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JANE DOOLITTE

بنیاد مطالعات ایران
Foundation for Iranian Studies

INTERVIEW WITH JANE DOOLITTLE

COURTLAND, N.Y.

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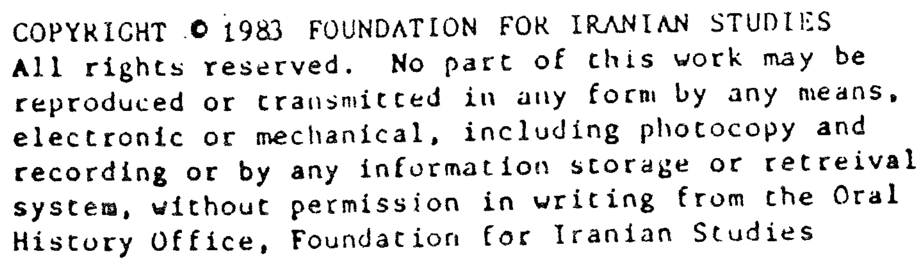
INTERVIEWED BY BEHRUZ NIKZAT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PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted for the Oral History of Iran Program of Foundation for Iranian Studies by Behrooz Nikzat with Jane Doolittle in Cortland in September, 1983.

Readers of this Oral History memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Foundation for Iranian Studies is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein.

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Foundation for Iranian Studies

اینجانب متن و نوار مصاحبه های انجام شده در ارتباط با برنامه "تاریخ شفاهی ایران" را به بنیاد مطالعات ایران هدیه میکنم تا در اجرای برنامه های آموزشی و تحقیقاتی بنیاد به هر نحوی که مصلحت میدانند از آن استفاده نمایند.

[signature] Doolittle
مصاحبه شونده

[signature]
مصاحبه کننده

Sept. 29, 1983
تاریخ

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Miss Jane Doolittle was born in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1899. After completing her college education, Miss Doolittle volunteered to join the Joint Board of Christian Missions in Tehran as a teacher for the Board's girl's school. Therefore, in 1921 Miss Doolittle embarked upon an arduous journey for Iran, which took her to Tehran via Baghdad and Kermanshah. In Tehran she became first,a teacher and later the principal of the Iran Bethel School, where she continued to work until 1979.

Miss Doolittle's memoirs are not only illuminative with regard to the history of missionary work in Iran, especially with regards to the Iran Bethel School, but also tell much about social changes which Iran has undergone over the past six decades.

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Foundation for Iranian Studies
Interview with: Jane Doolittle
Interviewed by: Behrooz Nikzat
September 29, 1983
Cortland, NY

Nikzat: Miss Doolittle, thank you very much for this opportunity that you gave me to interview you for the Foundation for Iranian Studies. I would like to begin by asking you to give us your biographical data from the date you were born, the books that you did, the schools that you went to, and the services that you have rendered, especially to the people of Iran.

Doolittle: I was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, on April 14, 1899. We lived in Reading until I was six years old, when we moved to Yonkers, New York, where I grew up (although I had started school in Reading). I attended the public schools in Yonkers because, at that time, they were excellent schools. When I finished the eighth grade (which was known as the primary school), I was sent to a boarding school in Riverdale, New York, for one year, and then I went to Tabin School in Northampton, Massachusetts for my high school work. I was not planning on college at that time, because my father felt that women didn't need college. Then I was convinced, when I was about seventeen years old, that I was called to work abroad, so my father said, "Well, in that case, you must go to college." So I got busy and prepared myself for college between January and June of 1917. There was a lot to be done, because I had just been taking finishing courses. I had to do several years of Latin and ancient history and English and mathematics, which I hadn't concentrated on. I prepared myself for college and took the exams and entered Welles College in Aurora, New York, in September, 1917. I went to Welles College because that was my

mother's college, and also my aunt's college, and it was a very good college. While I was there, I felt that I should prepare for medical work, because I had thought that the things that the countries abroad needed most was, perhaps, medical attention. So I took pre-medics work at college, and was accepted at Cornell and Columbia for their medical schools. But at that time, a friend of mine had a fiance who went to Iran (which was then Persia), and he wrote to her, saying that the girls' school in Teheran was in great need of teachers, and couldn't Welles College send a girl to this girls' school in Teheran? As was Yale in China, Harvard someplace south and so on. I was the president of the Y.W.C.A. [Young Women's Christian Association] at the college, and we put on a campaign and raised the money, but there wasn't anybody to go at that time. After all, back in 1920, nobody ever heard of Iran (or rather, Persia, as it was then). And it was near Russia, where there was so much going on. Nobody knew what the conditions were in Iran. So I was the goat: I gave up my medical training, and in the summer of 1921, I started out for Iran. [pauses] Transportation to Iran in those days was difficult. Formerly, they had used the Russian entrance, but in 1921, Russia was too unstable and people couldn't travel through there. So we had to go down to India. I took a little ship, which was not very safe, and it went from New York to Bombay. It took us thirty-two days to get to Bombay. Then, [Mahatma] Gandhi was showing himself about in India at that time, so there were disturbances, and there [was] no transportation to go from Bombay up to Basra. So we had to wait for a couple of weeks, or even longer. There were several other people planning to go to Iran

