

**Interview of Margaret M. Lyon on her service  
as a civilian teacher for the U.S. Army in France, Italy, and Japan**

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4  
5Dorothy Harrison: Um, Margaret, I'd like to start this interview of your experiences overseas,  
6 uh, by asking you if you would give us some biographical data on  
7 yourself. Though [inaudible 00:14] a word like [inaudible 00:14] I don't  
8 know whether to say "day-ta" or "dah-ta". [laughter] However, this by the  
9 way, is Dorothy M. Harrison, and I am interviewing Margaret Lyons, and  
10 you spell your last name L-Y-O-N.  
11  
12Margaret Lyon: Y-O-N.  
13  
14Dorothy Harrison: Just no S. Very good. Margaret Lyon. [00:31] So, tell us, uh, a little  
15 biographical background so that we'll have something to build on.  
16  
17Margaret Lyon: Um, when I went overseas to teach school, I was 26 years old. I had been  
18 a teacher, uh, in the, um, Louisville City Schools. Before then, I had  
19 taught, uh, three years in the parochial schools. I had gotten my, uh, BS in  
20 education from Spalding College, and I also had, uh, lots of credits in, um,  
21 education. So, uh, by the time I went over, I had a standard teacher,  
22 teaching certificate and about six years' experience.  
23  
24Dorothy Harrison: Good. [01:17] In other words, you are a Kentuckian, a Louisvillian born  
25 and bred or is [inaudible 01:22]?  
26  
27Margaret Lyon: No, I was – my mother and father are both from Loretto, Kentucky but I  
28 was actually born in Atlanta, and then we returned to Kentucky when I  
29 was 13. I had gone through, uh, to high school in, uh, at St. Catharine's in  
30 Springfield, Kentucky, for the most part. So, uh, then...  
31  
32Dorothy Harrison: [01:42] You [feel] yourself a Kentuckian?  
33  
34Margaret Lyon: Right. I do because my parents are from here and most of my life has  
35 been spent...  
36  
37Dorothy Harrison: Spent here in Kentucky.  
38  
39Margaret Lyon: ...in Kentucky.  
40  
41Dorothy Harrison: I should, I should mention that this is the Louisville unit of the Women's  
42 Overseas Service League that is making this report. Um, very good. And,  
43 uh, that does give us some background and, uh, now, uh, my first question  
44 is, [02:04] what branch of service did you server in?

1  
2Margaret Lyon: Okay. I was actually a civilian worker for the, uh, Department of the  
3 Army, and, um, I was employed...  
4  
5Dorothy Harrison: [coughing]  
6  
7Margaret Lyon: ...out of Washington, D. C. and I was employed here in Louisville to go  
8 overseas and to teach in Verdun, France. And so, I was a third-grade  
9 teacher.  
10  
11Dorothy Harrison: That was a historic sight to be teaching in. That was a terrible World War  
12 I battlefield.  
13  
14Margaret Lyon: It was a very interesting place. The – just of – the whole, uh, area was  
15 interesting.  
16  
17Dorothy Harrison: Good. [02:45] Now, how long did you – were you attached, uh, as a  
18 civilian to the Department of the Army?  
19  
20Margaret Lyon: I, uh, taught the one year in Verdun. I stayed there from September  
21 through...  
22  
23Dorothy Harrison: [02:58] September of what year?  
24  
25Margaret Lyon: ...September of '56 through August of '57. And, uh, then I went down to,  
26 uh, Verona, Italy, and I was there one year. I was there from August to,  
27 uh, July. Came home then on July the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1958.  
28  
29Dorothy Harrison: Very good. [03:21] And what influenced you to volunteer?  
30  
31Margaret Lyon: Um, I had wanted to travel. I always wanted to travel, and I think I  
32 finished college because I had in mind to be an air stewardess. And then  
33 when I finished, uh, I got into teaching, and when this opportunity came  
34 up, um, I applied. I had applied, uh, the year before and, um, that  
35 would've been in 1955. And because they had closed all the schools in  
36 Austria, there were a lot of, uh, surplus teachers in Europe, and so I didn't  
37 get, uh, get my job until 1956.  
38  
39Dorothy Harrison: [04:04] Uh, what did you do prior to your service overseas?  
40  
41Margaret Lyon: Prior to my service, I was an elementary school teacher here in Louisville.  
42 I had taught at Engelhard and also down at Roosevelt in the west end.  
43

1Dorothy Harrison: May I congratulate you on surviving Roosevelt. I happen to know that  
2 school [laughter]. [Inaudible 04:25].  
3

4Margaret Lyon: Well, Roosevelt, back in those days, was not exactly like Roosevelt is  
5 today. So, it was, uh, it was a nice experience. It was great. I had come  
6 from an affluent neighborhood of [Ottoman Park 04:41] and had gone,  
7 um, I had taught in [Ottoman Park 04:46] for two years and so when I, I,  
8 switched down to Roosevelt, of course, it was quite a different situation.  
9

