

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. SPRUANCE

30 November 1971

Q. Before resuming our interview in chronological order there are several aspects of his personality and character that are of interest to me. The first question is: what were his favorite foods?

A. He liked fish, but not fowl. He would eat meat because he would have to. He seemed to like most other foods. He always had to have a dessert. Regarding his desserts, he liked anything that was chocolate. Whenever he ate, however, he would eat sparingly. One of his habits was that about two o'clock in the afternoon he would start asking me what was on the menu for dessert.

Q. What seemed to be his favorite foods for breakfast?

A. For breakfast he would enjoy coffee and toast and he always liked an occasional egg. Indeed, he ate an egg every morning on the advice of Dr. Willcutts.

Q. What would be a typical meal that you would prepare for him if you really wanted to please him.

A. Hot soup, some kind of fish, vegetables and always a dessert. He really wasn't interested in foods and never seemed that he was particularly hungry. Nevertheless, he was a critical eater and was well aware of the food which was placed before him was of high quality. Upon returning home from dinner out he would often say to me, "That meal wasn't particularly good, you would do much better than that."

Q. When did he first begin grinding his own coffee?

A. He began doing it in Puerto Rico. He had some wonderful mountain coffee. Actually his drink would have to be called "cafe au lait".

Cafe au lait is very strong coffee with hot milk. He never found anything to equal that mountain coffee. That kind of coffee is not normally on the market and we had to always shop around for it. One other comment on his eating habits, Swede Overesch tells me that when he served with Raymond in destroyers in the Mediterranean that Raymond would eat onion sandwiches for breakfast.

Q. I understand that in his early life he was told by a Navy doctor that he must not drink because liquor did not agree with him .

A. I never heard about that. However, he was very absentminded (Z) He simply could not drink. It disagreed with him terribly. With one exception, he did enjoy his rum drink. The drink was very complicated and he would mix it with a great deal of flourish and theatrics. Whenever we visited anybody on the peninsula, they always had the makings ready for him and he enjoyed having people watch him fix the rum drink. He first became interested in rum drinks when we were first stationed in Newport. We would go out skating or people would come in to call on us and Raymond would offer them a hot rum drink to warm them up. The rum drinks which he fixed were delicious and this is when he first began to like that kind of liquor. But he was absentminded. For instance, in the evening he would say, "I suppose you want a drink?" I would answer, "Yes," and then he would fix a rum drink.

Q. Did he ever smoke a cigar or cigarette?

A. I never saw him smoke anything ever at any time. There is however, an amusing story about cigar smoking. As a girl, I had been brought up in a large family and the first time I was away from home was after I had married Raymond and we were living in Newport News. One day when I was downtown shopping, I walked

behind a man who was smoking a cigar. It smelled just like the cigars that my father used to smoke and it made me very homesick. When I returned home Raymond could see that I was visibly upset and I told him that that man's cigar smoke had reminded me of my father and it made me homesick. ~~Well/~~ His response was, "Well, would you like me to take up cigar smoking then?"

Q. Did his friends seem to have any characteristics in common? Or were they all types of characters and personalities?

A. He would always seem to have one or two of his whenever we went. They were always gentlemen and they were interesting. Carl Moore perhaps typifies the type of person that appealed to Raymond. His two closest friends in Indianapolis ended up being a lawyer and a doctor respectively. His friends could be from almost any kind of ethnic or economic background. The background made little difference to him in choosing his friends. I could usually predict the type of person who would be appealing to Raymond and who Raymond would like to have for his friend. Raymond also had many friends among the officers' wives. He particularly liked Penn Carrolls wife who was the gay, charming southern girl. She simply adored him and the two of them would sit together chuckling and chortling and getting along very nicely. Women seemed to be attracted to him because of his strange sense of humor.

