

An Interview with
Liz De Laperouse

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis
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Oral History Program

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PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself?

Liz De Laperouse: Sure, I'm Liz De Laperouse.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk about your childhood: your parents, your siblings, your grandparents, your cousins, anybody in your family that really encouraged you, that said, "What do you want to do? You have this strength" or "You should go on to college" or "You should go follow your dreams" or whatever it is, and how did you play? Did you play with boys and girls or did you play with girls? Just talk about your play.

Liz De Laperouse: Well, I had the most fascinating and wonderful childhood because I was born in what is now Zimbabwe, at the time was Southern Rhodesia and so my brother was only a year older than me and my mother ran one of these households that was welcoming of everybody. So it was a farm, three thousand acre farm. So it was a big farm and my brother and I were basically allowed to do whatever we wanted and so we just literally played, we tried to clean the chameleons when they turned black, which they weren't very happy about. We put water down this enormous spider hole so that it would come up and being rather annoyed. We had a horse named Teddy that we would ride and we had everybody raising us. I mean, there were just the two of us until we started going to school and then I went to a wonderful school in the capital City of Salisbury and then all of that kind of came to an abrupt end when I was seven, my brother was eight. We moved to London and I just remember a very long plane ride to a new adventure.

Blanche Touhill: Did you know you were leaving the country forever?

Liz De Laperouse: I didn't know forever; I knew I was leaving but I'd left before. When I think back on my mother's traveling with me and my brother and then later on my younger sister, those days, traveling from Africa to England and to North America and to Canada must have been very difficult but we did.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go by sea?

Liz De Laperouse: No, we flew and on that particular trip, we stopped off and visited my great aunt in the South of France, Aunt Vey, and then continued on to England where we were met by my grandmother who we called "Oma" and so one of the things that was kind of unique for me was that both

my American family and my British family were very, very much a part of my everyday life. I spent a lot of time with my grandparents and they were very influential. They were very strong and, as you said, they always encouraged me to do whatever I felt like doing and that I could do it. So we lived in London for a couple of years and then my parents' marriage fell apart and Mom felt she had to bring us back to St. Louis so she could raise the three of us.

Blanche Touhill: So she was the American and your father was from Britain?

Liz De Laperouse: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And so, do you have both citizenships?

Liz De Laperouse: I do.

Blanche Touhill: How did they meet?

Liz De Laperouse: My father was stationed at Scott Air Force base as a trainee for the Royal Air Force and through a family connection, a Canadian family, Aunt (Auntie?), my grandparents, Frank and Juanita Mayfield, had been told to look after Barnaby Howard during the weekends when he had time off and so they would have him come in and have dinner and entertain him and what have you. At the time, he was 18 and my mother was a 14, 15-year-old and so there was not a lot of interaction. He then went back to England, decided he was going to go and farm in Southern Rhodesia, was looking to figure out what kind of cattle would thrive in that environment and decided to come back to America...again, this traveling is just mind-boggling to me...to go to Texas and see what kind of cattle were there and whether there was a good breeding stock for him. On the way, he stopped off to visit his dear friends, the Mayfield's and decided to stay for my mother's brother's wedding, to Alice Van Trurer and during that period, the two of them fell in love and were promptly engaged and I would say this to my mother when she was not well before she passed away, I said, "What was my grandfather thinking when he allowed you to go off to Southern Rhodesia with this dashing Brit? I mean, he must have been out of his mind," but somehow he seemed to think that this was an okay idea, which I think speaks to my mother's personality which was very much of an adventurer and I can totally see her doing that and she thrived in Rhodesia. She just loved it.

Blanche Touhill: So your mother was the frontiers person?

Liz De Laperouse: She really was and there were two people that were very influential in her time in Rhodesia. One was a woman named Lady Cundleton and I don't remember her but I remember Mummy talking about her and she had a serpent tattooed up her leg. She's from this very prominent family in England but a real character. Then the other person was a woman named Trish Stewart Bamm and Trisha was actually the god-daughter of my father's great grandfather who was quite a character in and of himself and Trish found herself inheriting chrome mines in Southern Rhodesia so she went out to Southern Rhodesia to see if she could manage these chrome mines and it was right about then when Barnaby had moved to Southern Rhodesia, had just gotten married and she became a close friend of my mother and father's. So when their marriage started to unravel, she was very much a part of our lives and actually it was Trish who flew me and Allen from Rhodesia to Southern France and then on to England because Mom stayed for...I'm not sure exactly why but she was with my younger sister.

Blanche Touhill: Just for my information, was she divorced in Rhodesia or was she divorced in London or America or where?