10Dorothy Harrison: Actually, I thought that the staff there was very good at [inaudible 04:56]  
11 [what I saw] but I [inaudible 04:58].  
12

13Margaret Lyon: Yes, they were.  
14

15Dorothy Harrison: [Inaudible 04:58] for those who are listening to this tape explain that  
16 Roosevelt High School or Roosevelt School, rather, was [I hope I'm not  
17 incorrect 05:05] was built in the Civil War era.  
18

19Margaret Lyon: Right.  
20

21Dorothy Harrison: And it's a very antique building and it seemed somehow, uh, difficult to  
22 imagine getting anything done with the noise in the halls, the, uh, size of  
23 the rooms and the decrepit neighborhood was rather discouraging  
24 [inaudible 05:27], but as I say, I think the staff was very dedicated to  
25 teaching. [05:34] All right. Now, what, what did you actually do there in  
26 your service, uh, overseas? Did you also teach the third grade there?  
27

28Margaret Lyon: I taught the third grade. I had, uh, [throat clearing] we lived about four  
29 miles away in – at the, uh, officer's quarters. And, uh, then every day we  
30 would, uh, drive in our car down to the base. And, uh, my classroom was  
31 one part of a three-part Quonset hut. And I had the furnace in my room  
32 [laughter], so...  
33

34Dorothy Harrison: [That, that was fun 06:17] [laughter].  
35

36Margaret Lyon: It was actually a round Quonset hut and, uh, so, uh, the floors were  
37 concrete and the playground was, um, a mixture of gravel and sand.  
38 [Inaudible 06:33]  
39

40Dorothy Harrison: [I bet there were a 06:33] number of skinned knees in that, uh...  
41

42Margaret Lyon: It was an interesting experience.  
43

1Dorothy Harrison: [06:40] Um, the, uh, the next question – now, this was – this Quonset hut  
2 was in, uh, in Verdun?  
3

4Margaret Lyon: The Quonset hut was on the, um, the American army base there in Verdun.  
5

6Dorothy Harrison: Verdun, right. Uh, this next question seems, um, nonapplicable in your  
7 case. [07:00] Did you expect it to – experience to prepare you for a  
8 career? Obviously, you were prepared for a career [laughter] before you  
9 went, so therefore, you just did what you were – what you already were  
10 [planning on doing again 07:11].  
11

12Margaret Lyon: Right. I did.  
13

14Dorothy Harrison: [07:14] And, uh, what was your pay?  
15

16Margaret Lyon: My pay, the best I remember, was maybe \$3200 a year. And this  
17 included, um, housing and, um, [they counted 07:31] medical expense.  
18 And so, actually...  
19

20Dorothy Harrison: You were able to save on the [inaudible 07:37].  
21

22Margaret Lyon: I was actually, uh, able to realize more money than I was realizing here at  
23 home.  
24

25Dorothy Harrison: That's very interesting. That is a good – that's pretty good pay in those  
26 days.  
27

28Margaret Lyon: I remember that we thought we were rich off \$6000 here. [That was in the  
29 States 07:52]. [coughing].  
30

31Dorothy Harrison: [07:55] Um, here's the next – the next question on this, um, list, uh, is  
32 were you given equal opportunities for service and education? I think that  
33 is a proper [inaudible 08:09] question [inaudible 08:10], so somebody  
34 doesn't [inaudible 08:12]. So, I think...  
35

36Margaret Lyon: I had equal [status 08:16] with the men.  
37

38Dorothy Harrison: With the men, right. Um, [clearing throat] you've already told us, uh, a  
39 little bit about your housing in, uh, Verdun, that you were housed in  
40 officer's quarters. [08:32] Was that BOQ, the base officer's quarters?  
41

42Margaret Lyon: I was a BOQ, and, uh, it consisted of, um, about four buildings, uh, in a  
43 square with a parking lot in the middle. And, um, there were, uh, women  
44 assigned to one, one room with, uh, uh, bathing facilities in the middle.

1 And so, this was shared by a, um, another woman. For instance, what I'm  
2 trying to say is there was a woman on the other side, and we shared a bath.  
3 They had a common bath.  
4

5Dorothy Harrison: You were living in luxury [laughter]. We were lucky if we had a...

6

7Margaret Lyon: We had, uh, we had our breakfast and our dinner over at the, uh, officer's  
8 club with, uh, all the, the people that lived there at the compound.  
9

10Dorothy Harrison: [09:32] Were all your teachers American?

11

12Margaret Lyon: All the teachers were American, right.

13

14Dorothy Harrison: [09:37] And you were teaching dependent children?

