I mean, the bright lights, the stores, we had a great time. I don't know why it was a great time because the thing I really don't like to do is shop. And we had to do all of our shopping just like that. (snaps fingers)

B: Which it must have been difficult.

K: Oh, it was awful. It was just really hard.

B: Your husband, was he transferred to Taxco?

K: Yes, he was transferred to Taxco. So we went there with the same company.

B: In a better position? A higher paying position?

K: Oh yes, a better position, higher paying.

B: So he had done his time as a junior engineer?

K: Yes, but in Taxco it didn't matter that much. We weren't in a colony. We didn't get the spoils that we should have.
(laughs)

B: You had to fend for yourselves.

K: Yes, but I liked it because I liked being part of a community, too. You know when you're living on a mining colony, you're not really part of the country or the people like when you live in the town. Of course, Taxco is not exactly a typical Mexican town in that it's so really so touristy, but we enjoyed Taxco. We loved the climate. My daughter was born there.

B: So now you had two children?

K: Yeah.

B: Robert and...

K: My little Potosíno was Robert and my Taxceña was Katy. The company doctor in Taxco did not take maternity, so I used a doctor from the town. Actually he was a Black man. He was from Veracruz. There are quite a few Blacks there.

B: There's a small colony of Blacks living there in Veracruz, correct?

K: In Veracruz, yes. He was from Veracruz. He was Black. Do I remember his name? I don't right now. I probably did yesterday and will tomorrow. But he was my doctor. And he didn't want to be my doctor. He said that I should go to Mexico City. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to Mexico City. I have a child here. I can't leave him and go to Mexico City." Well, actually, it was quite an experience. In fact, I had a story about it that was published.

B: Really? Tell me about it.

K: Well, I'll give you the story to read if you'll send it back to me.

B: Well, tell me a little bit about it then.

K: Oh, no. I don't want to get into it. I'll just give you the story to read, but it was quite an experience, let me put it that way. Quite an experience. I write a lot about Mexican experiences. And I write fiction based on my experiences in Mexico and South America. That's what I'm doing now.

B: Well you'll have to share it with me. I'm very interested in seeing what you've done.

K: Okay. It's not much. I'm published in an anthology that comes out every year. In fact, I'm an editor. It's called Sarapé and it's sponsored by the University, and it's for writers in New Mexico over the age of fifty-five.

B: Wonderful.

K: It's kind of neat. I'm really enjoying my work with that and I enjoy seeing my work published.

B: Well, I'm sure you have received a lot of self-gratification.

K: I do. I really enjoy it.

B: Good. After we're done, I'll let you show it to me if that's okay.

K: Alright. Well, we liked Taxco. It wasn't a very good place to be pregnant; the cobblestone streets and we lived up a hill that the only way up and down this hill was by foot. No taxi could go up. There was no road. It was a narrow path that went almost vertical, so I really had a hard time the last few months of my pregnancy. I couldn't go out alone, of course; it was too easy to fall. And I would go out with Bob holding on to me for dear life, so Taxco was not a good place to be pregnant. No, not very good at all. It didn't turn out to be a very good place to have a baby, either, but it all turned out alright in the long run.

B: How long were you in Taxco?

K: Two years.

B: Is it common for engineers to be transferred every so many years?

K: Well, it usually happens with a promotion and yes, it is common for them to be transferred quite a bit when there's an opening within the same company.

B: So was there much interaction with other mining families in Taxco?

K: Yes, there was, but it wasn't as close a relationship as in the colony. We were all friends there, but we were just spread out all over town. We weren't as close. We didn't have telephones, so we would see each other at company functions and meet in the market. Then we would have dinner parties and that sort of stuff but not like Charcas.

B: Did you speak Spanish when you went down?

K: I had two years of high school Spanish and two years of college Spanish, so I got along pretty well. And it came to me pretty fast because of my background. I knew all the verb tenses. This is really strange, but I took guitar lessons. I am not musical. I cannot sing, but these guitar lessons turned out a wonderful way to learn Spanish because in the guitar lessons we learned all the Mexican folk songs. As far as the guitar goes, (imitates strumming) you know, in the background, and then what it really was was learning all these songs. I really learned a lot of Spanish from that. "If you had loved me, I wouldn't have left you." You know, all these tenses of the verbs and that sort of thing. I learned a lot of Spanish just from taking guitar lessons. Unfortunately, I never learned to sing or play the guitar very well at all, but it certainly helped my Spanish. It helped my Spanish a lot.

B: Do you play the guitar now?

K: Heavens no. I haven't in years. I only played guitar when I took the lessons. (laughs)

B: I wonder if they breathed a sigh of relief when you quit your

lessons and moved on?

K: No doubt. I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

B: So your children, they grew up learning both Spanish and English?

K: Yes.

B: Did they forget the Spanish when you moved back here?

K: Well, my son forgot it when we moved to Africa because then after that, when we left Africa and went back to Mexico, he had to learn it all over again. But, he was, what, seven years old so that was no problem. The girls...Katy was about five when we went to Mexico, and Bebe was about two, something like that. So they started speaking Spanish right away. When we went back to Mexico we went to Parral. That was quite different from Charcas partly because it was several years later, maybe eight, nine years later and there were a lot of Mexican families in the colony which wasn't true in Charcas. So the children, right away, started speaking Spanish. So, no. Well, Katy, for instance, has kept in such close touch with her friends in Mexico that she didn't forget her Spanish at all. Robert hadn't spoken Spanish in close to twenty years. When he went to work in Honduras two years ago it came back to him just like that. Now he's doing fine with his Spanish. Now Bebe, who lives in Colorado, I think she's mostly forgotten. She's the one that's had no- but I'm sure she went back to Mexico, you know.

B: She'd pick it up. So where did you go after Taxco?

K: We went to Africa.

B: Two years, right?

K: Um-hmm, a little more.

B: So your children were still toddlers?

K: Yeah. Katy was in arms and Robert was three- no, Robert was four.

B: Did you find it difficult moving with children?

K: I should have. I look back now at some of the things I did and I think, "How in the world did I do that?" But I guess when you're young everything's easy. I didn't think it was difficult. Right now I shudder at the thought, but at the time nothing seemed difficult. When you're young nothing's difficult.

B: So why did you all go to South Africa?

K: Well my husband asked for a twenty-five dollar raise. That means twenty-five dollars a month, mind you. And they said "No." They couldn't give him a raise, so he searched for another job. And he got an offer from South Africa which was quite a bit better than what he was doing. It was a promotion. It was assistant mine superintendent and a much better salary. When he went in to quit his job in Taxco they said, "Don't leave, we'll give you a twenty-five dollar raise." He said, "Too late." Because the job he was going to was paying quite a bit more. So we went to Africa with a different company.

B: What did you think? Did he consult with you or he just told

you that you were moving to South Africa?

K: Oh, no. We always did this together. Don't forget, I was his secretary. I wrote all of his letters for him, so I was involved from the beginning. We thought it was a good idea. It was an interesting experience. Oh, when we were in Taxco, we got to see a lot of the country then. We loved Mexico City. We loved to go there. We were close there. We went to Acapulco. We'd go to Iguala. We went to Cuernavaca. You could rent a taxi- we didn't have a car. We couldn't have a car. We lived in that house where you couldn't get to. There was no place to put the car.

B: It would roll down the hill, right?