on the same boat. There were four or five of us who started off and saw India while we were waiting for a boat. When I got back after ten days of traveling around to Agra and Allahabad and Banaras and so forth, there was a boat ready for us, which carried only six passengers, to go up the Persian Gulf. So a young couple, the Markers, and I took that boat and went up to Basra. It took us a week to get there from Bombay. Then we took a little train which went up to Baghdad: it was an overnight ride. We waited in Baghdad a few days, and then got the train to Railhead. At Railhead, we found there was no transportation to go on from there, and of course there were no conveniences: it was just out in the desert. There was nothing but the station. So the stationmaster emptied his rooms for some Britishers who were in the party, and the Markers and I stayed in the storeroom with the cans for kerosene. [chuckles] And of course, it was pure desert there. The Britishers who were with us: they had their own food and servants and all the rest of it, and of course, we didn't, but we managed somehow, and that night we all spread our beds out in front of the station. In those days, everybody carried their own beds and chairs and mosquito nets and what-have-you. We stretched those [out]. The Britishers went in, and we were all in the sand. We were awakened in the morning by something that sounded like a car, and it was a car. Of course, the Britishers thought it was for them, but it wasn't: it was for us. Mrs. Stead, who was in charge of the hospital in Kermanshah at that time, had been in Baghdad while we were there, and she had sent transportation back for us. So we got in this car and packed our luggage on the sides -- strapped it on, as they

did in those days: trunks and so forth -- and we started off for Kermanshah. At that time, at every village that you came to, there was a big pole put out in front of you and you had to stop and give your pedigree and your passport and your past history and everything else before they would let you go on. So we did that numerous times during the day, and when it was getting to be dusk -- this was in October, so it got dark early -- the village that we stopped in said, "Well, you'll have to spend the night here, because nobody travels at night. There are too many bandits." We were young and ignorant, and we said, no, we would go on. So we did, and as it got darker, the driver fastened a lantern on the front of the car. It didn't have any lights. Then every little while, he'd get out to look and see if we were really on the road or not. When I've traveled over that pass since then, I realize how the Lord preserved us, taking that trip at night. We reached Kermanshah about ten o'clock; nobody was looking for us, because nobody traveled at night in those days. We stayed there in Kermanshah with the missionaries for two or three days, time to give us to look around. Then we went on to Hamadan: that was another day's trip. Then I left the Markers there, and I went on from there with some Russians to Qazvin. When we got to Qazvin, it became evident that they had some business there, so they left me at the Grand Hotel, all by myself, with no language, when they went about their business. Two days later, they appeared and we started on again for Teheran. That was an all-day's trip at that time. As we entered Teheran, it was very dark; there were no street lights. We finally came to

the mission compound, and the church was blazing with lights. They were having a meeting of some sort. The missionaries from the school came running out to meet me, at the door of the girls' school, which was where I lived for the next three years. Do you have any questions now?

BN: There was one thing: Were you feeling safe traveling under those conditions?

JD: Yes. I had no fear.

BN: It's strange, for an American girl, about twenty-two years old, going through all this experience of traveling in the desert.

JD: No, I had no fear. I was too young, too ignorant. [chuckles]

BN: Would you be willing to go through that experience again?

JD: Yes, I think so.

BN: Very well. Now you were in Teheran. Had you officially joined the mission to come to work in Teheran, or this was a completely different project?

JD: No, it was under the mission, but I was what was known as a 'short-term' teacher. The regular missionaries, of course, had to spend three to five years studying the language. But since I was a short-term teacher, meaning three years, I wasn't given the chance to learn the language. I just had to get busy teaching. I lived in the eastern section of the school building, which was called Indleside.

BN: Where was the school, by the way?

JD: It was just east of the church. Ghavam-Saltaneh. And there were four of us living there: Miss McHenry and Miss Young and Miss Peak and myself. We lived together there for three years. And later on, Miss Chase joined us in that place. So I was

ushered into the living room, which was a very small room, very poorly furnished with borrowed articles and worn-out things. Nobody had anything new there. And I settled down for my three years there. The next morning, Miss Peak took me around: she was at that time the principal. She took me around to show me the school and the girls and so forth, and by Monday morning I was ready to start teaching. I think that was Friday I got there, maybe, and started teaching on Monday morning. I taught a little bit of everything, as we always had to do. Anything that needed to be taught, we taught. Of course, everything I taught was in English at that time. I picked up quite a bit of Persian from hearing, but not having time to study it. But that was a big advantage later on, when I wanted to study it. I liked the girls very much. Of course, they all wore their chadors at that time, and their charghads and long skirts. I was interested in having them have some good athletic activities, and when I was at Welles College I'd been a member of the hockey team. I liked hockey very much, so we had some very crude hockey sticks made by the carpenter in Teheran. We got a piece of property which was to the east of us, which the boys' school had been using, but which supposed[ly] belonged to the girls' school. And thanks to money from Welles College, we were able to put up a wall at the southern end of that property, and made it part of the girls' school, which it had not been. That made a wonderful hockey field, and the girls would get out there with their sticks and their balls and their charghads and their long skirts, and play hockey, racing from one end to the other. That was lots of fun. Then the girls also liked picnics. We would take them on

