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DIPLOMACY AT WORK



Shawn Dorman, EDITOR

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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President's Views

The Fundamental Question about Overseas Comparability Pay

By Susan R. Johnson

By the time this column appears, Congress will have either passed another continuing resolution for Fiscal Year 2011, shut down the government, or agreed on a budget that may impose a nearly 25-percent pay cut on our Foreign Service personnel serving abroad by abolishing overseas comparability pay.

How should we look at such a pay cut, should it materialize? At one level, this measure, however miniscule its effect on federal spending, and however severe its impact on the affected individuals, will be justified as part of the effort to reduce the massive budget deficit. But on another level, which should not escape the attention of lawmakers, the measure will have grave implications for the Foreign Service as an institution, as well as for our national security.

The fundamental question is this: What impact will such a measure have on the Foreign Service? Will the institution be able to attract and retain the strong, professional and dynamic corps of diplomats and development experts that we need to serve our national interests in the future? There should be little doubt that this measure will instead emaciate the spirit of this vital institution.

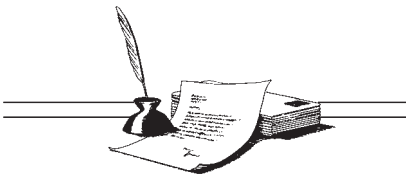
Effective diplomacy averts the need for costly military engagement, potentially saving taxpayers billions of dollars. Unless we dismiss this proposition as mere academic musing, does it make sense to cut the pay of the diplomats and development experts who are taking on tough, risky assignments all over the world, from Mexico to Egypt and Pakistan, from Sudan to Zimbabwe, and side by side with our military in Iraq and Afghanistan? A pay cut on this scale will depress the morale of Foreign Service personnel serving abroad even if they are primarily motivated by altruistic considerations ranging from patriotism to a deep interest in foreign affairs.

In 1990, Congress passed the Federal Comparability Pay Act (5 U.S.C. 5304(c) (4) (B). As a consequence of this legislation, the Foreign Service pay system diverged into two separate structures — one for those serving in the United States which includes locality pay; another for those assigned abroad, which does not. Since 1990, the Washington, D.C., locality rate has grown to nearly 25 percent. A 2006 Government Accountability Office study confirmed that the steadily increasing domestic locality pay rates had created a growing financial disincentive for overseas service. AFSA's efforts to draw attention to this gap led to hard-won congressional approval for overseas comparability pay, starting in 2009.

Some argue that housing and allowances compensate for comparability pay, but that is a different issue. Allowances and differentials are marginal and temporary, and are not included in base pay, which determines pension benefits through a combination of a fixed annuity, Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan. Discontinuation of OCP will reduce base pay and therefore both individual and federal levels of contributions to Social Security and TSP. Thus, the penalty for overseas service is both immediate lost income and lower overall retirement benefits.

The remedy is for Congress to authorize federal employees who serve overseas to receive salaries that include Washington, D.C., locality pay as the basis for calculating taxes and retirement income, thereby restoring a single, basic Foreign Service compensation system. What types and levels of allowances and benefits are then justified and affordable after basic salaries are regularized is a legitimate question, but one that should be examined separately through the authorization process.

Certainly we must all do our part to reduce the national deficit. But pulling the plug on the longstanding effort to remove the growing salary disincentive to overseas service will degrade the U.S. government civilian service as a key instrument of national power — one that promotes our interests abroad and functions as our first line of defense. ■



Letters

The Nepotism Syndrome

The many positive aspects of family employment abroad have been eloquently and effectively described. Now that the program has been fully institutionalized, perhaps this is an appropriate time to consider its potentially negative impact on operations. The operative word is *potentially*; the active, unmentioned word is *nepotism*, as insidious as it is pervasive.

I do not in any way intend to undermine the important and beneficial contributions of family member employment programs, of course. My sole objective is to raise awareness of the damage nepotism can cause. Many respected organizations enforce strict rules against nepotism, because it can be so disruptive to morale and efficiency.

Consider the possibly corrosive effects when the Employee Evaluation Report for the number-three in the visa section, who happens to be the spouse or partner of the deputy chief of mission, is written by the consul — whose own efficiency report is written by the DCM. Any analogous situation will generate similar but not necessarily insurmountable obstacles to effective communication, and operations.

Many day-to-day relations can be affected. Other employees, including superiors, may not interact with a connected colleague in the same manner as with someone lacking a relationship. It may not always make a difference, but inhibitions will be in effect much of the time and with most people. This can be the case even if favored individuals are unaware of the treatment, or make conscious efforts to avoid it.

I still recall a summer, part-time temporary visa assistant position in Baghdad when I was chief of mission there. Two visiting college-age dependents, one of them my daughter, shared the job. At dinner shortly after her stint began, I brought up the likelihood of special treatment.

She flatly rejected the entire concept, insisting that she was treated exactly like the Foreign Service Nationals, even getting the same food for 'lunch' (served and eaten at desks, since the embassy worked straight through the day and closed mid-afternoon). A protracted, highly instructive silence followed my asking her how much it cost.

Speaking truth to power is often viewed as dangerous, whether that power results from a rank or a relationship. It is not always easy to perceive or control, but many people will behave deferentially to those seen as able to affect their lives — or jobs.

A staff meeting in the ambassador's residence in Algiers was interrupted by the ambassador's spouse, who angrily declared that a coffee with other embassy wives had been organized so they could complain about poor general services office support from the embassy. She reported that she had cut them off with the following statement: "That is absolute nonsense. Every single thing that I ask to have done is taken care of the very next day."

As the Foreign Service moves into increased, welcome and productive opportunities for spousal employment, there may be some benefit to the nation, and to those working to advance its interests, from increased sensitivity to its potential downside.

Edward L. Peck
Ambassador, retired
Chevy Chase, Md.

Increase Allowances, Not Locality Pay

The implementation of locality pay for Foreign Service employees serving in the United States was a real mistake. All FS salaries used to be based on living in Washington, D.C. At that time, cost-of-living allowances were based on data from other areas with higher costs of living than Washington. (Somewhere through the years this distinction was lost.)

However, base pay never kept up with economic changes in Washington, D.C., so employees didn't want to be assigned there. Locality pay was then added as an incentive for a Washington assignment.

When this was all forgotten, and employees didn't want to go overseas (even though this *is* the *Foreign* Serv-

ice), the Washington, D.C., locality allowance was given to FS employees everywhere — with additional cost-of-living, hardship allowances and danger pay added on top.

To keep Congress and others from viewing the pay situation as strangely skewed, it would seem to be a better idea to readjust base pay and add allowances in other areas as needed.

Judy Chidester
FSO, retired
Las Cruces, N.M.

Mastering the Diplomatic Chessboard

The recent release of the American Academy of Diplomacy's long-awaited report on professional diplomatic education and training has focused renewed attention on that critical issue.

For my part, I would note that whether a chief of mission is accredited to a foreign government or to an international organization, he or she must master the complex three-dimensional chessboard at the heart of modern statecraft. Successful "grandmasters" are not born, however, but forged by education, training and experience. A critical stage in this process occurs in mid-career, when a diplomat has enough experience to know the challenges leaders face but remains open to new ways of meeting them.

With that in mind, the State Department and Foreign Service ought to adapt the model of the U.S. Army Fellows program, which allows experienced colonels to do their mid-career training at major universities. That setting encourages Army Fellows to think outside the box in ways that a year at the War College would not.

Fellows are placed at universities all over the Unted States, enabling them to escape the tyranny of the Beltway. There they can mentor future practitioners whom they encounter on campus, and have their own assumptions challenged by those same students.

Army Fellows also benefit from exposure to senior academics and practitioners who can help them step back from the operational grind to think through the best examples of statecraft available from theory and history. And they undertake original research on a topic of real-world significance to American statecraft, leading to a peer-reviewed article for publication.

Whether or not participants receive an advanced degree, they come away with experience that prepares them to be effective general officers. A similar program would help mid-career American diplomats prepare for future assignments in leadership positions.

Larry C. Napper
Ambassador, retired, and Senior Lecturer
George Bush School of Government and Public Service
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Contacts for a Lifetime

I commend Joanne Grady Huskey for her article about the International Visitor Leadership program in the March *Journal* ("Changing Hearts and Minds"). She rightly spotlights one of the most useful and productive tools available for cultivating close personal relations with current and future leaders.

Throughout my 25 years abroad as an FSO, I was constantly on the lookout for candidates for the program who appeared likely to ascend to top leadership positions. While serving in Vienna from 1962 to 1967, for instance, I was the embassy political officer responsible for contacts with the Austrian Socialist Party.

In the process of widening my circle of acquaintances, I met Fred Sinowatz, party secretary for Burgenland province, Leopold Gratz, secretary of the Socialist faction of Parliament, and Heinz Fischer, his assistant. I managed to get IVP grants for each in time.

Some 20 years later, in 1984, I had occasion to revisit Vienna. Sinowatz was now head of government (chancellor), Gratz was foreign minister, and Fischer was science minister. Each one graciously made time for me in the midst of their busy schedules to renew our friendships.

Two decades later, in 2004, Fischer was elected president of Austria and re-elected for a second six-year term last year. Also last year, he was prominently featured on a program celebrating the 60th anniversary of the IVP program in Austria.

When our ambassador met the new president in 2004, Fischer said he had never forgotten his visit to the U.S. 40 years before — nor all those who had made it possible.

Jack Sulser
FSO, retired
Alexandria, Va.

Mea Culpa

Call me chagrined and thankful that at least one *FSJ* reader is better at fact-checking than I am. Concentrating on the functional issue in my review of Philip Oldenberg's recent book, *India, Pakistan and Democracy: Solving the Mystery of Divergent Paths*, I carelessly credited Mohammed Ali Jinnah with a presidency I knew he never occupied.

However, the vital point I was making about the consequences of Jinnah's choosing to become governor general

of post-independence Pakistan stands. By placing himself loftily above the give-and-take of parliamentary democracy, Jinnah launched Pakistan on a very different trajectory from that of India, where Jawaharlal Nehru lent his personal prestige to institutionalizing the electoral process and the role of Parliament. The results, as Oldenberg so convincingly demonstrates, still resonate loudly today.

Thank you for continuing to turn out a terrific magazine.

Patricia Sharpe
FSO, retired
Santa Fe, N.M.

Potato, Potahto …

I enjoyed Virginia Young's recent Reflections column about her experience in Mexico following the 1984 Grenada invasion ("The Russians Are Coming," February). As an FSO stationed in Moscow at the time, I'd like to add my own vignette on the subject.

After the invasion, it was widely reported that U.S. forces had not been equipped with good maps. We were apparently not the only ones with that problem, however. The evening after our invasion, the Soviet evening news anchor intoned a long statement of condemnation. As he read it, the TV screen showed a map of Spain, with an arrow pointing to the province of Granada.

Neil Silver
FSO, retired
McLean, Va. ■

CORRECTION

Due to a production error, the March Table of Contents did not credit Joanne Grady Huskey as the author of the feature article titled "Changing Hearts and Minds." We regret the error.

CYBERNOTES

France's Diplomatic Corps Speaks Out

Growing criticism of France's foreign policy in the wake of the recent uprisings in North Africa has prompted a group of anonymous French career diplomats, active-duty and retired, to respond. In a Feb. 22 opinion piece in *Le Monde* (**www.lemonde.fr**), the group, which calls itself "Marly," analyzes the failings of the country's diplomacy and argues for more professionalism, experience and consistency.

The anonymous diplomats declare that "France's voice has disappeared from the world" due to poor decisions made at Élysée Palace (the presidential residence), not Quai d'Orsay (where the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is located). For example, they assert that President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to view Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Tunisian President Zine al-Abedine Ben Ali as "southern pillars" was made without taking into account the analyses from French embassies. Their letter continues that a French WikiLeaks would show that those diplomats, like their American colleagues, produced reporting that was critical of these regimes.

The group goes on to identify four main problems that have led to poor foreign policy decisions: impulsivity, amateurism, preoccupation with media attention and a lack of consistency, particularly regarding the Middle East and North Africa.

'Marly' sharply rebukes Pres. Sarkozy for basing his decisions on short-sighted domestic politics instead of forming and maintaining a clear, consistent foreign policy. In their public letter, France's career diplomats call for a return to a foreign policy that once again relies upon values of solidarity, democracy and cultural respect. Their message is simple: Professional diplomacy is not the cause of Paris's problems, but the solution.

— Danielle Derbes, Editorial Intern

> I know there have been times where perhaps the United States took this region for granted. [But since then] virtually all the people of Latin America have gone from living under dictatorships to living in democracies. This is the outstanding progress that's been made here in the Americas. … It's important for us to learn from our history, to understand our history, but not be trapped by it — because we've got a lot of challenges now and, even more importantly, we have challenges in the future that we have to attend to.
>
> — President Barack Obama, speaking at a joint press conference with Chilean President Sebastian Pinera in Santiago on March 21, *www.santiagotimes.cl*.

BBC and State to Team Up?

Writing in the March 20 edition of *The Guardian* (**www.guardian.co.uk**) Ben Dowell reports that the British Broadcasting Corporation's renowned World Service plans to sign an agreement with the U.S. Department of State to receive a "significant" but undisclosed sum to help combat censorship of BBC television and Internet services in various countries, including Iran and China. Dowell speculates that the U.S. government has decided the reach of the World Service makes such an investment worthwhile.

In what is believed to be the first deal of its kind, State Department money and technical assistance would enable the World Service (**www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice**) to invest in developing anti-jamming technology and software. The grant, understood to be in the low six-figures, is also expected to be used to educate people in countries with state censorship in how to circumnavigate the blocking of Internet and TV services.

The deal, which is expected to be formally announced on International Press Freedom Day, May 3, follows an increase in incidents of interference with World Service output across the

globe, according to its controller of strategy and business, Jim Egan.

For instance, BBC Persian television, which launched in early 2009 and airs in Iran and elsewhere, has experienced numerous instances of jamming. The BBC Arabic TV news service has also been jammed recently across various parts of North Africa during the recent uprisings in Egypt and Libya.

"Governments who have an interest in denying people information, particularly at times of tension and upheaval, are keen to do this, and it is a particular problem now," says Egan.

Another area in which the BBC World Service is expected to use the U.S. money is to develop early-warning software so it can detect jamming sooner than it currently does, relying on reports from users on the ground.

Finally, the BBC plans to use the funds to combat Internet censorship, establishing proxy servers that give the impression a computer located in one country is, in fact, operating in another location, thereby foiling attempts by repressive governments to block Web sites. Observes Egan, "China has become quite expert at blocking Web sites, and one could say it has become something of an export industry for them — a lot of countries are keen to follow suit."

Dowell notes that the battle against jamming is likely to be an ongoing one, as repressive regimes develop methods to counter anti-censorship technology. "It is a bit of a game of cat and mouse," a BBC source tells Dowell.

The agreement comes at a propitious time for the BBC, whose World Service faces a 16-percent cut in its annual grant from the British Foreign Office, which would lead to elimination of some 650 jobs. (The World Service currently receives 236.7 million pounds, approximately $380 million, allocated through a three-year budget.) The U.S. funds will be channeled through the World Service's charitable arm, the World Service Trust.

— *Steven Alan Honley, Editor*

More than Drugs and Thugs

The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs recently released its 2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, covering calendar year 2010. While the primary function of this annual report, mandated by the Foreign Assistance Act, is to apprise Congress of the efforts (or lack thereof) of different countries to combat the global narcotics trade, its scope is considerably broader.

The 2011 INCSR (**www.state.gov/**)

50 Years Ago…

Diplomacy is always going to consist to some extent of serving people who do not know that they are being served, who do not know that they need to be served, who misunderstand and, occasionally, abuse the very effort to serve them. … Let us take special pride in the fact that we of this profession serve not because of, but in spite of, many of the popular attitudes by which our work is surrounded. It takes a special love of country to pursue, with love and faith, and cheerfulness, work for which no parades will ever march, no crowds will cheer, no bands will play.

— George F. Kennan, "Diplomacy as a Profession," adapted from his March 31, 1961, speech to AFSA; *FSJ*, May 1961.

is more than 700 pages long, divided into two volumes. The first painstakingly analyzes the drug and chemical control activities of 121 countries and jurisdictions, while the second volume examines money laundering and terrorist financing in 62 countries.

After laying out the individual threat in each country and putting the country's situation in the context of the global threat, the report examines the host government's drug control policy and analyzes the impact of its efforts to combat the threat, in relation to those of the United States and the international community.

This year's report identifies 20 countries as major producers or transit points, and singles out three — Burma, Bolivia and Venezuela — for having "failed demonstrably" to fight the drug trade.

The INCSR's extensive, up-to-date research and detailed analysis of worldwide counternarcotics and anti-money laundering efforts make it an invaluable resource on transnational threats and organized crime. ■

— Danielle Derbes, Editorial Intern

Site of the Month: http://iPatt.uky.edu

The University of Kentucky's Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce has launched an 18-month trial to assess the value of Apple's iPad in supporting professional graduate education. The goal is to integrate the device fully into the school's master's program, transforming the student learning experience, enhancing overall school operations, and preparing graduates to advance diplomacy and international business in the digital age.

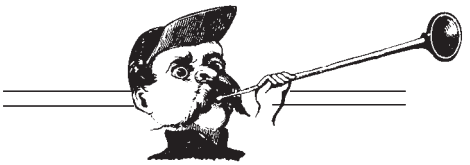
"With Facebook and Twitter empowering opposition movements in Iran and Tunisia, and the U.S. drawing a line in the cybersand in defense of Internet freedom, effective statecraft today demands mastery of new communication tools. 21st-century diplomacy increasingly has a digital and high-tech edge — diplomatic training must, too," says retired Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh, director of the Patterson School. He adds that this is the first time an entire professional school — faculty, students and staff — is using the device, with support provided by Apple, application developers, media companies and hardware providers.

Those interested in following the progress of the experiment can visit a dedicated blog at *http://iPatt.uky.edu*. This site provides frequent updates about the trial, as well as regular postings and reports from students and faculty on their insights and experiences.

With the iPad's Internet connectivity and constantly expanding world of apps, students should be able to configure the device to accommodate their unique academic interests and needs. Those may range from monitoring the global press and maintaining foreign language skills to analyzing trade data, tapping geospatial mapping or manipulating the latest econometric model.

If the device successfully supports and enhances the operation of an entire graduate school of international affairs, transforming the learning experience, the same may hold true for other professional graduate schools (business and law, for example) and academic centers.

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor



Speaking Out

Building Professional Skills

By William P. Schofield

Early in his presidency, Thomas Jefferson supposedly remarked that if he didn't hear soon from the American minister to France, he would need to write him a letter. Despite the profound changes during the 200 years since Mr. Jefferson wondered about events in Europe, what he expected from his representative in Paris does not differ that much from what is required of today's diplomats.

In their excellent book, *Career Diplomacy: Life and Work in the U.S. Foreign Service* (a second edition of which is about to be released), former Foreign Service officer Harry Kopp and the late Ambassador Charles Gillespie summarize the State Department's recent efforts to determine what skills and abilities its work force needs to acquire to meet the challenges of the future (e.g., operational leadership and program management).

Back in 2006, I took part in an exercise State conducted as part of that study. The purpose was to identify what skills diplomats would need to respond to various global scenarios.

Other participants included several active-duty and retired FSOs, some of whom had recently served in Afghanistan or Iraq, either on Provincial Reconstruction Teams or similar organizations. Some of these colleagues advocated moving from the traditional model to a more expeditionary Foreign Service, presumably to respond quickly to deteriorating conditions in failed states, post-conflict situations or states in transition.

The State Department should consider having generalists move primarily between assignments in one or two regions, or between one region and a functional field.

There is little doubt that Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflict zones will continue to generate new demands on the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies. However, the basic tasks of diplomacy have not changed, and they continue to constitute the bulk of the work Foreign Service personnel perform wherever they are stationed.