Liz De Laperouse: A very good question. Actually she was divorced here in St. Louis but the divorce itself was filed in Southern Rhodesia. So it was very complicated and took a long time. The man who was in charge of that divorce is still alive today, Charlie Allen, and I think it might have been the last one he was willing to do.

Blanche Touhill: Well, now, did you continue to see your father?

Liz De Laperouse: Most certainly did but it was really largely not so much my father, but his sister. Part of his story was that when Mom was out in Southern Rhodesia, Dad's youngest sister, only sister who Mom was very close to, married and moved down to Southern Rhodesia to be with Mom and Dad. She was pregnant and Uncle Mike tended to travel a lot because he was a journalist and so Dighthton moved in with Mom and so she proceeded to have Rory, who was six months older than me, and then I came along and then Dighthton had twins and then a year later had Guy. So Mom would talk about how she and Dighthton, because my father traveled just as much as Mike did, raised us like a litter of puppies. So

when the divorce happened, it was very important to my father's family that Allen and I, in particular because of our age, would continue to visit the family every summer. So we would go over every June and visit with my grandmother, Oma. She had a beautiful garden and it would be shown to the public and I would remember going down and staying with Oma and then collecting tickets while her garden was being shown to the public. Then we would stay with various other...her sister, Aunt Vey, they were identical twins but they didn't have any communication, the two of them, for the last 30 years of their lives. They were very unusual. My grandmother was 6' tall and an identical twin so they were quite remarkable and she was a painter. Then my grandfather had died when I was two, from cancer due to the gas from the First World War. And it was the women that took care of all of us and Dighton was then living in Norfolk. Aunt Vey's two sons, one was my godfather, Ben Coleman and the other one was Anthony and they lived in Norfolk as well so we spent a fair amount of time with them. Then my father's older brother, Ewan, lived on an island in Scotland that had been the place he had grown up. So I spent a fair amount of time there. So we just sort of traveled around.

Blanche Touhill: But you went to American schools?

Liz De Laperouse: Went to America during the school year, went to Mary Institute and then would spend my summers...I would say that my name and my accent and my vocabulary would all surely transition as I flew across the ocean and came back to the family in England.

Blanche Touhill: And did you come back in August?

Liz De Laperouse: Yes, usually. I'd go over in June and usually come back. When my father remarried in 1970 to a woman who lived outside of New York, it ended up that instead of going to visit with him, I'd go to visit with his family and then I would come back over and my father decided to purchase property and build a house in Cape Breton Island in Canada. So I would fly to Cape Breton and visit with him and Mary Jane after that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you certainly lived in beautiful parts of the world.

Liz De Laperouse: Yes, absolutely, very beautiful.

Blanche Touhill: When you were in Zimbabwe, did you go to a formal school?

- Liz De Laperouse: I did. It was a wonderful school.
- Blanche Touhill: Was it a boarding school?
- Liz De Laperouse: No, it was a day school but my brother did go to boarding school.
- Blanche Touhill: In England?
- Liz De Laperouse: No, in Southern Rhodesia because that was traditional. At seven he went to boarding school and I just remember going to visit him and going through this very lush part of Rhodesia and arriving at the school and my brother had been really naughty. He had tripped the head master the night before and so he had been confined to his room and we weren't allowed to see him and I just remember being devastated because I missed him so because the two of us had spent so much of our time together. So when we moved to London, my mother decided that boarding school was not appropriate for Allen so he went to a local school called Westminster School.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, attached to the abbey?
- Liz De Laperouse: Yes, and I was thinking about this not recently, when everyone's so concerned about children because the amount of freedom my brother and I had, I used to walk to the horrible school I went to called Lady Eton, which was just perfectly dreadful. All it cared about was that I could sew and walk straight. I'd have to walk around the room with a book on my head all the time and I would, very cupid-like, but I used to walk to school on my own from my house, through Kensington Gardens.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, how wonderful.
- Liz De Laperouse: Yeah, it was fabulous and then my brother would go on the subway to Westminster, again, on his own. And we continued with that when we would fly over, age 10 and 11, we were expected to get off the flight, get our stuff. I don't think anyone...
- Blanche Touhill: You two were accompanied?
- Liz De Laperouse: No, no, we were unaccompanied children and then we were probably met at the airport by Dighton or Oma or Dad or somebody. But pretty soon we were doing that trip on our own.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you fly direct?

Liz De Laperouse: No, we'd stop off and usually it was in New York City so sometimes I would be with Mom and my grandparents in Vermont and then Mom would drive us to New York City and then we'd get on a flight from there.