K: It couldn't get up. The path was too narrow even for a car to get up there, but you could rent a taxi for the day to go to Mexico City or to Cuernavaca or wherever very cheaply. And we saw a lot of that part of Mexico at that time...with the kids. We took the kids with us. At first, just Robert and then both of them. In Africa we were also able to see a lot. We went to the game reserves. We had a fabulous trip.

B: What were living arrangements like there?

K: Very similar to the mining colonies in Mexico, except it wasn't a colony. It was a company town. There was one part of the company town that was like upper staff. Upper staff was all foreign, and the company town was everybody who worked for the company except for the Blacks and the Colored. Of course, we were in South Africa now. The town was all White.

In another place was another town for- this was in Cape Colony. There were a lot of Colored, what they called Coloreds there. The Blacks are the natives who are pure black from different tribes. A lot of Blacks worked in the mines. They were brought in from Zululand and Swaziland and other countries nearby. Well, they came in because they could make good money. They left their families. They lived in dormitories. They worked in the mine. Then there were the Cape Coloreds who are a mixture of white, black, mostly white, and black and maybe a little Indian. The servants were Cape Coloreds. The Cape Coloreds were scornful of the Blacks. It was really sad. And the Whites were scornful of the Coloreds. And the Blacks were scornful of the Coloreds. Interesting racial tensions there.

B: So you lived in a company town? Was it self-contained?

K: Yeah. It had a store, the general store. It had a filling station. We got a car when we were there, so we could drive into Springbok, which was a bigger town than O'Okiep about ten miles away. It was still very small.

B: Can you spell the name of it please?

K: Springbok. You know, like the team. Like the South African team is called the Springboks.

B: Okay.

K: It's an animal. S-P-R-I-N-G-B-O-K. Springbok; that's the name of the town. We had friends in Springbok. We had a lot of friends that weren't connected with the company. We had

South African friends. Some were English-South African. Some were Afrikaners-South African. Of course, we didn't have any Black or Colored friends because it was South Africa in the [19]50s. The Blacks and Coloreds who were there were simply the workers. It was a completely different experience for us.

B: Was it hard for you to live like that, knowing that there were those color divisions?

K: You know, I guess it wasn't, because to me...

End of Tape One

Side B

Beginning of Tape Two

Side A

K: You asked me about the racial tensions or the racial problems in South Africa. This was only a few years after Apartheid went into effect. It was very repressing. It bothered us, but it didn't bothered us as much as it would have if we'd known even one Black or one Colored who lived the way we did or had gone to school but, of course, we didn't. They seemed very different to us. My husband and I had a three-year contract and after three years they wanted him to stay, but we left because we thought there was going to be a revolution in South Africa. We honestly did.

B: Why?

K: Because there were ten Blacks to every White and the Blacks were being repressed, so we felt that the country was going to explode. As a matter of fact, we didn't get our revolution until some twenty odd years later when we least expected it...in Nicaragua. (laughs) And where we thought there was going to be a revolution in South Africa, there wasn't. But South Africa is a beautiful country physically, just beautiful. We were fortunate to see quite a bit of it.

B: I neglected to ask you what minerals or metals they were extracting from each of the mines where your husband worked. And that's a very important question, isn't it?

K: I know, but the answer isn't very interesting. Everybody thinks that South Africa is all gold...

B: Or diamonds.

K: Yeah, or diamonds. It was just lead and zinc and tin and I think some copper, maybe some copper. At Taxco it was lead, zinc, and silver. The same almost everywhere that my Bob worked.

B: I know that when Dr. [W. Noel] McAnulty, [Jr.] interviewed Mr. Byrd he compared mining conditions in South Africa with mining conditions in Mexico and that was interesting. He talked about mine fires and mine accidents. Did you live with the fear of something happening to your husband in the mine?

K: No. No, I didn't.

B: Did he come home and talk about his work?

K: Oh, this was the bad thing about living in the colonies. And this is at every place that I lived. I think it's mining engineers, that must be the problem. After work, every party, everything you went to, the men would all get in one corner and talk...

B: Talk shop?

K: And they would talk about what? About what they've been doing all day, you know. Wouldn't you think they would be bored to death with that? They're never so happy as when they're sitting and talking about mining. And the women would be in the other corner talking about maids and babies.

B: You would think that since they see each other all day they would want to talk about something different.

K: Wouldn't you? Not so.

B: I don't think that has changed. I'm sure it's still the same.

K: You don't think it's just mining engineers?

B: I don't know. I haven't been around that many mining engineers, but get a group of men together that do the same thing or similar things, that's all they talk about.

K: No matter what their work is. They want to talk about their work. It probably goes back to men's basic insecurity.
(laughs)

B: There you go. You said it. So how old were your children when you left South Africa?

K: Robert was six, Katy was four, and Bebe was in arms.

B: Bebe was born in South Africa?

K: Bebe was born in South Africa.

B: International births. Was the birthing experience different in South Africa?

K: No. It was about the same as Charcas. We had a company hospital and a company doctor and everything worked out really good. The only problem I ever had having my babies was not having them before the doctor got there. I pop them out pretty fast in a matter of... .

B: That's good then?

K: Yeah, that's good.

B: So you had no birthing problems?

K: Well, actually I did with Katy because afterwards I got pretty sick. I was hemorrhaging stuff afterwards. Now Katy's birth was something else. You'll just have to read that story.

B: You don't want to tell me, do you?

K: Well, I'll tell you, I'm tired of it. You know, I think when I wrote I got it out of me. It's not that I don't want to tell you. It's just that...

B: You'll let me read it.

K: It's just that I'm bored with it because it's over...because I wrote it.

B: That's okay. I accept that answer. So was Robert already in school when you left South Africa?

K: He had started school there. The seasons are different, so he left in the middle of the school year. He wore his little

uniform with his little beanie on his head, and his little knee socks, and his little jacket, and his tie. Another reason we didn't want to stay in South Africa was because people sent their children away to boarding school at about the age of nine or ten.

B: That's young.

K: Well, that's what we felt.

B: Very young.

K: And what they sent them to was the equivalent of an English boarding school. And you know about English boarding schools.

B: Very regimental, et cetera?

K: Um-hmm.

B: Was it because of the educational system?

K: We had no company school there. It was a government school because, remember, it was a town there. We really did like them. They taught them to sing Dutch Reform Church hymns (slaps table) in school and we were quite dismayed over that. We didn't like that school at all, yet we didn't want to send our six-year-old kid off to boarding school many miles away. He couldn't get home even once a month because O'Okiep was pretty isolated, too. We did have a road to Capetown but, my goodness, what a road. It was a ten-hour trip over a dirt road, so we were quite isolated there. And we didn't have good food there. We were so isolated. We were on the edge of the Kalahari Desert, so it was dry. Although the climate was pretty moderate; it got hot, but not real hot, and it got

cold. I would say that it didn't get as hot as Las Cruces and it didn't get as cold as Las Cruces, but we had definite seasons there. What was I just saying right before the climate? I was going to tell you something really important.

B: About the desert?

K: Just before that...hmm.

B: It'll come. It's unimportant. When you remember you can just tell me in the middle of your next sentence. So you decided to move from South Africa. How did your husband go about looking for a position? Was it always word of mouth or did he have contacts in other parts of the world?

K: In the early years it was just floating letters to different mining companies.