Fridays to gardens outside of Teheran (which now are inside of Teheran). We'd get donkeys to take our load, and start out at five or six o'clock in the morning, and get back at six o'clock or so at night. That was a good recreation for everybody. The girls weren't used to such things: they liked them. Then, when the summer was coming along, the people who were living with me (Miss McHenry and Miss Young and Miss Peak) were all still studying the language, because they'd gotten there just a couple of months before I did. They were going to be busy for the summer, and what was I going to do? So we decided we'd have a girls' camp, and we called it Progress Camp. We were able to take twenty-five girls up-country for a month's camping. We walked up, because, of course, at that time there were no buses or anything. The only way to get there was to walk. The girls arrived at about five o'clock in the morning, and we walked and sang and walked and sang until we got there about nine-thirty that morning. Our baggage had been sent ahead: the chinaware and so forth on the , and other things on donkeys. We got there on foot. We had a very nice time there for a month. I think it was the only such camp that had ever been held before. They called it Progress Camp. Most of the girls, of course, were Armenian, because at that time most of our students were Armenian. There were not too many Moslem girls or Jewish girls who came to school, but we had three or four Moslem girls in the group.

BN: What was the name of the school?

JD: The Iranians always knew it as the American Girls' School, but its official name was Iran Bethel School.

BN: And who had established Iran Bethel School?

JD: It had been established by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, back in 1872. At that time, it was a boarding school with only Armenian girls, but gradually, some Persian girls started coming. Back in 1890, the Shah -- I think it was Nasir ad-Din Shah -- heard that there were Moslem girls in our school, so he came to visit the school. It was great excitement, having the Shah come to visit Iran Bethel. He saw everything, he went all around, and of course they gathered all the girls in the assembly room for him to see, and he asked them various questions. He saw the organ there and he asked that somebody should play on it. So according to the history, a little girl who was just learning to play sat down and played the organ for him. That little girl was Gertrude Nourollah's mother. Then he asked somebody to write something on the blackboard, and of course, the girls were too upset and excited to do anything, so he took the chalk from the girl, and he himself wrote on the blackboard that "Hakim-el-mamalek tashrif avard."

That little piece, about so big, on the blackboard, was preserved all through the years. I mean, it was framed on the blackboard so it wouldn't be disturbed, with his writing on it. After we left that building, I got that cut out with its frame, with its glass, and gave it to Demavand College. I don't know what's happened to it now, but that piece was still there. So those were exciting times. The first graduates were graduated in [1891], I think, and that was just two girls; two Armenian girls. The next year, there were no graduates. In '93, there were again two girls, again Armenian. The first year that there were any

non-Armenians graduating was 1915. It took all those years before there were any Moslem or Jewish girls to be graduated. They were all Armenians.

BN: Did the Armenian girls have to come to school wearing chador and charghad?

JD: I think they did to begin with. When I got there, they didn't. Their mothers still wore chador and charghad and so forth, but the girls did not. The Armenian girls did not.

BN: But the Moslèm girls did have to do that?

JD: Oh yes, oh yes. They all came very carefully veiled. And on wet days, all their chadors were spread all over the place to get them dry, because of course, they didn't have umbrellas. They used the chadors to protect them. We had racks all along the walls of the halls so the girls could hang up these chadors to dry.

BN: Can you tell me something about the social environment and life of the people at that time? It's very interesting.

JD: Yes. Well, what aspects, particularly?

BN: I mean, how did people go about their social life and socializing? What did they do? I mean, what were you doing there? For instance, you, as an American: were you accepted into the society?

JD: Yes, very much so. In those days, the movies and the American Army and so forth had not come to Iran, and so they set the Americans on a pedestal, and they were always eager to have us visit them. Every afternoon after school, we would go to their homes. Of course, the women in those days had no recreation whatsoever. There was nothing for them: they just sat at home and took care of their children and their husbands. So they were always glad to have anybody from outside. One of our chores during the holidays

(and in those days, we gave Jewish holidays and Armenian holidays and Moslem holidays) -- and whenever holidays came up, the students would expect us to call on them. So we would set out at about nine o'clock in the morning and drink tea all morning and call on as many people as we could, and come back for lunch, and we'd start out at two o'clock in the afternoon and get back at six, calling in their homes. They were very eager to have us. As I said, they had very little to do, of interest. In 1919 or '20, Mrs. Boyce, who was the head of the alumnae association of the girls' school, had the girls start a magazine: Alame Nesvan. To give them something to do. That is, have the graduates do that, the alumnae association. For about thirteen years, they published this magazine and sent it all through Iran. They had a subscription, I think, of about -- I'd be afraid to say, whether it was four hundred or four thousand; anyway, it was very few. But everybody liked that very much. They had a great time getting articles for it. One of the articles that was appreciated most was under the name of Khanom Delshad Khanom. Did you ever hear of Delshad Khanom?

BN: No.

JD: Delshad Khanom was Aghaye Nakhostin, that is Nouzad, the uncle of Ahmad Khan. Did you know him?

BN: No.