Q. Regarding his social life, what were his favorite types of recreation?

A. He thoroughly enjoyed a good movie. When we lived in Brooklyn in World War I we used to save our money to see stage plays. ~~1~~

If we saw a double feature he would insist on seeing both of them even though perhaps the first one was the only movie worth seeing. He disliked cocktail parties intensely. In contrast, he enjoyed a sitdown group of 10 to 12 people where he could sit and listen to them. I, myself, enjoyed going to cocktail parties because I enjoyed talking with people and being with them. However, Raymond was never particularly happy and he always seemed anxious to come home and leave as soon as possible. In Newport before World War II we had a delightful social life. The staff were a picked group of people. We had very nice times with them. In those days we had very good help in the kitchen. We would have occasional formal dinners. I would say he very much enjoyed the social life in Newport at the War College. In 1926, there seemed to be a never-ending round of cocktail parties. Raymond, however, wanted to outfit our house with furniture so he would buy antique furniture and set to work on them. I would say to him, "Let's go to ~~to~~ a cocktail party" and he would say "I'm not going, I'm going to work on the furniture. You go by yourself" which I would do. When I came home he would always ask me what happened and what was the latest gossip. He would be working on the bed in the basement and I would come home and go down and he would say "Well, I'm ready to hear all the gossip." And he was ready. After I had told him all the latest news he would then very proudly show me what he had accomplished while I had been gone. He particularly enjoyed refinishing furniture. It gave him great pleasure and satisfaction to buy shabby, yet interesting furniture and then restore it into a beautiful

thing. It was self-taught and he read many books to find out how to do the work. And he would come home from the War College in the afternoon he would say, "Let us go down to Tim Tierneys," who was an antique dealer. And down we would go to buy more interesting old antique furniture to refinish.

Q. I understand he liked schnauzers a great deal. Could you tell me about them?

A. He bought his first schnauzer when we were in the Mediterranean in 1924-1925. Actually and Swede Overesch went off without my knowing about it and bought themselves some schnauzer pups. The first one we called Peter the First. He brought the schnauzer back to the states with him. I had come back in June with the children and had rented quarters in Cloynøe Court. He arrived, very late one night having come up on the Fall River Line and when he came to the door ^{I opened it} and there he was with this terrible beast. Peter the First was a marvelous dog but he was not a family dog. He was strictly a oneman dog. Raymond just adored that dog. We only had one other schnauzer, Peter the Second. Between the two schnauzers we had a number of other dogs. I, in particular, had a Cairn terrier which I very much liked. Raymond enjoyed the dogs very much and as a family we had great fun with them. However, everybody else very much disliked that dog. They were afraid of him.

Q. Going back now to a chronological series of questions, let us return to the period of 1916 when the Pennsylvania was being put into commission. Did you know Kelly Turner or Rufus King very well in those days.?

A. No, not then, at that point they were just names to me.

Q. What happened after the Pennsylvania was put into commission?

A. The war broke out in 1916 and the Pennsylvania and the rest of the fleet went up to Yorktown. I and Edward lived in a boarding house in Hampton. We stayed ~~there~~ through~~t~~ the summer of 1916 and that was my introduction to Navy life. I first became acquainted with other Navy wives from the Pennsylvania. I felt like an outsider. I remember one time that summer a young paymaster came to the boarding house from the ship at Yorktown and said that Raymond was coming home tomorrow. Be prepared to go to Washington. I responded, "I can't go to Washington. I can't leave my child." ^{out} The paymaster persisted, "He's going to Washington, be prepared." The paymaster then told me Raymond was going to be ordered ashore; he's going to be ordered to the New York Navy Yard. (The reason the paymaster came to the boarding house was because his wife was living there)

was happy at the thought of going to Brooklyn but the paymaster told me that Raymond was determined to stay at sea. It would have been the end of Raymond's career if he were to go ashore. When Raymond came home he was furious. And said we are going Washington tomorrow. I said, "Oh, are we?" pretending that I knew nothing about it. "What are you going there for?" Because I'm not going ashore he said. So the next day I left little Edward with an aunt that lived in Newport News and away we went to Washington. I waited for him and after he had gone every place he could go, he returned to me that evening and said, "Every door has been slammed in my face."