B: So he'd present himself and ask if they could hire him?

K: You'd say that you were looking for a job and what your experience was, and if they needed anybody of your experience and things like that. But that's the only time he left ASARCO. Then when we came back he went back with ASARCO.

B: From South Africa?

K: No. From South Africa we went to New Mexico, to Grants, to the uranium mines for one year.

B: To Grants?

K: Uh-huh. To the uranium mines. Then from there back to Mexico, to Parral.

B: When you moved to Grants did you think you would be there for a longer period of time?

K: God. I hoped not. I just hated it...

B: What was Grants like?

K: It's the worst hell-hole I've ever lived in. It is absolutely horrible; we froze to death, the wind blew all the time, and when we weren't freezing to death it was summertime...we were burning up. I had these three little kids. This was the year that Robert went to school and the first thing he caught was the chicken pox. He came home with the chicken pox; he was sick for two weeks. Then Katy got it for two weeks. Then Bebe got it for two weeks. By that time, he was back home with the mumps. Same thing. That went through the three kids. Then the measles. You know, in those days, there were no inoculations for those things. Oh! That was the worst year of my life.

B: You'll remember that.

K: I'll remember that.

B: You were a little older and a little wiser.

K: I don't know about wiser. I just wanted to get out of Grants. I wanted to get out of Grants so fast. I didn't like that place at all.

B: So what company was Mr. Byrd working for in Grants? Do you remember?

K: I don't. I don't really remember the name of the company.

B: I can look it up later.

K: We were just there for a year.

B: What were Mr. Byrd's sentiments on living in Grants?

K: He wasn't happy either; he had to drive forty miles or more to work every day. He was the mine superintendent there and sometimes they'd call him in the middle of the night. He worked seven days a week. I never saw him. The kids never saw him. He was working all the time or on the road all the time. It was a dreadful year in our lives. We were so happy to go back to Mexico.

B: Did you live in the town of Grants or were there separate living...

K: No. You were just regular people, even in the town. And most of the town was mining people. Grants was undergoing a boom-time then with the uranium.

B: Most of the people, the miners and their families, had they been in other foreign countries?

K: No. We caused quite a stir in our neighborhood. We bought a car in Belgium. We left South Africa and we bought a car in Belgium. I can't believe we did this. I can't believe the things I did when I was young. We toured Europe in a car with three little kids.

B: You should be given a medal for that.

K: I can't believe it. I look back now and think about how I did that. There were no disposable diapers. Bebe was ten months old. I washed diapers every night. I can't believe I did that. And we were so dumb we thought we had a good time.

B: How long did you tour Europe for?

K: About a month. Then we brought the car back to the States

with us. It was an Opal station wagon and it had Belgian license plates on it. We caused quite a stir in the neighborhood showing up with that car in old Grants, New Mexico.

B: They probably didn't know what to think of you.

K: No, I don't believe they did. And I was kind of amazed at Grants, New Mexico. I've never lived in a place like before. But my next door neighbor, her husband worked in the mine and he was a miner. Well, we had never associated with anybody like that before. You know, all of our friends were professionals. We had never known a miner before. They had a bunch of boys, teenage kids and younger boys. She took in ironing. Her husband was a miner and she took in ironing. It was so strange to know somebody like that. We became very good friends. I've never known anybody like that before.

B: Probably because of the hierarchy in the other mining camps you just associated with professionals.

K: Yeah, because the miners never associated with... Well to tell you the truth, this neighbor and I were good friends, but we didn't have a social life together, really. Well hell, I had no social life in Grants, let's face it. All my social life was taking care of three kids that were mostly sick all the time, so that was a bad part of my life.

B: Sounds like if you were exiled.

K: It was a mess. I looked back with such nostalgia on my years in Africa and Mexico, and Bob was just having a real hard time

with his job. It was so demanding, and he never saw the family, so we decided that he would look for a job somewhere else.

B: I bet every engineer's wife can chalk up an experience like that; they look back and they can pick and say that that was the most horrible point of their lives.

K: It was. It was the worst time in my life, in our married life. So he wrote to ASARCO and he said, more or less, "How would you like to have me back?"

B: "Take me back, please."

K: Yeah. So they said, "Sure, come on back." So we went to Parral.

B: Where were ASARCO's main offices? When you corresponded were they in...

K: The first time we went down, when we went to Charcas, they were in El Paso. Even when we were in San Luis, they were in El Paso. I don't remember. At some time before or after we moved to Parral is when they went to Mexico City. I think they were still in El Paso when we were in Parral.

B: So did you come to El Paso to have to check in at the office?

K: Yeah. We went to El Paso and checked in at the office. They sent a car for us to El Paso and drove us down to Parral...us and the three kids.

B: So you were back in Mexico?

K: Back in Mexico. And we loved Parral and we loved La Prieta, the colony where we lived. We were very happy there. We

spent very happy years there. It was just like home to my children although we did live for sometime in Santa Bárbara, which is about eighteen miles away. I can't remember exactly...another ASARCO mine. There was La Prieta in Parral, there was Santa Bárbara, which was also an ASARCO mine and there was San Francisco del Oro where the Humphreys' lived, which is another company. These three places formed a little triangle and in the center of everything was the town of Parral.

B: How long were you in Parral in La Prieta?

K: In Parral and Santa Bárbara, because, you know, it's the same area, in Parral and Santa Bárbara...let's see, we went in [19]61 and we left in [19]74.

B: So you spent your longest there?

K: The longest time there between La Prieta and Santa Bárbara. We spent three years of that time in Santa Bárbara, two or three years.

B: How large was the mining camp in La Prieta?

K: Oh, it was large. How many houses were there? Hmm, I don't know. Thirty, forty, I'm not sure.

B: Was there a mining camp for the laborers?

K: No. They lived in town. The mine was the main industry of the town of Parral at that time. We were fortunate there. We had good water. We could drink the water.

B: And you couldn't drink the water in Charcas?

K: In Charcas we could. We were very fortunate in Charcas. We

could drink the water and we had pasteurized milk because the company had a dairy there. Then the only other place we ever were where that was true again was Parral. We could drink the water. That's a big thing to be able to drink the water and have a safe supply of milk. We did, both in Parral and Charcas, which is important for the age our children were. Later on it didn't matter when our children were grown and no longer lived with us. That's when we lived in places where you could drink the water and didn't have a safe supply of anything, but it didn't matter then. I was always extremely careful with the kids. My God, anytime you walked in my house, there were pots boiling all over the place. I boiled everything, absolutely boiled everything. And as careful as I was...Oh my God, I was the most devoted mother in the world and kept these kids absolutely sanitized. I'll never forget the day that Robert was crawling on the floor. My husband and I were sitting there fondly looking at our precious little boy. We saw him crawl and we saw him lean over and pick up something. It was a dead fly. And in front of our eyes he put it in his mouth and ate it. This was a dreadful thing to see.

B: For a mother that sanitary.

K: (laughter) I know. He just licked his little chops and... . My husband and I just about vomited. We both started to yell and jump at the same time, but it was too late.

B: What position did your husband have in La Prieta?

K: When we went there he was mine superintendent, then he was the assistant manager, then he was the manager.

B: Within these thirteen years?

K: Yeah. When we went to Santa Bárbara he was the assistant manager there. Then when we went back to Parral he was the manager.