15

16Margaret Lyon: We were teaching dependent children, and they, of course, were, uh, an  
17 interesting group. Uh, one child had a German mother and, um, he  
18 worked in the, the fields with the French, uh, farmers, and they did not live  
19 on the base. And, um, he spoke three languages. He was 10 years old.  
20 Um, I had [clearing throat] – one child that was a, uh, the son of a Puerto  
21 Rican person that was in the army, and he spoke no English. And so, on  
22 my lunch hour, I did teach him to speak English, which was an interesting  
23 experience. And you just had to figure this out by yourself. And so, I got  
24 a, uh, Spanish-to-English dictionary, and we started with a first-grade  
25 book. I had, uh, the general's son in my class and...  
26

27Dorothy Harrison: [10:38] It was a totally Democratic group there?

28

29Margaret Lyon: Oh, absolutely. And, um, then we had, uh, one young lady that came to  
30 the base every day, and she taught, uh, French to the children. On the base  
31 too, um, there were, uh, there was a high school. And some of the high  
32 school teachers lived in our BOQ. Uh, all together, the best I remember,  
33 there were 10,000 men attached to this particular base. And many of'm  
34 lived out in the countryside. One doctor, Dr. [Kuhn 11:17], was from  
35 Louisville, and he lived across the street in the French housing.  
36

37Dorothy Harrison: [11:24] That is not by any chance, uh, a dentist?

38

39Margaret Lyon: No. I think he's a plastic surgeon. And, um, let's see. As I mentioned  
40 previously, across the hall from me was, uh, [Phillis Crevata 11:38] whom  
41 I had gone to college with. And, um, so, it was quite interesting when you  
42 had traveled 4000 miles [and walked into 11:47] to the BOQ on Sunday  
43 morning and a girl comes up and says, "May?"  
44

1Dorothy Harrison: [laughter] [Inaudible 11:55]  
2  
3Margaret Lyon: [laughter] [And it's Phillis Crevata 11:55]. It was, it was quite interesting.  
4 Um...  
5  
6Dorothy Harrison: [11:59] Now, what about your housing in [Verona 12:00]?  
7  
8Margaret Lyon: I would like to say that, uh, the teachers that I was with were from all over  
9 the United States. There were teachers from California and there was a  
10 girl from Texas. Uh, one of my best girlfriends was from St. Louis.  
11 Another girl was from Denver, Colorado, so it was a very interesting  
12 experience from that, uh, standpoint also.  
13  
14 Uh, Verona was different. Verona was, um, a different type of base. It  
15 was part of the air command. Um, it was connected with the army. It was  
16 a much smaller base. Uh, we had two elementary schools there. The, uh,  
17 high school people went down to Vicenza to high school. And, uh, some  
18 of'm went to a boarding school in Germany. Um, our – the one school  
19 where I was when I first got there was a brand-new school they had built  
20 out, um, out of town, and the children were bussed in there.  
21  
22 Uh, then later on, um, because of the, uh, increased enrollment, we were  
23 switched to another school that was, uh, uh, [inaudible 13:26]. And the  
24 first place we lived was an old, Italian hotel. And, uh, [laughter] that was  
25 one of my first experience with rats. And, of course, I didn't really know  
26 that there were rats all over Europe. And, um, so, anyway, whenever  
27 anyone would leave the, uh, door open to the cellar, the rats would come  
28 up in the kitchen. And if you were walking by the canal, you would see  
29 these rats that're almost the size of, uh, kitty cats.  
30  
31 So, that, that, in itself, was interesting. We, um, lived there, I think, for  
32 about four or five months. And, uh, the place was musty and, um, the  
33 furnace never did quite work. [laughter] There were, uh, quite a few, uh,  
34 service connected people and, uh, quite a few people from Verona that  
35 would come in and inspect the furnace from time to time...  
36  
37Dorothy Harrison: [14:32] But it never really worked?  
38  
39Margaret Lyon: ...but it never really worked. And so then, later on, in the middle of the  
40 year, we were transferred over to a new house. And, um, it was just a very  
41 large house. In my room, um, my one friend, Rae, that was from  
42 California, uh, she and I shared single beds in this one room, and the other  
43 teachers were accommodated much in the same manner. And, uh, there  
44 was one central area for bathing.

