

**THE WORLD BANK GROUP ARCHIVES**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**Transcript of interview with**

**MARIE E. LINAHAN**

**July 19, 1986  
Washington, D.C.**

**Interview by: Robert W. Oliver**

**[Begin Tape 1, Side A]**

*Note: Marie Linahan wrote to Karl O. Lawrence of the Bank Archives in 1991 that, as she had mentioned to him in an earlier telephone conversation, "because of the many changes I wished to make in the transcript, I was retyping it." This transcript is Ms. Linahan's typed version.*

**OLIVER:** This is Robert Oliver about to conduct a conversation with Ms. Marie Linahan on July 19, 1986. It's a pleasure to be here, and may I ask at the outset if you would say a word about your career, about yourself and about how you came to the World Bank.

**LINAHAN:** I was born and raised in Binghamton, New York. After graduating from high school I worked as a stenographer in a law office in that city. It was a small firm, but a good one, and I learned a great deal in the two years spent in their employ. In 1928 I wanted to move to New York and through an uncle I got a job with a lawyer who was a friend of his. After about a year I applied and obtained a position as a stenographer with the Wall Street law firm of Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Gardiner and Reed. After a few months I was assigned to Mr. Whitney Debevoise, one of the young lawyers. He shared an office with Mr. William Stevenson. In 1931, Mr. Debevoise and Mr. Stevenson decided to start their own law firm and invited me to join them. I worked there for 15 years.

After the war I became "disenchanted" with living in New York City. There had been many changes in the Debevoise firm and Mr. Stevenson had left to become president of Oberlin College. In February of 1947 I visited Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson in Oberlin, Ohio. I mentioned to them that I was thinking of moving to Washington where my sister lived. At that time, Mr. Drew Pearson had a news program on the radio every Saturday night. He had predicted that Mr. John McCloy would become president of the World Bank. I said I was considering applying for a job as I thought it might be an interesting place to work. Mr. Stevenson said he would write him a letter recommending me. I told Mr. Stevenson that I was planning to visit my sister in Washington in March and gave him her address. When I arrived at my sister's there was a message to call Mr. McCloy's office, which I did and arranged for an appointment with Mr. McCloy and the personnel officer. About ten days later I was pleased to receive a message from the personnel officer offering me an assignment as a secretary in Mr. McCloy's office.

It was necessary to have two secretaries in the president's office of the Bank. When Mr. McCloy took over in March 1947 Miss Patricia Dermody was assigned to him. She had been working for Mr. Eugene Meyer until his resignation. Mr. Ray Barnett, who was secretary to Mr. McCloy in his New York law firm, became the other secretary on a temporary basis. For family reasons Ray did not want to move to Washington. It was fortunate for me to have applied for a job at this particular time. Ray was also fortunate as he was assigned to the World Bank's New York office which opened in April of 1947.

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Pat and I worked well together. She was familiar with the Washington scene and I had some knowledge of banks and law offices in New York. We shared the overtime.

I think Mr. McCloy was quite interested in the purpose of the World Bank and enjoyed meeting international figures. He also liked the people coming to work at the Bank. They were from many countries and were of high caliber. When he became President there were fewer than 300 employees. He was pleased with favorable publicity for the Bank, especially when joint annual meetings of the Bank and Fund were held and many international bankers attended. It was a surprise when he resigned in 1949 to become the U.S. High Commissioner to Germany. I was thrilled to be working the Saturday morning when President Truman telephoned to ask Mr. McCloy to come to see him at the White House. He instructed Mr. McCloy to walk and to take the East Entrance. This was because there had been a great deal of talk as to whether or not Mr. McCloy would become the High Commissioner. When Mr. McCloy returned to the office he dictated a memorandum regarding the meeting and his acceptance of the job in Germany.

**OLIVER:** Was it commonplace for you and Mr. McCloy to be working on a Saturday in the Bank?

**LINAHAN:** Yes. When he was in Washington, Mr. McCloy went to the office on Saturdays and some Holidays, and either Pat Dermody or I worked.