Blanche Touhill: And that was really a seven or eight-hour trip, wasn't it?

Liz De Laperouse: Yes, it was, much nicer travel in those days.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes. So you were an international student?

Liz De Laperouse: Very much so and then, kind of to make that even more so, my father's family had always been part of...they were in the diplomatic group so, as a child, my grandmother's brother was...I can't remember if it's governor or what, of Northern Ireland and so I was too little to remember but there's pictures of me going to visit them in Northern Ireland. Aunt Peggy was very much a part of growing up and she did a tremendous amount of work in England for the mentally ill. She had a son who was schizophrenic and so she was very active in that. Then another woman who was very much a part of my life was my father's godmother, Angela Limerick, and Angela had run the Red Cross. As you can see, there were a lot of very strong women who I was privileged to know and grow up with.

Blanche Touhill: Is that both on the British side and the American side?

Liz De Laperouse: Yes, absolutely. My grandmother, Juanita Mayfield...she hated the name "Juanita"...I remember when we moved back to St. Louis, it was difficult at that time for my mother as a divorced woman. That was not common and they wanted to get us into Community School. For some reason we weren't accepted at Community but I was accepted at Mary Institute and Allen was at Country Day.

Blanche Touhill: So that worked?

Liz De Laperouse: Exactly, and my grandmother immediately went back on the board of Mary Institute.

Blanche Touhill: Watching out.

Liz De Laperouse: Watching out, absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: Had she gone to Mary I?

Liz De Laperouse: You know, I think she did. I think she might have.

- Blanche Touhill: Well, the fact she got on the board right away, although that doesn't necessarily mean anything.
- Liz De Laperouse: No, she was just very...both Granny and Granddad were very civic-minded, very much involved.
- Blanche Touhill: Did your grandmother belong to the Wednesday Club or to the St. Louis Women's Club?
- Liz De Laperouse: You know, I don't know about those clubs. I know she was a member of the Garden Club of St. Louis and my mother used to talk about how she would do a lollipop walk through her garden for children from the inner city.
- Blanche Touhill: She would put lollipops around?
- Liz De Laperouse: Lollipops around and they would have to follow the lollipops which was sort of a cute idea.
- Blanche Touhill: So you always thought you would be what you wanted to be because you were surrounded by people who did what they wanted to do?
- Liz De Laperouse: Absolutely, and then also, there was a very, very strong commitment to education. I was expected to go to school. I was expected to do well. I was expected to go onto university. That was anticipated and I also benefitted a great deal from...the equivalent of Title Nine.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes. Now, speak to that.
- Liz De Laperouse: Well, I went to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and I was the first class that was fully integrated as male and female.
- Blanche Touhill: And what year was that?
- Liz De Laperouse: That was in '75 and when I got there, I had never really been very much involved with sports at Mary Institute and I was approached by the crew team. That was pretty funny because I wasn't very tall and I wasn't very big and I thought, well, maybe that would be rather fun. So I knew my cousins had rowed in England and I thought, well, why not? And so I joined the crew team and that sort of identified my club at Trinity.
- Blanche Touhill: That was your group?

Liz De Laperouse: That was my group and they were a wonderful group and I was fortunate enough to row for two years, twice in the Head of the Charles, which is just an incredible race and then I continued. When I graduated from Trinity, I had a degree in philosophy which my father didn't think was very useful and so I gave myself a week to find a job in New York City. I had made a specific decision to never learn how to type so that I'd never get a secretarial position which has come back to haunt me with computers. And so I was staying with my father who lived in Bedford, New York and finally I was having absolutely no success whatsoever and then a family friend said, "Well, you should talk to Chubb & Sons," and so I got an interview to work with Chubb & Sons. So I went into New York about two days before I was supposed to leave. Well, I got completely lost. I didn't know my way around New York very well. This was to go and interview with a wonderful man named Jay Devlin at Chubb & Sons, Wall Street office. So anyway, I finally got down there. I was late. I was disheveled. I walked into Jay's office and he took one look at me and just burst out laughing. He said, "You better sit down." Anyway, we proceeded to have the most wonderful conversation and he invited me back, I think it was probably even the next day and I came with my suitcase because I was flying back to St. Louis and this time I arrived on time and not disheveled. I put my bag in the Union Station lockers and went up and my first interview was with a man named Charlie De Andrea, a very small and obscure department at Chubb & Sons called the Crime Insurance Department. Well, Jay and I, we had a wonderful conversation and he hired me right then. I didn't even interview with any of the other people I was supposed to interview with. And so I went down and Jay told me what my terms and conditions and all of this and my one concern was would my job be enough to cover my rent. And it was. So I went and got my bags and went to a payphone, called my father to tell him that I had gotten the job. He was so shocked, he hung up on me. So then I went home, moved to New York.