What *will* change are the environments in which FSOs serve and the relative importance of the skills required of them. So we must continue to strengthen our core skills to meet the traditional demands of diplomacy, while ensuring that we do not forget the lessons learned in non-traditional environments.

An Afghan Case Study

Near the end of my final Foreign Service assignment in Kabul, which ended in 2005, an FSO assigned to the Herat Provincial Reconstruction Team in western Afghanistan, near the Iranian border, alerted me to a problem. A group of about 200 Hazaras, an ethnic and religious minority in Afghanistan, had returned to the area after spending a couple of years as refugees in Iran. When an Afghan strongman forcibly prevented them from reclaiming their properties, the local government not only refused to assist them, but blocked their access to the judicial system.

Resolving the Hazaras' problem would require a court decision on ownership of the land, along with action by the police to force the gunmen to back off. We saw an opportunity to advance multiple objectives by helping the group seek justice.

First, our intervention would send an encouraging signal to other Afghan refugees who were flooding back into the country and also being prevented from returning to their former homes. In some cases, local authorities were either complicit or ineffective in solving the problem. With nowhere to go, many of the refugees flocked to already-overcrowded cities, aggravating serious housing problems.

Helping to resolve the dispute would also strengthen the rule of law

and the authority of the central government. Disputes over land ownership were common in Afghanistan because the legal code was a complicated overlay of statutes and practices from the time of the monarchy, the Soviet-backed government, the Taliban and the current government. If the statutes didn't address an issue, the court was supposed to reach a decision consistent with sharia, Islamic religious law. The government had established a special court to resolve land disputes, but it was barely functional.

The rule-of-law officer at the embassy, a representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and I met with the chief judge of the Land Court to explain the situation and seek his advice. He suggested that since the local authorities would not allow the matter to proceed, the Hazaras should come directly to his court.

My Foreign Service assignment ended shortly after that, so I don't know whether the matter was resolved. Rendering assistance to foreign nationals in a dispute with their own government, as opposed to helping American citizens abroad, was not typical work for most FSOs. However, in Afghanistan it was routine.

Not-So-Ancient History

In March 1972, I was a young Army officer reporting to my new unit after a year in Vietnam. The message to me and many other junior officers was clear: "Lose the firebase mentality. Forget Vietnam and counterinsurgency. Learn how to fight outnumbered and win on the plains of Europe."

We did, but the bitterness of the post-Vietnam years and the desire never to return to such a conflict relegated years of experience with counterinsurgency warfare to the dustbin.

Even in conflict zones, the basic tasks Foreign Service personnel perform remain unchanged.

A generation later, the Army had to painfully relearn the lessons of that earlier conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, as *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army*, a 2009 book by Gregg Jaffe and David Cloud (reviewed in the February 2010 *Foreign Service Journal*), recounts.

Those of us in the Foreign Service must also not forget what we have learned from past challenges. For instance, *Career Diplomacy* reminds us that the State Department conducted a substantial training program for FSOs headed to Vietnam, but had to scramble to put together something for those headed to Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, hundreds of Foreign Service members served in those countries before any training was even in place.

Over the past two decades the State Department has gained a good deal of experience in conflict, post-conflict and transition situations. These lessons must be retained and passed on to other FSOs.

Some of this is already under way. The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization leads a corps of specialists drawn from across the U.S. government (most from outside State) who can quickly deploy to countries experiencing or recovering from conflicts. There are plans for S/CRS to transition into a Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations, which would further institutionalize a capability to bring civilian skills to unstable areas.

Such developments are most welcome. But in the process, we must not lose focus on the primary responsibilities of diplomats, which have not changed. Foreign Service officers must explain the situation in a country or region to Washington policymakers and suggest actions to advance our national interests — and explain U.S. goals to the host government and individual members of the society.

They must also seek support for U.S. policies, deal with the media and public, and protect Americans abroad, among many other responsibilities. (Kopp and Gillespie examine these tasks in more detail, as does AFSA's book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*.)

Revamping the Assignment System

The primary strength individual Foreign Service generalists bring to the conduct of their duties is expertise in a country, region or multilateral institution, including language ability. The sheer number and breadth of technical and transnational issues also require FSOs to acquire knowledge in an expanding number of functional areas.

The State Department might therefore be well served by formalizing a system in which FSOs move between assignments in one or two regions, or between one region and a functional field, for the majority of their careers. This approach would enhance geographic and subject-matter expertise on, for example, multilateral affairs, scientific and environmental matters, eco-

nomics or political-military issues.

Many generalists already do this informally through their bids. Formalizing such a system, however, should lead to a better allocation of expertise.

The skills required of FSOs do not change with the environment in which they serve, though their relative importance may shift. Those attributes that the Employee Evaluation Report groups under leadership, interpersonal ability and managerial ability — essentially, how to get things done — are necessary in any assignment. However, they take on greater importance in dangerous and unstructured environments.

The ability to take the initiative, work independently, utilize specialized expertise, and deal cooperatively with other missions, international organizations, the military, and nongovernmental and private-sector organizations in non-traditional settings is critical. Indeed, it is precisely what allows FSOs to function effectively and capitalize on their strengths.

Maintaining traditional abilities and strengths, while applying the lessons learned in new environments and missions, will pay great dividends.

Maintaining traditional abilities and strengths, while applying the lessons learned in new environments and missions, will pay great dividends for the State Department. The same holds true for individual officers, who will be able to bring to bear their core strengths more effectively throughout their careers.

I think Mr. Jefferson would approve. ■

William P. Schofield is a retired Foreign Service officer. He served in Brazil, Jamaica, Slovakia and Afghanistan, as well in Washington, D.C.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

For the June 2008 *Foreign Service Journal*, which focused on the Foreign Service personnel system, then-AFSA President John Naland contributed a commentary that still offers a lot of food for thought. Titled "A Career Out of Balance," the piece warned that inadequate staffing, expanding commitments, insufficient budgets and poor management all threaten the Foreign Service's future. In particular, it noted "a growing feeling that, rhetoric to the contrary, the Foreign Service is becoming significantly less family-friendly."

Three years later, the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies have made some progress on those issues, though much more needs to be done. But the other reason I cite that article here is because of the way it focuses throughout not just on the "macro" (budgets, assignments, etc.) but on the "micro" — how those decisions from on high affect individual members of the Foreign Service and their families, and factor into their calculation of whether the tangible and intangible benefits of service are still worth the sacrifices required.

In that regard, the article concludes with the following prediction: "If some semblance of balance is not restored soon between the burdens and rewards of service, the future of the Foreign Service as we have known it will be in jeopardy. Hopefully, however, better days are coming that will bring increased resources and a brightening of the global operating environment. If so, the Foreign Service will remain an unbeatable career choice."

To help assess which way that pendulum is swinging, journalist Shawn Zeller, a regular contributor to the *Journal*, spoke with dozens of AFSA members, both on and off the record, about their experiences. The resulting snapshot of an institution very much in flux, "The Foreign Service Juggling Act" (p. 18), leads off our coverage. As you might expect, the picture is still murky, but there are grounds for optimism.

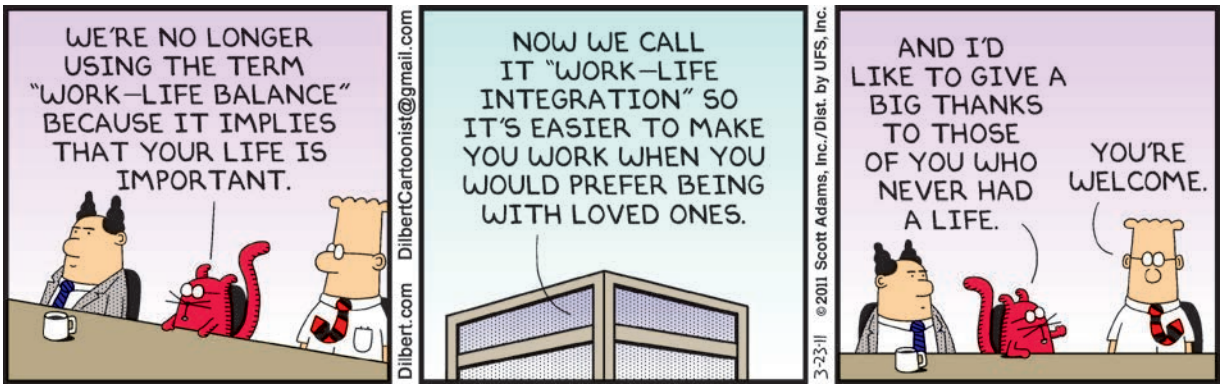
Yes, We Can!

Several of our contributors are convinced that it is possible to achieve balance between career and personal life. This is particularly true whenever management, whether overseas or back in Washington, does its part. Toward that end, Ambassador Charles Ray offers chiefs of mission and other leaders "A Win-Win Approach to Time Management" (p. 27).

As the title of her article, "Si, Se Puede" (p. 30), suggests, FS spouse Amanda Fernandez shares Amb. Ray's optimism. In it, she relates how her mission to check out her family's onward assignment took some unexpected twists and turns, but worked out even better than she had hoped.

While most of the contributions in this focus section address family matters, at least in part, it is important to remember that about a third of active-duty Foreign Service members are single. *FSJ* Associate Editor Shawn Dorman explores their unique concerns in "Going Solo: Single in the Foreign Service" (p. 33).

Steven Alan Honley was a Foreign Service officer from 1985 to 1997, serving in Mexico City, Wellington and Washington, D.C. He has been editor of the Foreign Service Journal *since 2001.*



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Our next two articles — "Forever Tandem" by Teresa Chin Jones (p. 37) and "Trailing Tandem" by Clayton Bond (p. 41) — represent the perspectives of FS tandem couples, a relatively small but growing contingent. At first glance, the two accounts might seem to contrast more than they compare; after all, the authors are from different generations, and one couple is same-sex while the other is more traditional (mother, father, children). But I think you'll find real similarities between the two, particularly in regard to the age-old question of what to do when one spouse or partner's career requires sacrifices on the other's part.

Problem-Solving, FS Style

The surge in the number of unaccompanied posts since 9/11 will not come as a surprise to any readers of this publication. But the impact of such long-term separation on employees and families still does not receive the attention it deserves, alas.

When it comes to overcoming the countless obstacles unaccompanied tours pose for family relationships, Jen Dinoia exemplifies the "can do" spirit of Foreign Service spouses and partners. But as she cautions in "Navigating Unexpected Realities" (p. 44), no matter how well you prepare or how hard you work at keeping ties strong, you can never anticipate all contingencies. All you can do is make the best of changing circumstances.

Keith Mines makes a similar point in "Staying Connected While Deployed" (p. 47). There is a natural tendency to trust that the Internet, Skype, videocams and other technological advances can somehow span the bounds of time and space, bringing Foreign Service families together over multiple time zones and thousands of miles. Yet as he explains in a droll account of his own experience, the challenges are great.

Victoria Hirschland, who is divorced from a Foreign Service officer, describes another type of separation that can be every bit as painful as an unaccompanied tour in "Sharing Custody, Diplomatically" (p. 50). As she notes, however, the good news is that always putting their children first, whatever that takes, has enabled each spouse to maintain strong ties with them.

Next, Elizabeth Power tackles a subject that some readers may find a bit delicate in "Work-Milk Balance: The State of Pumping" (p. 53). She urges State and other government agencies to adopt policies that empower breastfeeding mothers, and explains how to do so with positive results for "productivity."

Our focus section concludes with two articles that offer concrete suggestions for striking a balance between work and life in the Foreign Service. USAID FSO Taly Lind poses the question, "Can Technology Save the Foreign Service Family?" (p. 56) and draws on her own experience to answer it affirmatively. And Margot Carrington, the recipient of a 2010-2011 Una Chapman Cox Sabbatical Leave Fellowship to research innovative work-life policies, shares her findings in "Workplace Flexibility: What's In It for State?" (p. 60).

The issue's last word on the subject goes to 10-year-old Yasmin Ranz-Lind, whose father is currently finishing a yearlong unaccompanied assignment. She takes us through the pros and cons of such situations in her Reflections column, "A Dad in Iraq" (p. 84).

With all due respect to cartoonist Scott Adams, AFSA still sees "work-life balance" as a better goal for Foreign Service members than "work-life integration." We hope these testimonials from FS employees and family members will help all of you achieve better equilibrium between career and personal life. ■

The Foreign Service Juggling Act

Most FS employees willingly make personal sacrifices for their careers, but they would like more support from their agencies in return.

By Shawn Zeller

It would be an understatement to say that a career in the Foreign Service poses some challenges to a healthy work-life balance. One need only think back to the hectic evacuation of American diplomats from Egypt in February. Or consider the yearly exercise to find volunteers to leave their families behind to serve in Iraq or Afghanistan.

But ask Foreign Service employees about their own experiences, and surprisingly few mention the trials of serving

away from family in some of the world's most dangerous corners. Indeed, such service often inspires a sense of pride in serving their country where they are most needed.

When regrets do come up, Foreign Service employees tend to mention the more mundane ones: the long hours at the office; the cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents whom their children don't get to know; the career sacrifices that a spouse made to become part of the Foreign Service family.

Missed family dinners and outings may seem small in the grand scheme of things, but become important when they keep happening.

Regrets? I've Had a Few

Robert Griffiths, who raised three children with his wife during a 30-year Foreign Service career that has taken him to posts in Asia, Africa and Europe, remembers vividly the moments when his job took precedence over his family.

On one occasion, while serving in Beijing, he was the control officer for a large, high-ranking congressional delegation whose visit ended on a Saturday night. He remembers that he was especially glad to see them off because his daughter was ready to depart for college, and would make an important presentation at the family's church service the next morning.

Late that night, he got the bad news: The delegation had been unable to land at its next destination and had decided to return to Beijing. Could he make transportation, hotel and other arrangements for them, including a Sunday program? "Needless to say," Griffiths recalled. "I missed my daughter's presentation and a small but important piece of our family life."

Such regrets may seem small in the grand scheme of things, but become important when they occur time after time. There was the expensive concert Griffiths missed when a démarche was scheduled at the last minute. "My wife was not happy," he recalls. And, of course, there were the long hours. In Beijing, for instance, 12-hour workdays were the norm. "There were many times when I would not see my kids for several days."

Shawn Zeller, a regular contributor to the Journal, *is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.*

When the *Journal* asked members of the American Foreign Service Association for anecdotes about work-life balance in their jobs, similar stories were not hard to find. Let there be no doubt: Unaccompanied posts and dangerous assignments are tough, but over the course of a long career, it's the consistently long hours, the missed events with kids and spouses and the distance from extended family that cause the most strain.

That doesn't mean, though, that the regret outweighs the enjoyment. Nearly all members who responded to AFSA's survey concurred that they don't regret their choice to join the Foreign Service, and the benefits of the job outweigh the negatives. And they were remarkably stoic about the sacrifices they make for the job, often referencing the equally great sacrifices that members of the military make, and even those of regular Americans working long hours back in the United States.

Griffiths' take was typical: "I am sure that every professional job entails obligations that interfere with a healthy career/family balance," he said. "I don't know whether Foreign Service officers have more than their share, but perhaps being overseas does accentuate the feeling of loss."

Calling All Workaholics

Notably, few respondents blamed the State Department for the routine frustrations of their working lives. Some even said that the department has done much to encourage employees to take time for themselves and their families, only to run up against a workaholic culture driven by motivated people eager to rise up the ranks.

It's no secret that top college graduates have long competed intensely for a limited number of Foreign Service jobs each year. An annual survey by the Philadelphia-based research firm Universum Communications has consistently found that college undergraduates rank the State Department as one of the most desirable employers in the United States. Indeed, for much of the last decade, State was among the top five. So there will probably never be a shortage of intelligent, motivated Americans who want to go overseas to represent their country.

And despite major changes to the Foreign Service exam that have narrowed the applicant pool, competition for jobs remains fierce. Those who make it all the way through the process are, not surprisingly, eager to succeed and willing to work long hours and take on difficult assignments to win promotions. Such dedication is one of the main reasons that the State Department has never had to direct a single employee to accept an assignment to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Unaccompanied posts and dangerous assignments are tough, but the impact of the career on family life is what weighs heaviest on many FS employees.

Daniel Hirsch, the State Department vice president at AFSA, notes that State has in recent years made an increasing array of services available to employees to help them maintain balance in their lives and improved existing services, from counseling to day care. The department also encourages managers to let employees take time off and requires Foreign Service employees to take home leave when they return to the States.

But those who try to carve out more time with their families still find it doesn't always go over well with their superiors. One FSO now serving in Canada said that he's made a conscious decision to get home for dinner with his young family each night during eight years with the State Department. For the most part, that's gone well. But during one previous assignment, a superior said he needed to change his approach: "He took me aside within my first six months at post and told me I would need to find a better work-life balance as I went further along in my Foreign Service career — and he did not mean more time with the family."

As such comments indicate, a workaholic culture remains pervasive at State and the other foreign affairs agencies. The Foreign Service culture is very work-focused and hard-driving, so the kind of people who work in its system "are intelligent, competitive people who have a natural tendency to be workaholics," Hirsch says. "All of this urging to balance work and life does not mean that most people do so. In fact, the vast majority of Foreign Service officers — particularly those overseas — work long days, frequently go into the office on weekends and find very little time for themselves."

For most Foreign Service employees, "their identity is bound up in what they are doing, especially if they really like what they are doing," adds Faye Barnes, president of Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide. Barnes should know. She spent a career following her husband from posts on all corners of the globe and was director of State's Family Liaison Office. She also served as the Community Liaison Office coordinator at three posts, helping to integrate new Foreign Service employees and their families into life at post and organizing activities to provide them with some balance in their lives.

Her husband, Barnes recalls, spent a lot of time at work, so many vacations were forgone over the course of his career. At the same time, she says, "The kids used to complain, but there was no question he was in the right job. He loved the work."

Building Personal Networks

Even the most committed workaholic, though, requires some semblance of a social life. Yet a Foreign Service employee's social life is inevitably different from what might be considered normal back home in the United States.

First, there is the constant moving all over the globe. Then, with each assignment come new colleagues. It's both a blessing and a curse that Foreign Service employees can reinvent who they are so regularly. If an employee develops a reputation as a homebody at one post, he or she can flip the switch and become a social butterfly at the next.

For employees who are adaptable, it can work out very well. "I made friends everywhere. Some places more local folks, others more Americans, depending on the community," says Barnes.

It helps that serving at posts in foreign lands can be an intense bonding experience — all the more so in dangerous and far-off places, Foreign Service employees say. That's one reason many look back fondly on time spent in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. They say they made some of the best friendships of their careers there.

Even in more routine posts, Foreign Service culture integrates work and play more than would a typical job back in the United States. Evening events are the norm.

While community liaison officers regularly organize weekend excursions to enable families to bond, even purely social interactions can morph at any time into a discussion of work.

Foreign Service employees spend a lot of time together and, ideally, that can lead to close friendships. But they aren't easy to keep up. As Hirsch says, "Some people I've known for 30 years and consider very good friends, but I may not see them for five or six years at a time."

One supervisor took an FSO aside to say he needed to carve out a better work-life balance — and he did not mean spending more time with the family.

And while employees may find much in common at certain posts, they may find nothing to link them with colleagues at their next assignment. Just as close quarters can lead to good friendships, they can just as easily lead to anger, resentment and frustration when employees don't click, but are forced to live and work in close proximity.

Hirsch recalls finding himself at one such embassy. "I had a post where of every single person at post, not one came from my educational or regional background, so I was the odd man out in that entire community." When parties were thrown, he was often the only employee left out. He got hints that people were whispering about him, and not in a nice way. "People laughed about me as the college boy behind my back. In their view, I was the guy who never really had to deal with real life. It stank."

Such travails can be all the more difficult for Foreign Service employees with unusual backgrounds, who aren't of the same race or sexual orientation as their colleagues, or who are married to foreigners.