**OLIVER:** Did Mr. Black follow the same practice?

**LINAHAN:** No. Not as much. He preferred to leave the office by 6:00 P.M. but very often it would be later. It depended upon his schedule. He worked some weekends.

**OLIVER:** Do you know whether Mr. McCloy had difficulty deciding on becoming High Commissioner to Germany rather than staying with the World Bank? Did he think that High Commissioner was a more important job? Or was it just that the President had asked him?

**LINAHAN:** I think he was pleased to have been offered such a challenging job. Before accepting I am sure he gave it considerable thought.

**OLIVER:** There was also speculation, I am told, at that time--this would be '49--that Mr. McCloy might possibly be a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. Were you ever aware of that?

**LINAHAN:** No. I was not. He spoke about meeting General Eisenhower on a train when he was on a trip to New York. And I heard him say he thought that General Eisenhower would make a good president.

**OLIVER:** Let us move into the period when Mr. Black was president. What kind of

highlights shall we relate in connection with Mr. Black's long and illustrious presidency of the Bank? Let me ask at the outset, I suppose that you simply stayed in the president's office as a secretary when Mr. Black moved in?

**LINAHAN:** That's right. Pat Dermody went to Germany with Mr. McCloy and Mrs. Jean Costello moved to the president's office. She was secretary while Mr. Black was the Bank's U.S. Executive Director. She stayed about a year. She left the Bank because her husband was transferred out of the area. Miss Constance Ladue replaced her, and we worked together until Mr. Black retired in December 1962.

**OLIVER:** Well, bond sales were surely important and Mr. Black's becoming president must have made it easier to sell Bank bonds because of his familiarity with the bond market.

**LINAHAN:** He made a great many telephone calls to bankers. I don't feel qualified to comment on bond sales.

**OLIVER:** Do you happen to remember the circumstances which led the Bank to choose Morgan Stanley and First Boston as its major agents for marketing Bank bonds? Do you remember the names of people in New York--I'm wondering specifically, of course, whether George Woods had a hand in this.

**LINAHAN:** I don't know the answers to these questions. I know that Mr. Woods of First Boston and Mr. John Young of Morgan Stanley were in frequent communication with Mr. Black.

**OLIVER:** The names are not so important as the processes.

**LINAHAN:** I wasn't familiar with the processes.

**OLIVER:** You may remember Mr. William Bennett.

**LINAHAN:** I remember him very well. I understand he was a great help in bond matters, especially in dealing with New York bankers.

**OLIVER:** Having introduced the name, George Woods, would you just say a bit about the relationship between Mr. Black and Mr. Woods. I think Mr. Black talked to Mr. Woods frequently, not only about the bond market but projects and that sort of thing.

**LINAHAN:** Mr. Black had frequent telephone conversations and meetings with Mr. Woods about many matters. Mr. Woods seemed to be interested in going on missions abroad. I remember he went to India and Egypt.

**OLIVER:** Maybe you'd say a word about Mr. Black's personality.

**LINAHAN:** He was thoughtful and friendly, a true Southern gentleman. He was well liked by the staff. In the early days of the Bank at the annual picnics he would take part in the sports, playing baseball, running in races, etc. Mrs. Black and he attended the Christmas parties and took part in the festivities. He was a really good diplomat. I understand that at some business conferences there might be arguments and, although he would get his points across, the meetings would end on a friendly note after he would tell a joke.

**OLIVER:** You've been talking about Mr. Black's outgoing personality and his ability to tell a joke at the right moment to liven people up if they became too serious. Can you contrast Mr. Black in this regard with Mr. Woods?

**LINAHAN:** Mr. Woods was friendly but more reserved than Mr. Black. He had lived in the New York area most of his life, whereas Mr. Black was raised in the South. Mr. Woods was diplomatic and realized it was important in dealing with international figures.