"I'm going ashore". He was very depressed but we went to Brooklyn. We lived in a littel apartment on Parkside Avenue near a great old park in Brooklyn. Our ppartment was within walking distance of the Navy Yard. We remained at the Navy Yard until the end of thw War. I recall also that he did make some trips to Great Britain and fiaally at the end of the war he became aexec of the transport ship that bringing the troops back. I recall his telling me about seeing the British fleet at Scapaflow on his visits. I recall that he was particaarily pleased about some electrical engineering research work he had done which he said had saved the govern=ment hundreds of thousands of dollars. He would even boast about his electrical engineering work and I would say "Why that's perfectly wonderful"but it would just go in one ear and out the other as far as I was concerned because I did'nt know what he was talking about. At that time he had to make the choice between being a seagoing officer and an engineering duty officer and he chose to become a seagoing officer. The next thing that he did was put the AARON WARD into commission. He was supposed to be homeported in Newport so we rented a house in Jamestown but as soon as we did that, the AARON ~~WARD~~ then went off to the Mediterranean where I did not follow. (Mrs. Spruance then corrected herself and said that when Margaret was about six weeks old she left Indianapolis and went out to San Diego to be with her husband who had the AARON WARD in the ~~Sixth Fleet~~//Pacific Fleet.) (At this point, Mrs. Spruance discussed the dinners~~s~~ th~~a~~t she and the Admiral had had with the Halseys in San Francisco during the San FRancisco World's Fair. Halsey said to Spruance. "If

you had your life to do all over again what would you want to be?" And Spruance responded, "A successful Naval Officer." Halsey said, "So would I." This episode took place during the World's Fair when Spruance had command of the Mississippi.) Another event that took place was in the summer of 1926 when Margaret was sick and the doctor advised me to come back to the states. So when I landed in Boston in early June and when I was there I ran into Admiral Philip Andrews. The first thing he said to me was "Did you know that you are going right on to Washington?" I said, "No, what has happened? I thought he was going to the War College?" Andrews said, "Well, your husband's orders have been changed to Washington duty." I said, "Well, that's just terrible. I've signed a lease on a house and we are all set to go to Newport." Andrews, who was a very severe person, looked at me and said, "Does Spruance want to go to the War College?" I responded, "He wants to do that above everything." Andrews said, "I will see what I can do" Andrews then sent a message to Washington protesting the eleventh hour changes to Raymond's orders pointing out all of the hardships that and disruptions it would cause. Thanks to Andrews intervention, his orders were ~~changed~~ again changed and we happily went to Newport. Raymond later said, "That was fate. I wanted to go to War College but it was fate that I went there."

Q. Tell me about his tour of duty in the Mediterranean 1924-1926.

A. At first he was perfectly delighted because he had been given command of a division of destroyers in the Mediterranean. He was very thrilled and excited over his prospective tour of duty. Then one day he came home and I knew something was wrong because

he looked very silent and very grim. I said, "What has gone wrong?" He said in a very low, depressed voice, "My orders have been changed." Rufus King has been detached from the staff of Philip Andrews. They have come to a parting of the ways. I am to relieve Rufus King." He said in a low depressed voice, "This is the end" and he said it often. Philip Andrews was a very difficult person and he anticipated many difficulties. Raymond said, "Well, I know I'll never get along with that man." So ~~when~~ he went to Europe he went right to the job as Chief of Staff. Happily he got along beautifully with Admiral Andrews. I'm sure the two of them had many set-toos but Admiral Andrews came to admire Raymond greatly. Andrews had no children of his own and Margaret was at a particularly cute age so the Admiral and his wife took our whole family under his wing. As Chief of Staff's wife I had a perfectly marvelous time. For instance, I had an official careall through Ireland. Admiral Andrews loved children. When he was done with his duty as chief of staff, he took over the OSBORNE. And it was at that time that ~~W~~we Overesch was with him. As an example of the problems that Raymond had with Admiral Andrews at one point Admiral Andrews wanted to take these ~~ports/in~~ ships into a port in Spain. The port was known for its wonderful beaches and other recreational facilities. Raymond said to him that it was impossible because the draft of the ship was too much and the anchorage was too shallow. Andrews wouldn't listen to him and said that's where we are going. He said, "very well, you can take responsibility for that but I'm going to put down in black and white that that is the wrong thing to do". The upshot was that Andrews would not take the ship in there. Raymond would not argue with