Blanche Touhill: How did you find an apartment?

Liz De Laperouse: You know, I don't remember exactly how I found an apartment but I did. I guess I stayed with Dad, then found an apartment, moved in...it was actually on the Upper West Side and one of my roommates actually is the wife of a man I now work with in St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness.

Liz De Laperouse: And I had a wonderful time working for Chubb. We very soon branched out into liability insurance so we were writing at the time two forms of insurance which was white collar crime insurance, employee theft and kidnap ransom and then after about three or four months, as a trainee, I was promoted to underwriter and about the same time, the head of the department decided we should write a new kind of insurance that was just being introduced to the United States. No one in America was writing at the time. It was only written by Lords of London and that was directors and officers liability insurance.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, for non-profits?

Liz De Laperouse: For profits and non-profits.

Blanche Touhill: They did not have insurance for the directors?

Liz De Laperouse: Not at that time. It was just starting.

Blanche Touhill: What year was that?

Liz De Laperouse: That would have been '79. So I was so fortunate because I wrote that insurance on Wall Street and then was promoted to senior underwriter and worked in the Midtown Manhattan office where...I have a more modern, funny anecdote. I was working in a building called the Pan Am Building and frequently I would have to ride up and down the elevator with a certain man named Donald Trump.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my.

Liz De Laperouse: And when I did, I would come in and I would go to my boss, Skip Orsa, and say, "There's one person I will never underwrite a Deno policy for and that is Donald Trump." Needless to say, that has come back to haunt me as well.

Blanche Touhill: How long did you stay with Chubb?

Liz De Laperouse: I was with Chubb five years. Philippe and I met in New York. Then we got engaged and he, at the time, was working in Boston so fortunately for me, it was time for me to make a change and right as we got engaged, the manager's job of the Boston office opened up and so I interviewed

and was given the manager's job in Boston. So after we got married and had a big honeymoon, I took on that job and had a wonderful time.

Blanche Touhill: Did you live in Boston or outside?

Liz De Laperouse: Just outside in Cambridge.

Blanche Touhill: And you both worked in Boston?

Liz De Laperouse: Both worked in Boston, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Now, was he in insurance too?

Liz De Laperouse: No, he was in investment banking so he had gotten his MBA from University of Virginia and had been in investment banking in New York and then joined a boutique firm in Boston. So I worked for Chubb and then we came out to St. Louis for a wedding and that was when someone told Philippe that he should talk to Ralston-Purina. So he did. They hired him and there was no job that was comparable for me at Chubb in St. Louis so I regrettably had to leave and I took a leave, took a break. Then we were only in St. Louis a year. Meanwhile, I got pregnant and that and we had our son, Patrick when we were moved to Barcelona.

Blanche Touhill: With Ralston-Purina?

Liz De Laperouse: With Ralston-Purina. So I moved to Barcelona with a six-month-old.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my.

Liz De Laperouse: And luckily, when I'd gone over to look for an apartment when he was two, I [inaudible 26:34] whose husband worked with Philippe. She called me up and she said, "Eliza, I've got things worked out for you. I have Maria, she will come, she will clean, do your laundry and make lunch for Patrick and then (Belin?) will come and look after Patrick five days from 9:00 to 3:00 and two evenings so that you can get accustomed to Barcelona." So I was thrilled with that arrangement.

Blanche Touhill: That's women power.

Liz De Laperouse: Yes and also, the difference with children and how they were cared for. In Spain, they were gods and so being a Belin who was my au pair, was a wonderful, wonderful woman who was only 18 at the time and had decided she was not going to go to university, instead was going to look

after children. So Patrick was her first ward and we lived in Barcelona just for just under two years. Meanwhile, (Calorin?) was born and when she was about six months, we moved just outside of Paris to Le Visigny and we lived there for six years.

Blanche Touhill: Did you learn Spanish and French?

Liz De Laperouse: I did. I already knew French. Part of my father's family's history was that if you were well educated, you spoke French. So I had learned how to speak French as a teenager, which was why sending me to Barcelona was the harder thing but I picked up on the Spanish and that was when Barcelona was not part of the EU so it was a wonderful time to have been there and I made wonderful friends.

Blanche Touhill: And the architecture is supposed to be so grand in Barcelona?

Liz De Laperouse: It was stunning, yes, Gaudi, quite the fantastic person. It was a wonderful time to have been there.