B: Was there a similar social life at La Prieta as there was at Charcas?

K: Um-hmm and Santa Bárbara, too. Yes, there was.

B: Did you have to go into town to buy your food, also?

K: La Prieta is practically in the middle of Parral.

B: So you weren't as isolated?

K: We didn't feel we were isolated at all. We had a lot of friends in Parral and our children had a lot of friends in Parral.

B: Mexican nationals?

K: Oh, yes. There weren't any Americans living in Parral. The only Americans were living in La Prieta, the colony. But we had a lot of friends in Parral and so did our kids. They still do.

B: How did you develop friendships with the Mexican nationals that lived in Parral? Did they work there?

K: You mean how did we meet them?

B: Yes. I mean, were they all people that worked at the mine?

K: No, they weren't; they owned businesses, they were doctors, they were lawyers, they were business people. Well, we all

belonged to the casino. The casino is the equivalent to a country club, which was the center of Parral social life, not La Prieta. All the best families and anybody who was anybody belonged to the casino. It was a wonderful place for teenagers to hang out. They had big dances, and parties, and *tardeadas*, and *tertulias*, and that sort of thing kept the kids in a mad social whirl all the time. We met a lot of our friends. I think that's how we first knew some of them. A lot of times you meet people because your kids are friends with them. It wasn't because we met them at church. We didn't go to church there. We didn't go to church anywhere as a matter of fact. We didn't belong to any clubs...just common interests.

B: Your children attended school in La Prieta, correct?

K: Yes. We had a one-room schoolhouse there. But we wanted the kids to have a little broader scope than that. We wanted them to know more about Mexico and have more Mexican friends, so when they were in school, which goes up to the eighth grade there, we enrolled the kids downtown after school. Oh, I wrote a story about Robert and his school downtown. It was a true experience. He was in school downtown and he came home. He was all excited about the *niños heroes*- you know what the *niños heroes* are- because it was getting close to the 15th of September and they were having the pre-celebrations for the 15th. The third grade class was going to have a re-enactment of the *niños heroes*, you know, being killed and then the last

one wrapping himself in the Mexican flag and throwing himself over the cliff and Chapultepec. The story impressed Robert so much. He was really impressed. So they're going to re-enact it and every kid would have sold his soul for the part of the last cadet, you know, the one who wrapped himself in the flag and threw himself over the embankment. They all would have killed for that. Then if they couldn't get that one, maybe the next to the last one that died. Robert came home from school one day and he was inconsolable because one thing he hadn't realized in all the drama of the story was that the invaders were American. Because they told him that he would have to be General Winfield- was it Winfield Scott?

B: I think it was Winfield Scott.

K: That's the role that he would have to take. Well, he said he just didn't want to be that. You know, who wants to be the mean guy killing these poor, brave cadets? And they said, "You have to be that because you're an American." And he said, "I'm not an American." They said, "Oh, yes you are." And he said, "An American wouldn't do something like that." Well, they did and he refused to believe it. He was so upset. He wanted to be one of the *niños heroes* and he didn't want to have anything to do with being an American. Also, he was not prepared to admit that this evil general was an American. That night after school we had a hard time with him. He just didn't want to believe it. And it's hard to explain to a kid in the third grade, a kid who's grown up as an expatriate. An

expatriate somehow seems to develop more chauvinism than ordinary Americans who live in the States. There are some times that you, especially the children, you know, they're different. And, I think, part of their defense is being proud of their country, so this was a very hard lesson for poor Robert to learn at the tender age of eight.

B: You said that they were schooled in La Prieta in a one-room schoolhouse? Do you remember the name of the school teacher?

K: Of course, I'll never forget it. My dear, dear Eloisa Tatem. Her husband was the chief accountant.

B: And she was the school teacher?

K: She was a wonderful teacher. My children just loved her. We all did. She was a wonderful teacher.

B: What was the curriculum like that they were taught?

K: They taught the Calvert course. And they learned the usual things and they also had a strong emphasis on mythology- I don't think that children in public schools today, in the grade schools, learn mythology- a lot of composition writing. She was very strict. They learned to study. When they went off to high school, they had already learned how to study because they had to study in grade school. I think that our children got a very good education. And, I think, it was evidenced by when they did go off to high school they were at the tops of their class. And the other kids that had gone to public school...of course, they all went off to private high schools, but people didn't send their children to private

K: Three or four times a year.

B: And you would come in and shop and...

K: Go to dinners. Actually, later on, there was a time I had to come more often because my daughter had medical problems and I had to bring her up pretty often, but those trips were just for that purpose.

B: You mentioned that the school only went up to the eighth grade. When the time came for you to decide where to place your children, did you know? What options did you have?

K: Well, we were limited, of course, by economic realities, so for Robert we sent away for a lot of private schools and got the brochures back. He chose one that he liked in Tennessee. It's called Castle Heights Military Academy. He really liked the idea of a military academy.

B: Why do you think that?

K: Well, I couldn't actually blame him much after I saw the brochures for the private boys' schools that weren't military academies. They stressed social graces, having tea with the dean, learning to ballroom dance and that was enough for Robert to... (telephone rings, taping stopped and started again)

B: This is a continuation of the interview with Kathryn Byrd. Today's date is May 14, 1996.

K: Since I last talked to you, I was worried about one part of our interview and that was about South Africa. I was afraid that I seemed very insensitive about the racial conflict in

grade schools. The other students had gone to public grade schools and they just didn't have the preparation that our children did for high school. They just didn't have the background.

B: You're not the first person that's told me that because in the past I thought that the transition from going to school there and then going to school here would have been difficult. They just slid right in and they excelled. They usually did better than their peers and that they all went on to obtain advanced degrees.

K: It's true of almost everyone I've known.

B: So you were closer to El Paso when you were in La Prieta?

K: Oh, yes.

B: How often did you go to El Paso?

K: Maybe three times a year.

End of Tape Two

Side A

Beginning of Tape Two

Side B

B: Mrs. Byrd, you mentioned that you came to El Paso about three times a year.

South Africa. And I didn't want to appear that way, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that I was insensitive at the time. I truly was. We lived such an insulated life. We didn't live in an area where there were racial tensions of any kind that I was aware of. And all the problems were in the cities and in other parts of the country. I have to admit that to a great extent I was insensitive at that time, but, I think, part of it was because of our insular life.

B: Well, that would have probably been the case in every mining camp that you lived in. You were insulated from the environment surrounding you.

K: That's true. That's why I enjoyed very much the places I lived when I didn't live in a mining camp. I felt that I got to know the people, the country, the customs, everything a lot better than in a mining camp. And those places were only Taxco, Mexico, and Cochabamba, Bolivia. Those were the only two places where I didn't live in a mining camp, so, anyway, we'll get back to Parral.

Robert went away to school then shortly after. Let's see, either three or four years after, I can't remember, Katy went out to school. She went to Loretto Academy in El Paso. She spent four very happy years there. She loved it. Then when she graduated she came to school here in Las Cruces and majored in agricultural engineering with a lot of civil engineering. Then when Katy was in her freshman year here at

the college, at the University, Bebe also started school at Loretto. The following year we left Mexico and went to Colorado, where we lived for three years before we left for Nicaragua. What else can I tell you about that?

B: While your children were away at school did they return home often to visit you?