the Admiral. Admiral Andrews had a habit of bickering and arguing and Raymond would not argue with him, So at one point or at least at one time Raymond said "I'm not going to argue with you anymore Admiral" and he walked out. Raymond had not wanted the job in the first place so he didn't feel he had to put up with petty arguments on the part of Andrews. He liked the Admiral but he just couldn't understand anybody being so difficult. The Admiral ~~was~~ ~~had~~ had a fear of catching cold so when Raymond would come in to talk with him the Admiral would say, "Take coughing distance." Raymond thought that was veyr funny so at times he would say to me, "Take coughing distance." We did however have many pleasant times with the Andrews. On one occasion the ship anchored off Ireland. The city that we anchored off of was Kingstown. We were there three weeks. We would tour the countryside in a car. Raymond would sit in front and enjoy his role of directing the car to the places where it would go. The Admiral and his wife and Margaret and I would sit in the back of the car. Raymond would try to control the situation because Admiral Andrews never wanted to stop. Mrs. Andrews would whisper to Margaret, "Please tell the Admiral that you are hungry." Margaret would then turn to the Admiral and say, "I'm very hungry, can't we stop?" And the Admiral would say, "All right, let's stop." Margaret was too young for school but we sent Edward to school in Switzerland for the first year. However, I felt badly being separated from him so I rented an apartment in Cannes. Edward went to a French school and he was the only English speaking boy there. Edward would come home for his mid-day meal. The reason Edward came home for

lunch although it was against the school rules is that the food that was served there was so bad he wouldn't eat it. You might imagine, Edward learned to speak beautiful French. Edward learned to ~~speak~~ French in the school in Switzerland of which there were a class of about 30 boys. Half of them spoke English and the other half was French and German. Edward had a particularly good French teacher and he had a flair for languages as did his father. Captain Evans had commented to me on how well Raymond could speak French..I think Margaret ~~pick~~ed up this flair also because I believe she could speak any language she set her mind to. The only language that Raymond learned to speak was French. He did not like German. Although he had a fluency in language he had no ear for music. On the other hand, I have an ear for music But language is difficult for me. He and Ruf King had a great deal of fun after they returned from Europe in talking both good French and slang French. Raymond and I a wonderful time during those two years. For instance, the PITTSBURGH was the first American ship to visit Kingstown since before World War I...so we were given a great reception. One of the reasons why I could not follow all around the Mediterranean was that Margaret came down with a serious case of colitis. Going back to Kingstown, however, it was a marvelous time because we had many grand balls and other types of ~~activities~~/ festivities.

Q. What was his reaction to the letter of reprimand that he got on the OSBORNE?

A. I did not even know he had gotten a letter until it was time for his selection to Captain. We were talking about when it

was time for him to go up for Captain we were discussing other peoples possibilities and I remarked to him "Well, you don't have anything to worry about"and he replied, "Oh indeed, I have." And that was the first time I heard about the letter of reprimand. It was when we were living on Hunter Avenue in the early 30s.

Q. Did he enjoy the War College when you came here for your first tour of duty in 1926?

A. He was very happy at the War College then. He seemed to be inspired and he read a great deal. He would read at the library. I remember he would come home rather late. From my standpoint, the living was rather difficult. He enjoyed the lectures and thought Adm. Pratt was brilliant and he had many friends here at the time. They wanted him to stay on the staff which worried me but he was too young.

Q. What kind of problems did you have here?

A. Domestic problems. There was quite a contrast from the gracious living that I had experienced in Europe. When I first saw the apartment it looked rather nice with pretty furniture in it. However, I soon came to know our landlord Mr. Green and he was an absolute devil. I told Mr. Green how happy I was to be there because everything was so pretty. With that I sat down on this darling old sofa and the spring popped. I said, "Oh, dear me" and I called Mr. Green right away. I said, "Something has happened to this beautiful old sofa"and he said, "Well, that happens all the time" and he banged shut the receiver. In another case the furnace didn't function. We were freezing cold. The first cook that I had was not very good but the second one I had was excellent. She was from the back bay

and her name was Anna.