Blanche Touhill: Did your children learn French and Spanish?

Liz De Laperouse: The two older ones did. When we were in Barcelona, Patrick and Calorin went to the local matenal which was standard, actually informed the fact that we need better childcare in this country because everybody, no matter what their socioeconomic standing was, used the local matenal and started it, I think it was around three or four and you went through the matenal and then into (de lise?) system and when Patrick...I was concerned, I knew eventually we'd come back to the United States and probably St. Louis and I knew how hard it had been for me to transition as an English speaker to Mary Institute so I wanted to make sure that Patrick and Calorin were fluent English speakers. When he applied to Valise International, American section which was not far from us in San Jolin Olet he was turned down in kindergarten because his English wasn't strong enough. So we decided at that point to only speak English at home. So Isabelle, who was just young at that time, did not benefit from a bi-lingual education which, to this day, she holds against me. But Patrick and Calorin continued and are totally bi-lingual.

Blanche Touhill: So then, how long were you in France?

Liz De Laperouse: Six years. So in 1992, we were transferred back to St. Louis and have lived in St. Louis ever since.

Blanche Touhill: And was your husband involved in all the changes at Ralston?

Liz De Laperouse: Pretty soon thereafter, he left Ralston in '92 and worked for a Russian fund that was doing investment in Russia for a while and then ended up joining Bungee of North America.

Blanche Touhill: And is he still with Bungee

Liz De Laperouse: He is not. He left Bungee and then went on to work for an Agra business consulting business.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, because it's all the same?

Liz De Laperouse: It is.

Blanche Touhill: It's all the same.

Liz De Laperouse: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: What did you do when you came back to St. Louis?

Liz De Laperouse: I tried to make sure that my children were able to maintain the benefits of where they had come from and then adapted to school in North America which was not easy, particularly for Patrick. The Lisee system in France was very, very structured and very rigorous so Reed School was way too easy for him. At the same time, he was having a very hard time understanding what the American system was like and the same applied to Calorin. Even though Calorin could speak English fluently, she was not accustomed to the local customs, I guess, for lack of a better word.

Blanche Touhill: So they had culture shock?

Liz De Laperouse: They did. I remember Calorin coming out at Reed School and she started at Reed October 1st because that's when we moved and closed on a house and so it was Halloween and so the day before Halloween, she came out and she goes, "Mommy, I have to bring a..." ...da da da da. I said, "A what?" "I have to bring a..." ...ra ra ra ra, and I was, "I don't know what this is. You have to bring...let me go find out from somebody what it is that you have to bring." So I went to one of the other mothers and I said, "What does she have to bring tomorrow?" and they said, "Oh, a brown

paper bag.” Well, she hadn’t gone to the grocery store. We didn’t do...she had just been trying to...we were living in an apartment while our house was being renovated so she had no idea what this was and her teacher spoke so quickly that she just kept on trying to hold onto these nuggets she knew were important and it was a brown paper bag. So they had a difficult transition.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. And what about the third child?

Liz De Laperouse: I couldn’t figure out what to do with her. There was nothing for her to do. She was little, she was three years old so I put her in the YMCA which she hated, absolutely hated. So anyway, she survived and they were all better and stronger for all of their difficulties.

Blanche Touhill: Now, did you go back to work?

Liz De Laperouse: I did not. I took care of and got very involved in the schools, joined all the parent/teacher associations and ended up getting involved with Ladue School District, helped start a school garden at Reed School in conjunction with one of the garden clubs, was involved with one of the strategic planning sessions for the district.

Blanche Touhill: Now, was that when Chuck McKenna was the superintendent?

Liz De Laperouse: You know, I think it was right after he was and I joined the task force on diversity because I always felt that the idea of diversity was very superficial. It was the color of your skin and it was not diversity of thinking or experiential and having grown up in Africa, I always had had a very positive experience with black people and had a real affection for the people that had been such an important part of my childhood. Also, my uncle, Mike Faber, had become very involved in anti-apartheid so when I would go to stay with them in the summers, with Dighton and Mike, they would often have people staying with them who were exiles from various countries.

Blanche Touhill: Of course. Did your family lose the land in Zimbabwe or were they able to sell before it all collapsed?

Liz De Laperouse: No, they were not able to sell. Dad did end up giving it to the Salvation Army so he did benefit from a tax rise. Many years later, my brother ended up going back to Africa. I don’t think he got to the farm but my

Aunt Dighton did and it was totally destroyed through the war and it was also a location that, there was a pass between Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia. So it was heavily mined.