1  
2Dorothy Harrison: Very good. [clearing throat] [15:08] Of course, you got medical  
3 attention...  
4  
5Margaret Lyon: Yes, we did.  
6  
7Dorothy Harrison: ...as part of your, your, uh, salary? And we know that it was usually quite  
8 good. [15:18] Uh, did you wear a uniform at all?  
9  
10Margaret Lyon: No, we did not wear a uniform.  
11  
12Dorothy Harrison: [15:27] Uh, where did you eat? [You always 15:28] ate with the medic-,  
13 with the army unit or – that you were with or did or with the air force unit  
14 you were with?  
15  
16Margaret Lyon: Now, when we, um, moved down to Italy, we, uh, we would have to go  
17 out to the base if we wanted to have dinner there at the, uh, at the base.  
18 And we usually just, um, arranged to have, um, a dinner there in town.  
19 We did have a hot meal that was brought in from the base. And, um, so,  
20 we did get one hot meal a day. For the most part, I think we just ate in  
21 some of the local restaurants or fixed our own.  
22  
23Dorothy Harrison: [16:05] But you paid for that yourself, of course?  
24  
25Margaret Lyon: Yes, we did.  
26  
27Dorothy Harrison: Right. [16:08] But the other was free?  
28  
29Margaret Lyon: Correct.  
30  
31Dorothy Harrison: Right.  
32  
33Margaret Lyon: Well, no, actually, we paid every time we went to dinner.  
34  
35Dorothy Harrison: [16:13] You paid when you went to dinner with the army?  
36  
37Margaret Lyon: The best I remember, we did.  
38  
39Dorothy Harrison: Oh, that is interesting.  
40  
41Margaret Lyon: [I think 16:20]. I can't really be sure, but it did seem like that we did.  
42  
43Dorothy Harrison: Very good. Well, of course, you were civilians. So, that made a  
44 difference in the way you would be treated, I would think. [16:35] Now,

1 we've come to one of the more interesting questions that – what – you've  
2 already, actually, told us what one of your memorable experiences was,  
3 was trying to teach this young Puerto Rican, uh, English. Uh, but they're  
4 asking for any other memorable experiences which you may have had in  
5 the course of your...  
6

7Margaret Lyon: It was, uh, the whole, the whole experience was memorable. I think, um,  
8 comin' over tonight, I remembered that, um, when we were in, um,  
9 Verdun, it, uh, we were just in a little compound out in a field and, um, the  
10 place was patrolled at night by Polish, um, uh, people. And the story was  
11 that they had come, come out of Poland, and if they served the Americans  
12 for five years or so, they were given their citizenship. And, uh, so, we  
13 never really got to know any of them, but there was always a Polish guard  
14 that walked back and forth in the compound. That was rather interesting.  
15

16 Uh, I remember the, um, Algerians were there in Verdun, and you would,  
17 uh, very often seen, um, them. In fact, there was a, a base there...  
18

19Dorothy Harrison: [coughing]  
20

21Margaret Lyon: ... not too far from, from us where the Algerians were and, of course, they  
22 were, uh, uh, easy to spot because of their colorful uniforms. And, uh,  
23 that, that was interesting. Um...  
24

25Dorothy Harrison: That's very interesting, indeed, about the Polish, that they were told they  
26 could have citizenship...  
27

28Margaret Lyon: Mm-hm.  
29

30Dorothy Harrison: ...if they served...  
31

32Margaret Lyon: But they lived there and, uh...  
33

34Dorothy Harrison: ...five years.  
35

36Margaret Lyon: Um...  
37

38Dorothy Harrison: [18:20] Did you have any visits from any, um, famous people or  
39 outstanding, um [inaudible 18:30]?  
40

41Margaret Lyon: No, not while we were there. I wouldn't think so. The, uh, I don't  
42 remember anyone coming to the base that, that, uh, was par-, particularly  
43 memorable. Um, the same in Italy.  
44



1Dorothy Harrison: [18:42] Most of your – yes. Your, your challenges were almost all –  
2 you’re – almost all your challenges were from your students?  
3

4Margaret Lyon: There were a few challenges from the teaching. Uh, for the most part  
5 though, it was very similar to, um, teaching here at home.  
6

7Dorothy Harrison: The challenges you would get here.  
8

9Margaret Lyon: Right. I think, uh, just the, uh, uh, the one thing that, uh, really struck me  
10 was the fact that you, um, worked and lived with the same people on a 24-  
11 hour a day basis, which, uh, took a bit of getting used to. And, um, uh,  
12 Verdun, you had so many more civilian employees there, and so, um, it  
13 was a more comfortable situation perhaps then going down to Italy where,  
14 um, there were about 13 of us, uh, ladies and, uh, we actually lived  
15 together on a 24-hour basis, and there was quite a range in age. It really  
16 wasn’t a problem exactly, and we were all friends, it was just that it was,  
17 uh, such an adjustment.  
18

19Dorothy Harrison: An adjustment, yes.  
20

21Margaret Lyon: And I used to tell Rae, “Rae, I didn’t mind working with you, but I just  
22 didn’t realize this was gonna be a 24-hour business.” And it, it was just an  
23 adjustment on everybody’s part. And, and you just had to, uh, uh...  
24

