

Errol and Delphine Francis

Uganda Collection Oral History Project: Departure

Errol Francis: “Three airlines came in from Canada—Air Canada, Pacific Western Airlines from Alberta, and CP Air [Canadian Pacific Air Lines]. So we left, we got on the plane in Entebbe with a lot of tension because until you are out of the airspace they can call the plane back, right? And these guys were crazy.”

Delphine Francis: “And they did check us. I know for myself, I had long hair and it was a big huge bun, but they made me take it out just to check if I had put any gold or any stuff in there so that was checked. They checked me inside out because although I was pregnant, there were no guarantees that I was not hiding—I think they were concerned about cash, paper money, and the jewelry, gold in particular.”

Errol: “Foreign currency, local currency meant nothing. Anyway, that was a big issue. The other thing was, people in the airline business—and I was in the business at the time—in those days, they had what was called an MCO, a Miscellaneous Charges Order. For example, let’s say you came to me and said, “I’m going to London,” and I’ve issued you your tickets, but from London you want to go to Zurich or somewhere in Europe or you’re not sure yet, and you don’t want to carry money with you, I could issue you a voucher, that’s what they called it, an MCO. It was like a voucher worth x amount of pounds or dollars or whatever, so then you could go to a travel agent in England and say, “Oh, I want to buy a ticket to Zurich and I’m going to pay you with this voucher.” What happened was—Asians are smart, they figured this was a way to get their money out. They started going to the airline people saying, “I need a voucher for ten thousand, twenty thousand.” Then the government caught onto that so they started going after airline people, that’s why I had a soldier come up to our office and stuff like that. That was an issue that came up so they were looking for this at the airport, these are the other things they were looking for. So we had nothing—we had two suitcases and that’s it. We said, “That’s all we have,” and that’s what we left with, with two suitcases when we arrived in Montreal.”