Blanche Touhill: Now, when your children were growing up, did you take any of them to Britain?

Liz De Laperouse: I did. I would send them over, usually over to stay in France with a childhood friend of theirs. In Patrick's case, it was with his friend, Marcus Vofiet and in Calorin's case, it was her friend, Alyson de Vigniere and so they would go over and stay with those friends and then continue over to England and stay with various cousins of mine.

Blanche Touhill: And did any of them come to America?

Liz De Laperouse: They did, both Mark and Alyson came and stayed with us and then many of my cousins have transitioned through St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Was it easier for you to go to Spain and to France because of your early travels?

Liz De Laperouse: Very much because of my family. Immediately, when I knew we were going to Barcelona, I called my father and I said, "Who do you know in Barcelona?" and he knew of two families, Becky and Jimmy Evert and then Phoebe and Reg Williams and Phoebe and Reg had been friends of his father's so that was wonderful. They were quite a lot older. Then Becky and Jimmy were in Barcelona because of kind of a strange situation: they had to be there for seven years because he had been subpoenaed to testify against a mob figure.

Blanche Touhill: How interesting.

Liz De Laperouse: Yeah, Jimmy was a very good cards player and so he had gone to an elite gambling place and so he had been subpoenaed and instead of doing that, he moved his family to Barcelona and never stepped foot in the United States for seven years.

Blanche Touhill: And then did they come back?

Liz De Laperouse: They did come back but Becky and Jimmy had children exactly the year older than each one of mine so whenever I had a question about what to

do about a stage Patrick, Calorin or Isabelle was going through, I would call Becky and so we are still strong friends to this day.

Blanche Touhill: Are your children...are the girls strong?

Liz De Laperouse: They are.

Blanche Touhill: And what has become of them?

Liz De Laperouse: Both Calorin and Isabelle work in San Francisco. Isabelle is looking for a job. Calorin has worked for over five years for Google so she has a wonderful position with them but right now she's in a transition which she's not...she doesn't like the job she has right now. I'm not so sure it's that she doesn't like it, is that she just doesn't know if it's the right fit for her. Isabelle graduated from California College and ended up working first for an advertising company in LA called Send-a-though-to-Media and then she got recruited to work on a very unusual job which is the Bentonville Film Festival and this was a film festival which was kind of spear-headed by Geena Davis and it was to look at gender and minority inequality in film and filmmaking. So Isabelle helped put that on. She was the only employee and last May, I went down to the Bentonville Film Festival and watched her successfully pull off this festival that was really about...

Blanche Touhill: You know, I went to a meeting years and years ago, I'm going to say it was probably the '80s and in the film, the woman was the secretary and the man was busy giving dictation and the film was filled with that kind of stereotype: the nurse, the teacher, and the '80s, that was breaking down and I went up to him at the end and I said, "Well, why did you do that? You should make the man the secretary and the woman is dictating or something" and he said, "Oh, film has to be just told very quickly in film, the story has to be told very quickly everyone understands those stereotypes" and that was a shock to me and now you're telling me your daughter is involved in that as well.

Liz De Laperouse: Well, Geena Davis had the most fascinating statistic, that if you look at a crowd, any crowd scene in any film, it will be 25% women and minorities, so even the extras are not depicting our society. So it was a fascinating two, three days that I spent with her.

Blanche Touhill: What's the name of the film?

Liz De Laperouse: This was just the Bentonville Film Festival. This is all films so if you just pick any film out, you will see in the crowd scenes...

Blanche Touhill: And she made the study?

Liz De Laperouse: She did the report.

Blanche Touhill: And is the report published?

Liz De Laperouse: You know, I don't know where she got those statistics from but that was really one of the things that just compelled her and all the other women who were part of this festival, which of course was underwritten by Wal-Mart and Coca Cola so when I was down there, Isabelle got me passes into all the VIP functions. I found myself in an elevator with two giant M&M's. You never know where your children will take you.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to the bridges?

Liz De Laperouse: That's where most of it took place.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my.

Liz De Laperouse: So I was there and Isabelle really wanted me to go and attend a lot of panel discussions which I did and so it was really an interesting few days.

Blanche Touhill: Well, if your daughter is ever in St. Louis, we would like to interview her.

Liz De Laperouse: Okay.

Blanche Touhill: And then she could drop those reports into her file with the State Historical Society.

Liz De Laperouse: That's a great idea.

Blanche Touhill: And I think she has something to say about women and the society.