The Role of Spouses and Partners

For many Foreign Service employees, their families are what carry them through the long hours and difficult living conditions. "I think anybody who's married knows that if your spouse or significant other is happy, then you're happy," says Lino Gutiérrez, a former ambassador to Argentina who took over as executive director of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation last December. The foundation has for years been an indispensable source of funding for State's Family Liaison Office, supporting programs to ease stresses on families living overseas.

Even in more routine posts, Foreign Service culture integrates work and play more than would a typical job back in the United States.

A spouse who loves adventure and travel can be a Foreign Service employee's savior when times are tough. But just as often, family issues can pose the most significant challenges for Foreign Service employees. A spouse or partner who expects everything overseas to be as easy as it is back home can make an employee's life harder.

"When I was single and could throw myself into a danger-pay post with no problem, or could have a Washington job that was 10 hours a day, 5.5 days a week, there was not much work-life balance. But I was starting my career and was single, so it wasn't too difficult," says John Naland, a two-time former AFSA president who's now approaching the end of a 24-year Foreign Service career. "As I've gone on and gotten married and had two kids, it's gotten more and more difficult."

There's no getting around the fact, Foreign Service employees say, that spouses make huge sacrifices to allow their husbands and wives to serve abroad. Unless their employers are unusually flexible, they experience high levels of unemployment. In fact, their employment rate is more than 10 percentage points lower than that of couples back in the United States. And when they do find work, it's usually outside their chosen field and can be frustratingly menial for people who may have had high-powered professional jobs at home.

Gay couples have it even tougher: even if they are married under state laws, the department is severely limited in terms of the assistance it can render. For more details, see the May 2009 Speaking Out column in this magazine, "Hope for Gay and Lesbian Foreign Service Employees," by 20-year Foreign Service veteran Steven Giegerich. Not long after that commentary appeared, State began according same-sex partners the same employment preferences it gives married couples of the opposite sex.

Dissatisfaction about employment opportunities for spouses and partners is pretty much universal, with good cause. A 2010 AFSA survey of active-duty members found that 61 percent of spouses were unemployed. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) who did have jobs worked in embassies or consulates. Of those, nearly seven in 10 were in support positions and more than six in 10 were working outside their preferred field.

Finding Meaningful Employment

Among the issues raised by Foreign Service employees who responded to AFSA's most recent member survey, spousal employment was far and away the one they said created the most stress. At the same time, though, employees raised few complaints about the State Department's efforts to help spouses and partners find work. Many acknowledged that opportunities have expanded, but noted that the nature of Foreign Service work is such that family members inevitably are required to make sacrifices.

The department has made reaching bilateral work agreements, which allow spouses to work in the host country, a priority. And it gives preference to qualified spouses for embassy jobs, many of which are low-skill positions. At the same time, it's also expanded the array of positions available through the Professional Associates Program, which allows family members an opportunity to work in Foreign Service entry-level positions in the FS-4 to FS-7 range in a broad array of sections and specialties, including political, economic, public diplomacy, management, general services, human resources, financial management, office management, information management and medical (both physicians and registered nurses). Applicants must commit to serving a minimum of one year in the position for which they apply.

State has also expanded its Global Employment Initiative, which is designed to help family members find work in the local economy. Global employment advisers

assist job-seekers by building networks of potential local employers and providing coaching, workshops and other career development services. The program has also sought to establish partnerships with multinational corporations, organizations and nongovernmental organizations to provide family members with jobs. Currently, State employs 17 advisers to assist family members at 65 posts.

State could make improvements within its own employment processes, says Hirsch, "but there's not that much they can do to help people work in the local environment beyond getting permission for them to do so, which they do."

"The vast majority of Foreign Service officers — particularly those overseas — work long days, frequently go into the office on weekends and find very little time for themselves."

— AFSA State VP Daniel Hirsch

But the State Department could better assist spouses, some employees said, by giving incentives to posts with high rates of spousal employment, by opening more embassy jobs to spouses, and by taking into account their skills, as well as the employees', in making assignments. Some added that the department could do a better job of informing employees before they bid on posts about what employment opportunities for spouses are available at the posts they are considering. And it should create a central fund, rather than one controlled by each post, to pay the salaries of spouses, so that posts have no financial incentive to slow hiring.

All of those things could help. But the reality, most say, is that spouses will continue to make big sacrifices for their wife's or husband's Foreign Service career. "The

bottom line is that somebody's career has to take a back seat, and 99 percent of the time that's the spouse," says Faye Barnes. "Like in all marriages, there are compromises. With the Foreign Service, it's just a more permanent or longer-term one because the spouse most likely, though not in all cases, gives up his/her real career and does what he or she can while overseas."

Among the issues raised by those who responded to AFSA's most recent member survey, spousal employment was far and away the one they said created the most stress.

Paging June Cleaver

Spouses and partners who held high-level positions in big companies or in the government back home say they've felt completely out of sorts and completely dependent on their wife or husband in the Foreign Service. "I've been in positions where you can't find out anything yourself," says one woman whose husband joined the Foreign Service seven years ago. "I'm sitting in a house with no car, no Internet or cable. You're so dependent."

Many spouses feel that the Foreign Service culture still carries vestiges of the 1950s, when women were expected to stay at home and raise children. As one points out, "I've made a name for myself in my own career — but when I'm there at post, my identity is through my husband."

She isn't alone in that assessment. "The Foreign Service culture still leans toward assuming that the spouse is 'trailing' and not a professional," says Barbara Hughes, a USAID officer in Madagascar, whose spouse has continued to work. For instance, her husband gets invited to do things with other embassy spouses in the middle of the workday. "He declines politely, but it is a bit insulting that people just assume he is not working or that his job was created to keep him busy," she says.

Most spouses don't have employers who are so flexible, so they have to separate to keep both jobs. One woman whose husband is a diplomatic security officer complained that she's now facing four years apart, since her husband is in the midst of a three-year tour in Europe following a year in Iraq. She would have to give up a high-level Civil Service job with an agency in Washington, D.C. — and its substantial salary — to follow him. "We've looked at the eligible family member programs, and they are secretarial in nature. I have a master's degree. I'm a GS-14. I'd be going from making a lot of money to little money," she says.

Robin Solomon, a Foreign Service officer married to a naturalized U.S. citizen from Kazakhstan, has faced a particularly stressful time. "He's got the challenges of trying to have a career that's moved every couple of years when his degree is not from a U.S. university." When bidding for posts, she says, his happiness is foremost on her mind. "That's not just on the list of considerations; that's the top consideration," she adds.

The difficulties for spouses are such that many choose to go the tandem route, with the spouse seeking permanent employment in the Foreign Service. But that can pose its own difficulties, because the department makes no guarantees that the couple will serve at the same post.

It also means that both spouses are embroiled in State's workaholic culture. That makes it more difficult to handle the logistics of moving and give children a sense of stability amidst all the change. As a result, tandem couples often feel tremendous stresses in managing their families.

One Foreign Service employee now stationed in the Caribbean, who joined her husband in the Foreign Service two years ago, says that's certainly been the case for her family. "I'm going to move to Thailand, and I'm expected to work the day after I arrive. I have kids and I'm starting to panic. Who's going to watch my 3-year-old? I used to be the wife at home to do all that stuff. Now I don't know."

A year ago, AFSA surveyed members and found tandem couples deeply divided over the department's support for them. Four in 10 said they were satisfied, but three in 10 were extremely dissatisfied.

Children Sacrifice, Too

In a Reflections column in last June's *Foreign Service Journal* ("Where's Home?"), retired U.S. Information Agency officer Christopher Heinz poignantly described the sacrifices his family made during a 24-year career in which they moved 19 times. "Except for brief visits on home leave, the children never really got to know their

grandparents and vice versa, not to mention cousins and other relatives," he wrote.

The State Department does wonders, many employees acknowledge, to ensure that Foreign Service children are well cared for and educated. In addition, Foreign Service life does, in some parts of the world, allow for the hiring of domestic help, which can ease a family's burdens immensely. But as Heinz wrote, the sacrifices can still be difficult and sad.

A 2010 AFSA survey of active-duty members found that 61 percent of spouses were unemployed. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) who did have jobs worked in embassies or consulates.

The department's own culture can add to parents' stress, as well. Many say it is frowned on, for example, to take time off to tend to a sick child or attend a child's school event. "The culture still assumes that there is a stay-at-home parent who can handle all things related to children and the household," says Hughes, though she notes that she has, for the most part, had supervisors who understood her burdens as a mother.

Sometimes, of course, that creates frustrations for single employees, who feel — with some justification — that it's not right to always assume that they are available to fill in. One USAID employee says "family-friendly" has become code for demanding more of singles, who are often stuck with the more difficult schedules and assignments to accommodate those who have children. "I am genuinely sympathetic to the problems and needs of people with non-FS spouses and with kids," she notes. "However, there should be more balance in treatment and in the allocation of benefits."

No matter how much help they get, however, the challenges Foreign Service parents face are very real. They struggle to give their children a sense of home and a feeling of being grounded when they really have neither. It's hard, of course, for children to leave friends behind every few years when the family moves on to a new post. Even worse, when a parent is assigned to an unaccompanied post, children can feel a sense of abandonment. The difficulties are all the worse for single parents who have no spouse to fall back on.

The challenges Foreign Service parents face are very real.

State has tried to ease the burden by increasing the separate maintenance allowance to ease the financial pressures on families living apart. It also allows families overseas to remain at post while the Foreign Service employee does a temporary, unaccompanied assignment. And the Family Liaison Office has tried to help, too, by creating a listserv to bring families together, hosting events for families, giving children awards and providing their parents with literature on how to handle the separation.

Still, it's an issue that weighs heavily on Foreign Service employees, especially since the number of unaccompanied assignments — which has nearly quintupled in the last decade — shows no signs of abating. Many say the issue could come to a head if employees are asked to accept repeated unaccompanied tours. In May 2010, AFSA found that 21 percent of Foreign Service employees had done an unaccompanied tour in the previous six years. Nearly eight in 10 had served at a hardship post.

In an AFSA member survey released two years ago, only 15 percent of employees said the State Department did enough to help separated families; 71 percent said State should allow employees to extend tours to allow a child to finish high school; and 64 percent said that family concerns might cause them to leave the Foreign Service early.

"It can happen that children feel unrooted," says Hirsch. "It can happen they feel different than fellow Americans. It can happen that they are being torn away from their friends and being denied the right to make long-lasting friendships." And unhappy children make for unhappy parents.

But most parents who responded to AFSA's survey said they wouldn't have traded their children's experience for a regular life in the United States. While Foreign Service kids may lack a strong peer group, the lifestyle often contributes to a closer family life, they said.

"Our children see and feel that we are doing this together as a family. That's the other advantage of living overseas: we depend on each other a lot more," says Barnes. "The children become very adaptable and are open-minded about the fact that there are many wonderful-but-different people in the world, whom they can have as their friends."

She adds: "The Internet makes keeping in touch with friends and family members around the world so much easier than when we first started in the Foreign Service in 1993. Our children see the world as a much smaller, less scary place than, I would imagine, someone who has never left America or the one or two neighborhoods where they have lived their entire life until college age."

A Model Workplace?

Five times in the last 10 years, the Partnership for Public Service has ranked government agencies on employee satisfaction. In the most recent edition of the study — which is based on employee responses to questions about agency leadership, work/life balance, and pay and benefits — State finished seventh. It was a small comedown from two years before, when State finished fifth.

But State's overall score has improved with each of the five studies. In the first one, in 2003, State finished 19th, so, overall, the department has done well.

State was particularly successful, survey respondents said, in matching the skills of its workers to the department's mission, in grooming leaders and in supporting diversity. In all of those areas, the department finished among the top five of 28 government agencies surveyed. But the two areas in which the department fared worst were work-life balance (17th) and family-friendliness (25th).

For most Foreign Service employees, having a job they love trumps the difficulties it brings. But the question remains: Are those low scores a necessary function of a diplomat's life in a competitive culture? Or could State, and the other foreign affairs agencies, do more to address these issues? ■

A WIN-WIN APPROACH TO TIME MANAGEMENT

WHILE DIFFICULT, ACHIEVING A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN ONE'S CAREER AND PERSONAL LIFE IS POSSIBLE. BUT LIKE ANYTHING ELSE, IT REQUIRES COMMITMENT.

BY CHARLES A. RAY

Work in the Foreign Service goes around the clock and is often high-pressure. So if you're not careful, it can consume your entire life.

While the concept of work-life balance gets lip service, the reality is that the importance of what we do, the resource limitations with which we have to cope, and the time-sensitive nature of much of our work can make it extremely difficult to actually achieve that balance. Yet failure to do so can have long-term negative consequences, not only for your personal well-being, but also for the quality of your performance.

Achieving a proper balance between one's career and personal life is possible, however. But like anything else, it requires commitment. As an individual, it's up to you to find ways to be a complete, well-rounded person, and not just an expert drafter of action memos. And as a supervisor or leader, creating an environment in which those in your charge can devote adequate time to their personal lives, while getting the necessary work done, should be among your top-priority tasks.

Over the past decade, I have served in a number of leadership positions, within the State Department and at the Defense Department, and in each I have made work-life balance a key element of my approach to mission accomplishment. In the words of a general I served under during my Army career, "I want my people to work hard and play hard. If they do both, I know I will get the best out of them when it counts."

Lighten the Mood

The workaholic culture at State often frowns on things that in the military are a routine part of life. For example, when I was selected to be the first U.S. consul general in Ho Chi Minh City in 1998, I had to hire and train an entire consulate staff, as well as demolish the old American embassy. I also had to build relations with government and commercial officials in the southern part of Vietnam.

We started out with offices in buildings that had formerly been occupied by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War, while the new consulate general was being built on the old embassy site. I had a staff consisting of a handful of mid-level officers (along with an experienced deputy

Charles A. Ray, a career Foreign Service officer since 1982, has been ambassador to Zimbabwe since 2009.

at the outset) and 16 first-tour consular officers. We had to hire and train more than a hundred Foreign Service National employees.

Local Communist Party officials were wary of us at first, and when the new consulate general began operating, we immediately had a problem with their reaction to the long lines of visa applicants on the sidewalk in front of the building each morning. To say that it was a high-pressure environment is an understatement. In addition, we often had to deal with attempts at micromanagement from some of the section heads in the embassy in Hanoi, a thousand miles away.

Leaving early sent a clear signal to my staff that they, too, were not chained to their desks.

I did a number of things to change the mood, starting with a habit I picked up in the Army: I walked around the consulate general for a good part of each day, visiting people in their workplaces and just chatting with them. Now and then, I would let the staff schedule an end-of-week social event, such as a happy hour, just to let their hair down and get to know each other. And for my own personal sanity, since we often worked until late at night and on many weekends, I set aside Wednesday afternoons to join other consuls general, businesspeople and, on occasion, a local official for a game of golf, followed by dinner at one of the local golf courses.

This didn't go over too well with some of the senior people in the embassy, and I received a few complaints. But I was fortunate in having Pete Peterson, the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam following the war, as a boss. He recognized the need for down time, and saw the added benefit of the extra contact with officials who would otherwise be unavailable. So he basically told the embassy staff to shut up and let me run my post the way I felt best. I will always be grateful to him for that vote of confidence.

My approach was further validated when former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and remarked that the morale in the consulate general seemed much higher than it did in the embassy. Score one for work-life balance!

Unchain Staff from Their Desks

As an ambassador, as long as you don't break any regulations or fail to deliver what is needed when it's needed, you can pretty much call the shots without someone looking over your shoulder. The micromanagers of ambassadors are an ocean away, and most of the time they can be tactfully ignored. So when I took up my post as ambassador to Cambodia in 2002, a mission that was suffering low morale and loss of confidence from the department, I immediately set out to put my personal stamp on things.

Of course, I did my usual walking around. At first, some people were nonplussed to look up and see me standing in their office door two or three times a week, but they soon got used to it and appreciated the extra, uninterrupted face time. That gave me a better handle on what was going on around the mission than if I'd stayed in my office waiting for people to come to me.

I also announced that every day, unless there was something going on that required my physical presence, I would be leaving my office at 4 p.m. sharp and working on unclassified stuff at home. So if there was anything needing my signature or approval, it had to be on my desk by 3:30 — and it would have to be ready to go, or I'd send it back until the next day.

I did this for a couple of reasons. First; the embassy at that time was a depressing collection of ragtag buildings that looked more like a displaced-person camp than an embassy. The less time I spent in it, the better my mood. Second, by leaving early, I sent a clear signal that I didn't expect people to be in their offices late each day unless they had something absolutely critical to do. Less time in the office meant more time with families, pursuing hobbies, or just kicking back.

Within three months, morale had soared, and according to an Office of the Inspector General team that assessed us early during my tenure, we were one of the better performing embassies, with the highest morale in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

When I served as deputy assistant secretary of Defense for prisoners of war/missing personnel affairs from 2006 to 2009, I encountered a situation similar to that in Embassy Phnom Penh. Management by walking around is less surprising to people in the defense field, but apparently none of my predecessors had tried it. So except when we were crashing on an issue, I made it a point to get out of the office a bit early every day, thereby sending a signal that I expected my subordinates to do the same.

Once or twice a month, we'd end a week with a little happy hour in our big conference room; and twice a year,

we'd schedule a unit outing to a park or bowling alley. This time I didn't get any pushback from my superiors; as far as they were concerned, I was just doing what any decent commander would do to take care of my people. The fact that we increased the quantity and quality of our output, never missed a deadline, and improved relations with activist groups just proved that this was the way to go.

Since arriving in Harare, I've had to modify my 'management by walking around' technique. Not, mind you, because it doesn't apply here, but because the configuration of the mission here is completely different from any of my other posts. I have people in five widely separated locations in the city, and with Harare's traffic, getting around to each section on a daily basis, as I've done in other locations, is just not possible.

I do manage, however, to drop in on agencies like the Centers for Disease Control, USAID, the public affairs section, and the general services office warehouse at least twice a month. While these unannounced visits were a bit shocking for the staff at first, I now find that they look forward to them, and happily take me around to show me each of their new projects.

I manage to get to those sections located on the main chancery compound on a daily basis, even if it's just to chat for a few minutes. I especially enjoy talking to the entry-level officers within the mission. As I mentor them professionally and personally, I learn a lot.

These are just a few examples of the benefits that achieving work-life balance can bring to an organization. It results in well-rounded employees with high morale and self-esteem, who feel that the leadership of the organization cares about them as human beings and not just as work units. It also demonstrates that longer hours don't necessarily produce more or higher-quality work. In fact, just the opposite is frequently the case.

Dedicated, committed employees whose morale is high will produce more and better work in fewer hours than the drones who stay tied to their desks for 12 to 14 hours a day — who have, in essence, retired in place. ■

SI, SE PUEDE

AN ADVANCE VISIT TO THIS FS FAMILY'S NEXT POST LIGHTENS THE BURDEN OF TRANSITION.

BY AMANDA FERNÁNDEZ

My plane descends toward Quito's airport, bumping over air pockets as the tips of mountains and volcanoes emerge from the clouds, much closer to the plane's belly than I'd like them to be. Houses and neighborhoods are tucked into every mountain terrace and valley, a warning that habitable land must be an expensive commodity.

We bank over gated communities within Quito's city center, and almost tear the fog lights off of an 18-wheeler with our landing gear as we roar over a highway bypass. It's mid-afternoon, and I'm delighted the weather forecast of thunderstorms all week was mistaken. The sun at 9,300 feet is blazing.

I'm in Quito on a mission: to ease my family's transition for our upcoming move here. Quito is one of the last lease/living quarters–allowance posts left in the Foreign Service, where newly arrived families routinely spend up to three months in hotel rooms, awaiting housing. To get a jump start on the process, my husband suggested I make an advance trip to Quito. "Go get a sense of the place," he said.

For a mother of two children under the age of 4, it wasn't a hard sell. Three days by myself to find housing, hire domestic help, find a school for my children and chase down some job leads won't be easy, but the time alone and the indulgences — massages, nice restaurants and sleep — make it worth the expense.