JD: Well, he was a very interesting person and a very keen Christian. He used to write articles and sign them, Delshad Khanoum and everybody thought it was a lady that was writing these articles. They were very well accepted at that time. That gave these women something to do. As I say, they kept it up for about thirteen

years, and it was -- I don't know whether the first or the second women's magazine to be published in Iran. It was very well liked, but gradually they found it was too much hard work to get it out and supervise it and provide the finances for it and so forth, so they gave it up. But they really had no social life. For instance, in order to raise money to help this, they had to find various means. One idea was to have a movie performance, because the women couldn't go to movies. Although by 1927 or '8, movies were in Teheran. But the women couldn't go to them; only the men went to them. So somebody had the bright idea of having a movie given at our school, and charge for it and so forth. But there was great excitement as to what they should do, because it would have to be a man who would run the movie, and he would hear women's voices. That was not allowed. [chuckles] But they finally had it, and they earned quite a bit for the magazine. But their lives were very narrow; very uninteresting. But they had a good time in their own homes. It was always amazing to me, what good times they did make up and how the children of the second or third wife would associate with the other children and the wives all got along so well together; that was amazing.

BN: How much did you know about Iran before you went to Iran?

JD: Very little. There was very little literature on the subject, because it was out of the way; nobody was particularly interested in Iran.

BN: Were you surprised or disappointed, or what, when you got to Iran?

JD: Well, one of the things that impressed me the most was the condition of the beggars on the streets at that time. You'd see a bundle of rags on the side of the road, and you'd discover it

was a woman, and the rags were her chador. She'd be sitting there and begging. Of course, we didn't know at that time that she probably under her chador had a nice little brazier keeping her warm. [chuckles] But she was so surrounded by her chador there wasn't evidence. Of course, the things that were difficult there in living were the lack of central heating, the lack of telephones, the lack of taxis, cars, the lack of -- did I say telephones? The lack of electricity, the lack of plumbing. We didn't have any of those things in those days. And the electricity didn't come on until 1937. The running water didn't come on until 1954. It really was amazing, the conditions that we lived in at that time. But we sort of expected them, and therefore were not bothered by them.

[interview interrupted]

BN: [What] was the Church's role in the school?

JD: Well, the church as a church, of course, didn't have any role there, but the missionaries. The women missionaries finally revolted at having a man as the head of their school committee. They thought they could manage the school themselves, which they did. But the church itself never had anything to do with it, as such. Of course, in those days, the church was in the hands of the missionaries. It wasn't in the hands of the Iranians.

BN: Okay. And this was the year 1921. You told me that you were on a temporary mission. That's for three years. So what made you stay there so long?

JD: Well, when I left -- although I left early; I didn't stay the full three years, because I was ill and they sent me home early. But at that time, it was evident that the principal, Miss McHenry,

was going to be married. So the mission asked me to prepare to come back and take over the school. So when I came back to America, I studied education instead of doctoring.

BN: So how long did you stay in the United States before you went back?

JD: Just two years.

BN: Two years. And then you went back to Teheran again.

JD: Then I went back. Well, no, I didn't go to Teheran. I went back to Hamadan, because everybody felt that if I went to Teheran, I knew so many people there I would not have time to study the language. So they put me in Hamadan for a year to concentrate on learning Persian. Then I went back to Teheran in '27.

BN: Was Hamadan much different from Teheran at that time?

JD: Oh, yes, it was very different. Much more primitive in every way. The students were very backward, and the schools and everything were nothing like those in Teheran. And of course in Teheran the schools for girls were very few. There was Namus school, which was very well known, and they graduated their girls from the seventh class: that was their highest class. The only other school which had higher grades was the Zoroastrian school. The Zoroastrian school, for some years, drew their principals from Iran Bethel. It was always one of our girls that was in charge there, because we had the highest educated girls in the country.

BN: Was your school registered with the government or with Vezarate Moaref, at that time, I guess?

JD: Yes. To begin with, of course, if there was a vezarate moaref it had nothing to do with our schools. I mean, it wasn't interested. After all, under Ahmad Shah, everything was just at a standstill. But then after Reza Shah took over, things were different, and the Vezarate Moaref

became active. It was, I think, in 1925 -- when I was not there -- that they had the first inspection from the Minister of Education. Two men came to look over the school, and as they reported, it was the first time that any man had been in the school in all those years, except for Nasir ad-Din Shah's visit. These gentlemen went around, inspected everything, and approved of it and so forth. From then on, we had inspectors. But to begin with -- that is, for the first fifty years, practically -- we were completely free to do anything we wanted to. For that reason, we didn't develop the Persian language as it should have been developed. To begin with, when I first went there, the Armenians had their Armenian classes, and the Persians had their Persian classes. The Armenians studied Persian as a second language, and learned very, very little. If you know any of our graduates, back before '25 -- the Armenian graduates -- they knew very little Persian.

[interview interrupted]

BN: What was the official teaching language of the school?

JD: Really, the official language was English. To begin with, we started teaching English in the fifth grade, primary. Then when the Minister of Education took over, they said it shouldn't be begun until the seventh class. So we had to change that. But really, the language of the school was English, and the missionaries there didn't know Persian. They knew Armenian rather than Persian, because they worked more with the Armenians.