Liz De Laperouse: Well, it was an incredible experience for her and that the film festival was a success was great. She ended up not staying with that job because she didn't like LA and so January of this year she went to Geena Davis and Trevor Drakewater who were the founders and said that she didn't want to renew her lease and so she would continue to work for the film festival but she would have to do it from either Bentonville or remotely and they thought that wouldn't work. So she resigned but she still has all of those

connections and those people she got to know and it was an incredibly good experience for her.

Blanche Touhill: Well, let me change the subject a little bit: If you look at your life, did you get an award or something like an award that made you feel like you did something good?

Liz De Laperouse: I think it's the people who wanted to work with me or brought me into a situation and I always prided myself on being well informed so when I was told that something was going on that didn't make sense to me, I would then research it further. So, for instance, about...it must have been 10 years or longer, I was out at a fellow priory parents' house and David Eagleton came up to me and said that there was an effort in the State of Missouri to outlaw stem cell research.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, I remember that.

Liz De Laperouse: And I was just shocked, one, because when I was delivering my last child in France, a friend of ours had been a hematologist and he had asked for my cord blood because he was looking into whether or not that could be used for therapeutic uses and I just didn't do it. So when they talked about this stem cell thing, I thought, this is ridiculous; this is medical research. This could really help people. He said, "No, no, come to Jefferson City," so David and I went down to Jefferson City and sure enough, they were truly wanting to outlaw embryonic stem cell research and I'd been forewarned before I went down that if someone started talking about the soul, that that was a lost cause and I was sitting in some little anti-chamber waiting to speak to some law maker and some kind gentleman from somewhere in Missouri came up and asked me what I was doing there and I said I was there talking about stem cell research and he said, "It's about the soul." I went "Okay, lost cause." No point to talk to this man. But then when I got back to St. Louis, I was so undone by the fact that they truly wanted to outlaw this. Then I looked further and I was given the name of a wonderful man in St. Louis named Bernie Frank and Bernie was suffering from Parkinson's Disease and so I called up Bernie and he, sure enough, he said, "Nope and I've been working on this because of my Parkinson's for 15 years" and then Bernie, David and I were asked to a meeting down at Washington University where they announced the start of Amendment Two and this was this campaign to legalize stem cell research in the State of Missouri. Well, Bernie got up at

that meeting and he was absolutely brilliant and he went to Don Ruben who was leading that effort and said, "This makes no sense. No one cares what happens in the State of Missouri. This is going to be expensive and will accomplish nothing. What's more important is electing Claire McCaskill to the senate. The Amendment Two people disagreed with us and so Bernie and David and I went to Clare and said, "Clare, you are more important" and so she said, "Well, work with me on this." We didn't want to step on the toes of the Amendment Two people so we ended up contacting the people in California, a man named Don Reed who had spear-headed their effort to do stem cell research and then also fund the research and Don advised Bernie, David and I, we started a pact called Act for a Cure and we advised her on how to message so that she didn't offend people who found it to be offensive but so that she could be elected and so when she was successful, Richard Martin asked me to join him and Michael J. Fox on a nationwide effort. Bernie Frank told me, "Liz, that's going to go nowhere." I said, "Okay, Bernie, but for right now, I'll see if Richard and I can't figure out something." And then about, oh, two months later or a month later, Richard called me and said, "Liz, we've been asked to work on chemicals." I said, "Richard, it took me only so long to get stem cells figured out. Now you're saying chemicals?" and he said, "Yes, yes, yes, Liz, we need to work on a chemical group called Phthaltes" which is spelled horribly, should be banned if not, P-h-t-h-a-l-a-t-e-s. I said, "Ach." He said, "No, Liz, really, this is a very safe product and we need to make sure it's not banned." I said, "Okay," and I called my favorite chemist in St. Louis to see if he could help me with this and that was Dr. Bill Knowles and Bill was uniquely qualified, having won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. He was a family friend and I said, "Bill, are you familiar with the chemical group Phthaltes?" which I said, "Phthalates," and he said, "Yes, Liz, know them well." I said, "Oh, great, could you help me educate people in Washington about the safety of Phthaltes?" He said, "If you think I could be of help, Liz, I would be happy to help you," and so called the people in Washington, said I thought I had someone who might be quite helpful and proceeded to spend the next five years working on Phthaltes for a firm in Washington. Bill could never travel to Washington so, through a friend named Max McCombs who was with government affairs for Salutia, I was directed to the top Phthaltes experts which all knew each other because they helped each other and we traveled with a wonderful man, Dr. Bill Waddell and Dr. Elmer Rockfen to

Washington, D.C. to talk about why Phthalates should be allowed and are safe as used.