Other than the surly immigration agents at Quito's airport, I find Quiteños to be among the nicest people in the Americas. "¡Estoy para servirle, señora! (I am here to serve you!)" one says, as I chuckle silently. During three years in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, I've never heard similar words spoken.

A Shower of Politeness

The shower of politeness continues for the duration of my visit, from the driver I've contracted to the real estate agents who cart me around the city to see houses and apartments, taking the time to point out nearby restaurants

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and shopping centers, and clocking the driving distance from a potential home to my husband's work and children's likely school.

The masseuse at my hotel fills me in on the gossip: by coincidence, the Argentine national soccer team is arriving in Quito the next day and staying at my hotel. He tells me that Ecuadoreans aren't optimistic about their chances against the Argentines in this World Cup qualifier match, given their status as former world champions and their star roster.

As much as I've prepared for my trip, I worry I've overestimated what I can actually accomplish in three days in the developing world.

A soccer player before my age and knees betrayed me, I've been attending as many games in Buenos Aires as I can find tickets and babysitters for. The last match I saw was Argentina vs. Venezuela, where the Argentines crushed the visitors 4-0, Lionel Messi dribbling circles around Venezuela's defense. But that was Buenos Aires, and this is Ecuador. The national stadium here is near 10,000 feet. The altitude is no joke; I'm overtaken by dizziness my first night in Quito, to the point that I can barely stand, and experience faintness every day like clockwork in the late afternoon.

I ponder the coincidence and similarities of our respective pilgrimages to Ecuador. The Argentine team and I are both here for a short period of time with specific goals to achieve; tourism is the last thing on our minds. If we are successful, our future anxieties will be considerably lessened. Argentina will go on to play World Cup–winner Brazil with the confidence it so desperately needs, and I will have found a school for my children, a nanny to help care for them, a house to live in and a job for me — greatly easing our next move. For once, I'll be able to really enjoy a country with my family as soon as we get there.

Parallel Missions

Yet as much as I've prepared for my trip, I worry I've overestimated what I can actually accomplish in three days in the developing world. I'm putting my money on the Argentines.

Day One. I pass children begging at stop signs, strip malls and ubiquitous KFC outlets. The look of the city near the airport, with its low buildings, cracked sidewalks and paint-chipped highway underpasses, is depressing, so I keep my eyes focused on the spectacular views offered in most neighborhoods, as fabulous as those found in Sydney or Cape Town.

I visit seven potential homes, meet two nannies, tour three preschools and have an informational interview with a consulting firm. The homes are overpriced, too large by embassy standards, or too small for my family. The preschools are decrepit or frighteningly expensive. The potential nannies underwhelm me with shyness and downcast eyes, and the firm isn't hiring. I'm fighting off a blanket of resignation and depression. In the spirit of World Cup competition, I begin to keep score: Ecuador 1, Amanda 0.

Day Two: Game Day. The streets of Quito are awash in a sea of yellow. Easily half of the population is wearing copies of the Ecuadorean national soccer team jersey. My driver politely suggests it may not behoove me to attempt any appointments during or right after the match, starting at 4 p.m. I concur and decide to watch the game from the comfort of my hotel. No, he says, the cable mafia have restricted the transmission of the game to the select few with premium cable. Bastards. Ecuador 2, Amanda 0.

I visit a preschool and an apartment and love them both, and even have time to check out the supermarkets and hotel where my family and I will spend a month, or until our housing effects arrive. My mood is shifting. Optimism is seeping into me as the day progresses. The score is shifting to my favor now: Ecuador 2, Amanda 1.

Right before kickoff, the socialist-leaning government sticks it to the cable companies and broadcasts the soccer game on all local channels. I rush to my hotel room and turn on the TV. By halftime, the score is a lackluster 0-0. The Ecuadoreans are patting themselves on the back; they'll be thrilled with a tie.

Everything Changes

The second half begins. Maybe it's the altitude, but the Argentines play largely unenthusiastically. A rocket shot on goal and everything changes. Ecuador scores. I open the window in my hotel room to the roar of the stadium crowd from across the city. The TV broadcaster is screaming: "¡¡¡GOOOOLLLL ECUADOR!! ¡Un país humilde jugando lo grande!" (A little country playing greatly!)

The Argentines dig deep, but Ecuador can't be stopped. Another shot from the edge of the box, and Ecuador seals the victory, 2-0. The celebration in Quito lasts all night.

Day Three. I drive down death-defying spiral roads into the Cumbaya Valley, passing majestic colonial churches and buildings.

Nothing has turned out as I predicted, least of all little Ecuador, emerging triumphant.

My realtor and I chat about the soccer game and her joy that the foreigners who adopted Ecuador as their home were so enthusiastic while being interviewed on TV the night before. She cackles as she mimics their English-accented Spanish, "EcwadoRRRR! Si say puay-day!"

"'Si se puede (Yes, we can)' is our national motto, you know," she informs me. Hmmm, I've heard that expression used somewhere else recently.

I return to the hotel. The lobby is empty. I ask a top-hatted porter if the Argentines have left.

"Yes, ma'am, they've gone. They went out the back doors."

"Too embarrassed to face the local press?" I counter, jokingly fanning the anti-Argentine flame that burns brightly throughout Latin America.

"It appears so!" he says, winking at me.

Missions completed, we all head home to Argentina. Argentina lost its match, but I've found a place to live, a school for my children, and have leads for nannies and possible work. Anxiety levels have shifted, but major obstacles remain in our way. For Argentina, a game against five-time World Cup–champion Brazil; for me, another move with my husband and two small children. Nothing has turned out as I predicted, least of all little Ecuador, emerging triumphant.

I smile to myself as my plane lifts off, "Ecuador. Si, se puede." ■

GOING SOLO: SINGLE IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

SINGLES COMPRISE ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE AND HAVE THEIR OWN UNIQUE CHALLENGES.

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Much ink is spilled over Foreign Service family issues: not so much when it comes to issues facing single employees. Yet singles comprise approximately one-third of the Foreign Service and have their own unique challenges.

The lifestyle overseas for singles can be exciting. Single Foreign Service employees tend to have greater flexibility and freedom than their married colleagues to pursue the career and opportunities they desire. They do not need to factor into their bidding decisions things like family member employment possibilities and international schools, or a spouse's preference for, say, Paris over Dushanbe, when the perfect job is in Dushanbe.

But at the same time, life overseas can be lonely. FS singles do not have the built-in support system of a family traveling with them on the sometimes bumpy roads around the world, and must work to create new networks and friendships at each post. One particular challenge for many singles is the assumption that the bureaucracy and many colleagues seem to have — namely, that singles are more "available" and should therefore shoulder more of the burden of dangerous assignments and extra work.

Finding Family in the Fishbowl

Many embassy communities can feel like fishbowls, making it difficult to maintain privacy in one's personal life. When embassy staff members live on a compound, the effect can be magnified, and it can feel like everyone knows your business. Sometimes everyone *does* know your business!

Close-knit embassy communities usually welcome singles and include them as part of an embassy "family," inviting them to holiday dinners and other gatherings. The author, a single FSO in Bishkek, arrived there the week of Thanksgiving, and joined the entire American FS staff — numbering about eight, including the ambassador — for a turkey dinner in the dark, mirrored basement of a local restaurant, where she immediately became part of a very small, rather quirky, embassy family. (Butterballs had been shipped in on a support flight from Europe.) By the next holiday, the embassy singles hosted

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their own gathering for a few locals and two American travelers who had wandered across the border from Afghanistan, dirty and hungry.

Embassy communities vary from post to post, and even from year to year, depending on the mix of people, post management and priorities, and overall morale. Larger posts in more developed countries tend to offer more anonymity and more of a choice as to joining in embassy socializing or focussing outside the embassy community. Smaller ones, especially hardship posts, tend to have closer communities, where people are more likely to socialize together and look out for each other.

When you work for the American embassy, it is often the case that before you are seen as a man or a woman, you are an American official — "the third sex."

Singles are always well-advised to consider the type of community and environment they prefer when bidding, rather than after they show up at a new post. Otherwise, they may expect a great dating scene and long nights out at local clubs, but discover that the management officer's Scrabble tournament is the only social game in town. Information can be gathered ahead of time through the community liaison offices at various posts and the Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute, as well as from unofficial online sources like "Real Post Reports" on the Web site *Tales from a Small Planet.*

No matter the post, the key to a fulfilling social life as a single in the Foreign Service is creating a support network from local friends, expatriates from various countries and embassy colleagues.

Support Networks

Singles have to seek out new support networks at each post, and it pays to do this early in a tour. As one of the veteran singles on a January panel hosted by the Foreign Service Institute said about starting out each assignment: "You're only new once," so accept as many invitations as you can. Even if what you really want to do is go home and put on your pajamas and curl up with a good book, single colleagues advise that you'll be glad later for making the effort to go out anyway.

Such networks also help singles navigate daily life overseas. "Whereas many married employees depend on their spouses to take primary responsibility for household matters, singles must handle such demanding issues [themselves]," comments Judy Carson, a recently retired FS single. "These include dealing with time-consuming obligations such as entertaining for work, planning travel and moves, taking care of finances and property, finding doctors, taking care of elderly parents and disabled siblings — without the assistance of a helpmate." Married spouses who both work full-time may face similar challenges, but also may have more income to spare for hiring help when they need it.

Single parents in the Foreign Service must navigate the complexities of raising a child outside the U.S., often without much assistance. Plusses include the ability to afford domestic help at most posts, as well as access to (and tuition for) good international schools at many posts. At the same time, schools will probably have to play a large role in

bidding choices. And when times are tough for a child, the single parent is often torn between caring for the child and the demands of the job.

Depending on the person and the post, single FS parents can find that building a social life is particularly difficult. Many gravitate toward the "family" crowd to participate in activities that involve the kids.

It is still more difficult for a woman to find a partner to follow her around the world than for a man.

Unwritten Expectations

In the bureaucracy and among colleagues, many view singles as unencumbered and, therefore, more available for duty than their married colleagues. As a result, singles often perceive that there are unwritten rules that they be first to step up to volunteer for unaccompanied and danger posts, as well as to work during holidays and put in extra hours any time — or all the time. This pressure is not official, but for many singles, it can seem very real and have serious consequences — especially for individuals who tend to be workaholics.

Nor does such pressure only happen at overseas posts. One former FSO who spent several years in Washington assignments during the early 1990s recalls that he and several unmarried colleagues who lived in D.C. were always assigned to the evening and overnight shifts of task forces. They were then required to resolve any action items back in their office before going home to sleep for a few hours.

That general attitude toward singles was one of the main reasons this individual left the Foreign Service a few years later.

Single Men, Single Women

As a general but not universal rule, being single in the Foreign Service presents more of a challenge for women than for men. Not everyone will say this aloud, but most will agree that single men tend to be able to connect more easily with, and marry, non-Americans overseas. Conventional wisdom has it that young, single male officers often come back from certain postings with a wife from that country. In fact, more than one-third of all Foreign Service spouses are foreign-born; and most, though not all, of those spouses are women.

Many countries of the world are still patriarchies where the male of the household is the primary breadwinner, so a working single woman is simply not seen as a possible spouse by locals. Obviously this varies greatly from country to country, and the broader expatriate community can offer alternatives for the single woman.

Although female FS singles may find active social lives and options for dating overseas, there is no way around the fact that it is still more difficult for a woman to find a partner to follow her around the world than for a man. This reality may be shifting as the one-salary household becomes more rare in American society, however. For many Foreign Service families, economic realities dictate that both partners be employed to make ends meet. This is especially true during Washington tours but, in many cases, overseas as well.

One alternative to the "who follows whom?" conundrum is for FS singles to marry each other, becoming a tandem couple. Tandems also can bid on the same posts and can spend most of their careers together. As they rise in rank, they do run into issues of limited job opportunities at the same posts, in part because one spouse cannot be supervised by the other. Tandems may also find that at certain times, one person's career will take priority and compromises may have to be made in order to serve in the same location. Most tandems will spend at least one year apart, serving in different countries.

Today there are about 500 tandem couples in the State Department and an additional 81 interagency tandems, in which one spouse works for another foreign affairs agency. While a degree of creativity is required to ensure two successful careers, many couples find the tandem arrangement works quite well.

The Third Sex: Challenges of Dating Local

When you work for the American embassy, it is often the case that before you are seen as a man or a woman, you are an American official — "the third sex," as an FSO on the FSI singles panel explained. This distinction can serve you well, if you know how to use it. In some conservative societies, American Foreign Service women may have access to places and people their female, non-diplomat peers would not have. Societal norms need not always apply.

But along with the special status of the third sex come unique challenges for dating locally as an FS single. It can

be difficult to ascertain whether someone's interest in you is truly an interest in you, or if it is motivated by the hope for a free ticket to America as your spouse and, eventually, U.S. citizenship.

While this makes trusting one's instincts even more important, the opposite side of the coin can also be true: singles, particularly single men, who have had trouble socializing in the States, may find that dating overseas comes more easily. But as students in the consular training course are cautioned: "Remember, we don't get better-looking just because we move overseas."

Singles must seek out new support networks at each post, and it pays to do this early in a tour.

Contact Reporting: Know the Rules

One consideration for single officers interested in dating while overseas (and, indeed, for all Foreign Service employees) continues to be the reporting requirements on contact with foreign nationals (including dating, cohabitating and marrying). Single employees should keep contact reporting issues in mind when bidding on assignments.

For many years the reporting requirements for the contact policy in the Foreign Affairs Manual were confusing and out of date, based on Cold War–era threats. But in 2009, the regulations were rewritten and made clearer. "For more than five years, AFSA undertook vigorous efforts to bring about a long-overdue update of the regulations governing the reporting of foreign contacts, cohabitation and intent to marry foreign nationals," explains AFSA General Counsel Sharon Papp, "including multiple démarches and letters to State Department management, collaboration meetings and *Foreign Service Journal* articles. The bureaus of Diplomatic Security and Human Resources worked closely with AFSA lawyers on these rules and accepted many of our suggestions."

The new regulations can be found in 12 FAM 260 and 12 FAM 270. The rules on marrying a foreign national can be found in 3 FAM 4190. This set of regulations spells out the latest security reporting requirements. Although there are strict requirements for contacts with foreign nationals at critical-threat posts, the new rules have eliminated the requirement to report relationships involving continuing romantic or sexual intimacy with foreign nationals from non–critical-threat countries, unless the employee has SCI access.

All clearance holders, however, must report all close and continuing contact with foreign nationals of *all* countries each time they update their SF-86 to renew their security clearance. In addition, DS may still ask about such relationships if they are perceived as a security vulnerability for the employee.

The list of critical-threat posts is still classified, but available to employees when they need it. A good rule of thumb is that if you think a country might be a critical-threat post, it probably is. More details about contact reporting are spelled out on the AFSA Web site at www.afsa.org/foreign_contact_reporting.aspx.

Overall, the new regulations are an improvement in the sense that they are clearer on the reporting requirements. Yet they have not entirely kept up with the new realities of social media and the wide variety of "friends" FS employees may have online. For instance, while some security officers have told employees they must report all of their foreign Facebook friends, DS has confirmed that this is not, in fact, a requirement. ■

Suggestions from FS Singles for FS Singles

Being a Foreign Service single overseas can offer great possibilities to meet and socialize with some of the most interesting people on earth. But at times, it can be very lonely. To help make the most of the unique Foreign Service lifestyle, here are some suggestions from single colleagues:

- Speak up at post. Let your needs be known.
- Get to know people from other missions.
- Know your neighbors.
- Always let someone know where you are.
- Ask for help, for example with pack-out. Hire help. Trade help.
- Team up with other singles to explore and/or to co-host social or representational events.
- Remember that you cannot supervise a spouse/partner, so aim to date outside your cone.
- Take up personal or "extracurricular" projects like volunteering or an artistic endeavor — create a life for yourself outside the office.
- Connect with international organizations and groups outside the embassy community.
- Take advantage of networking opportunities through your alumni association.

— Shawn Dorman

Forever Tandem

Achieving work-life balance is like personal engineering, and comes with the same trade-offs that all engineers face in getting things done.

By Teresa Chin Jones

In our forthcoming book, *Forever Tandem*, to be released this fall under the aegis of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, my husband, David, and I talk about our lives as a two-career Foreign Service couple with three children.

Admittedly, our experiences in the Service were atypical, starting with the fact that neither of us ever served in hardship posts. We thus don't have vignettes from life in deepest, darkest Nowhereland to add spice to our conversations. We never struggled through medical evacuations or faced the enemy-at-the-gates evacuations when Americans were hunted game rather than valued interlocutors.

We took the king's shilling, knew the "needs of the service" assignment rules, and would have gone where sent with no more than the normal demurrals. But our expertise in science, economics, intelligence, base negotiations, politico-military affairs and arms control issues, as well as specific family factors, limited our choices. (At least we never had to jockey for ambassadorships in neighboring countries!)

Every career has its own ups and downs, and there are distinct differences between the post-9/11 Foreign Service and that of the pre-2001 era. But David and I believe that the following observations about "work-life balance" are applicable not just to Foreign Service personnel but also to most U.S. professionals in the 21st century.

Foreign Service Challenges Are Not Unique

Our military colleagues face constant rotations and deployments, separating them from families — with the additional prospect of death and injury to add poignancy and tension to the separation.

My husband and I were separated for 14 of the first 15 months of our marriage while he served in the Army in Korea and I continued graduate studies in 1964-1965. The technology was so primitive that we only heard each other's voices on tape cassettes during our separation.

Teresa Chin Jones, a Foreign Service science officer from 1974 to 1998, is an environmental, science and technology writer and analyst who lives in Virginia with her retired Senior Foreign Service husband, David. The author of Tales of the Monkey King *(Pacific View Press, 2008) and the forthcoming* Forever Tandem, *she is working on projects based on the Chinese epic* Three Kingdoms *(San Guo).*

Still, this was much more than American soldiers had in World Wars I and II.

My own parents had a searing experience with separation. Both were members of the Chinese Foreign Service in the early 20th century. When they left China in 1939, my mother didn't see or speak to her mother for 40 years. We don't yearn for *those* good old days!

It takes an entire family to support a taxing work schedule.

Know Thyself — and Put Family First

Having fled as a child across the Soviet Union before becoming a refugee/immigrant in the United States, I was anti-communist to the bone. I still vividly remember a lesson my mother taught me about communism. While watching a 1947 May Day parade in Tashkent, we heard the crowd chant "Stalin is our father; Stalin is our mother." My mother then told me that the true evil of communists was their desire not just to control your body but to have your soul.

While I understood the need for personal sacrifice, I also realized that our children needed a lot from their parents. So, very early in our careers, I chose less demanding work and taught the children to respect the 12-hour, six-day-a-week workdays their father had. It takes an entire family to support a demanding work schedule.

When my parents came to the United States and started all over again as refugees in 1950, they worked five shifts a day between them at a factory. And I started babysitting my brother when I was 9 and he was 4. Given that background, it wasn't hard to show our children that they were lucky to enjoy as much of their parents' support as they did.

It is a throwaway line but still true that, on your deathbed, you will not say, "If only I had spent more time at the office." So push back against those who seek your uncompensated extra hours — and remember that your children will determine your old age home.

In that regard, schools are vital. If at all possible, keep your children with you. Let it be you who make the "mistakes" in their upbringing, rather than some for-profit overseas school. And if your children will go to school at post, ensure they receive as "American" an education as possible unless you don't see them making their lives in the United States. Our children wanted to be Americans as adults, and so they are.

Sexual Fidelity: The "Elephant in the Room"

Life is hard on marriage. Statistically, divorce rates are no higher for the Foreign Service than other professions, but separations and temptation certainly don't make marriage easier. To be blunt, most of the marital failures I've seen, and the concurrent career/family wreckage, have stemmed from adultery.

We are all tempted to stray; it is how we respond to temptation that makes a difference. Keep in mind that it is easier never to start that enticing extramarital relationship than to mend your marriage after it.