[interview interrupted]

BN: Were you giving out any sort of diploma or certificates?

JD: Yes, we gave a diploma all through the year. The first graduating

class was in 1891, and we gave a certificate of their having completed the twelve grades.

BN: And who was honoring it?

JD: There wasn't anybody to honor it, at that time. The girls never applied for any work or anything; it was simply their pride and joy, that they had graduated. The diploma that we had in those days had a nice picture of the school, a nice little round one up at the top of it. They were very proud of those. To begin with, of course, they didn't have any alumnae association, because there weren't enough alumnae to have such. I think it was in 1915 that they first started an alumnae association, and there were only six graduates at that time that were members of it.

BN: When did you make up your mind to stay in Iran for such a long time? Was it a difficult decision to make?

JD: No, I don't think so. I think it just gradually came along. I mean, I'd lived there for so many years, and when it was time for me to retire, I had no family left in this country to come to. All my friends were there, so I retired there.

BN: Okay, Miss Doolittle, please tell me a little bit about the changes that you have observed in the life of the people during all these years. You told me about the primitive way of life that they had when you got to Teheran; and when you left Teheran, there had been so much advancement and development in that country, and you are one of the honest witnesses of all this progress in that country. Let's hear from you.

JD: Of course, it really came about quite gradually, I think, and it was all thanks to the Pahlavi dynasty. If that hadn't come in and taken over -- if Reza Shah hadn't insisted on the freedom

of women -- of course, the day of the freedom of women was really a very exciting time, and that was in 1937, in January. Before that, there had been a lot of talk about women unveiling, and the girls in our school, of course, were gradually getting rid of their veils, and every day as they came to school, there would be shouts, of another girl appearing without her veil or with a hat on; of course, in those days, they wore hats. Then in January of 1937, we had the order from the Ministry of Education that in order to receive the diplomas of the eleventh class (which is all they had then), of the previous year, of 1936, that the students and their principals were to appear at the teachers' training college there on Roosevelt Avenue, and all the girls had to be completely in white, and we were told what the principals should wear and so forth -- I think it was to begin at two o'clock in the afternoon. We were fortunate in that we had the twelfth class; that was for all the girls who had received their diplomas the year before, were on hand, so we could get hold of them and get them dressed in their white dresses and stockings and shoes and all the rest of it. Then we went to the teachers' training college, and the girls were all lined up in one room, a line side-by-side, with the principal at the head of each line, and the boys were in another room. We stood there waiting for a while -- [interview interrupted] Then their majesties --

-- appeared in the room where the women were, and then one by one, called up the school, and the school principal went and received the diplomas from Her Majesty, and took them back to the girls. When that was finally finished, then the girls were all told to go down and line up on both sides of the road out to the main road.

It was winter, with the snow, but all the girls had to go there in their white clothes, no coats or anything. We lined up there for Their Majesties to leave. Then, the next morning, we had word from the Ministry of Education to come there for a meeting. We all got there, and then the Minister said, "Now that Her Majesty and her daughters appeared without chadors, but hats and proper clothes, it is unseemly that any woman in Iran should appear with anything but a hat." And we were to see to it in our schools that nobody came, except in modern European clothing. So that's what happened; we all went back. For me, it was easy, because I said, "Our girls have already started doing that." But as you probably know, no woman was allowed on the street without any scarf of any sort over her head.

BN: Did you have to wear chador?

JD: No, no.

BN: As a foreigner, you didn't have to?

Weren't you facing any objections from the people?

JD: No. When I went out into the villages, they were surprised, and thought we were men, because we didn't have chadors on. But I was never compelled to wear a chador. And in fact, I never did. I mean, to get into some places, of course, you had to have a veil to go there, so I never went to those places where they didn't want you. But one time, we had had a very fine black woman who had been a slave. She worked for me for twenty-seven years, and then she died of cancer, and she was buried at Shah Abdol Asim I wanted to go there, to the cemetery. I put on a chador for that, because they wouldn't let me in without it. But that's the only time I wore a chador, as such.

BN: You mean, at that time -- in 1921 -- you could walk in the streets of Teheran with bare head and without wearing a chador?

JD: Yes.

BN: And facing no objection from even the fanatics?

JD: No. If there was any objection, we never heard it. They were used to these American women. Of course, the Armenian women wore chadors.

BN: They did.

JD: Yes, they did. But we never did.

BN: And you know that now you cannot do that in Teheran?

JD: Yes, I know. Gertrude Nourollah's sister Mary is there, in Teheran, and she has such a time having to have, in the summertime, long sleeves. She can't go out with short sleeves, and she has to have a scarf on her head.

BN: Interview with Miss Doolittle will continue on the other side of the tape, side B.

[end of side one, tape one]

Was your school considered an evangelical school?

JD: That is, in the eyes of whom? In the eyes of the church, it was supposed to be a Christian school. I don't know how much the Iranians realized that although we always told them that when they came to register their girls. We told them that this was a Christian school, and they were all expected to attend chapel; daily chapel.

BN: How did they take it?

JD: They took it very well. I only remember one or two objections, through all the years. They said they knew that.