Blanche Touhill: And did you succeed?

Liz De Laperouse: We did. The Consumer Safety Improvement Act did not ban Phthalates in children's products that could be dumber even though, as Bill said, it's been studied so heavily. There still are efforts to ban Phthalates. The other wonderful scientist that I recruited or became my friend is a Dr. Joe Schwarz at McGill University and Joe then started inviting me up to a symposium he does on science and society and his area is all the pseudo-science. So people like the anti-vacs folks...so I now have worked with Joe. I'm known for that so, for instance, last year when Claire McCaskill challenged Dr. Oz, that was because of me pointing her science team towards some of the terrible things that he proposes on his show.

Blanche Touhill: Let me change the subject again: If you were born 50 years earlier, what would your life have been like?

Liz De Laperouse: Well, that, to me, has been the hardest question because I don't know which side of the family I would have been a part of. Would I have been a part of my mother's American family which was very traditional, pillars of the community? Frank M. Mayfield put his suit and tie on every day and was just wonderful and was very influential in my life because my brother and I used to play bridge with my grandparents every single Sunday and that was sacred time. Allen and I would not think of doing anything other than playing bridge with Grammy and Granddad. Equally, on my British side, would I have been a part of that family, which would have...my father's father grew up, he was in Kenya, he was in India, it would have been the boarding school, it would have been that kind of a life. So I can't imagine not having the parents I had and the mixture that I had because it was really wonderful.

Blanche Touhill: So it's unknown?

Liz De Laperouse: Exactly, unknown.

Blanche Touhill: What is the theme of your life?

Liz De Laperouse: That's a good question. I think that one thing that was consistent with both Mom and Dad which is how important it is to do what is right and

how you must...if you were born to the kind of privilege I was born to, that you must give back and that you must do things for others that are less fortunate than you. So I think that would probably be the most important lesson. So I've always been volunteers; trying to make sure that I give back in some way. I hope I've instilled that in my children.

Blanche Touhill: Do you think your affiliation with science and science education and the political aspects of science has been the most important aspect of your life, outside of the home?

Liz De Laperouse: Yes, I do think so and I often question that because there was a very strong artistic side in my family and I would discuss this with Bill Knowles and that really to be a great scientist...and this was true of the scientists, everyone from Joe Schwarz to Bill Knowles to Bill Waddell to John Thomas, you have to have an incredible imagination because you have to think of something that no one else has thought of and then also the beauty of science and that is something that, I think, sometimes gets lost in science education. You don't realize that science is all around you. It's from cooking your food...I took a wonderful online course that Joe Schwarz did with his fellow chemists called The Science of Food and I know now they're teaching here at UMSL The Science of Beer. So I think sometimes we don't realize how much math and science is just a part of everyday life and one of the things that I also find just frustrating and irritating from my chemical time is why anyone would purchase a product that was chem-free. As Joe Schwarz says, "If it's chem-free it doesn't exist." So our ignorance about some things that inform so much of our lives is just sometimes just mind-boggling.

Blanche Touhill: And you sort of got in that sort of accidentally, didn't you?

Liz De Laperouse: Completely accidentally and I actually laugh about that because I do constantly find myself...and just recently I campaigned against all of this complementary and alternative stuff saying that, as my friends at science-based medicine would say, "If it's complementary and alternative, it is not medicine. If it works, it becomes part of mainstream medicine. So most recently what opened up, up the street from both of us, in our little town of Ladue in the Palm Health Center, if you go in there, there's everything there that I've been told doesn't work, is being offered, from acupuncture to salt rooms and IV kelation which just...and it's throughout medicine. They now offer Reiki and therapeutic touch

down at Washington University so some people say it's harmless but it can be harmful just because it makes you doubt conventional medicine. So there is some harm.

Blanche Touhill: So you have another adventure awaiting you?

Liz De Laperouse: Obviously.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you so much for coming in today.

Liz De Laperouse: Thank you, Blanche.

Blanche Touhill: I appreciated hearing about your life and, really, your adventurous background allowed you to have an adventure in science.

Liz De Laperouse: It did, absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: It wasn't geographic. It was intellectual.

Liz De Laperouse: No, and as a matter of fact, one of the things that I found out when I started working on the Phthaltes was I hoped that this was going to take me to the coast where my kids were all. I found out that the experts were right here in St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: How wonderful. Well, St. Louis is our home and we're women who like adventure, like something new.

Liz De Laperouse: Absolutely, and intellectually curious.

Blanche Touhill: And intellectually curious. Well, thank you very much.

Liz De Laperouse: Thank you, Blanche.