At one time there was this strange aroma of gas through the house. Raymond wrote to Mr. Green and said something must be done about it. Green responded I have the same trouble in my house when the air gets too heavy with gas I simply open the windows. I said, "Raymond, what are you going to do about that?" And he responded, "Nothing." He then put the little note from Mr. Green aside. We did not complain anymore. Our schnauzer was being bad and the entire neighborhood was complaining. We called the schnauzer, Peter the Great. When June came Mr. Green was put on the black list. He never got off the black list. He therefore wrote a note to Raymond. He said "You and I have never had any trouble in the past and would you be kind enough to say a good word for me to get me off the black list?"

Raymond mailed Mr. Green the little note that he had sent ~~then~~ him about the leaking gas.

Thus, when we left Newport I was happy to go and I felt we would probably never come back, because Raymond had always said to me the only thing that counts in selection and promotion is sea duty so I felt we would never again come back to Newport.

He said you can go any place on shore duty and it doesn't matter. As you know we kept going back and back to Newport.

- Q. In that you were so close to the War College, I imagine that he walked back and forth and would come home for lunch?
- A. Yes, he did. With my wonderful cook Anna we always seemed to be having loads of company. Housing in Newport for the War College students was usually pretty bad. The houses at first seemd to be large and attractive and the rents low. But it took so much to heat them that the coal bills were often more than the rent.

As a result the War College drew up a annual housing list as a guide to War College students who were seeking satisfactory housing.

Q. In that you and other Navy families were receiving rather low wages, how could you and all the other families afford a cook?

A. I can remember in Newport News in the early days, we paid \$3.00 a week for a cook. And they were more than just a cook; they did all the housework as well. I remember I got in wrong with the southern ladies in Newport News. I had hired a woman named Isabel Lightfoot to be my cook. She was a marvelous colored woman. She was the first cook I had ever hired. When I interviewed her she said "Mam, if I suit you, could I have \$4.00 a week?" I was so naive that I thought \$4.00 was extremely cheap. She did very well so at the end of the week, I told her that I would pay her \$4.00. The wages I was paying was soon all over Newport News. The southern ladies in that town were most indignant that the northern lady was paying the hired help \$4.00 a week. Also, by the time we returned from the Mediterranean I had inherited some money from my father who had died so we had some extra income. Raymond invested my money for me.

Q. What was his reaction when he got ordered to ONI in Washington?

A. He thought it would be interesting but he did not like the thought of going to Washington. Also, having had my inheritance we could afford a nice house. It was almost as if we were on easy street.

Q. Tell me about his relationship with the Japanese Naval Officers.

A. Our principle Japanese friend there was Admiral Sakano. I

suppose they called on us first and then we returned the call. Mrs. Sukano had a perfectly charming little boy. Mrs. Sukano who was a charming woman wanted to enter her little boy in school. She spoke English and she was very apprehensive about getting her boy in school. She asked me what should she do.

Capt. ~~Admiral~~ Sukano also told Raymond how apprehensive he was. Raymond said that I would help Mrs. Sukano enter their son into a school that was nearby. So I did help get the boy into the school. The Sukanos were most grateful for what they considered ~~they~~ to be an extremely kind act on our part. As a result of my helping them we became very good friends. We would visit each other's homes often. Capt. Sukano was a most interesting man. The relationship between Raymond and Sukano was amusing. They knew that Raymond was an intelligence officer and he knew that they knew. We would go to great Japanese receptions and saw many other Japanese naval officers and families. We saw the Sukanos again when Raymond was executive officer of the MISSISSIPPI. They were returning to Japan via Los Angeles and we saw them off there. Raymond wrote to them in 1946. He saw them again in Tokyo after he had left as Ambassador to the Philippines. Swede Overesch asked the Admiral what did he want to do while he was in Tokyo and he said, "I want to see the Sukanos." It worked out that the Sukanos came to lunch with us and it was great to see them. Adm. Sukano had always been against going into the war and Raymond knew that. If Sukano had been against the war he did not actively participate/after it ^{in the war} began. His life as a result was very hard. They had lost everything and Mrs. Sukano had to set up a little shop where she would make little items to sell to support ~~them~~ themselves. The Sukanos also saw Gerry and Margaret when Gerry was on

duty in Japan.