If there are problems with the marriage, then focus on solving them. Even if you cannot solve the problems and the marriage ends, it breaks more cleanly and gives everyone a chance to begin anew without the burden of betrayal. Spare your second spouse the onus of being the "home wrecker."

Recognize that Life Is Tough and Unfair

Chances are that neither you nor your spouse (regardless of whether or not you are a tandem couple) will get all the jobs you want and deserve. All of us have "lost" assignments to someone less qualified; and making lemons from lemonade (since you cannot "grieve" an assignment) is a standard professional diplomatic skill. Agonizing over lost opportunities is futile, and only hurts you.

Similarly, both marriage partners rarely reach the same level of success. The odds are very high there will not be two ambassadorships in your career(s), so one or both of you may have to sacrifice a cherished assignment for the sake of the other. If you realize that you can't accept this kind of trade-off, you may need to rethink your marriage or your current career.

I gave up scientific research, but doubt that the world lost another Madame Curie. Instead, I applied my professional expertise to the Foreign Service, so that I could retire knowing that I had earned my pension and enjoy the fact that our three children had no university debt — not even after attending an Ivy League school.

You gain professional satisfaction from three areas: the post to which you are assigned, the position you hold and the supervisor you have. You gain *personal* satisfaction from your spouse and family life. If there is a crisis, which counts more?

I think of achieving work-life balance as personal engineering — with the same trade-offs that all engineers face in getting things done. Taking yet another hardship assignment and dragging your family along (or doing it alone) may advance your career, but at the expense of your loved ones.

At the same time, under our personnel system there is no guarantee that sacrificing family needs will lead to promotions. Family hardships are not sacrifices on the Foreign Service promotion altar. Keep in mind that the area of the world you love and the hard language you have mastered are *your* choices — not those of your families. It is not by accident (or due to the daunting testing regime) that few Foreign Service children follow their parents' footsteps for their own careers.

Weigh Your Trade-Offs

Diplomats are supposed to be defined by their foreign-language ability, but the reality is that virtually all of your overseas contacts will speak English better than you will ever speak their language. For many of us, learning a foreign language is akin to chipping stone with your tongue; consequently, knowing a "hard" one can be a trap. Devoting years to mastering the "in" language of the moment at a 3/3 level can ultimately prove useless to your career — and it may get you sent (minus family) to an unpleasant assignment.

Remember the legions of Vietnamese-language speakers who were going to win hearts and minds through the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program more than 40 years ago? And how many speakers of Dari, Pashto, Urdu or Iraqi Arabic will we need in 2022? So become proficient in a world (French, Spanish, etc.) language, which you may be able to employ in retirement far more than you would Korean or Mongolian. Unless you genuinely enjoy plugging away at acquiring new languages, or have "Richard Burton"-level linguistic skills, leave more exotic tongues to those who yearn to be modern-day 19th-century explorers.

Look to Your Future

Live modestly abroad — or as modestly as you can, anyway. In many developing countries, your children will associate with the first rank of society in lavish accommodations with servants. They can easily develop a false sense of status that makes for a real comedown upon re-entry to the U.S., where they are just the children of a government bureaucrat. Our savings allowed us to buy a house in 1972 when we couldn't afford to rent. We still live there today.

On your deathbed you almost certainly will not say, "If only I had spent more time at the office."

Think carefully about where to live in the United States. Particularly for a tandem couple, it is critical to live near where you work (we lived four miles from State, a 10-minute drive door to door). If you spend an hour each way in commuting time, that costs you 10 hours a week, or a full workweek each month.

There is no way that we could have managed child care and two careers if we'd also had a long commute. When money was tight and my husband's hours were erratic, living close to work enabled me to pick him up without much sacrifice. As a bonus, the children loved these jaunts to get Daddy. And we kept the house, not just as an investment but as an anchor for our children to know where "home" is, regardless of foreign travels.

Also keep in mind that the Foreign Service is not a lifetime career. With our up-or-out system, the odds are that you will leave the Service in your mid-50s with a modest pension, and many life responsibilities still extant (mortgage, children's education, alimony/child support, etc.). So while working those 50-plus-hour weeks, be aware that you are likely to need a substantial second career, and plan accordingly.

Last but not least: No matter how many times you are asked, keep your cool when you have to explain yet again to strangers, relatives or friends that you do not work for the Foreign Legion or the Forestry Service. After all, diplomacy is to be practiced at home, as well as abroad. ■

Trailing Tandem

Perhaps one day no trailing tandem who wants to work will have to take leave without pay to join a spouse or partner at post.

By Clayton Bond

I don't recall ever feeling as lonely and sad as during my first night in Singapore, Sunday, Aug. 16, 2009. True, I was in a city-state where things worked; a fully developed, orderly, clean country, which couldn't have been more different from the one to which we were previously posted. But Ted wasn't there. And I had no easy way of communicating with him that night — I had no e-mail access yet in my apartment, and didn't yet know how to dial Jakarta from my home phone.

It was just me, my two carry-on bags and a welcome kit from the embassy with bed linens, towels, plates, glasses and related items to get me started until my own things arrived. Why did I decide to do this? Was it worth it?

We had always known that if our Foreign Service careers both continued to advance, it would be increasingly difficult to get assigned to the same city. But that problem had seemed hypothetical until nearly one year before, when we were bidding. And because we were both up for promotion, the process was more complicated than usual.

We thought it would be helpful to have some principles to guide us in thinking about which jobs we wanted and where we hoped to serve. One of the main ones was to work in the same city. And so we lobbied. Then Ted got promoted and quickly pursued positions for which his more senior grade now allowed him to compete. He was offered an assignment as deputy chief of mission of a very large mission, but one of the conditions was that I would not be able to work there, due to nepotism concerns.

Ted had just 24 hours to decide whether to accept the offer. We were visiting his sister in the United Arab Emirates at the time, and agonized over the decision. But we ultimately decided he should accept.

Now I had to decide what I would do. If I accompanied Ted to Jakarta, what would my status be? (This was

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eight months before Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's groundbreaking June 18, 2009, announcement that same-sex partners of Foreign Service personnel would henceforth be entitled to Eligible Family Member status — a major leap toward equality.)

What would I do for health insurance? As a member of a same-sex couple, federal law denies me the option of being covered under Ted's government-provided plan. Would I be okay with putting my career second? How would I keep myself busy? And could I deal with not earning my own money? Would I feel as though I were being "kept"?

I love the Foreign Service, but I found that I was willing to give it up if I had to choose between my career and my family.

Some friends noticed there were management-coned positions available at my grade in Singapore, which, according to maps and airline schedules, appeared a short journey away from Jakarta. Maybe a commuting marriage was possible. During the week, we could focus on our respective jobs and then share the weekends. It seemed a workable compromise.

Time Management 101

Almost as soon as I made the decision, I began to have doubts. Ted and I had never before lived apart as a couple. But I had committed to taking the position, so we began to think earnestly about how we were going to make it work.

We would see each other at least three weekends per month, and would not invite houseguests so we could have those days to ourselves. And during the week, we would speak every day about mundane things, as couples experienced in long-distance commuting advised.

Then the reality came crashing down. We went back to Washington for training between assignments. Mine was eight weeks longer than Ted's. We were full of angst the night he left.

Remarkably, Ted and I managed to achieve and even surpass our goal of seeing each other three weekends per month. But our weekends weren't always our own. For instance, I soon found myself coordinating the transportation arrangements for a U.S. delegation, headed by President Barack Obama, that would be attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, hosted that year by Singapore. That entailed long hours of extensive planning, countless phone calls and constant monitoring of my BlackBerry for several weeks.

Meanwhile, Ted and his team in Jakarta were contending with several natural disasters, terrorist bombings and other challenges. Those pressures rarely allowed him to be away from the telephone and BlackBerry, or to miss meetings.

What our friends had told us about the importance of speaking every day about mundane events was true. It helped us feel up-to-date on what was going on in each other's lives, and helped lessen the distance.

One trade-off for me, however, was not going out in Singapore as often as I might otherwise have done. We spoke in the evenings, often when Ted was en route to an event, stuck in traffic. (He usually phoned me because initiating or receiving a call on my cell phone proved terribly expensive compared to him calling the land line.) What little I explored of Singapore took place during lunch or on the few weekends we had together there.

Be True to Yourself and Your Partner

Because of Ted's responsibilities in Indonesia, he was not as free to travel outside of the country as I was. So I spent most weekends with him there, and that began to feel more like home.

Though on the map Singapore and Jakarta are very close, I found that the actual commute was much more time-consuming and stressful than I had imagined. Without checked baggage, the commute was about five hours each way: a 30-minute trip from the embassy to the airport right after work on Fridays, check-in at least 45 minutes before the flight, 1.5 hours in the air (assuming no flight delays), 30 minutes from the gate to the taxi, then a 1.5-hour journey from the airport to our home. And then I reversed the process on Sundays. Occasionally, I missed flights, which was costly in terms of time, hassle (when not flying Singapore Airlines) and money.

Despite our best efforts, the commute was taking a real toll on our marriage. During a Thanksgiving trip to Vietnam, we spent a weekend in Nha Trang — a rare weekend for just the two of us. That weekend brought to the surface my growing fear that Ted and I were beginning to drift apart, a thought that terrified me.

I had been wondering for some time whether it was worth the hassle for both of us, and now I had my answer: no. Shortly after I returned to Singapore, I informed my boss, apologized and began the arduous effort to curtail.

Perhaps that decision betrays a certain generational sentiment: I love the Foreign Service, but I found that I was willing to give it up if I had to choose between my career and my family. And it nearly came to that. The bureau ended up opposing my curtailment and persuaded the assignment panel accordingly. On appeal, my request for leave without pay was approved.

Some trailing tandems find creative ways to continue working in active-duty status. But there should be an official support mechanism for such situations.

Making the System Work Better

I learned a lot through that process. Most important, I learned the value of being true to yourself and to your relationship first. Once you make that decision, everything else will work out, somehow, and a lot of personal and bureaucratic heartache can be avoided.

I also found that there were a number of trailing tandems who chose at the outset to accompany their spouses, and that individuals in the Department of State, on an ad hoc basis, helped them find creative ways to continue working in active-duty status. There was one person in particular, in a regional bureau, whose name kept coming up as the go-to person for facilitating these sorts of work arrangements — which wasn't, as far as I know, among her official work responsibilities.

Still, considering the growing number of tandem couples in the Foreign Service, and the financial and other benefits they bring the department, there really should be someone at State (perhaps in the Career Development and Assignments Office) whose official responsibilities include actively identifying opportunities for trailing tandems who desire to continue working.

By applying the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 and with the backing of senior management, it might be possible for that person to formally survey offices in the department and find out whether there might be projects that trailing tandems could complete while overseas, using Skype and other technology, including remote access to the intranet. This could be a coordinated effort, building on the department's Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas policy, which provides a formal mechanism for Washington, D.C.-based Civil Service or Foreign Service employees to continue working there, even as they accompany their FS spouse or partner on an overseas assignment.

Though technology presents opportunities, the bureaucracy does not always eagerly welcome change. There is institutional skepticism about teleworking. And there are those who are afraid of the future. But with bold leadership, such as Sec. Clinton demonstrated with respect to benefits for same-sex domestic partners, perhaps one day no trailing tandem who wants to work will have to take leave without pay to join a spouse or partner at post. ■

NAVIGATING LIFE'S UNEXPECTED REALITIES

NO MATTER HOW CAREFULLY A FAMILY PREPARES FOR AN UNACCOMPANIED TOUR, LIFE HAS A WAY OF THROWING CURVES AT THEM.

BY JEN DINOIA

Six months ago, nearly to the day, our family embarked upon the adventure of a lifetime: an unaccompanied tour. We had known for several years that a UT was in the offing, and finally decided during the summer 2009 bidding cycle that it was our turn for one. So my husband, Peter, with my blessing, set off on a yearlong tour in Iraq with nothing more than a bit of heavy-duty work gear, a fancy-pants laptop and a heavy heart.

Not long after he arrived in Baghdad, I realized that even though we conversed regularly via Skype and our landline, we weren't always *connecting*. It didn't take me long to figure out that date nights could be arranged — they just wouldn't necessarily involve a babysitter, Open Table reservations and a gamble that we could snag good seats before the movie started.

Instead, those occasions would involve setting aside time that would be just for the two of us. We agreed we would not discuss work or home issues, and one of us might even enjoy a glass of wine during the conversation.

Despite the fact that it was my idea, I bailed on the first attempt. How could I do it? How could it possibly work? We were 6,213 miles apart. Was I a complete moron for thinking I could pull off the creativity and outside-the-box thinking needed? We texted back and forth, but the date died before it started. He didn't really have the time, and I didn't have the guts to admit I was disappointed that I couldn't live up to the new reality of our lives.

After a restless night's sleep, I realized that I was too busy comparing our new life to our old one. The problem was not the lack of his presence, but the lack of my understanding that it *could* work — just not the same way.

Jen Dinoia is the spouse of Peter Dinoia, a special agent with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, whom she has accompanied to domestic postings in Virginia and California and overseas postings in Caracas and Reykjavik. In addition to having worked overseas for the U.S. embassy in Caracas and at the International School of Iceland, she is a long-time volunteer with Associates of the Foreign Service Worldwide. She is the founder and moderator of the DS Spouse Yahoo group, and also moderates the Livelines listserv. The couple has three children. In her spare time, she can be found blogging at www.dinoiafamily.typepad.com/.

That evening, my glass of wine was breathing, and by our appointed date time, I was but a click away from our Skype call for an unusual but still very enjoyable date night.

That experience was a revelation for me. I realized that the preparations we had made had been proper in some respect, but had in no way truly set me up for this year. I thought that moving across the country from San Francisco, buying a house in our old neighborhood and returning to familiar territory would somehow make the transition smooth.

The problem was not Peter's absence, but my lack of understanding that our lives could still work — just not the same way.

On My Own…

While I cannot deny that those steps helped, I failed to grasp just how much I would truly be on my own. I had endured experiences in the past with long temporary-duty assignments, as well as Peter's three years on the Secretary of State's protective detail, so I thought that I had it all mapped out. But I suddenly had zero time to myself, the kids' birthdays began coming around, the house was not shaping up as I planned, and I began to stress about Peter being over there.

Originally, I hadn't planned to send our son Nicholas to Montessori instruction so soon after relocating across the country and moving into a new house, though we hoped he would eventually go to the same school his older sisters Caitlin and Kelsey had attended. But it quickly became clear that he had no interest in unpacking, beyond strewing his toys around as many rooms as possible. At the same time, his sisters needed to get out of the house and spent their time at nature camp, animal camp and the pool. When they were able to help, it wasn't the kind of "get Nicholas out of the house and exhaust him while having fun" help that I truly needed.

I finally realized this and sent off a quick e-mail to Cait's old school. Within a week, I had registered Nicholas for five days a week. That instantly freed up three hours a day for exercise, unpacking, naps (I was averaging only four or five hours of sleep per night), grocery shopping or whatever needed doing that Nicholas just wouldn't enjoy. The pangs of guilt I initially felt dissipated as soon as I realized that he was fine at Montessori — and that I simply had no other way of having time to myself during the day.

Hitting Our Stride

A mere four weeks after Peter left home, Cait's birthday came around. A few days before the big day, she mentioned that her only wish was to have her father celebrate it with her. I was at a loss, as I knew there was no way he could physically be with us, or eat the birthday cake with her.

It was now Peter's turn to save the day. He remembered seeing slices of cake in the cafeteria and snagged one just before leaving dinner that night. He then set his alarm for 4:30 a.m., which would nicely jibe with our celebration. As soon as the Skype call went through, Peter surprised Cait not only with the cake, but also with a candle for his piece. We sang to her, everyone blew out their candles — and we checked another "How do we?" item off our list.

A few weeks after school started, I thought we were finally hitting our stride. Not everything was perfect, but afterschool activities began to pick up, friends were being made and we were enjoying our first Virginia fall in years. Then, out of the blue, Little Guy — as we affectionately called Nicholas — changed.

In retrospect, I suppose the process had actually started in early September, but I'd brushed it off then. But after Cait's choral activities ramped up to include an extracurricular performance choir and voice lessons, things *really* spiraled out of control.

Nicholas became unruly and unhappy, and seemed constantly exhausted. Waking him up for school was a challenge at best. Meanwhile, the choir was demanding a lot of Cait (and would soon require four hours a month of my time), as well as quite a bit of money.

After desperately trying (and failing, as she was too exhausted) to get her to a mandatory Saturday practice, I realized that we were just all drained. It was too much stress in a year that already had taken a lot out of us all. So we politely declined the choir position at the end of the trial period.

Within a week, Nicholas had nearly returned to his much happier self, as his nighttime schedule had been dependent on Cait's practices. (She had started to make new friends in the choir, but was also overwhelmed by the large commitment.) We had weathered yet another unaccompanied tour storm and, by that point in time, the first week

of October, were sure we had this year all figured out. Or did we?

New Challenges

My 20th high school reunion fell during the first weekend of August. My father thoughtfully flew up to watch the girls while Little Guy and I had our own adventures over Labor Day weekend in Memphis. Earlier that week, I'd felt a lump in my right breast and, even more frightening, a bit of pain. I consulted Dr. Google immediately and tried to console myself with the notion that most painful lumps are not cancerous. I went on the trip, enjoyed myself and resolved to see an obstretician/gynecologist once the kids were settled in school.

Four weeks later, I was again trying to calm myself while being subjected to three mammograms, two ultrasounds and a fine-needle biopsy in a two-hour period — all while Peter was more than 6,000 miles away.

I had not told him about the lump, for I was completely convinced it was nothing. But "nothing" soon turned into everything. Late on the afternoon of Oct. 8, I was given the official diagnosis of not one, but *two* types of breast cancer. By 6:45 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 11, Peter was walking into our house for what he hoped would be a short trip home. Instead, he curtailed from his tour in Baghdad at the end of December and accepted a job at Diplomatic Security headquarters, since we now have a few uncertainties in our future.

We worked so hard to make this year go smoothly. We thought we had prepared in every way possible, and when things didn't work out, we tried our best to make them right. Little did we know that life had so much more in store for us than the usual realities of an unaccompanied tour.

Instead of looking forward to Peter's second rest-and-recreation trip, now we are navigating a completely different type of situation — one we never expected. While the unaccompanied tour in Iraq was sometimes difficult, we always found solutions to our problems.

As we embark on a new set of challenges, I only hope the same will be true again. ■

STAYING CONNECTED WHILE DEPLOYED

MODERN COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAVEL HAVE GREATLY ALTERED THE FOREIGN SERVICE EXPERIENCE. BUT ONE FSO WONDERS, IS IT REALLY ALL FOR THE BETTER?

BY KEITH W. MINES

Modern communications and travel make contemporary deployments fundamentally different from those of previous generations. My father didn't even see my sister, Gayle, until she was 2 years old, and didn't know of her birth until he received a curt telegram weeks later in New Guinea.

But when I deployed to Iraq in 2003, I was never more than two or three days away from some form of contact with my family back in Budapest. In retrospect, however, I sometimes wonder if less communication may be better.

The Perils of Chat Mode

For the first few months in-country I borrowed whatever Internet access I could find from military and Coalition Provisional Authority colleagues. But fairly early on, we had an "Internet in a box" system installed in Ramadi that gave us nearly unimpeded access to the Net. Once

they heard that, our kids convinced me that my wife, Cecile, and I should start to "chat."

This apparently works well for teenagers with superior computer skills and little of substance to say. But, among other things, I never adapted to the fact that you were answering your chat partner while she was composing her next bit, so the two conversations never quite lined up. One conversation went something like this:

HER: How's it going?

HIM: All right, how are you?

HER: Are you working hard or are you working smart?

HIM: I'm fine, making real progress.

HER: You didn't answer my question.

HIM: We had some real progress today with the city council.

HER: Number-One Son has been bucking me on schoolwork.

HIM: Working smart, definitely, real smart.

HER: No he's not working hard, or smart. I said he is

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bucking me on school.

HIM: You aren't interested in the city council?

HER: I have my own city council here, with four citizens, and they need their father to help sort them out.