25Dorothy Harrison: Get used to it.  
26

27Margaret Lyon: ...get used to it, right.  
28

29Dorothy Harrison: All right. [20:18] Um, so, the question is did you experience conflict with,  
30 with between being feminine and being a military professional. Well,  
31 since you weren’t a ...  
32

33Margaret Lyon: No.  
34

35Dorothy Harrison: ... military professional, there was no conflict.  
36

37Margaret Lyon: No.  
38

39Dorothy Harrison: Um, and the next question also about getting benefits from the GI Bill is,  
40 is not applicable. [20:39] Um, what did – what do – you have just rather  
41 expressed one of the answers to the question that’s next is what demanded  
42 the greatest adjustment? Uh, [inaudible 20:49]...  
43

1Margaret Lyon: It was all just a big adventure as far as I was concerned. It was a big,  
2delightful adventure.  
3

4Dorothy Harrison: [20:57] And you had a good relationship, I'm sure, with the military, so  
5that...  
6

7Margaret Lyon: Yes, we did.  
8

9Dorothy Harrison: ...it was just a lack of...  
10

11Margaret Lyon: They were just very, um...  
12

13Dorothy Harrison: ...privacy that, um, you had to...  
14

15Margaret Lyon: They were, uh, just very friendly and, um, um, just very charming and it  
16was, um, you, uh, just had a great deal of respect for them because they  
17showed so much heart to one another.  
18

19Dorothy Harrison: That's an interesting thing and I, I've often wondered how – in what way  
20the, the, uh, army occupation forces [inaudible 21:33] quality [was  
21different than those who were in there 21:35] fighting, uh, the war, in the  
22previous decade. And, um, I'm sure the atmosphere must've been totally,  
23totally different. And to have their families there and their children there  
24made it much more like a small town.  
25

26Margaret Lyon: Really, it did.  
27

28Dorothy Harrison: All right. Now, let's see. [22:00] What did you do after your service was  
29concluded?  
30

31Margaret Lyon: After my service there was concluded, I came home and I was home then  
32for two years. And then, uh, I got a job with the navy in Japan, and so I  
33was in, um, Yokosuka, and that, again, was just a totally different  
34experience, just a great adventure.  
35

36Dorothy Harrison: [22:31] When was this?  
37

38Margaret Lyon: This was in – from 1960 to 1961. And, uh, again, we lived in a BOQ.  
39And, um, my school was probably eight miles out around the peninsula,  
40uh, to a little housing settlement that had been turned over to the army, uh,  
41from the air force. And that, in itself, was just a grand experience because  
42every day we'd get to see the people in their fields. You got a beautiful  
43picture of Japanese life and, uh...  
44

1  
2Dorothy Harrison: This was country life too.  
3  
4Margaret Lyon: This was country life.  
5  
6Dorothy Harrison: [23:13] And you were – what – in what place was this?  
7  
8Margaret Lyon: Yokosuka.  
9  
10Dorothy Harrison: Yokosuka. [23:16] It was on the island of Honshu?  
11  
12Margaret Lyon: Right. It was on the island of Honshu and on the bay of Japan. And, um,  
13 it was, um, a little south of, uh, Yokohama and also Tokyo.  
14  
15Dorothy Harrison: [23:33] And you were serving the air force at this time?  
16  
17Margaret Lyon: No.  
18  
19Dorothy Harrison: [No, the navy 23:36].  
20  
21Margaret Lyon: This was with the navy.  
22  
23Dorothy Harrison: The navy.  
24  
25Margaret Lyon: Right. So, on our way out to school, uh, some mornings, we could see  
26 Mount Fuji. And, of course, this was breathtaking. And, uh, it was, uh,  
27 just a, a fantastic experience. Of all the different, uh, scenes I've seen in  
28 my life, I think this still stands out as the most beautiful. And, of course,  
29 the fact that you could maybe only see it once or twice a month, uh, added  
30 to the fascination.  
31  
32Dorothy Harrison: [24:07] And that, uh, that – the, uh, what did you think was different about  
33 the way the Japanese country people lived and worked that would be  
34 different from the way our own farmers lived and worked?  
35  
36Margaret Lyon: Well...  
37  
38Dorothy Harrison: [24:22] Was there anything that stood out?  
39  
40Margaret Lyon: Just, um, I think with the Japanese people it was just their, uh, constant,  
41 um, movement and their, uh, energy level was just amazing. And the fact  
42 that, uh, they work so very hard, and the women worked right along with  
43 the men, and you would see the women out building the roads along with  
44 the men and, of course, there would be elderly women. And, uh, this, of