- Q. Did the Admiral get to know any other Japanese Naval Officers in Washington?
- A. ~~Sukano~~/ No, Sukano was the only one. Also perhaps Sukano ingratiated himself with Raymond in hopes ~~that~~ of finding out as much as he could about the American Navy.
- Q. How did he feel about the Japanese after the attack on Pearl Harbor?
- A. I can remember that very well. When he came home he looked 20 years older. He said, "we at sea had no idea of the devastation until we steamed into the harbor." He was simply stunned. He made himself talk about it and tell me his feelings on seeing the wreckage in Pearl Harbor but after that one time, he never again talked about it. He was simply shattered the day he first saw the wreckage. Seeing that devastation was like a physical blow to him. He said Adm. Kimmel and his staff were in the same frame of mind. All of them looked as if they had been physically struck.' Kimmel and his staff could not function. I myself could not see what had happened until we sailed away on the Matson liner on the 19th of January. That's when I first saw the wreckage. I did not want to leave Pearl Harbor at that time. Edward had gone back to San Francisco with his submarine and an overhaul. Both Raymond and I wanted to get Josephine out of the islands and back with Edward. On several times we thought we had Josephine all lined up and ready to go..she would go down to the ship with her bags packed but find out that she had been bumped by somebody with a higher priority. I recall that I went down on a Monday to find out why Josephine could not get a passage back. I was told that we were all going and would be leaving on Wed. I was shocked and

I told the official that I did not want to go. He said I did not have to go. I was told however that if I did go on Wed. I would be traveling comfortably because I ~~wasn't~~ was an Admiral's wife. Margaret would have a nice room and a shower. He told me regardless I would have to go within the next month unless I was working. I was working in the Red Cross. The official said that 50 people would jump at the chance to return to the states in the accommodations that were being offered to me. The official said, "Think it over." I consulted with my friends and they all advised me to go back to the states. So I went home on Wed. with Margaret. Josephine and Margaret went with me.

(Mrs. Spruance mentioned two other incidents having to do with Adm. Andrews when Spruance was Chief of Staff in Europe. One was that Andrews was very much against people drinking.. a real prohibitionist. And he roundly disapproved of anyone drinking. All the rest of the staff enjoying having a cocktail before dinner so they would very surreptitiously gather in the various hotel rooms and have their cocktails and keep an eye out for the Admiral. Spruance would say, "Now you post a watch, watch out here he comes." But they would sneak these drinks and think it was a very funny, exciting thing to do hoping that the Admiral wouldn't find out about it. He also a friend who was a big lush and at one dinner party one night this fellow just drank to excess and made a complete fool of himself. Next morning Andrews said to Spruance "Wasn't so and so just the life of the party?")

Note 1: When he made his rum drinks in Newport he would take forever to make them. Also, in retirement on the Monterey Peninsula it got to be ridiculous how people would have all the makings all set up

when they would go calling and then he would go through such elaborate ritual putting the rum drinks together. Alos, any time that in the evening the Admiral would say to Margaret "I suppose you would like a drink" and she would say "Yes" and he would fix her one and then he would always fix his own rum drink to sip on. in the afternoon or evening.

On that cigar smoking incident, when Margaret came home weeping after smelling that cigar smoke, ~~he~~ she said that her husband looked at her pitifully and said, "Well, do you suppose I should take up cigar smoking?" Mrs. Spruance did not smoke becuase her husband didn't smoke. However, if there were social occasion where it was the thing to do, she would puff on a cigarette occasionally but no more than that.

One of Spruance's closest friends was a Mrs. Von Holt^F, her first name was Betty. When the Admiral would come ashore during World War II in HONOlulu, Betty ~~Von Holt~~^{van Holt} was with him quite often helping him pass out medals and decorations.

Another friend was a Mrs. ~~Meter~~^{James L. Meader} (Metie?). Mrs. ~~Van Meter~~^{Meader} would accompany Raymond as he would make his various trips around the island of Honolulu. He would come home chuckling and chortling how he had met people and handled the situation. ~~It could be that this woman was in the Philippines rather than in Honolulu.~~