HIM: From Iraq?

HER: You have Internet contact with the kids?

HIM: Yes, I have . . .

HER: I talked to Katie today. She and Seb are doing well, but Seb's parents are not.

HIM: I'm happy to connect with the kids; what's the issue?

HER: They are not in good health; real problems with walking now.

HIM: The kids are having problems walking? I thought it was just schoolwork.

HER: Are you paying attention to this conversation at all? Seb's dad has some health issues.

HIM: We got a new guy coming onto the team today — very impressive.

HER: That's nice. Is he any good working with kids remotely on school work?

HIM: He's having trouble getting around, walking? That'll be tough.

HER: Great, your new guy has trouble walking. What the heck kind of a system do you have out there that they send you people that can't get around? No wonder you don't have time to help the kids.

HIM: He gets around fine, and he will be a real asset as we set up the city councils.

HER: Impressive in math, science or English composition?

HIM: The City Council members I have met didn't impress with any math or science skills, but I can check. Anyone studying Arabic?

HER: You didn't answer my question about the new guy.

HIM: Can we go back to letters and leave this chat thing alone?

HER: Coward.

HIM: Really, I need to get to a meeting. Will write you later.

HER: Don't tell me, a "team" meeting?

HIM: Right, and my new guy is not a coward just because he has trouble walking.

After that, we stuck with e-mail, supplemented by the random face-to-face visit. But even that was fraught with challenges.

I took the opportunity to get home for Christmas. I felt guilty since my military colleagues were not allowed a similar break, but not guilty enough not to do it.

Home for the Holidays

In December 2003 I took the opportunity to get home for Christmas. I felt guilty since my military colleagues were not allowed a similar break, but not guilty enough not to do it. I had met several times with Hungarian diplomats who had traveled to Ramadi to investigate the killing of a Hungarian citizen at a U.S. army checkpoint. They mentioned a direct two-hour flight out of Damascus. Including the seven-hour drive to Damascus, the trip is about 10 hours door to door — compared to the 48 hours it would have taken to drive to Baghdad, fly via military air to Kuwait, and then take a commercial flight to Budapest through Frankfurt.

So on Dec. 23, 2003, I donned a kafeeyah, bundled myself in the backseat of a black BMW and drove with Samir, the governor's translator's brother, to a house in Ramadi where we switched vehicles. We then drove to his house where we had breakfast, switched vehicles again and then proceeded to the Syrian border. The drive was uneventful until we arrived at the border itself. I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw the border post, knowing there were U.S. soldiers on the Iraqi side that we could rely on in a pinch.

Suddenly, without explanation, the driver turned around and went back into Iraq. I asked what he was doing. "Petrol," he said. "It is a fraction of the cost in Iraq. We need to fill up."

"Look," I said, "I'll pay the difference, whatever it costs."

"No, Mr. Keith, no need. I know a guy who knows a guy, who has a barrel of gas. It will just take a minute." And so we gassed up, at 17 cents a gallon.

The border post itself was right out of central casting, with long lines, lots of stamps, and absolute bedlam inside and out. The confusion was not helped by the appearance of the first-ever American diplomat crossing into Syria from Iraq. The border officials were not at all sure

what to do with me. But they were incredibly professional and gracious, seating me first here and then there, and without a lot of fanfare finally just stamping me through and wishing me a good day. Samir's brother needed a bit more time to be processed, but we were soon on our way.

My body was in Budapest, but my mind was still fully in Iraq.

In another hour and a half we were in the airport in Damascus, and three hours later I was on my way to Budapest, arriving at 6 a.m. Not wanting to wake anyone, I took a cab and walked up to my apartment on Joszef Heghyi Utca. Remarkably, I could still find my key, and walked in the door. My daughter Rachel's room is the closest to the staircase, and she is the lightest sleeper. She practically flew down the stairs and into my arms. It was good to be home.

So Near, and Yet So Far

It was Christmas Eve, and Cecile had invited Ambassador Walker and his wife for dinner. They had arrived at post after my departure, and I wasn't sure he would have a sense of humor about my TDY. But, in fact, he saw it as very much the right thing to do. As it turned out, it was a very pleasant evening overall.

Still, the difficulty I felt that night shifting gears from the increasingly mean streets of Ramadi to a comfortable apartment in Budapest persisted. And, as with the chat system, Cecile and I never quite got on the same wavelength. I thought it was enough to have made the effort to be home; she thought that after all she had done to cover for me and then prepare for my arrival, I should be able to give her my undivided attention.

One fateful afternoon in a coffee shop she found me drifting off, not focusing on the conversation — certainly not focused on whatever issues she was raising. She was right: my mind was elsewhere, working through, again and again, how we would structure the Fallujah Council in such a way that it would tamp down the hostility there; how we would engage the essential Kharbit clan in the Ramadi caucus; and how we would cover the river cities out to the border for their elections without anyone getting killed in the process.

My body was in Budapest, but my mind was still fully in Iraq. That went over even less well than our standard Mars-Venus interactions.

Is Less More?

The return trip was an amazingly simple reversal of the trip to Budapest — a two-hour flight to Damascus, met by Samir's brother, and an eight-hour drive to the base. This time we went straight in without the car-switching.

As always, though, when we returned to the base in anything other than a Suburban, it was nerve-wracking to make the approach to the gate, not knowing what new system might be in effect, always leery of how the guards would react to an American walking up to the gate.

Then they checked me in, and I was "home." We immediately got started on the caucuses, and I was quickly reminded why I had been so consumed with the project while in Budapest.

In the end, I wonder if my father's system of a clean two-year separation wouldn't be easier on everyone. ■

SHARING CUSTODY, DIPLOMATICALLY

A DIVORCE SETTLEMENT GAVE THESE FS CHILDREN TIME WITH BOTH PARENTS AND THE UNEXPECTED GIFT OF TRAVEL SKILLS.

BY VICTORIA HIRSCHLAND

Less than a year after my Foreign Service husband and I divorced, I had to put my babies on a plane to travel 18 hours to see him. Well, they weren't exactly babies, being 11 and 13 at the time, but they seemed so young as we hugged at the security gate.

The children and I had talked and packed, and I had tucked emergency lists away in their pockets. Then I took them to the airport, where strangers hung pouches around their necks and marched them through security.

I have escorted them to those gates for seven years now, always with some trepidation. Yet my sons have grown to be capable young men, adept at handling airports all over the world. Though divorce is not the way I would have given them this skill, watching these boys grow tall and strong and confident, ready to take their places in the world, has been a source of joy.

When my ex and I chose divorce, we also chose to minimize the pain of it for our sons. Our final divorce decree included a joint custody arrangement, even though we knew we would always live thousands of miles apart. Our older son, Richard, recently confirmed that this decision was important to him: "I would have hated it if you fought over us. Then we would have had trouble seeing Dad."

The joint custody agreement proved important in a world ruled by the Foreign Affairs Manual, because it allowed the children to be on my ex's orders, which meant that they could get regular, government-paid visits to post, or even decide to stay at post, if that became appropriate.

My ex-husband has a penchant for postings involving at least 24 hours of travel from the continental United States. I returned to my hometown in Wyoming, which added about six hours to any trip abroad. I was to be the primary caregiver, but visitation would be liberal.

Mostly, this meant that the children had to travel for the summer, and when possible, one school break a year, to those distant postings. Twenty-four to 40 hours of travel for each trip were not unusual for our children, from age 11 and up.

Victoria Hirschland was married to an FSO for 17 years, and during that time bore two sons and served in the Middle East, Europe, South Asia (twice) and Africa. Her sons have since traveled to spend time with their father on tours in South America (twice), Central Asia and South Asia. A return to Africa is pending.

In the Air

How did these trips affect the children? "The first time I traveled by myself, I was a little worried," our older son, Richard, says. "But we had done it so much with you and Dad that everything went smoothly." Since he was the older brother, I had put him in charge of the tickets, passports, money and the like. My stoic younger son, Andrew, had little to say about the experience, yet he gladly took on responsibilities as he matured.

At the same time, Richard says he saw little benefit from seeing so many different countries. It was more about seeing his dad. Andrew agreed.

Still, my ex and I didn't always agree on travel arrangements, and there are times when a mother feels she must protect her children. At one point, he wanted the children to fly to post for the summer even though a voluntary departure had been ordered. But State wouldn't pay for it, and I refused to put the children on a plane. My ex acceded and arranged to leave post before July 4 (rare for a general services officer) so he could have his summer with the kids on home leave.

Another problem came up when the children could not make it home without an overnight hotel stay en route. Though their father felt they were old enough to do it on their own, I disagreed, and pointed out that hotel policy (no unaccompanied minors) would not allow it in any case.

He agreed to pay for a flight attendant to stay with them in an adjoining room, which turned out to be the right thing to do. Even though the boys were adept at ordering room service and knew to stay in their room, they still had difficulties with alarm clocks. The escort got them to their early morning connecting flight on time.

As the boys grew older, we had fewer disagreements over their transportation arrangements. Even when we had disputes, I did my best to vent to friends and not the children. Though we were no longer married, I had no desire to denigrate my ex in front of his children: it would have been unfair to him and especially to the boys, who should never have to choose between parents. I can truly say that I am delighted that they have a loving relationship with him.

The Value of Lists

So how did I cope with putting my children on dozens of long-haul flights over the years? I made lists. Each child and each bag would carry a complete list of contacts, including their father and me, the mission and all their aunts and uncles.

Then there would be the itinerary, which we spent time going over before each trip. I stressed how to read it; how much time they had between flights; what to do first (find the gate), next (get food), and last (get on the flight and settle in).

Passports, credit cards and cash hung around their necks and were never to be taken off. The travel documents almost never got lost. In trips involving a long London layover, their father sent them his international phone via FedEx, so they could call either of us at any time. A couple of brief calls were made just because the child was lonely.

In the early years, our sons always traveled together, and as "unaccompanied minors" were walked through the trip by airline employees. But even in subsequent years, the airlines would often scoop them up if there was a flight delay and take them to the children's room for supervision.

A couple of nights were spent on plastic-encased mattresses on the floor of the Denver children's room, when weather made them miss their flights. Ideal? No, but they were supervised. I expect that if they had gotten lost in the airport, and missed their flight, the same would have been done. I also knew that if they had trouble in a foreign airport, there was always a U.S. mission that could be called, and the children would be taken care of.

A year ago, I was lucky enough to have them for Christmas break. We flew together, and then I learned what savvy travelers they had become at ages 17 and 19. They truly did not need me to make any arrangements. They knew how to pack their bags and what they needed to carry on.

They nailed the entire security routine, from shoes to computers, and told me to stop nagging them, though I reminded them that just a year earlier, one of them had forgotten his passport, cash and credit card at security after clearing customs in Atlanta. (Something about a flight delay from London and a rush for the connection — and yes, the Transportation Security Administration did get everything back to us.)

Through kindness and agreement to do what was best for our children, despite occasional spats, my ex-husband and I worked out ways for him to have substantial time with the boys every year. And every year when they left for six to eight weeks with Dad, I would shed tears over my temporarily empty nest.

Now they are adults who know their father as well as their mother. And I know that this unexpected gift of travel skills and time with both their parents will stay in their hearts the rest of their lives. ■

Calling All Foreign Service Authors!

The October 2011 issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* will include a list of recently published books written by Foreign Service-affiliated authors.

FS authors whose books have been published in 2010 or 2011, and have not been featured in the roundup, are invited to send a copy of the book, along with a press release or backgrounder on the book and author to:

Susan Maitra
Foreign Service Journal
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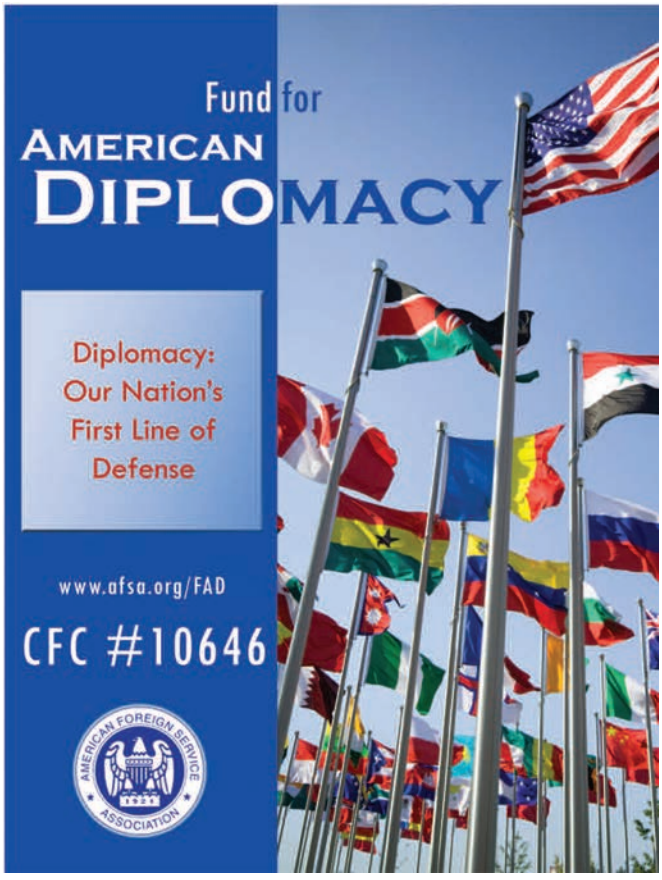

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WORK-MILK BALANCE: THE STATE OF PUMPING

BROADENING ITS SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS IS ONE WAY THE STATE DEPARTMENT CAN HELP EMPLOYEES FIND AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE.

BY ELIZABETH POWER

In certain circles you hear stories about these women all the time. There was the one who did it in a bathroom at the Foreign Ministry after delivering a démarche. Another one did it at her desk, practically in plain sight of her colleagues in neighboring cubicles. One even joked that she might do it while interviewing at the consular window. Although not an illicit or even particularly controversial activity, pumping breast milk in the Foreign Service context can sometimes approach the stuff of legends.

The advantages of breastfeeding are well documented, with both the breastfed child and the breastfeeding mother gaining many health benefits over the course of the nursing relationship. Being able to provide milk for their babies has become an important element of work-life balance for many Foreign Service moms — it's a key way for them to continue nurturing their children even when they can't physically be with them. Employers who support breastfeeding or pumping in the workplace receive tangible benefits such as reduced health care costs and fewer days of sick leave used, as well as intangible ones like empowered, satisfied employees.

The Department of State must continue to broaden its support for breastfeeding mothers to reap these same benefits.

Basic Needs and FS Challenges

A pumping mother doesn't need much accommodation from her employer: just an electrical outlet, a little bit of semi-private space, and a 15-20 minute break every few hours. Access to a sink and refrigerator are helpful, as well; but for those moms who find space and time at a premium, hand sanitizer and a cooler bag can make up for that. In an unclassified, domestic office setting, meeting these needs is usually possible. Supervisors allow for breaks to pump, outlets are well-placed, and refrigerators and sinks are readily available.

Elizabeth Power joined the Foreign Service in 1998 and is currently deputy chief of mission in Maseru. Her previous assignments include Lagos, Montevideo, Ciudad Juarez and Washington, D.C. Since 2008, she has been an accredited leader with La Leche League International, a global mother-to-mother breastfeeding support organization.

The challenges for the Foreign Service mother often come when she is working in an overseas or classified environment. Although there may be access to electricity, some posts are wired for both 110 and 220 volts, and more than one breast pump has been destroyed by an outlet with mislabeled voltage.

There is also no consistency in the application of rules about the introduction of electric pumps into classified space. While some posts have allowed them as randomly procured and/or scanned items, others take a firm stance that they may not be introduced into the classified workspace.

Finding space for pumping tends to be the biggest concern. It can be particularly difficult for students and those working in cubicles, shared offices and classified areas. Not all mothers are comfortable pumping in a cubicle, although some have done so discreetly under a nursing cover; and it's often not practical to ask colleagues to vacate a shared workspace. Medical units, both overseas and domestic, are often designated as pumping space. However, they are not always available, procedures for accessing them are sometimes not clear, and they may be located at a prohibitive distance from the mother's own work area.

Space is particularly at a premium at overseas posts. It can be difficult for post management to justify setting aside a designated space, especially in a very small post or if locally employed staff members are not generally requesting accommodation. But the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations has acknowledged the need by recently incorporating wellness rooms into the design of several new overseas facilities, including Bucharest and Dubai. These rooms are intended for several purposes, among them accommodating the needs of pumping mothers. This is an important step forward, but does not address the space challenges in existing facilities.

Fortunately, for most mothers working for State, flexibility in work scheduling is not an issue. Supervisors are often supportive of their need to pump every few hours. Mothers who are able to express milk at their desk and continue working while doing so have an advantage, while mothers with very fixed schedules or those serving the public, such as consular officers or students in long-term training, may have to be a bit more creative in getting their supervisor's buy-in. Generally, however, it can be done. The fact that pumping is a temporary need for each individual mother can make it an easier sell to a reluctant supervisor.

Employers who support breastfeeding mothers in the workplace receive tangible benefits such as reduced health care costs and fewer days of sick leave used.

Effective Employee Advocacy

Most of the Foreign Service breastfeeding mothers I know have quietly made pumping work for them in their local context, doing what mothers all over the world have done for as long as there have been children: meeting the child's needs the best they can. There are a few women, however, whose efforts to find accommodation stand out.

Following a virtual lockdown on activity in the wake of 9/11, the USAID mission in Tel Aviv found itself in the midst of a baby boom, with 18 babies due in June and July 2002. When FSO Erin McKee, the only American in this group, returned to work after the birth of her daughter, she developed a routine of expressing milk in her private office. Her many locally employed colleagues, however, were not so fortunate. Many were considering ending breastfeeding altogether because of the difficulties they experienced in pumping in the office's main bathroom and in storing their expressed milk in the common refrigerator.

McKee took up the challenge on their behalf. She used policy from the Office of Personnel Management on supporting breastfeeding in the workplace to advocate with her front office for provision of a dedicated room for mothers — a "pumping station," as one of them put it. Although post management was reluctant at first, McKee successfully lobbied them to agree to provide a room with outlets, chairs, a sink and a refrigerator. The mothers eagerly used this room, and management found that their productivity at work rose as a result.

McKee's effective advocacy resulted in what may have been the department's first-ever dedicated pumping room overseas.

Outstanding Management Support

Some post managers stand out for their support on this issue. The development of lactation support at the Foreign Service Institute is one such example. In 2001, I was

one of several pumping students at FSI. The other mothers and I found each other through shared use of the office of an instructor who was particularly supportive of lactation, happily vacating her space whenever one of us was on a break and needed to pump. While this worked as a temporary measure, it was certainly not an ideal long-term solution. So as a group, we decided to approach FSI management.

In a meeting with Executive Director Catherine Russell, we learned that a lactation room was already included in the design for FSI's new building. As a stopgap measure, Russell offered to work with her facilities team to retrofit handicapped toilet stalls throughout FSI with outlets and shelves, and the first stall was completed within weeks. Pumping in a bathroom is not particularly comfortable, and there may be sanitary concerns with this arrangement, but it offered another option to mothers who struggled with finding a vacant classroom or volunteered office space. And due to the huge crush of new students and required staff as a result of the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, we were sympathetic to management's very real lack of available space.

With the recent completion of the new building, FSI now leads the department's domestic facilities in the support it offers to breastfeeding mothers. The lactation room is set up to accommodate three pumping women at a time, and FSI management reports that it is heavily used. Russell and her team also offer support to lactating students who may need help in negotiating breaks from their training, which can be a challenge for new employees in particular.

One of the mothers told Russell that she was grateful not only for the logistical support FSI offered, but also for the encouragement she received from the other mothers who used the lactation room.

Investment in the Future

We don't stop being individuals with personal needs when we clock in at work. State acknowledges this fact by recognizing the need for strong policies that help employees find and maintain that elusive work-life balance. Supporting breastfeeding mothers is one low-cost, high-return way for the department to help its employees meet the needs of their families.