BN: Among all the places in the world, why go to Iran?

JD: I think I said that a friend of mine's fiance went to Teheran and sent back word that they needed women for the girls' school in Teheran. That's how I got to Teheran. I always expected to go to Africa [chuckles].

BN: So you had made up your mind to get out of the United States and serve somewhere else.

JD: Yes.

BN: Why was that?

JD: I don't know. The Lord told me so. And my family were very co-operative. When I look back and think of where Persia was, in those days, and the turmoils all around Persia at that time, I think it was really wonderful that my parents let me go, and they never put any obstacles in my way, in any way. My sister rather resented my going; she didn't see why I should go there, and why I should take no responsibility for my parents, as they grew older. But fortunately, each time that I was needed at home, I was at home. I mean, I was on furlough when my mother was taken ill, and I was with her for two years, looking after her and my father. Then, after she went, three years later, I went home on a short furlough, and my father was taken ill, and I was there to take care of him to the end. Then later on, when my sister was ill, I also was in the United States, and I saw her through to the end. It was very wonderful for me, that although she had not appreciated my being in Iran, she and her husband had come to see me in Iran, visited Iran, back in 1952, and they were very interested and very impressed. Then after her husband died, she came out for a year and taught in Iran Bethel. On her deathbed, one afternoon when a friend was taking care of her so I could get a little rest,

the friend came in and woke me and said, "Your sister wants to see you. She said she needs to see you." So I went in to see what she wanted, and she said, "Tell everyone I think the work that you're doing is the most wonderful work in the world for bringing peace on earth." And she kept repeating, "Tell everybody that, that it's the most wonderful work for bringing about peace in the world." That was very wonderful.

BN: It is wonderful.

JD: Yes, it really was.

BN: My experience with the church in Iran shows that, in general, the church of Iran was withdrawn from society. The church was not active in social affairs of the society. But, I know that a lot of graduates from your school were socially active and working in high positions. Why was that?

JD: I don't know. Of course, we tried to train them along those lines. We tried to have them have Christian ideals, and I think a great many of them do have. They always said that we didn't train them to fit into Iranian society. They felt that they -- I mean, even when they didn't become Christian, they felt that they had become so different, that they didn't fit into the present society any more. I don't know how many of the girls have told me that.

BN: But was it because of the standard of education that you were offering them, opening a new horizon to them, to be active in social life?

JD: I think probably, yes.

BN: I mean, why couldn't other schools do that?

JD: Because they didn't have the ideals that we had. The other schools were just teaching. We were trying to develop the girls, the

women, of Iran.

BN: How much do you think that you have achieved your goal?

JD: Well, of course, as to having Christians, very few. Very few that have come out as Christians. It involves too much for them. But, as to their having Christian ideals, I think a great many of them have them, and a great of them have said, "We almost became Christian." But of course it's very difficult for a Moslem to give up his faith. Look at Dr. Nayereh Samii: look at all she has done. She is full of Christian ideals, and yet she is a strong Moslem. Then there's Esmat Mohimani: you may not know her. She has been in this country for over twenty years. Her husband is a veterinarian. He left Iran because he didn't like the conditions there, and he came here. They live in Columbus, Ohio. She got her Ph.D. and she's been teaching in the public schools of Columbus, Ohio. She's full of Christian ideals, but she claims she's a Moslem. And there are plenty others like them. One girl I think of -- as I said, back in 1921, there were very few Moslem girls in the school; they were mostly Armenians. But in one of the upper grades, there were two outstanding Moslems whom we thought about and prayed about a great deal, but they never became Christians. After over fifty years, when there were so many Americans in the American community church in Teheran, I went to one of the meetings of their women's association, and I saw one of these girls there. I was surprised to see her, and I welcomed her, of course. They'd asked me to speak that day on the work that I'd been doing in Iran. I went again, after a month or so, and she was there again. Finally I said, "Well, what are you doing here?" She said one of the American ladies had invited

her, and so she'd come. Later when I talked to her, she said, "Well, you know all those things that you taught us over fifty years ago, I've never been able to forget. And," she said, "I am a Christian, I want to be a Christian." And she started coming to our church on Pahlavi [Avenue] and came very regularly. Her husband is a staunch Moslem, and to begin with, she was afraid to tell him. But she brought him to church a couple times. She's had to be very careful with him, because he is a fanatical, but he's gradually softening. She didn't join the church because she couldn't, because of his attitude. She's now in Europe, and she goes to church very regularly, and she says her husband is really softening up, and she's so pleased with that. My hope and prayer is that a great many girls like that, although they never did come out and stand up for Christ, yet in their hearts they are Christians, and they're trying to live a Christian life. This girl gave very good sums to the church there on Pahlavi [Avenue]; very keen.

BN: How many years did you serve in the school?