**OLIVER:** He probably didn't have the same sense of humor; the ability to tell a story at just the right moment.

**LINAHAN:** Well, I think he could tell a good story, but I don't know of any particular incidents.

**OLIVER:** Before we leave the subject of Black and Woods would you say that Mr. Black talked to Mr. Woods frequently when Mr. Black was president? Was Mr. Woods a major counselor, so to speak?

**LINAHAN:** I think he was, especially regarding the bond market. And I think Mr. Black welcomed hearing Mr. Woods's opinions regarding India, for instance, and the Suez Canal negotiations.

**OLIVER:** In those days, when Mr. Black was in Washington and not traveling, would you characterize his days? Would he be on the telephone a great deal and at meetings? Would this comprise his day?

**LINAHAN:** He would check the mail and dictate letters and memos; meet with top staff; attend board meetings of executive directors. He also had many appointments and telephone conversations with persons who were not affiliated with the Bank. With regard to executive directors, - If Mr. Black wanted to take up a special matter at a board meeting he might call individual directors to his office before the formal meeting to get their views on what he was going to propose. I believe Mr. Woods did the same.

**OLIVER:** Mr. Black was particularly adept, I think, at working with the executive directors and maintaining their confidence and support.

**LINAHAN:** I believe he was.

**OLIVER:** Did Mr. Black entertain the executive directors in his own home?

**LINAHAN:** Yes, from time to time.

**OLIVER:** How about members of the staff? Would you say just a word about Mr. Black's social relationship with his staff?

**LINAHAN:** He would invite different members of his staff to dinner parties when he would be entertaining international figures. For instance, whenever Prime Minister of Australia Menzies came to Washington Mr. Black had a dinner party for him and members of the staff who were involved in Australian projects would be invited.

**OLIVER:** Which staff members would you say Mr. Black relied upon the most, so to speak?

**LINAHAN:** In the early days he relied on Mr. Robert Garner, the vice-president who became the head of the International Finance Corporation. After that he relied on Sir William Iliff, Mr. Davidson Sommers, Mr. Burke Knapp, and Mr. Harold Graves. He would also listen to the heads of the different departments and to loan officers who would be in charge of special projects.

In 1959 Mr. Black felt the need of a personal assistant who would be free to travel with him on short, as well as, long trips abroad. So Nicholas Gibbs joined the President's Office. His duties were to check on travel arrangements and schedules, tickets, hotel reservations, expenses, all that sort of thing. When he was in Washington, between trips, he assisted Mr. Black in various ways. After about a year Mr. Gibbs took another job in the Bank. He was replaced by Mr. Joseph Verner Reed who stayed until Mr. Black retired the end of 1962.

When Mr. Woods became president in 1963, Mr. George Wishart became his personal assistant. He was a great help to Mr. Woods not only in arranging travel but in taking charge of answering mail and overseeing the affairs of the President's Office. Miss Bernadette Schmitt, who was secretary to Mr. Woods at First Boston, moved from New York to join the Bank and continue to act as his secretary.

**OLIVER:** Well, I think now it's appropriate for me to ask if you would say a word about some of the trips you had the opportunity of going on with Mr. Black.

**LINAHAN:** It was a long time ago and I no longer have records, but if you will bear with me I shall mention the places and incidents which made the most impression on me.

**OLIVER:** I think you were about to say that in India you tried to keep a diary.

**LINAHAN:** Yes. However, I didn't do a very good job. I was busy and jotted things down when I had a chance.

**OLIVER:** And this is the diary you are now showing me.

**LINAHAN:** Yes. I'd be glad to have you take it if you would like to have it.

**OLIVER:** To keep or to look at?

**LINAHAN:** To look at.

**OLIVER:** It seems to me that at some point the archives of the Bank might be very happy to have that.

**LINAHAN:** Oh. I don't think I'd want to give it to them.

**OLIVER:** All right. I understand. But it's interesting to note that you have it.

**LINAHAN:** Mr. Black liked to have Mrs. Black join him on trips abroad of more than a week or two. As Mrs. Black wanted to have a secretary along, Constance Ladue and I alternated trips. I felt very fortunate to draw three very interesting ones: 1952 - Around the world, two months; 1958 - East Africa and Cairo, five weeks; 1960 - West and North Africa, four weeks.