K: Yes. The girls in El Paso were able to, of course, but Robert didn't come home often. He came home for Christmas and summer. That was all.

B: What was the transition like for them? Did they write letters home telling you about what life was like away from home?

K: When Robert was in school it was a military school. They were pretty strict and he was required to write a letter once a week, so we heard from him once a week. We heard from the girls easily once or twice a week and then they would call. Katy had a hard time when she first went away to school. She used to call and blubber for ten minutes and I got so my husband and I both hated to answer the phone and we'd say, "What is it? What's the matter? Are they bad to you?" "No. (mimics voice of daughter crying) I just miss you guys." But she got over it and she has very fond memories of that school.

B: A while back I had asked you about the social interaction in the mining camps and you had mentioned that you had many friends in Parral. What about the social interaction between the three camps in the near vicinity?

K: Oh, yes, definitely. We invited the other camps to our

parties and they invited us to their parties, and we knew everybody in the other camps. It was a very close relationship, not as close as living in the camp was, but all of us enjoyed being with outsiders because we saw so much of each other on a daily basis. We enjoyed getting what we called the outside world or other people, so it worked out very nicely for us.

B: How did Katy meet her husband?

K: She was visiting some friends in San Francisco del Oro where Jimmy lived. This is the way I remember it. They were playing pool and he started playing with them. She beat him at pool and she came home and said that she had met this boy that was really stuck up. I asked what his name was and she said, "Jimmy Humphreys. Oh, he is just so stuck up." That's all she said about him for about two or three weeks. Then she quit saying he was stuck up and the next thing I knew every time I looked up he was there. He was a very relentless suitor I would say. They were both fifteen years old.

B: So young.

K: Yes, so young. They started going together and that was it. He was her first boyfriend and she was his first girlfriend. And now they have been married for almost twenty years, but they've known each other forever.

B: Where were they married?

K: In El Paso at the Humphreys' house. We were living in Colorado at that time and they wanted to be married in El Paso

because of all their friends from Mexico would find it very difficult to get up to Colorado. Most of our friends were there, too. It was a very good decision and the Humphreys' graciously had the wedding in their home and it was very nice. It was a nice wedding.

B: So after they married, they never went back to live in the camp? By then, had they each had their own careers?

K: They married a week after they graduated from college. Jim graduated from UTEP [University of Texas at El Paso] and Katy graduated from NMSU. They went to Texas A&M to do their graduate work. They both went there. And Katy finished before Jim did and she moved to Roswell, [New Mexico], the place where she got a job- she was going to go anywhere she got a job- then when he got out a year later, he followed her and they've stayed in Roswell ever since.

B: And Bebe?

K: Bebe lives in Colorado. She has two girls.

B: What was life like for you after everyone left the nest? Did you have the empty nest syndrome?

K: Oh, it really hurt me a lot as each one left, but, you know, by the time the third one left...hallelujah! (laughs) That's true, but as each one left, it was very hard. It really was. Then we began to enjoy a new phase of our lives.

B: When Bebe left were you still in La Prieta? Or by then had you moved?

K: Bebe didn't leave. We left. We went to Nicaragua and she

didn't want to come with us.

B: So Bebe stayed?

K: Bebe stayed in Colorado. She had finished high school and she didn't want to come with us and she didn't want to go to college, so she just stayed there, in Colorado. And she's been there, mostly, ever since.

B: Was Mr. Byrd working in Colorado? Is that why you were all there for those three years?

K: Yes. He was working for ASARCO also in Colorado.

B: Whereabouts in Colorado?

K: A little town called Leadville, west of Denver, in the mountains that has more snowfall than most any place in the U.S., but we came to like Leadville. The weather at first really scared me. I had hardly seen snow in my life and it just came down by the foot. And it was on the ground there all winter long. I started skiing.

B: Cross-country?

K: Cross-country. And I loved it. Cross-country is a wonderful way to go. You just go out. They had trails all over the place there. You sign in. I spent a lot of time, at first, looking for somebody to go with me, then I realized that I really didn't...if somebody could, alright, if they couldn't... . You sign in and out of the trails. You know, you're perfectly safe. I went on some citizen ski races. I had a great time.

B: You're an olympic woman.

K: Yes. An olympic woman. I think I was about forty-seven, forty-eight when I started to ski.

B: Leadville. That doesn't sound like a very romantic name.

K: Oh, you sound like my children. They were horrified. They called it "Deadville" before they even saw it. They said, "We don't want to go to Leadville." Of course, they didn't want to leave La Prieta. They weren't really leaving La Prieta. They were already out of school, but to be able to go back to La Prieta... . They weren't very happy about Leadville.

B: What were the living arrangements like in Leadville?

K: We had a company house that was very nice; an old-fashioned house that we liked very much with radiators and steam heat, which I found out is the most wonderful thing in the world. I love steam heat.

B: It's good for your skin, isn't it?

K: Yes, and you need it in Leadville since it is so high. It's so high that it's very dry up there. We had a good time in Leadville. And for the first time since I had left the States, I worked. I joined a woman's consciousness-raising group because I thought I had missed out on all that stuff. I didn't do too well in the woman's consciousness-raising group.

B: Did they say that you raised their consciousness too much?

K: Well, when I'd hear their complaints, I couldn't see anything to them. And I'm pretty much a feminist, but some of these women... . I didn't stay in the group. I didn't belong in

that group. I didn't have those kinds of problems. Maybe I didn't know it, but I was happy.

B: What made you decide to go back to work?

K: I wanted to. I had done in Mexico the usual charity work and I had taught English. I gave classes in English.

B: Oh, you didn't tell me that.

K: Well, it was just a sideline kind of thing.

B: I can imagine with all of your children gone that you had that much more time to fill in. Did you have any hobbies when you were living in any of the mining camps?

K: Well, when we went to Taxco everyone in Taxco was an artist, so I decided to be an artist.

B: Well, you played the guitar, didn't you?

K: Oh heavens, that was only for learning Spanish. I'm no musician. But I decided to be an artist and I got all of the paraphernalia because everyone in Taxco was an artist, I mean, if you live in Taxco. If you're not an artist, people assume that you are. I found out that I could no more paint than I could sing and play the guitar, so I had to give up on that. At that time I was pregnant. I could not get out in Taxco much at all because of the terrain. I had Robert, who was very little and Katy was born. I didn't have a lot of time to do things there or even interest, I would say. I was interested in my children at that point.

B: Which is a full-time job in itself.

K: I made it so.

B: Did you have any pets while you were in Mexico?

K: We always had pets. We've had pets everywhere we lived... always, at least, a cat. Then in La Prieta we had everything because Robert was a nature lover; he had a pet raccoon, he had snakes...all kinds of snakes. We had a cat, we had a dog, and they were always bringing home some mangy dog or something that we would just have to get rid of in some quiet way. The kids could find the most pitiful, miserable, half-dying animals and bring them home. Oh, and Robert had a pet bird that used to sit on his shoulder and go all over the place. The snakes used to coil around his neck as he walked all over the place. The raccoon was very mischievous and got into trouble and would unroll the toilet paper all over the house, get into the toilet and take a very messy bath squirting water all over the bathroom. We had lots of pets, lots of them.

B: Were you in Mexico during the Mexicanization or had you already left?

K: No. We were there during the Mexicanization and after.

B: Did you notice a change in life after the Mexicanization went into effect?