JD: Well, I was in the school from 1921 to 1966. I should have retired in 1964. We're supposed to retire at the age of sixty-five. But there was nobody else to take over the school, and of course, you realize that the school was closed. I mean, we had all those headaches. Every time I came to America, something happened and when I came back, the school was being closed. Back in 1932 when I returned to Iran, I was greeted by the fact that the primary schools were all taken over by the government. We couldn't have primary schools any more. So that gave us a chance to develop the middle school more, which we did. Then in 1939 when I returned

when I got to Baghdad, I had word to proceed as quickly as possible and not to bring the short-term teacher that I was bringing with me; to leave her. They didn't tell me what was what, until finally I got to Kermanshah, and there they told me that all the schools with foreign heads were being taken over. We managed to keep the school going until 1940, but it was in 1939 that the Minister of Education gave that rule, because, as I understand it, Reza Shah did not want foreign influence for his children. So Dr. Jordan and I and others worked on the problem. As soon as I got back, we started working to see what we could do. We should have closed in September 1939, and the embassy in Washington told us that we must close if we wanted to ever get anything out of our schools, our property and all: that we should close immediately. So the Board of Foreign Missions sent a commission out of three men. They thought that they would end it up with the Minister of Education in a few weeks, which of course they didn't; being Iran, it takes time. They were there the whole year and didn't get anywhere, except that they took over our schools. In 1940, the schools were closed down. At that time, all the missionary educationists left, because there was nothing doing. But I thought I had been in Iran long enough so that there would still be something for me to do there, so I stayed on, and moved away from the compound, because I had been living in our Sage College compound; because we were developing a women's college at that time. We had this one compound which belonged to Sage College. I had to move from there, and I moved out to Lalezar I started having classes then, with former students and their friends. I had them very informal, and only two or three times

a week, so that the Minister of Education wouldn't put me out. That was during the war years, of course, but these classes developed until -- Then, when I came home in 1946, I'd been running this illegal school for some years -- [chuckles]

BN: Or, informal.

JD: Yes, informal. Akhtar Azadegan was my helper, and I told her to keep going with these classes, no matter what, because I realized that some of the missionaries were not sold to the school, and they probably would close it. We were living in rented property -- I used my own home as the place for classes. So Akhtar Azadegan kept the classes going, and with the help of the missionary women, the work did go on for the two years that I was home. I was home for two years instead of one, because of my mother's illness. At that time, the Board in New York was convinced, somehow or other, that the Iran Bethel -- known as the Doolittle project -- was really doing something, so they gave us the money they had realized on the Sage College property, to develop another school. So when I got back in 1948, Akhtar Khanom had been looking for possible properties, and she had rented a place that I could live and also have the classes there. We had classes by that time not just three times a week, it was five days a week, and from morning until noon. She had rented a temporary place that we worked in, and by that winter, December, we had found the property there on Khiaban Diba and bought it with this money that the Board had given to us, which was very nice. And we carried on there, and it was a regular school. Of course, the Ministry of Education got word of it, and they sent after me to know what was what. I said, "Well,

I'm just having classes." He said, "You're not having classes; you've got a school there." [laughs] I said, "Yes, I had a school." But they gave me a permit for it. I had a regular permit for that school. Then, as you know, it grew, and when it was time for me to retire, we needed somebody to take over. They brought Miss Gray from Beirut and she developed it into a college, Damavand College. You saw their beautiful building up in the mountains, did you?

BN: Oh yes, I did.

JD: And that, of course, left there now. Nothing happening; all closed.

BN: Is it closed now?

JD: Yes. All higher education institutions were closed, and most of them have not opened. All that big property and that tremendous building, and everything: just standing there.

BN: Miss Doolittle: you served the school for forty-five years. Were there moments or periods that you felt sorry for what you had undertaken? Or disappointed?

JD: No, I was never sorry for what I had undertaken. I was sad that I haven't won more people to Christ. But I never regretted going into that work.

BN: Were you ever disappointed in what you were doing?

JD: No, I don't think so.

BN: That's a great spirit. [pauses] Who gave you the most support for the work?

JD: You mean mental support? I wouldn't know. I can't think of any individual person. Of course, Mrs. Boyce was always very busy with educational work; and Dr. Jordan and Mrs. Jordan: they were always a help, inspiration. But as to real backing, I think

I had just the Lord for my backing.

BN: Miss Doolittle, please tell me about the social changes in Iran. It's so interesting to hear it from -- At that time, a foreigner; but I will call you 'native,' now -- at that time, as you were observing the changes in the social life of people, the social status of the people, in the politics of the country.

JD: Well, of course, it was wonderful seeing the women being allowed to do things that they'd never been able to do before. And it was wonderful to see them having a social life with their husbands and other people's husbands and wives. It really was wonderful. Of course, it was very hard on them to begin with. They had to be forced to go to these parties. The Shah commanded they should have parties and they should bring their wives. It was very difficult for the women, but it was wonderful the way they came out. The Iranian women, I think, are very adaptable and very wonderful. As you know, you couldn't find any more chic people anyplace than those in Iran. [chuckles] They always were in the front line.

BN: Well, of course, they were the people who were better off.

JD: Yes.

BN: What do you think brought this change in Iran? This revolution?

JD: Well, it seemed to be the people's dislike of the Shah. They felt they were being mistreated; whereas, when you look at history, they weren't being mistreated, the lower classes. They were all the time being given rights that they never had before. It's amazing to me that so many of them felt the way they did.

BN: But could that be the only reason, do you think, to bring in this kind of revolution, and just get a symbol like Khomeini to come to the country, to power?