In January 1952 our first stop was London. After about three days, we flew to Bahrain where we stayed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Max Thornberg located on an island in the Persian Gulf. Mr. Thornberg was an advisor on oil to the Sheik. He arranged for an appointment for Mr. Black with the Sheik at the Palace and Mrs. Thornberg, Mrs. Black and I were delighted to tag along. We next went to Karachi, Pakistan, staying at the Governor General's house. The Aga Khan was on a visit to that city and Mr. Black had an appointment with him. Our next stops in Pakistan were in Lahore and Peshawar. One day while Mr. Black was busy, Mrs. Black and I were taken by auto over the Khyber Pass to the Afghanistan border. It was a thrilling experience that Mr. Black said he was sorry to miss.

From Pakistan we went to New Delhi, India, where we stayed in the mansion formerly occupied by Viceroy Mountbatten. Mr. Black was extremely busy with appointments, among them with Prime Minister Nehru. While in New Delhi, our party was invited to lunch by Mr. G. D. Birla, a wealthy industrialist who was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. It was on the grounds of Birla House that Gandhi was shot. We saw the site, where fresh flowers were kept. This was in 1952. I understand that since then a monument has been erected.

Our next stop was Calcutta. While there Mr. Leonard Rist and Mr. Joseph Rucinski mentioned they were interested in going to Darjeeling. I said I'd like to see Mt. Everest. Mr. and Mrs. Black did not wish to go but didn't object to our taking the trip.

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It was a rugged excursion. We stayed overnight in an "ancient" hotel. Got up at 4:00 A.M. to go by Jeep up Tiger Hill to see the sun rise on Kunchinjunga (spelling?). We were about 10,000 feet above sea level. It was a thrill to watch the outline of the snow-capped mountains come out of the darkness and to know we were looking at the highest peaks in the world. I tried to see Mt. Everest but it was a dim view as it was several miles distant.

**OLIVER:** Very interesting. Your mentioning Leonard Rist being a member of the party leads me to ask: Did Mr. Black usually take with him on his travels several staff people?

**LINAHAN:** Yes he did. On this particular trip the members of our party, besides Mr. and Mrs. Black and me, were: Mr. Leonard Rist, French, the director of the economic department; Mr. Harold Graves, American, the director of public relations; and Mr. Joseph Rucinski, a loan officer. Mr. Lars Bengston was in Pakistan and India part of the time. Mr. Raymond Cope was with group in Australia.

**OLIVER:** Did wives of staff members sometimes go along?

**LINAHAN:** Not very often. Mrs. Michael Lejeune went on the trip to Africa in 1958 and Mrs. Siem Aldewereld joined us for part of the 1960 trip. I believe they were entitled to go because their husbands had been away from home for long periods of time working on special projects.

Other places we visited in India were Jaipur, Taj Mahal, Bombay and the Kans Grass project.

After India we went to Ceylon and Thailand. Then to Australia. After a stop in Sydney we went to Canberra where Mr. and Mrs. Black stayed at the home of Prime Minister and Mrs. Menzies. While in Australia our group spent a weekend at a sheep station where we had fun riding in jeeps and watching kangaroos and foxes being chased. At that time the Bank was interested in Australian projects but I don't remember what they were.

The last country on our itinerary was New Zealand where the Bank was interested in a forestry project. There were meetings in Wellington and Auckland. Before leaving for the long flight (It was before jet travel.) to Honolulu, we were happy to have a few days to rest at a fishing lodge.

**LINAHAN:** In Honolulu Mr. Black worked on a speech he was to give in San Francisco.

**OLIVER:** Sounds like you accomplished quite a lot.

**LINAHAN:** I think Mr. Black felt the trip was a success. For me it was a great privilege to have traveled with the group and to have been around the world. We were



in San Francisco for three or four days before flying home.