K: I don't know what year it went into effect. I'm not sure. I should ask. The Mexicanization didn't make a difference in my life unless- I'm really unclear as to when it began- but I know that when we first went there, nearly everybody in the colony was American. Then by the time we left, the colony was mostly Mexican. I didn't like living in a colony that was

closed, you know, that was only Americans. I really didn't like that very much. I liked it much better when it was open and we had Americans and Mexicans, a nice mix. It was just a more interesting place.

B: Was there a big change-over in the management? I've heard that when the Mexicanization went into effect. Many of the Americans left.

K: You know, I'm going to go have to ask my husband what year that happened.

B: I don't know the exact year either. The late [19]60s.

K: It didn't seem to make a big difference to us except that, I believe, at that time Mexicans began getting promotions to higher jobs, which was something that we thought was a long time in coming. But to us, personally, I don't know if it made a big difference to my husband on the work side of it. I didn't feel any difference in our lives.

B: When did you leave Mexico? What year?

K: We left Parral in 1974, so if the Mexicanization, which is very unclear in my mind- it certainly meant nothing in my life- was in the late [19]60s, but we were there quite a few years after that. Then we went to Nicaragua in [19]78. Nicaragua was quite the experience. We couldn't help but reflect that we had left Africa twenty-odd years before fearing that a revolution was imminent, then we walked into Nicaragua. And a day after we got there the newspaper editor was assassinated and the whole place just fell apart. We were

in the middle of a revolution.

B: How did you all end up in Nicaragua?

K: With the same company. Bob was asked to go and we did. We thought we were back in the States to stay when we were in Colorado, but they needed him in Nicaragua. He liked it better. He loved the work there. All the men loved Nicaragua and all the women hated it.

B: Tell me why.

K: I wonder why. All the men just loved the work and it didn't bother the men that we were all so isolated. I had to do without a lot of things. And the women, I guess, the isolation bothered the women and the lack of available foodstuffs and things that we would have liked to do some creative cooking with. Did Peggy Humphreys tell you that she was in Nicaragua?

B: She mentioned it briefly in passing.

K: I knew that they had been there, but many years before they went to Mexico, long before they went to Mexico when they first married.

B: Yes, in the very early days of their marriage. She didn't talk too much about it.

K: In their very early days I remember that I called her from Colorado because she had been there, to Bonanza, the same mining camp we were going to. I called her and I said, "Peggy, we're going to Bonanza. What can you tell me about it?" And she was just a diplomat. All she said was, "I'm

sure it's much better now than when I was there." Well, I don't believe it was. We flew in on these little...I don't know the type of airplane it was, but they were the planes that had flown the China Hump. I mean, the exact same planes that had done that in the [19]30s. All the signs inside the plane and everything were in Chinese. These were the same planes. We took our dog with us. The dog we had in Parral- she was the children's dog and when all the children left, she ended up as our dog- we took her from Parral to Leadville. Then we took her with us to Nicaragua and when we got to the airport in Managua to fly over to the colony, I took one look at that plane and said, "I'm not letting Polly go in the baggage compartment of that plane." Bob said, "You have to. They're not going to... ." I said, "Well, then I'm not going to." He said, "What are you going to do?" "I'm just going to hold her in my arms." Well, of course, it didn't matter. It didn't matter at all. There were people sitting next to me with a box of chickens in their lap. There was somebody else with, not on that flight...a man had an ocelot on a leash. I felt something under my foot. I tell you, it was really wild. You reached down to fasten your seat belt and you find out that the clasp wasn't there; you couldn't buckle your seat belt. It was really wild. And that was our life-line to the mine. We got our supplies in by air...our mail. We had no telephone contact with the outside world. There was radio contact at the airport, but when the revolution started the

airport was bombed and we had no more radio contact. The flights stopped because the whole country was at war, so we were isolated completely from May until, of course, the Sandanistas triumphed in the revolution in July. I forget the exact date, but the country was still torn up and nothing was normal, so we didn't really have any communication until about October. I had a ham radio and I had a very good ham radio operator friend in College Station, Texas. He had gotten in touch with me on behalf of Katy and he lived in Bryant, Texas where she was going to school. I could talk to Katy and I did once a week by the ham radio.

B: She must have been beside herself with worry.

K: Probably not so much because, well... . Then after a while I couldn't talk to her because the Sandanistas had changed all the radio licenses and everything and mine was no longer valid, but I kept a kind of a clandestine date on the radio with my contact without identifying myself. He could talk to me and tell me things. At least it was some little contact and we had it in case of emergencies.

B: Did the company make any effort to move you to a safer place?

K: Yes, you would think the State Department would or something. We were so isolated that nobody could get to us. We were just forgotten. The company did worry about us a lot. My radio contact would call the New York office and tell them when he had talked to me and how things were. Then the company sent a ship with food supplies because we were running low. When

the Sandanistas invaded the people from the village had ransacked the warehouse and the store and the butcher shop and taken everything. It was kind of a wild thing; everybody went wild. The offices were broken into and equipment was either destroyed or taken. Well, the company sent a ship and the Mosquito Indians on the coast saw the ship coming. We had a hard time getting our supplies off the ship because they said that the ship was sent by the Queen, their Queen. They still thought of themselves as British subjects and that the Queen had sent them the ship full of food. Finally, through negotiations by giving them part of it they released it.

We had a hard time, those months of real isolation and we were either real bored to death or scared to death. We had weeks of just complete boredom and then, all of a sudden, there would be a rumor that the Sandanistas were coming back or that the *guardia* was coming back and then we would be scared to death. I remember once we got into a tizzy because these two Sandanista soldiers were walking up the road to the camp and, oh my goodness, out of the whole town, they came straight to our house and- they weren't real Sandanistas, they were just... . That was the problem then; you didn't know who was a Sandanista and who wasn't. Anybody could put a kerchief over his face and carry a gun. And everybody did, so we didn't know. When the war was over, the Sandanistas did come to our house, the leaders of the Sandanista party. It was a very interesting meeting with them. We didn't know that they

were coming. And during one of their raids on the village they had planted little red and black crepe paper flags around in different parts of the colony. And I took one of them as a souvenir; I had it on a stick and I had it stuck in a flower base. It didn't mean anything to me, just a souvenir, but they came in and they saw that flag and, I think, they thought that we were supporters. Of course, we were, in a way. At that time, everybody wanted the Sandanistas to win. They were very friendly. They had their guns. They didn't have their masks on because the war was over, but they all carried their weapons. They were very interesting people. One of them had gone to school in France. They were all well-educated. These were the leaders who came; the very same leaders who later became so disappointed in the Sandanista party and got out of the movement after all those sacrifices. They didn't like what it had turned into, which was really unfortunate. Everybody was disappointed by that. I said that I was pro-Sandanista, but sometimes they made it hard for me.