JD: It really was amazing how he came in there.

BN: And can you believe the same people now are behaving differently?

JD: Yes. Well, they expected too much. [pauses] I think perhaps the movies and radio and television and all those things: they had something to do with it, because the people's eyes were opened. When I first went there, all of them, their eyes were shut. They knew nothing but what they saw in Iran. Now they know everything that's going on in the rest of the world, which they didn't used to know. I think that's made a big difference.

BN: But a revolution normally tries to move a step forward.

JD: Yes. They're going backwards all the time, but I think they think they're going forward. We don't think so, but they do, or they did. I think they're beginning to realize now -- a great many of them --

BN: Do you have any contact with your ex-students?

JD: Oh yes. I keep up with a good many of them. Of course, there are a lot of them here; there are a lot of them in Europe. The people here and in Europe can write more freely; those in Iran can't write too freely, and can't tell me much. But I keep up with them, yes.

BN: Would you be willing to go back to Iran again?

JD: Yes, if it was ever possible.

[interview interrupted]

-- in September of '79. I just came out with a suitcase; I expected to be going back in the spring, and as I kept hearing conditions there, I kept writing to friends and asking them if it was wise for me to return. They never answered my questions. Then we expected to go back in March of 1980, and Gertrude kept

fussing as to why I didn't get our tickets, for us to set forth. I said I didn't know, but something told me that we shouldn't. But I was sure that before Norooz, I would know what we should do. So we just kept coasting along. Then on March nineteenth, two days before Norooz, I had a cabled telephone call from Iran saying that I was on the black list as a spy, and it would be very dangerous for me to return then, if ever. So that was the answer.

BN: Could you believe it, calling you a spy after all these years of services? [both chuckle]

JD: Well, they call everybody a spy, don't they? Look at all the good people they've executed, for nothing.

BN: How much of your time was actually the school taking?

JD: Of course, when I was in the school, it took all my time. I was with the classes, and then with the calling, seeing the girls and so forth.

BN: What were you doing since you retired?

JD: Of course, I left the school in 1966, and during the last few years, I had developed a clinic for the poor people. From 1940 to '46, when I was trying to find how to be useful to Iran, besides having classes for former students and their friends, I got to know the people in the poor quarters, because we lived just off Lalehzar. And we lived over an opium den. At that time, that good black woman was serving with us, and she knew I was looking for things to do. One day she came in, and she said, "There's a little boy who's sitting outside here who is weeping his eyes out because he can't go to school, because he doesn't have the clothes or the money for going to school," and couldn't

I do something about it. So I went with that little boy to his Carvansara where he was living, and from that, all the work that I have done for the last years started. I went to that Carvansara, which is a big place with about forty houses around this central garden, which had one filthy pool for the water for the whole forty houses, and so on. Of course, when I got acquainted with the people there, then they introduced me to their friends in other Carvansaras or similar places, and I started meeting first with the children. I had a Friday school for them. These little boys and girls came to my home; I had classes for them in the morning on Friday. Then I decided that just working with the children was no good: I should get acquainted with their mothers. So I invited their mothers, and they came to my house on Wednesdays, Wednesday afternoon, and they sat on the floor in my living room and had tea and so forth. I taught them something about sewing, knitting, and spinning, what-have-you. And hygiene: trying to get them to have better homes and so on. That started in 1940, '41. At that time, our American hospital was running, and I sent the sick people there. But then the American hospital was closed, so I didn't know what to do with these sick people. Dr. Varjavand took them on for a while, but that was not right to him. Oh, before him, I sent them to the government hospitals, and I found that they never improved at all. They just kept on being sick. So then I got Dr. Varjavand to take them on. Then, one of our Sage College graduates, Soghra Azami who had become a doctor, was willing to give me one afternoon a week to have a clinic. So I started having a small clinic. By that time,

we had bought the property on Khyaban Diba, just off Saadi. We had bought that with the money we had realized on the Sage College property which the Board gave us. So we had more space; before that, we didn't have any space to have our clinic. We had space and facilities, so we opened a clinic there with Dr. Azami and a nurse and a druggist, and we had two or three patients, and we kept that on for some time, one afternoon a week. That came out of the meeting that I had on Wednesday afternoons, and we had it on Wednesday, again, because the women were used to coming on Wednesday. So they went there instead of going to the doctor. That gradually developed. Also, we developed a program we had developed before, before we got That Property. We had gotten supplies from the Red Cross and so forth for children: milk and vitamins and things like that, they had given to us and we were dispensing. So that developed more. Gradually, this clinic developed so by 1966, when I left the place, we had over ten thousand women on our rolls. That had been coming, and were coming. They were getting the dried milk which the government supplied, and we had a drugstore as well as a doctor. As it expanded, we needed more doctors; we took on another doctor. Then, in May, 1966, that was closed, because my successor didn't want that kind of work. So we told all these poor women that the clinic was closed and finished. One of my reasons for having the clinic there, at the school, was to get the students -- that is, the wealthy classes -- acquainted with the poor and their needs, and they had gotten quite interested in it. So when it was commanded that the clinic would be closed, the alumnae took over, and they raised money and bought a property