1 course, was new to me. And then, um, um, it was more like a, uh, a  
2 gardening than it was a farming. We never did actually see the, the, uh,  
3 large farm situation that we have here in the United States, but they did  
4 have, uh, three or four crops a year on the same little plot of ground.  
5  
6Dorothy Harrison: Very intensive farming.  
7  
8Margaret Lyon: Yes. And, of course, they – as in Europe, did fertilize with human man-,  
9 manure. And they would, of course, gather this in their – and, uh, then  
10 distribute it out on the fields. And that, that was interesting.  
11  
12Dorothy Harrison: [25:29] Was there a faint aroma of, uh, that you...  
13  
14Margaret Lyon: Uh, Japan just had its own aromas, you know, you just, uh, I don't really  
15 remember the aroma of the fields. I do remember, um, while I was there I  
16 did a lot of volunteer work and I did, uh...  
17  
18Dorothy Harrison: [25:47] Where did you volunteer?  
19  
20Margaret Lyon: I, uh, went over to what would be equivalent to our Annapolis or West  
21 Point. And, uh, we taught English conversation to the boys that were from  
22 about 18 to 21.  
23  
24Dorothy Harrison: [25:59] Japanese boys?  
25  
26Margaret Lyon: Japanese boys. And that was an interesting experience because they were  
27 not only from Honshu, they were from all over Japan. They were  
28 extremely polite and, uh...  
29  
30Dorothy Harrison: Probably very bright too.  
31  
32Margaret Lyon: Yes. And just a marvelous experience. And then, uh, on Saturday, I  
33 would go in to the, uh, Japanese schools and, uh, teach, uh, English. And I  
34 remember I taught the – taught'm, uh, the song Bingo – had a dog, B-I-N-  
35 G-O, his name was Bingo, and we would clap, leave out a letter and clap.  
36  
37Dorothy Harrison: Oh, yes. That's...  
38  
39Margaret Lyon: It was a lot of repetition, and so they could get it and they liked the  
40 rhyming. And so, then I taught them, um, [sighing] Coming 'Round the  
41 Mountain. And that had a lot of repetition and they picked it up. And it  
42 was interesting because months later they were still singing these songs.  
43  
44Dorothy Harrison: Coming 'Round the Mountain [laughter].

1  
2Margaret Lyon: Yeah. She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes. And, um,  
3 so, that, that was just a very fascinating experience and they very, very  
4 anxious to learn English. And, uh, then too, we had an association with  
5 the, uh, Japanese teachers and went on several field trips with them, which  
6 was just a lot of fun. I remember the one day we went out to some  
7 favorite spot and coming back, uh, we stopped and had lunch, which was,  
8 uh, cold fish [laughter].  
9  
10Dorothy Harrison: [27:34] Was it at least cooked?  
11  
12Margaret Lyon: It, it was cooked, right, but it was, it was quite an experience. And, uh,  
13 I'm, I'm an easy person to, to please when it comes to food and not the  
14 least bit timid, so it, it was, it was all just a very, very marvelous  
15 experience.  
16  
17Dorothy Harrison: Very good. I hadn't realized that you had been in Japan too as well...  
18  
19Margaret Lyon: Yes.  
20  
21Dorothy Harrison: ...as in, uh, in Europe.  
22  
23Margaret Lyon: And there too, you, you had a variety of children. You had, uh, I think  
24 probably the most outstanding from, from that particular class was, uh,  
25 seems like it was the second third-grade class, and I had, uh, two children,  
26 [Akimi and Kuzumi 28:15] whose parents, uh, whose father was an  
27 American, um, navy officer and the mother was from Okinawa. The  
28 children had been left on Okinawa and so when I got them, they spoke no  
29 English at all. And so, again, it was the, uh, starting at lunch time and you  
30 would have to take their little Japanese dictionaries and start with basic  
31 words and build up a vocabulary. So, they were able to read about second  
32 grade or third grade when I finished with them that year. We had, uh...  
33  
34Dorothy Harrison: That was marvelous. [28:50] Now, how did you do this? With just  
35 repetition and, and pointing to objects or...  
36  
37Margaret Lyon: Uh...  
38  
39Dorothy Harrison: [28:54] You begin with the Japanese word?  
40  
41Margaret Lyon: We began with that. I have done this two or three times, so we did it a  
42 couple years ago with a little girl that was from, uh, Korea that didn't even  
43 know the American alphabet. And, uh, we just started with a book of  
44 pictures, a picture dictionary. And then you – when they build up a