End of Tape Two

Side B

Beginning of Tape Three

Side A

K: Every afternoon at 3:30 p.m.- this was during the war, before the war was over- they had these broadcasts to incite the *campesinos* to help them. I listened to this faithfully every day. They would tell them how to make homemade bombs. I learned how to make a home-made bomb with kerosene and sugar...and a molotov cocktail, as a matter of fact. They would always close it off by singing the hymn of the Sandanistas which was very unkind toward the Americans. We were called the Yankee traitors who would someday be vanquished: "*A los yankis enemigos de la humanidad.*" Well, I didn't like being called enemy of humanity very much. In fact, when the Sandanista officers came to our house I told them that. I said, "I'm very sympathetic to your cause and nearly everyone in your country was, but it's very disturbing to me to be called the enemy of humanity. Those are strong words and I don't appreciate them." And they said, "We don't mean you personally. We just mean your country, just your government, not you." I said, "Well that's me. I still take it personally." They simply couldn't understand why I could feel offended over those words when all they meant was the government and not me. After the war when the U.S. sent the first new ambassador to Managua to be the ambassador in the

new government he was met at the airport with a man that played the *himno nacional* of the Sandanistas with those words. A very strong protest was made by the U.S. government, fortunately, so they removed the words from the song, but except by that time every school child, every grown person, every single person in Nicaragua, was used to singing it that way. It only had two verses in it- and that was one of them- so I don't think it did much good.

B: Where did you go from Nicaragua?

K: We were, actually, run out of Nicaragua. The Sandanistas kept talking out of both sides of their mouth. They'd say, "We want you stay. Don't go." Because all during the revolution, the mine, except for the day of the big raid on the village, the mine worked every day. It was the only business or industry in all of Nicaragua that worked every day during the revolution.

B: Why was that?

K: We were isolated. See, the Sandanistas came in, struck the mine and then left. Then the *guardia* was afraid to come back for fear that they'd come again. We were there and there wasn't anything else to do. Bob said, "They might as well work. We're not just going to sit around." And everybody wanted to work; they wanted to make money, although there wasn't anything you could do with your money, but they could save it for sometime after the war when they could spend it. Yeah, they kept saying that they wanted us to stay and they

said that they wanted Bob to stay, that he'd been so good there. They knew that I had started a charity thing- well, I can hardly call it a charity thing. Bonanza only had a *segundaria* school, which is high school, for about three years and they were very, very proud of it. Up until then they'd never had one. While it was free to attend *segundaria*, all the books had to be purchased and the uniforms, which consisted only of a white shirt and a dark skirt or pants, it had to be purchased. There were some kids who wanted to go to *segundaria* who couldn't afford the books and, really, couldn't afford even the uniforms, so I started a fund-raiser...getting together funds to supply uniforms and books for the kids who wanted to go to school. And the Sandanistas were people who appreciated things like that. They really did. They knew a lot about us by the end of the war. They said that they liked us and that we were the kind of people they wanted there and all this. On the other hand, they made it increasingly difficult. Then they would go downtown right after they'd spoken to my husband about not leaving and incite the population by saying, "This mine is yours now. The foreigner will be getting out." Well, we would hear that, so when it came time to leave Bob felt he just couldn't stay there any more. It was becoming too impossible, so we left; it wasn't easy. They sent in a military plane for us. That getting away that day was pretty tough.

Then we went to Arizona and we lived there a couple of

years in a place called Casa Grande, Arizona, which was uneventful, except, once again, I got a job because I was back in the States.

B: Were you with the same company?

K: Yes. Then we were sent to Bolivia.

B: Same company?

K: Same company. We enjoyed the Bolivian experience very much. It was so different from anything...and we lived in a city, Cochabamba, a beautiful city. It's called a city of eternal spring- perfect climate, wonderful vegetables and fruits, good bakeries, a lot of poverty, though, of course, in Bolivia as you can imagine. I became involved with the government orphanage there. I formed a group of volunteers. We raised money and did projects at the orphanage. We bought sheets and clothes. We finally realized what the real need was after seeing all these things that we wanted to change. The real need was food, so we just started buying food every week, which your dollar could go so far in Bolivia. While we were there there was a terrible inflation, just terrible. When we got there, the exchange rate was about twelve pesos to the dollar and when we left it was something like ten million to the dollar. Every week...the next week it would be forty to one, and then it would be a hundred to one, and then a hundred and fifty to one. For a while in Bolivia, guess what the country main import was? Money. Their money was printed in Europe, in Germany, in fact. And the bills...when we first

went there, the largest bill was the hundred peso bill. But it got so that a hundred pesos wasn't even worth half a penny, so they'd send to Germany for more money. I mean, just piles of more money in larger denominations. By the time we left it was just millions to one. I remember that we made a trip. While we were there we visited several countries in South America and I went down to the travel agency to get our tickets. And I had suitcase packed with money for our trip...packed with money. I couldn't lift it. The taxi driver had to help me lift it.

But we enjoyed that, in Bolivia, being able to travel around in South America and see a lot different countries. I really enjoyed studying the folklore of Bolivia. It was very different and very interesting, incredible. I became really involved in that. I loved to go to the witches' market, which was part of the market where they sold all the things for witchcraft. All of our Bolivian friends claimed that they did these things because their servants expected it. You know, "If we don't have a *Chaya*..." which is a ceremony to appease the *Pachamama* who is this force in Bolivia who is like the Mother Earth. She could be very good to you or she could be darned right mean. She could cause floods and famines and sickness and plagues and divorces and everything or she can be very kind. They spend a lot of time trying to keep her happy. She's a kind of a greedy god and she likes sacrifices made to her. In the witches' market they sell all the things that the

Pachamama liked that you would use in a certain way in the *Chayas*, they called them, which were the sacrifices.

Cochabamba was the second largest city in Bolivia. It was a city. It was a very interesting place to live. You made lots of friends there. I had a very interesting life there. I was involved in a lot of things. I didn't have any children there and I made a lot of interesting trips in Bolivia, some with Bob and some without. I went to Peru; I went to Machu Picchu and all those places. It was really an interesting time in my life and I enjoyed it.

B: What were they extracting there?

K: I imagine that it was mostly tin, lead and zinc, some silver probably.

B: You mentioned that life in Bolivia was different than living in any other mining camp, in what ways?

K: Well, for one thing, we lived in a city, a metropolis, in fact, although it wasn't one of those seething Latin cities, you know, like Caracas or Mexico City. It was a slow-paced place. Nevertheless, it was a city; we had art galleries, we had restaurants, we had entertainment and movie houses- lots of things- a wonderful market, as I had said, the most wonderful fruits and vegetables. Everyone travelled by plane in Bolivia, everyone. I seemed surprised by that because I'm from an age where only the more affluent people flew, but in Bolivia, everybody travels. The native women with their many, many skirts and their big, tall hats, and their bundles of

kids and stuff would be sitting right next to you on a plane because that is the only way to get around in Bolivia. There is a train, but it would only go certain places and it takes forever. Bob used to use the train a lot to get out to the mines and he had some interesting experiences. He saw parts of Bolivia that I certainly never saw. We went to La Paz frequently and we saw a lot of Bolivia. I think we saw everything there was to see in Bolivia. We were also fortunate enough to see a lot of other South American countries, too. It was a really enjoyable time.

B: Was it common or did you ever experience in a camp, for example, when you were in Bolivia, were there ever other couples there that you had known in other mining camps where you were ever all together at the same time? Does that make sense? When you went to Bolivia and you met all the miners' wives, et cetera, were they all new to you or had you known them in other mining camps?