I have spent five of the last 10 years pumping for my three children. During that time, I've seen the accumulated wisdom on making pumping work in the Foreign Service context travel by word of mouth, from mother to mother, in the old-fashioned way. In just the last two years, there have been several ideas on the State Department OpenNet Sounding Board and a Diplopedia article on the subject.

Meanwhile, there is growing momentum outside the department, as well. Breast pumps have recently been designated as tax-deductible purchases, and the health care reform law mandates new breastfeeding rights for public-sector employees. President Barack Obama has gone one step further, asking federal agencies to establish new guidelines to support pumping and breastfeeding for all their employees.

It's time for the Department of State to move from the ad hoc provision of space and time to the development of a global lactation policy that actively supports the cadre of breastfeeding employees, whether Civil Service, Foreign Service or locally employed. The return on such an investment will be measured not only in dollars, but in employees' improved evaluations of their work-life balance. ■

Pumping Tips

Transporting Milk Overseas. When first arriving at post, you'll need breast milk immediately for those first few days at work. Before departing the U.S., use up your frozen milk and travel with the last week's worth of fresh milk (not frozen) in a cooler bag, refreshing the ice multiple times en route. Use or freeze that milk immediately on arrival at post.

Finding a 220-Volt Pump Power Supply. The major brands of dual electric pumps offer power supplies in both 220-volt and 110-volt versions. You can find them at various online shops, including www.momandbabyshop.com.

Washing Pump Parts. Unless your baby has a compromised immune system, treat your pump parts as you do your daily dishes. Wash them in hot, soapy water and allow them to completely air-dry, instructing household staff not to towel-dry any pump parts.

Dealing with Power Outages. Have a battery backup, car adapter or manual pump (such as the Avent Isis) on hand in case of power outages. Being comfortable with manual expression techniques can also be a lifesaver when you don't have easy access to your pump.

Other Sources of Information. The La Leche League (www.llli.org) and Kellymom (www.kellymom.com) Web sites have numerous articles on breastfeeding and pumping issues. Both sites also have active forums where mothers can ask questions specific to their situations.

— Elizabeth Power

CAN TECHNOLOGY SAVE THE FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILY?

APPLYING THE NEW COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES TO THE "WORK" SIDE OF THE WORK-LIFE EQUATION COULD HELP KEEP FS FAMILIES TOGETHER.

BY TALY LIND

I don't need reading glasses, I have minimal gray hairs and wrinkles, and I have yet to see 40 candles on my birthday cake. However, when my husband joined the Foreign Service right out of college and moved to Karachi, and I voluntarily stayed in the States to start graduate school, our only modes of communication were letters that took between two and three weeks to arrive and phone calls that cost more than a dollar a minute. In those days, the mailman was my best friend and AT&T my worst enemy. We estimated that in the first year of our marriage, we could have bought a round-trip ticket to Karachi for me with the money we had spent on phone bills and postage.

Today my husband is in Baghdad and my children and I are in Rabat. We "see" each other every day and "cook" and "eat" meals together. He "reads" with the kids, "helps" my daughter with her homework, "practices" piano with my son, and "kisses" us all good-night. We perform all of these mundane activities virtually through laptops that move around with us from room to room whenever my husband has a free moment to "be" with us. And we do all of this for the cost of an Internet line we already have.

That experience has made me reflect on just how much our lives in the Foreign Service have been enhanced by technology during the past 19 years, and how much I've learned about the flexibility — and limitations — of the virtual family. FS family members have become adept at using technology to stay connected. But, given the power of these technologies, applying them to the conduct of diplomatic work could produce an even greater benefit: keeping FS families together in the first place.

The Virtual Life: Benefits and Limitations

Years ago, when we were separated for months at a time, my husband and I would wait to discuss important issues until we were reunited. We hesitated to write letters or even e-mails on serious problems because we knew that a lot could get lost in the translation. Tone and body

Taly Lind, a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development, is a program officer with the USAID mission in Rabat. Her husband is the spokesman and counselor for public affairs at Embassy Baghdad.

language are critical to communication. Interacting through a screen is, unfortunately, harder than it seems. You think you really understand the other person, because you can see her roll her eyes or him blink away his tears; but in fact, the screen hides a lot.

Interacting through a screen is, unfortunately harder than it seems.

A couple of seconds' time lag leads to fights over interrupting, until we sheepishly recognize that it is the technology doing it, not us. A dropped call in the heat of an argument can lead to accusations of hanging up. But with all of its faults, it still allows us to have a "date night" once in a while and just chat about daily events. We have had days where we talked three and four times throughout the day and felt that by the evening there was nothing left to discuss — much like in our real marriage.

Because my husband and I share more than a hundred friends on Facebook, just checking our page each day gives us a chance to interact not only with each other, but with friends from grade school, high school, college and beyond, in all corners of the world. It gives me the sense that we are sharing not only our lives, but those of our friends and family — much more like in the real world. In addition, Facebook enables us to post articles and YouTube videos and pictures without clogging each other's mailbox.

We used to use Skype and similar videoconferencing programs just to maintain the relationship between our children and their grandparents. My 10-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son both grew up thinking that their grandparents lived in the computer! During the past few years, however, and especially with my husband in Baghdad, we have discovered the joys of Skype parenting whenever one of us is away. We have gotten so good at it that while I was on a temporary-duty assignment, I diagnosed a case of lice (the telltale scratching) from my hotel room in the Dominican Republic — one that my husband didn't notice sitting two feet away from our child.

Since his departure, my husband has "visited" the kids' classroom via Skype (where he was put on a big screen and answered the questions of first-graders on Iraq.) He "attended" a parent-teacher conference, "camped" out with us in the garden with the boy scouts, "lit" the Hanukkah candles, and "rang in" the New Year with us. He is even able to discipline our children when they fight in front of the computer screen while I am in another part of the house. (Actually, that works about as well as when he disciplines them face to face.)

Of course, it is not a perfect situation. The kids get tired of interacting with their father on a screen and often want to show him things that are too pixilated to see well. (I've started scanning art and e-mailing it rather than "showing" it to him.) The time difference is exceedingly frustrating because we often end up talking to him when he is exhausted or when we would rather be out and about. And one of the most important tools and benefits of parenting can never happen virtually: he can't get or give a hug through the computer.

There is no doubt that Foreign Service families will continue to use the new communications technologies to try to keep their families strong and their work-life balance healthy. But given the incredible power of these technologies and their impact in many fields, shouldn't we also be thinking about applying them on the "work" side of the work-life equation to benefit families?

A New Model for Work at Unaccompanied Posts

Whether they are at State or USAID, Foreign Service personnel who are parents or who are married and do not want to be separated from their spouse face very difficult career and family decisions that are exacerbated by the pressure to fill a growing number of unaccompanied posts. The key issue for most officers is not the danger, discomfort or hard work that goes with life at especially challenging posts; it is concern for children, spouses, marriages and one's own mental health.

Currently many positions at unaccompanied posts involve sitting at our desks in a compound and some visits to the field, with periodic R&Rs to see loved ones and only virtual daily contact with our families. Why can't technology help us turn this equation around? Why can't we live with our families during unaccompanied tours, doing our desk-work remotely, with regular temporary duty assignments for field visits and critical face-to-face meetings?

Though it's hard for me to comment in detail about how this new formula would work for State FSOs, it would seem to be an easy fit for USAID. Unaccompanied missions need to have a certain number of staff present every day, but a significant percentage of the work

could be performed virtually. After all, these missions are already effectively supported by a large number of Washington-based staff using e-mail, phone calls and videoconferences.

In addition, USAID has already established a model for virtual support to missions through regional offices that provide legal, contracting, financial management and other kinds of support to their client missions. Embassy Baghdad has done the same with much of its travel services, which are managed by the Iraq Support Unit in Amman.

Unaccompanied missions need a certain number of staff present every day, but a significant percentage of the work could be performed virtually.

The model could be expanded to establish "host" missions where Foreign Service employees (along with their families) are formally assigned to jobs at the (nearby) unaccompanied post, but live and work in the host mission. "Offsite" positions would be identified that don't require daily supervision or presence. Rather, the job would consist of virtual support for a certain percentage of time and regular longer-term TDYs for the rest.

Under this arrangement, an offsite officer could be assigned to an unaccompanied post for two, three or four years, rather than the typical one- or two-year assignment. The additional time working for a mission could help USAID staff in critical and priority countries focus on mid- and long-term programs and their outcomes, stabilize staffing patterns and increase institutional memory.

For example, as a regional hub, Amman could serve formally as a host mission for Sudan, Lebanon and Yemen (as it already does for many State functions related to Iraq). New Delhi and Almaty could be host missions for Pakistan and Afghanistan, respectively. In fact, any mission with acceptable flight connections to the unaccompanied missions could work (e.g., Uganda or Kenya for Sudan).

A Review of the Counter-Arguments

I anticipate several arguments that could be made against this idea, but all of them have a reasonable answer. For example:

• *It would look bad if we are seen as bureaucrats sitting at our desks, rather than in the field getting results and having an impact.* No one would agree more with this than an FSO. A great deal of the frustration of being "in the field," no matter what the country, is that officers spend much of their time at their desks responding to Washington's demands and reporting requirements and dealing with bureaucracy and paperwork. In any post with high levels of danger (unaccompanied or not) this is even more true, because each movement out of the office needs to be coordinated with an army of regional security officers.

However, if we are honest about how much time many officers spend outside of their offices at any high-danger post, the answer is relatively little. Moreover, many services at USAID are offered by regional offices to their client missions. No one should want officers to serve as window dressing in a high-threat environment, putting them at unnecessary risk, increasing the number of other staff needed to support them, and separating all of them from their families.

But imagine instead that officers were at the unaccompanied post for two or three weeks out of every month or two, and the TDYs were organized so that the employees assigned to the post spend their time having an impact in the field. People would be clamoring for these jobs.

• *A concession was already made to make many of these one-year tours and have more leave time to spend with family. It's better to get it over with in a year.* From personal experience, I can tell you that my kids and I would much rather have my husband home for one week out of every month than for three weeks every three months. Having a "visiting" parent and spouse can be more disruptive and painful than not seeing the person at all.

Issues of Time and Turnover

For one thing, kids don't perceive time the way adults do. Twelve weeks is an eternity in the mind of a 6-year-old. In 10 weeks my son went from reading individual words to reading book chapters, and my husband missed all of it.

We also have to face the likelihood that it won't be for just one year in a career, either. USAID FSOs were recently told that they may have to do an unaccompanied tour once every four to six years. And with a tandem couple (an increasingly common phenomenon), you are looking at a child having one parent missing for as much as six to eight years of their 18-year childhood.

The assumption is that this prolonged separation is a

one-time experience. But from what I've observed from colleagues (and fully anticipate for myself), there are lingering results: sixth-graders who still sleep in their parents' room; long-term resentment and anger toward a missing parent; a spouse who felt abandoned in favor of the FSO spouse's career; divorce papers handed to a spouse returning from an unaccompanied post. Studies have already found high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Foreign Service personnel returning from high-threat posts, and this is bound to have long-term implications for marriages and families.

An "offsite" officer could be assigned to an unaccompanied post for two, three or four years, rather than the typical one- or two-year assignment.

Moreover, the assumption that all Foreign Service personnel start with a strong, healthy family and marriage as a base can't possibly be true. The regular and consistent presence of a spouse or parent (whether it's every two weeks or every three weeks) makes a major difference in the quality of relationships and in the morale of the employee.

Finally, it is deeply disruptive to posts to have totally new staff every year. Senior officers spend the first months of their tours recruiting to fill positions that will turn over in one year. Recruiting a new team upon arrival takes up a huge percentage of the time an officer that he/she is supposed to be using to learn and do his or her new job. So one of the strongest arguments for creating these flexible "offsite" positions is that they will foster continuity, allowing individuals to do the jobs for a much longer period of time. Especially in development, this longer-term perspective is critical.

• *Single officers would find this proposal unfair.* Perhaps, but fair and equal are not necessarily the same thing. Otherwise, everyone should be assigned a one-bedroom apartment and given no school allowances or rest-and-relaxation tickets for anyone but themselves. Conversely, tandem couples should be assigned two houses.

Fair is giving everyone the same opportunities and finding ways to meet their particular needs, given their circumstances. The Foreign Service finds ways to accommodate FSOs with family members who have Class 2 medical clearances, for example. This is fair, but arguably not equal. This only bolsters the argument for identifying positions at unaccompanied posts that lend themselves to this kind of flexibility, rather than viewing it as a "concession" to people with spouses and families. Everyone will have an equal right to compete for them, while being aware that they don't have the same benefits and advantages as a full-time, one-year, "onsite" tour would — e.g., extra pay, linked assignments and faster promotions.

Things Can Change

• *Others have faced these issues, made sacrifices and survived. So can you.* Yes, there are a few who say "I suffered, my family suffered — so should you." But many more say, "Why should anyone suffer?" Most FSOs who joined before 9/11, particularly Senior Foreign Service officers, had no expectation of ever serving an unaccompanied tour.

Everyone understands that the world — and the Foreign Service — have both changed. No matter how flexible the system ever becomes, many of us will willingly make sacrifices, as will our immediate families and our extended families. But we don't need to accept that things cannot change.

I have seen the transformation that the Foreign Service has undergone in the past two decades. There are more women in leadership positions (although still not enough), more respect for same-sex couples and members of household and an increase in the number of single parents — all good. So I also wonder: Can those who didn't benefit from any flexibility in the system honestly claim that it was better that way? Can they say that there weren't divorces and negatively affected children as a result of the "toughen up" attitude?

In any case, the ideas I've offered here are about innovation and evolution, not a rejection or disrespect for what others have endured. Yes, only a minority of jobs could be done this way, and clearly this approach lends itself better to some types of jobs than others. At first glance, I can't quite picture how a virtual consular office would work — but an argument can be made that there is little difference between a visa window and a computer screen.

If families are willing to be flexible in the face of new demands and use all of the new technologies available to us, shouldn't our employer learn from our experience? ■

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY: WHAT'S IN IT FOR STATE?

FLEXIBLE POLICIES HAVE BOOSTED PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCED COSTS IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS. STATE HAS MUCH TO GAIN BY FOLLOWING THE TREND.

BY MARGOT CARRINGTON

Over the past several years, a revolution has taken place in how large segments of the American work force do their jobs. It has been precipitated to a great extent by dramatic changes in American work and family life. Two out of three families with children are now headed by either two working parents or a single parent. One in five workers acts as caregiver to an elder, a number soon expected to become one in three. At the same time, growing global competition means that businesses require a nimble work force able to respond 24/7. The mismatch between the needs of employers and those of their workers has led to reduced productivity and increased employee attrition, and forced companies to adopt policies that help employees better align their work and personal lives.

Margot Carrington is an FSO and the recipient of a 2010-2011 Una Chapman Cox Sabbatical Leave Fellowship to research innovative work-life policies. *She wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by executives and staff of WorldatWork and the Alliance for Work-Life Progress, the Sloan Work and Family Research Network, the Boston College Center for Work and Family, Workplace Flexibility 2010, FlexPaths,* Working Mother, *Accenture and Deloitte.*

Negotiated so as to be beneficial to employees and employers alike, these policies, known as Flexible Work Arrangements or FWAs, alter the time and place of work. Some of the most progressive organizations give employees full autonomy over where and when they do their work, provided they deliver the expected results. Under this new paradigm, as work-life pioneer Kathie Lingle of WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress explains: "Work is no longer defined as a place you go, but something you do." The trend has been greatly assisted by recent advances in computing and communications technology.

More traditional FWAs include job-sharing, part-time work, alternative work schedules and telecommuting. According to the Alliance for Work-Life Progress, more than 90 percent of companies offer at least one type of FWA, as do many public-sector organizations, including the Department of State. However, in many of these organizations the prevailing culture has made employees reluctant to take advantage of them.

Today FWAs are being more actively pursued by the

public sector, in large part due to the impressive gains in productivity and retention they bring about, as well as the real estate and capital cost savings realized by private-sector firms that have implemented them.

Concerned with both increasing America's economic competitiveness and easing the burden on working families, the Obama administration convened the first "White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility" in March 2010. As President Barack Obama stated at the time, "Workplace flexibility isn't just a women's issue. It's an issue that affects the well-being of our families and the success of our businesses. It affects the strength of our economy — whether we'll create the workplaces and jobs of the future that we need to compete in today's global economy."

The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management followed with a May 2010 hearing on "Work-Life Programs: Attracting, Retaining and Empowering the Federal Work Force." The Office of Personnel Management is now tasked with moving the federal government in this new direction, including through a bold attempt to expand the use of telecommuting and overcome the numerous institutional and managerial barriers that have prevented the implementation of a flexible work culture in most government agencies.

The State Department has much to gain by embracing this trend, absorbing the lessons learned in the private sector, and applying the resulting best practices to advance State's mission.

Retain, Don't Retrain: The Business Case for Workplace Flexibility

The FWA trend was started by companies in fields like accounting, which found their best-trained and most valuable talent depleted because women, after assessing the increasing demands of the workplace, decided not to return after the birth of a child. Rather than hire and retrain new employees at a greater cost, firms have found it makes more business sense to retain top-performing employees by offering them greater flexibility. Numerous organizations in the private, public and nonprofit sectors now offer job-protected leave for employees experiencing major life events such as the birth or adoption of a child. Employees often return to work on a part-time or more flexible schedule, with remote work used during these periods of transition.

Rather than hire and retrain at a greater cost, firms have found it makes more business sense to retain top-performing employees by offering them greater flexibility.

Organizations offering such family-friendly and employee-friendly policies have quickly become sought-after employers, featured on listings such as *Working Mother* magazine's "Top 100 Companies for Working Women." With men increasingly bearing a larger share of family responsibilities, and reporting work-life conflicts to degrees that often exceed those reported by women, use of this ranking is essential for those seeking employment that won't require them to leave their lives at the door.

The *Fortune* listing of "100 Best Companies to Work For" includes work-life balance and telecommuting as "best benefits," and indicates that 82 of the top 100 companies allow employees to telecommute at least 20 percent of the time. In a 2010 survey by the human resources consulting firm Towers Watson, employees cited a flexible schedule as one of the top seven reasons for joining a firm. This finding was reinforced by a 2008 Families and Work Institute survey revealing that 87 percent of respondents would consider flexibility extremely or very important if they were looking for a new job.

Rather than just being a "must have" for working parents no longer able to burn the candle at both ends, flexibility has become a priority benefit for workers of diverse ages and backgrounds. According to the Partnership for Public Service, 68 percent of 2008 college graduates reported that a healthy work-life balance was important to them. Offering both work flexibility and "career flexibility" to accommodate the nonlinear career paths needed by women with children is seen as critical to ensuring women's advancement in most organizations, and is something more and more men are demanding, as well. Older workers find flexibility helps them remain in the work force longer, and baby boomers increasingly need it to better cope with elder care responsibilities. FWAs also make work more accessible to returning veterans and employees with disabilities.

Overall, when it comes to retention, Towers Watson found that 69 percent of workers who plan to stay with

their employers say management understands the problems they face and supports their need for a better work-life fit. For companies that want to reap the bottom-line benefits of having a diverse work force and being recognized as an "employer of choice," the choice has become simple: embrace flexibility as a work culture, or lose out to competitors that do.

Organizations offering family-friendly and employee-friendly policies have quickly become sought-after employers.

Proven Productivity Gains, Cost Savings

In addition to confirming that work flexibility differentiates companies from their competitors, a 2008 survey of chief financial officers revealed that 88 percent felt it had a positive impact on recruitment, while 53 percent cited decreased health costs as another significant benefit. Fully 75 percent of the CFOs surveyed also reported significant productivity gains, a finding that has been reinforced by numerous other studies.