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I don't remember the itinerary for the trip to East Africa and Cairo in the spring of 1958. Mrs. Black was not feeling well so did not go on this trip. Other than Mr. Black and me there were Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lejeune and Mr. Nathaniel McKitterick. Places we visited were: Leopoldville, Belgian Congo; Johannesburg, Pretoria and Kruger Park, South Africa; Salisbury and Kariba, Southern Rhodesia; Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia; Arusha, Tankanyika; Nairobi, Kenya; Entebbe, Uganda; Khartoum, Sudan; and Cairo, Egypt. There were business meetings and social affairs all along the way.

Mr. Black was particularly interested in Kariba because of the Bank's part in the dam project. There were about 10,000 persons living in the town, most of whom had moved there less than three years before our visit. It was amazing to me to see what had been done in such a short time to establish a town for people involved in the Kariba Dam project. We were taken on what seemed to me to be a thorough inspection tour.

In Johannesburg there was a dinner party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Oppenheimer. Mr. Black expressed interest in visiting a gold mine. We were surprised when it was arranged for our party to have a tour of a mine the next morning. What a fascinating experience!

**OLIVER:** You were telling earlier about a meeting of Mr. Black and Mr. Woods in Egypt at the time of the Suez negotiations.

**LINAHAN:** Yes. When Mr. Black arrived at the airport in Cairo in April 1958, he was met by General Raymond Wheeler, Sir William Iliff and Mr. George Woods, as well as members of the press. There was a short press conference before Mr. Black left for his hotel. Mr. Black had many talks with General Wheeler, Sir William Iliff and Mr. Woods before and after his two meetings with President Nasser. I heard of an incident that happened at one of the meetings.

**OLIVER:** The incident?

**LINAHAN:** Yes. I believe Mr. Black became quite friendly with President Nasser and took his picture with a Polaroid camera. President Nasser was fascinated to see the immediate result of the flash. So Mr. Black gave him the camera.

**OLIVER:** I think Mr. Black had the marvelous diplomatic capability of being warm and outgoing in thinking of things like that to do with dignitaries.

**LINAHAN:** Members of the press were on Mr. Black's trail in Cairo and kept calling on the 'phone for appointments and some of them even waited in the lobby of

the hotel to try to see him on his way in or out. However, no statements were given to them until the press conference held at 11:00 P.M. the night before he left Cairo. It was held in the United Nations Information Center. General Wheeler also made a statement to the press.

Mr. Black flew to London the next day. Mrs. Black joined him there. After a few days Mr. and Mrs. Black, General Wheeler, Nat McKitterick and myself boarded the Queen Elizabeth for a delightful sea voyage home. Mr. and Mrs. Lejeune were anxious to see their children so they flew back to Washington.

In the spring of 1960, Mr. Black took another trip to Africa. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Black, Mr. John Williams, Mr. Nicholas Gibbs, and me. Mr. and Mrs. Siem Aldewereld were with us in Khartoum and in Southern Rhodesia. Mr. William Diamond saw Mr. Black in Nigeria.

To the best of my recollections the countries visited were: Sudan, Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Tunisia and Morocco.

Mr. Black's purpose for visiting Southern Rhodesia again (he was there in 1958) was to be present at the dedication of Kariba Dam. The Queen Mother was the honored guest and was one of the speakers. Mr. Black had a private meeting with her.

In Morocco Mr. Black was very busy. He had many meetings with government officials. He called on the King, who was in poor health, and on the Crown Prince, who is the present King Hassan. The Crown Prince hosted a dinner at the Palace in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Black. It was "fabulous!" I was happy to have been invited.

Compared to the trip two years before, I noticed a great change in the attitudes of Native Africans toward white persons, especially at airports. In 1958 attendants were courteous and pleasant. This was not apparent in 1960. I don't think of any other experiences on this trip that would be of special interest to you.

**OLIVER:** Well thank you so much for your time today and your gracious interview. It's been a great pleasure for me and I know the archives will benefit from having your recollections. If you care to add to them when you get the typed transcript, I surely hope you will.

**LINAHAN:** I will.

**[End of Tape 1]**

**[End of Interview]**