1 picture, uh, vocabulary, then you start with your first-grade words. I  
2 mean, your first-grade books and so on. So, um, but anyway, I did take  
3 [Akimi and Kuzumi 29:26] at lunchtime, and we had English lessons.  
4 And, uh, they were just the most charming, beautiful children.  
5  
6Dorothy Harrison: I can imagine.  
7  
8Margaret Lyon: Yes.  
9  
10Dorothy Harrison: [29:36] Uh, did they, uh, have Japanese, um, eyes or was it American  
11 eyes? I, I've often wondered...  
12  
13Margaret Lyon: They didn't look like, uh, um, full-blooded Japanese but they were very  
14 beautiful children.  
15  
16Dorothy Harrison: Children [inaudible 29:47].  
17  
18Margaret Lyon: No. They just stayed with their grandparents and, uh, the mother and  
19 father left'm with their grandparents for about eight years, and then when  
20 they came back to Japan, they had a little sister with'm and they picked  
21 the two children up, and then they started them in, uh, our school there in  
22 Japan. And I had, uh, two other children that had spent their whole life in  
23 Japan.  
24  
25Dorothy Harrison: [30:12] American children?  
26  
27Margaret Lyon: American children. And, uh, the one, of course, uh, she would go out with  
28 us and be the interpreter when we went on field trips and the Japanese  
29 were always surprised. They'd say, "She sounds Japanese." And, of  
30 course, she did. And the other lit-, and they spoke absolute fluent  
31 Japanese because they had been raised, reared by Japanese, uh, nurses.  
32  
33 So – and they had, uh, all the Japanese customs like, uh – I was adventure  
34 – uh, I did just try any food that came along. Well, they had a long, dried  
35 squid that looked like licorice; it was black. And, uh, so, the mother, uh,  
36 one of the mothers one day that had gone on the field trip said, "You really  
37 should try it." And I did, and it just wouldn't go down. It was one of the  
38 few things – but now, this other little, blonde-haired girl that had been  
39 raised in Japan, they ate that all the time like it was candy. So...  
40  
41Dorothy Harrison: It's what you're used to.  
42  
43Margaret Lyon: It, it was a very interesting and totally different and a very interesting  
44 experience. I had, uh, they – I think one of the other things that was, um,

1 quite remarkable about the Japanese was, um, even to the last child, they  
2 seem to be artistic. And they had, um, so much art in their school. And,  
3 uh, they all learned, uh, um, the art of paper folding. They could do that.  
4 And they learned, uh, flower arranging. They all learned to juggle little,  
5 uh, beanbags at a very early age and so, uh, they had, uh, just really a lot  
6 of, uh, talent. And then they did go to school six days a week, uh, 11  
7 months a year, which to me was quite interesting.  
8

9Dorothy Harrison: [32:05] And why – how – what kind of a schedule was your school on in  
10 Japan?  
11

12Margaret Lyon: Our sch-, our schedule was the standard, American's schedule. We had  
13 the standard, American books. And it was just like you had transported an  
14 American school over to, uh, Japan, which, is in essence is what it was.  
15

16Dorothy Harrison: [32:24] Uh, and how many, how many teachers did you have there and  
17 how many pupils?  
18

19Margaret Lyon: In our school, we had four teachers. [laughter] And, um, it was, it was just  
20 a lot of fun. Now, I had – with our two older teachers...  
21

22Dorothy Harrison: [32:37] How...  
23

24Margaret Lyon: ... and two younger ones...  
25

26Dorothy Harrison: ...how many, how many kids were there?  
27

28Margaret Lyon: Um, probably about 150. There was one man. There were five then, I  
29 guess. And, uh, that was this one little school and its housing compound.  
30 Now, back on the bu-, uh, the base, they had, um, a high school and  
31 another elementary school.  
32

33Dorothy Harrison: [32:58] So, you were just an isolated elementary school?  
34

35Margaret Lyon: We were an isolated elementary school, but I chose to go out there simply  
36 because I would get, uh, get to see more of the countryside. It was – it  
37 was [fascinating 33:10].  
38

39Dorothy Harrison: [Inaudible 33:11] that sounds quite fascinating.  
40

41Margaret Lyon: It was.  
42

43Dorothy Harrison: [33:14] Uh, were you able to visit any of the, uh, special, uh, cities, uh,  
44 and shrines in Japan [while you were there 33:22]?

1  
2Margaret Lyon: Yes, we did. We went to, uh...  
3  
4Dorothy Harrison: [Inaudible 33:25].  
5  
6Margaret Lyon: We went to Tokyo often. We went to Kyoto, uh, um, Kamakura. At, uh,  
7 Christmas time we took a trip down to, uh, Singapore [and China 33:40]  
8 and, uh, we were in, uh, Vietnam before the war. And, uh, we were in  
9 Bangkok. And, uh...  
10  
11Dorothy Harrison: You really did make use of your time there. [33:57] How long were you  
12 in, uh, Japan then...  
13  
14Margaret Lyon: In Japan...  
15  
16Dorothy Harrison: ...in total?  
17  
18Margaret Lyon: Uh, I was there from August of '60 to, uh, June of '61.  
19  
20Dorothy Harrison: To June of '61. Very good. You did a great, great deal in that time.  
21  
22Margaret Lyon: Yes, I really did. It was a fascinating year. It really was.  
23  
24Dorothy Harrison: [34:19] Uh, now, is that the end of your adventures or did you go  
25 elsewhere?  
26  
27Margaret Lyon: That was it. [laughter]  
28  
29Dorothy Harrison: That was it. [laughter]  
30  
31Margaret Lyon: Yeah, that was it.  
32  
33Dorothy Harrison: All right. Now, uh, then you came back to the United States and came  
34 back to Louisville.  
35  
36Margaret Lyon: I came back to the United States, came back to Louisville. Um, got a job  
37 in Jefferson county because that was the one job that was open.  
38  
39Dorothy Harrison: Good reason.  
40  
41Margaret Lyon: And, uh, so, I've been here ever since.  
42  
43Dorothy Harrison: [34:46] And you are now principal?  
44