K: Well, Bolivia was different. There weren't other miners' wives there. We just lived in the city and Bob travelled out to visit some of the mines where there were no foreigners there. He travelled on the train to see the mines and there were no foreigners there. There was no mining colony when we were there, so we just lived as regular people in Cochabamba. Of course, when we were in Mexico, everybody knew everybody in Mexico, no matter which colony you lived in. You'd go to another one and you would either knew them or you knew the

person who took... . We had so much in common with everybody in Mexico. That's why they used to have a mining convention every two years in Mexico, sometimes in Mexico City, sometimes in Acapulco. I believe, now it's all the time in Acapulco, but it used to be in different places. It used to be a lot of fun to go because you'd see everyone. We all knew each other, we really did.

B: Were those conventions specifically for the mining engineers in Mexico?

K: Mining engineers in Mexico.

B: They just had one not too long ago if I'm not mistaken.

K: Where?

B: In Acapulco?

K: They have it every year in Acapulco, but I think they have it about September, something like that.

B: If I'm not mistaken, Noel attended the last one.

K: Oh, he did? It wouldn't do us any good to go now because we wouldn't know anyone now. Everybody we would know is either dead or retired, so there would be hardly anyone that we would know.

B: Probably too, it would be difficult to have that same sense of community that they did years ago. I'm sure everything is different now.

K: Oh, I'm sure it is.

B: So you were in Bolivia for three years?

K: Yes.

B: And who decided to come back? Was the decision made for you?

K: The decision was always made for us. I can't think of any place that we went because we wanted to, (laughs) except moving to Las Cruces. Suddenly, we had this decision to make and we thought, "My God. We're not used to making decisions." We've always just gone where we were told and suddenly you're retired and we thought, "What are we going to do now? Nobody's going to tell us where to go or what to do." One reason we came here was because we wanted to be close to Mexico. Another reason was that my mother lives here. In that respect, it certainly is a good thing that we came here because now she is very frail and, in fact, she just recently had to go into a nursing home and I have to spend a lot of time with her. She's ninety-one years old.

B: My goodness. So what was returning to the States...what was that like after having been away for so long? You left, you told me, when you were twenty-two years old and you returned at retirement age. You had been gone for so many years.

K: In some ways, it's kind of tough. Two of my greatest pleasures in life, here in the States, are a daily newspaper in the morning and a telephone that I can pick and call any of my kids or any friend, anytime of day or night that I want to. You should see my telephone bills, but I say, "I went for years without that and I'm not economizing on that." We take pleasure in things like that, great pleasure in things like that.

We had some adjustments to make and there is one I haven't made yet- I don't drive on the freeway. I drive around Las Cruces and that gets me where I have to go. I am absolutely terrified of getting on the freeway and I do not drive on the freeway, which is so stupid, but I could not start at my age driving on the freeway. I'm jut terrified, so that's a bad thing.

It's nice living in a university town. I take classes at the University and I'm a volunteer literacy teacher. I keep busy and Bob keeps busy, probably not as busy as he'd like to, with the Bureau of Land Management- I mentioned that to you, what he does with that- and he loves television. See, we didn't have television for all those years.

B: He's making up for lost time.

K: Yeah, and he loves television, especially seeing the sports. He likes that a lot. In fact, he's in there right now. We taped Larry McMurdy's, "Dead Man's Walk." It came on the other night, so he's in there watching that now. I'm not going to be watching, so this is a good time for him to watch it.

B: Do yo return often to Mexico to visit friends?

K: No, we don't. We do go to Juárez a lot to buy things. We buy our bread in Juárez. We go to the market, but you can get so many things here now, you know. We can get our papayas and pineapples here. You can get wonderful chile here; every kind of condiment for Mexican food. We really haven't gone to

Mexico very much. We've been to a couple of weddings, things like that, but apart from that, we haven't gone back very often.

That road is so much better now than it was when we lived there that we used to think nothing of getting off and driving for eight or nine hours to get up to El Paso. It was a terrible road then and terribly dangerous. Now that it's good road, a really good road- it's a toll road all the way to Parral- it's just wonderful- but we have second thoughts about traveling on that road. It's so silly that we are more cautious now in our old age than when we were young and had children to worry about and things like that. Instead, now that we're old we've become cautious. It doesn't make any sense.

B: Do you have any final anecdotes that you would like to share or comments or thoughts on living in a mining camp?

K: Well, although I told that I loved living in Taxco and Cochabamba when I didn't live in a mining camp, it's true I did enjoy living in those places very much for some of the reasons that I talked with you about, but I loved living in the mining camps. I truly did when we had children. When we had children I think that it was the most wonderful life for us and for our children. And we had very, very happy family life and we enjoyed it very much. Our children, to this day, when they talk to their friends about how they lived and how they were brought up, their friends find it an incredible

story and can't believe it. They're all jealous, in fact, of the lives that they lived, simple as it was, which it was...a very simple life. I wouldn't take anything for those days. I think when I really didn't enjoy living in a colony was after the children were gone. Of course, the only place that it happened was Nicaragua. I don't think I would have like it, even with children, in Nicaragua.

B: Would you have done anything differently?

K: I don't believe that there's a person alive that wouldn't have done a lot of things differently. Of course, don't ask me why, but I'm certain there are many, many things I would have done differently. Wouldn't everyone?

B: Let me ask you one final question. What words of advice would you give to a young woman accompanying her husband going to work for in a foreign company? If he accepted a position as a mining engineer and she was accompanying him what would you tell her?

K: I don't think that happens much anymore because young women aren't going to want to do that. (laughs) They're going to have their careers and they have to be able to go to a place where they can follow their careers and, of course, they can't in a colony. I guess, it does happen because my son is in a colony now in Honduras and there are a lot of Americans there with their wives and their children. I think you'd have to be a certain type of woman to want that...a woman who wants to have a family and be dedicated to your family for those years

and a woman who would be willing to forego a career or, in fact, not only forego a career but any kind of higher education or enrichment of any kind. She'd have to be willing to do all that. I don't believe that you're going to find very many women like that now. Maybe I'm wrong.

B: I think that it's a very astute observation especially in this day and age.

K: Except, maybe, you would like to go and be barefoot and pregnant there. As long as you're going to be barefoot and pregnant- you told me that you wanted to be barefoot and pregnant- I can't think of a better place for it to happen.

B: I'll have to share that thought with my husband and ask him what he thinks about that final statement that you made. (laughter) Are you about ready to stop?

K: I can't think of another thing, except, that I'm afraid that I sounded really stupid all the way through in this.

B: I think that we're all uncomfortable when we hear our voices on tape, but you did fine. I'd like to thank you for your time. I'm very appreciative.

K: Well, thank you. It's been fun remembering all those days and I've had a good time writing about them, too. I've written a lot about all those things. That has been fun. I've never talked about it so extensively. And I know, for one thing, I'm absolutely sure that I can write about it much more than I can talk about it because I can rewrite and rewrite and rewrite. What I'd really like to do is redo this whole

interview from beginning to end. How would you like that?

B: That's impossible. (laughter) Maybe down the road you can elaborate and you can tell me more stories.

K: No, I don't want to elaborate. I just want to undo everything I said. (laughs)

B: It's too late. No, you did fine. I'm sure that your interview will be a valuable addition to what we have already done in our mining project. You should be proud.

K: I don't think I'm going to be proud. I think I'm going to feel kind of silly. You have really pretty teeth.

B: Thank you. How about if I turn the tape recorder off.

K: Is it still on?

B: We'll stop. This is the end of the interview.

End of Interview