1Margaret Lyon: I am now principal at Bates Elementary out in Fern Creek, 40291.  
2

3Dorothy Harrison: Yes. I know it well. [laughter]  
4

5Margaret Lyon: Yes.  
6

7Dorothy Harrison: Uh, and it's a good school.  
8

9Margaret Lyon: Yes. It's a lovely school.  
10

11Dorothy Harrison: And we're very glad that you talked to us on this night, and we thank you  
12 very much, and, uh, well, that concludes our interview, unless someone  
13 else has a question they'd like to ask Margaret? In which case, speak up  
14 because this old microphone may – will need to pick up your voice.  
15 Jenny? Jean? Virginia?  
16

17Virginia: [Inaudible 35:31].  
18

19Dorothy Harrison: Well, I think we can –  
20

21Female 1: You were, uh, [inaudible 35:38].  
22

23Margaret Lyon: Yes, we did. Yes, we were in both instances.  
24

25Female 1: [35:47] Uh, did – you didn't have to wear any uniform or anything?  
26

27Margaret Lyon: No. We wore no uniform. There was no restriction on any of our travel  
28 and...  
29

30Dorothy Harrison: [35:55] Did you have to wear some kind of an identification badge, I'm  
31 sure, [to get in and out of the] [inaudible 33:58]?  
32

33Margaret Lyon: Um, there must've been something on the car. I'm sure there was  
34 something on the car, and I'm sure that we must've had a, uh, an  
35 identification, like a badge of some type. We did use the [script 36:11].  
36 We used the army [script 36:14] money, both in, uh, France and in Japan.  
37

38Dorothy Harrison: [36:18] In Italy too?  
39

40Margaret Lyon: Right. We did.  
41

42Dorothy Harrison: Very good. Very good.  
43

44Female 2: Now, America [inaudible 36:25]?

1  
2Margaret Lyon: Uh, yes.  
3  
4Dorothy Harrison: [36:30] Did, did – was that a question – [yeah, it's all right 36:32]. Uh,  
5 what did...  
6  
7Margaret Lyon: I, um, we had – now, we had, um, I think there was a, an actual love for  
8 the Americans in Japan. I felt that. We had the one chaplain that came  
9 out one day and talked to us, and he had, uh, gone in, uh, to this particular  
10 base where we were, to Yokosuka, right after the war when the people  
11 were starving. And, uh, he said at one time that, uh, he had gone in and  
12 scooped up just eggs and rice and things of that type and taken'm out to a  
13 family that was literally starving. And he had come back there then as a  
14 missionary. He was quite interesting to, to, uh hear.  
15  
16 But, um, I think the Americans were loved in Japan. They seemed to just  
17 have a lot of camaraderie, I think, between. And we were always treated  
18 just beautifully by the Japanese. We went on a ski trip with, uh, with the  
19 Japanese ladies and the Japanese men one weekend, and they were just  
20 marvelous to us. But on the other hand, uh, they're a very polite people.  
21 But I did get the, get the feeling that they, uh, had a general admiration for  
22 Americans.  
23  
24Female 2: Uh, the reason for their positive attitude toward us was that they knew that  
25 we were not there to [inaudible 38:06]. We were there...  
26  
27Margaret Lyon: Right.  
28  
29Female 2: ... [inaudible 38:08].  
30  
31Margaret Lyon: That's right.  
32  
33Female 2: To stand on their own feet and be Japanese [inaudible 38:12].  
34  
35Margaret Lyon: Mm-hm.  
36  
37Female 2: But we were not there [inaudible 38:16] to occupy Japan.  
38  
39Margaret Lyon: Right. I, I think they truly felt that.  
40  
41Dorothy Harrison: I suspect it was a great surprise to them 'cause I have a feeling that  
42 perhaps they would not have been as generous to us.  
43  
44Female 2: I believe so. I mean, I'm sure they were very [conscious of that 38:30].

1

2Margaret Lyon: Right.

3

4Female 2: Because I think their attitude toward the U. S. [inaudible 38:36].

5

6Dorothy Harrison: Thank you, Margaret, very much.