A 2010 Telework Research Network study on the benefits of remote work estimates it increases the productivity of U.S. businesses by $235.4 billion a year, saving $46.3 billion in absenteeism-related costs and another $31.1 billion by reducing turnover. Moreover, teleworking can also lead to a considerable reduction in overhead costs and in a firm's "carbon footprint." A visit to Accenture, a local technology company on both the *Fortune* and *Working Mother* lists, revealed that, with 80 percent of their employees working remotely through the use of an advanced suite of IT tools, the company has saved tens of millions of dollars in real estate and travel costs.

Companies like Accenture, IBM, Sun Microsystems and many others have been able to shed unnecessary leases and real estate holdings by moving to a "hoteling" system, where employees reserve space on an as-needed basis in a facility convenient to their home or customer site, rather than having a designated work place. At Deloitte, the largest professional services firm in the world, close to 90 percent of employees report they have the flexibility they need regarding where and when they work.

While these new ways of doing business require a change in mindset, they can also result in increased team collaboration and work output, according to a Deloitte executive. Many employees say working virtually has forced them to be more deliberate about keeping in touch, and that through the use of tools like social media, they have, paradoxically, become closer than when they worked side-by-side.

Citing fewer distractions, less stress from work-life conflict, better health and less burnout, as well as time and cost savings from not having to commute, workers across industries report they are better able to give the company their best work. Surveys also show that remote workers often put in longer hours than their counterparts, and are more likely to go the "extra mile" for the organization.

In a knowledge economy where innovation drives profits, unleashing the creative and problem-solving abilities of a firm's human capital in a sustainable way has become the ultimate goal — and the data show that this is exactly what happens when flexible work policies are implemented. It's no wonder that the CEO of one Dallas company says FWAs are not a perk, but rather "an incredibly powerful business strategy."

With so many measurable benefits, leaders in the private sector who have embraced the new approach are not likely to return to old ways of doing business. Even during the recent economic recession, most companies maintained FWAs at existing levels, while others actually increased them. The question now is, will the public sector will follow suit?

FWAs in the Public Sector

The federal government is the largest employer in the U.S., and many would like to see it become a model for a flexible workplace, in the same way it once led the way with workplace practices such as telecommuting. Although some hoped for movement toward legislating such practices, as many Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries have done, support for that is lacking.

Experts from "Workplace Flexibility 2010," a public policy initiative of Georgetown University Law Center, have led the call for the government to play a leading role. Last November, Georgetown sponsored a forum for leaders in the private and public sectors to discuss "practical public policy solutions to support workplace flexibility." The event underscored the high level of support for workplace flexibility in the public sector, including from Admiral Mike

Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who has called it a "strategic imperative for our country." He argues that a rigid structure puts an unnecessary strain on families and results in the U.S. military losing top performers — an unfortunate outcome in a system that, like the Foreign Service, only promotes from within.

Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has called workplace flexibility a "strategic imperative for our country."

The U.S. Navy has put numerous new programs in place, including one allowing sabbaticals for one to three years for those with proven records. Seven different Navy commands and units garnered prestigious 2010 Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence for Workplace Flexibility. Elsewhere in the military, the Defense Information Systems Agency successfully used alternative work schedules and various FWAs, including telework, to help retain high-value IT workers during a long-distance relocation.

Similarly, in the executive branch, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has had a "Work-at-Home" program in place since 1997, when a limited number of examining attorneys worked from home three days a week. The practice met with great success, and USPTO moved to expand telework and incorporate flexibility into "the fabric of the agency's concept of workplace," according to their 2007 strategic plan. As of 2009, more than 56 percent of eligible USPTO employees were telecommuting.

In spite of these successes, the use of telework by the federal work force is still limited, with only 10.4 percent of eligible employees (or 5.72 percent of all federal workers) participating in 2009. (Figures for 2010 are not yet available.) However, John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management and the government's point person for telecommuting, believes this will change soon. During the snowstorms of 2010, Berry points out, federal workers demonstrated the value of telecommuting from home by providing valuable "continuity of operations" for a number of government functions, saving U.S. taxpayers nearly $30 million a day.

In addition, the Telecommuting Enhancement Act of 2010 requires federal agencies to expand the use of telework as a strategic management tool. It presumes that all federal workers are eligible (barring performance or discipline problems), and puts the onus on agencies to explain why a position *cannot* be teleworked. What's more, all federal agencies must designate a senior management official with direct access to the agency head to oversee implementation of the policy.

OPM is taking things a step further with a "Results-Only Work Environment" pilot project for 400 of its employees, who will have autonomy to choose where and when they work as long as the work gets done. Martha Johnson, administrator of the General Services Administration, is also a believer. She sees telecommuting as central to meeting Pres. Obama's goal of cutting $3 billion in government real estate leasing and maintenance costs by 2012. Under her leadership, GSA has become a flexible work model, with more than 56 percent of eligible employees teleworking.

Flexibility as a Way to Advance State's Mission

Experience in both the private and public sectors indicates that wider use of FWAs could boost State's effectiveness by increasing employee productivity and morale and reducing attrition — a critical goal given State's current experience gap. It could also help secure the department's status as a federal employer of choice. In the 2010 "Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" rankings, the department placed seventh overall among the large agencies; but it dropped to 17th place for "Work-Life Balance," and down to 25th for "Family-Friendly Culture and Benefits."

Although these arrangements will not be feasible for certain functions, leaders at State should ensure that, when possible, employees have access to and use them. In offices where concerns exist about the feasibility of flexible work, FWAs can be tried on a pilot basis, as has been done in many other organizations — most of which quickly expanded the programs after they proved to be very successful. Moreover, telecommuting can involve as little as one day a month and can be increased by mutual agreement between the employee and his or her manager.

What is clear is that there is currently a lot of room to grow. After experiencing a precipitous drop in 2008 (to 1,004 employees from 2,447 in 2007), the number of State employees who telecommuted on a regular basis in 2009 was 1,374, or 9.83 percent of total State employees, according to OPM's February 2010 report, "The Status of

Telework in the Federal Government." Although no statistics are kept for overseas posts, some appear to be allowing limited telecommuting in special cases.

OPM's analysis of 2010 Telework and Employee Viewpoint Survey results shows that due to various "barriers" 69.9 percent of State employees do not telecommute. These obstacles can be both real and perceived, and include lack of appropriate IT equipment or training in its use, management fear of insufficient office coverage or work output, and employees' fear they might be harming their image or chance of promotion.

Wider use of FWAs could boost State's effectiveness by increasing employee productivity and morale and reducing attrition.

State can benefit from the experience of organizations that have successfully overcome these barriers by ensuring that the organization's leadership supports and directs the change; allowing for open discussion of concerns; identifying and supplying the necessary tools and training to all affected employees; developing metrics to measure work output; and ensuring that employees suffer no adverse effects on their career advancement by using FWAs.

There are other compelling reasons State should embrace this trend. First, it will help the organization adjust to a generational change and the continued influx of IT-savvy young employees with different notions of the boundaries between work and life. As Foreign Service Director General Nancy Powell points out in the December 2010 issue of *State* magazine, the department should be cognizant that Generation Xers and Millennials "want the job to fit into their personal life and family." FWAs offer a way to retain our most experienced employees, many of whom are increasingly struggling with the competing demands of work and elder care.

Despite some improvement over the years, in 2010 men still outnumbered women in the Senior Executive Service by almost 2 to 1 and in the Senior Foreign Service by more than 2 to 1. One key determinant of whether organizations have been able to reverse male dominance of the executive suite has been whether they have made workplace flexibility an integral part of the culture. So to take full advantage of the talents of our female employees, and ensure we don't lose them to a more accommodating work environment, State will have to follow suit.

With the increasing call for service at danger, hardship and unaccompanied posts, State should look for ways to allow Foreign Service employees greater workplace flexibility to help modulate these demanding assignments and allow time for employees and their families to regain their footing once they are over. Moreover, since domestic assignments usually provide the best opportunity for spousal employment, an employee on an FWA would be better positioned to support a spouse's return to work, easing the difficulties inherent in re-entry and trying to make ends meet in "two-income" areas like Washington, D.C.

Given that overseas posts and the regional and functional bureaus that support them in the department already work essentially as remote teams often operating on different schedules, alternate work arrangements and remote work will allow for easier communication, better office coverage and greater continuity of operations during emergencies, while giving our employees more options to better align work and family demands. Adopting a more flexible work culture would also be consistent with the recommendations of the 2007 "Embassy of the Future" Commission to create a more decentralized, flexible and mobile work force.

At the same time, it would help achieve Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's goal, as outlined in the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, to free employees from their desks so they can deliver the results American taxpayers expect and deserve from us. ■

Internet Resources on Work-Life Issues

Alliance for Work-Life Progress
www.awlp.org/awlp/home/html/homepage.jsp

Boston College Center for Work & Family
www.bc.edu/centers/cwf/

Georgetown Law Workplace Flexibility 2010
www.workplaceflexibility2010.org/

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network
http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/

Interagency Web site for information about telework in the federal government
www.telework.gov/

— Margot Carrington

AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • May 2011

Covering the Globe, Economically

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

Whose heads will roll if we fail to meet the goal of doubling exports put forth in the National Export Initiative? How has economic diplomacy changed in three decades?

These were some of the questions directed to three leaders in the field of economic and commercial diplomacy, when 100 attendees convened at AFSA on March 16 for a panel discussion that encompassed the past, the present and the future.

ASGEIR SIGFUSSON

Left to right: Amb. Alan Larson, AFSA Exec. Dir. Ian Houston, Amb. Shaun Donnelly, AFSA Pres. Susan Johnson and Amb. Charles Ford, March 16 at AFSA Headquarters.

Ambassadors Alan Larson, Charles Ford and Shaun Donnelly commented on changes in the global economy and their impact on diplomacy and commerce, and shared insights into what may be on the horizon.

The event was part of a new program focusing on themes taken from the *Foreign Service Journal*, which centered on economic and commercial diplomacy in its February issue.

Amb. Larson, a senior international policy adviser at Covington & Burling, has served as the under secretary for economic affairs and assistant secretary for economic, business and agricultural affairs, and as U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris.

Amb. Ford is the deputy director general of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service and principal deputy assistant secretary of commerce. He previously served as U.S. ambassador to Honduras.

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AFSA OFFICER ELECTION NOTICE

The 2011 regularly scheduled AFSA Officer and Governing Board election is under way. Details about the election, including the rules, can be found online at www.afsa.org/afsa_elections.aspx.

Members will receive candidates' campaign literature in a number of ways. Campaigning through an employer e-mail by any member is prohibited, with the exception of the three pre-approved candidate e-mail blasts.

Ballots: The ballots have been mailed. If you did not receive a ballot, please contact the Election Supervisor (contact information below).

Ballot Tally: On June 2, 2011, at 9 a.m. the ballots will be picked up from the post office in Washington, D.C. Only ballots received in the post office box will be counted.

Election Information: Written requests for a duplicate ballot should be directed to Election Supervisor Alison Dunn at U.S. Department of Labor, OLMS, 800 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 120, Washington DC 20002-4244, by fax to (202) 513-7301, or by e-mail to afsaelectionsupervisor@dol.gov. Please include your full name, work location, current address, telephone number and the last four digits of your Social Security number.

REACHING OUT THROUGH FS RETIREES

AFSA Takes on Texas

BY TOM SWITZER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The vibrant city of Austin, Texas was the venue for the first of a series of programs sponsored jointly by AFSA and the American Academy of Diplomacy. Held March 1-4, the event explained the critical need for sustained foreign affairs funding to academic, political, business and media audiences.

The centerpiece of the Austin program was a March 2 talk, "Smart Diplomacy for the 21st Century: People Are as Important as Concepts," featuring AAD President Ambassador Ronald Neumann. The audience in the Robert Strauss Center for International Security, part of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of the University of Texas, comprised some 130 faculty members, students, diplomats and civic leaders. Their enthusiastic response to the presentation led to a vigorous discussion on how foreign affairs funding might be defended and increased. Amb. Neumann also provided insights on current conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia, where Foreign Service personnel carry out some of the most dangerous missions in the world.

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AFSA NEWSBRIEFS

May Events at AFSA

On Mon., May 16, our Book Notes program will feature Ambassador Edmund Hull, who will discuss his newly released *High-Value Target: Countering al-Qaeda in Yemen*. Hull served as the U.S. ambassador to Yemen and knows this part of the world intimately. The program takes place at AFSA HQ, 2101 E St. NW, at 11 a.m.

On Thurs., May 26, AFSA will present a panel discussion in collaboration with the *Foreign Service Journal*. The topic is work-life balance in the Foreign Service, the focus of the May *FSJ*, and the panel will feature experts from within and outside government.

If you are able to join us for one or both of these events, please RSVP to events@afsa.org.

Support the AFSA Scholarship Fund via the Annual Appeal

By now, you should have received our annual appeal for donations to the AFSA Scholarship Fund. If you haven't made a donation yet, there's still time: our funding needs never take a holiday, and no portion of AFSA dues support the AFSA Scholarship Program. To give online, visit www.afsa.org/scholar, or just go to www.afsa.org and click on the "Donate" button. You can also send your donation in the postage-paid envelope we provided with our letter. The AFSA Scholarship Fund provides aid to more than 90 children of Foreign Service employees totaling over $200,000 each year, either as need-based, financial aid scholarships or as academic and art merit awards. Please also consider leaving a legacy gift to the AFSA Scholarship Fund. Your contribution is tax-deductible.

The AFSA Memorial Plaque

The AFSA Memorial Plaque Ceremony will be held on Foreign Affairs Day, Fri., May 6. The ceremony will commence at 10:35 a.m. in the C Street lobby of the State Department in front of the West Plaque. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is scheduled to preside. AFSA President Susan R. Johnson will read a message from President Barack Obama and also make brief remarks.

This year we are honoring Eugene F. Sullivan, who died of malaria in 1972 while working with USAID in Ethiopia. He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sec. Clinton will pay her respects to the family.

Later in the day, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., AFSA will host our annual reception for all members at our headquarters at 2101 E St. NW, where we will honor our 2011 scholarship winners.

AFSA and FPA Team Up for Seminars

AFSA has entered into an agreement with the Foreign Policy Association to co-sponsor seminars on careers in international affairs. The FPA University offers specialized courses, networking opportunities and access to insider information for the next generation of global professionals.

AFSA's Shawn Dorman serves as the instructor for the FPAU Foreign Service careers seminar. Encouraging students and young professionals to consider a Foreign Service career is an AFSA outreach priority, so this new partnership is a great fit.

This spring, three different career seminars — on international development, the United Nations and the Foreign Service — are being held in New York and at AFSA headquarters in Washington. More than 100 people attended the first, Careers in International Development, on March 23 at AFSA, held again on March 30 in New York. The Foreign Service seminar was held April 12 at AFSA and is scheduled for May 19 in New York. The U.N. seminar is scheduled for May 12 in New York and May 18 at AFSA. For more information, and to register, please visit www.fpau.org.

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The Better Part of Valor

I have a friend who swims competitively. She can outswim most people in any pool, using any stroke. But she is terrified of deep ocean water, and never wades into the ocean beyond her waist.

Years after we reopened our embassies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is becoming evident to AFSA that not everybody is equally suited to serve in such posts. There are Foreign Service members who thrive on the excitement and challenges of these assignments. There are also excellent FS members who cannot or should not serve in them. And then there are the less excellent colleagues who have rapidly reached a "Peter Principle" level as a result of war-zone service.

At any post, having the wrong person in the wrong place can hamper efficiency. In Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan, it can compromise the safety of the individual or others, and cause lasting harm to psyches, families and careers. Some problems can arise early, while others (like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or related issues) might not surface until years after the employee has moved on.

Service in these posts symbolizes a high degree of commitment to the profession. AFSA had recommended to the Bureau of Human Resources that the department ask the military to include the FS in their civilian medal of service program. Their initial negative response should be reconsidered. But service in such posts should not be used as a test of devotion, or as a required career stepping stone. Nor should it be rewarded in ways that hamper the careers of those who do not go. Unwillingness to serve in an unaccompanied or war-zone post should be respected as a sign of mature self-awareness, not as a lack of esprit de corps.

It is time for the department to take further stock of these issues, and to separate war-zone service from career advancement and assessments of devotion to the Service. The department should worry less about incentives, motivation, promotion preferences and identification of personnel to fill slots, and worry more about the downside of encouraging (in some cases virtually forcing) employees to go where they are not prepared to go.

This means, in part, publicizing more completely the difficulties of life at these posts — moving beyond the brown-bag lunches to more visible programs on B-Net and greater detail in bidding materials.

It also means improving the preparation given to employees bound for war zones, as well as returnees and their families, and expanding that training to include all managers everywhere who might supervise or interact with such individuals and their family members, whether on any onward assignment or in Washington. In many cases, the department has already developed good courses and programs, but these should be made better known and mandatory, and funded accordingly.

Existing options include courses and videos for family members and couples, a course on working with returnees from Iraq and Afghanistan, and a course called "Leading in a High-Threat Post." The Family Liaison Office maintains a blog called Foggy Bottom Rambles (http://foggybottomrambles.blogspot.com) that discusses FS members' experiences at unaccompanied posts. For its part, the Office of Medical Services has substantially improved its ability to identify and help employees with PTSD and stress-related injuries.

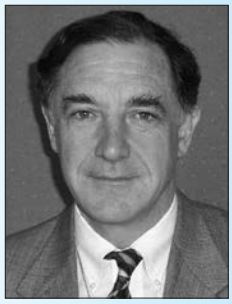
Families should not only be invited to some courses (as they already are in some cases), but spouses and partners should be *required* to attend as part of the employee's preparation. Ongoing support should be provided to family members left behind, including children. Because PTSD and other injuries can take a year or more to become manifest, State should also pay greater attention to returnees, providing knowledge, counseling and peer support wherever the employee may be posted next. A PTSD self-assessment, already available, should be made mandatory for a number of years after service in such posts.

Serious, transparent and verifiable procedures must be established to ensure that employees who seek help — or who simply acknowledge that they overestimated their tolerance for hardship and stress — will not face any career or security-clearance impediments as a result. More than a promise by management, this should include documentation of whole-person reviews and disciplinary consequences for sharing employee medical information outside of MED. It should also include consequences for supervisors who ignore or discourage requests for assistance.

Ultimately, the success of our mission in these challenging countries depends on the qualifications and cohesiveness of our teams. Team members should be carefully selected and trained, and supported both during and after their war-zone service. ❑

V.P. VOICE: **FCS** ■ BY KEITH CURTIS

Trading Up



Washington seems to be experiencing a lot of upheaval these days. The federal budget and the constant battle of the cuts has been worrying and spinning the Department of Commerce in several ways. One day we are preparing for how a shutdown would work; the next, we are counting the number of posts we might close. And then the president announces a trade reorganization.

The discussion generated with the field on that subject is very timely as we head into talks with the president's reorganization team. In March I met with Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director Jeffery Zients, who is responsible for the reorganization. Meeting again with his staff the following week, we strongly supported a proposal from the president to create a new agency as the most effective and efficient method of giving the trade engine of economic growth the priority it needs at this critical time.

Where there was much debate about the pros and cons of returning to State, or staying within the International Trade Administration, there was virtually no disagreement that an independent trade agency that combines the United States Trade Representative, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Export-Import Bank of the United States, the Trade and Development Agency and the Foreign Commercial Service could create both the efficiency and effectiveness that we need.

It is clear from Zients that this is very much on the table. As of press time, Zients has 90 days to come up with a proposal, so this issue will certainly have more shape and focus by the time you are reading this. He is inviting online input at http://governmentreform.ideascale.com.

The biggest unknown is how the Hill will react, but a proposal that advances free trade at the same time it demonstrates real cost savings could receive bipartisan support.

Again, we call on AFSA members to weigh in. You have seen AFSA President Susan Johnson's urgent messages about the fight for Overseas Comparability Pay and how to engage your members of Congress. Please keep your ideas coming in. We need you to keep your eyes and ears open to take advantage of every opportunity to make a difference. ❑

The Power of AFSA's Membership

As part of an ongoing campaign to build support for the Foreign Service, AFSA has mobilized a drive encouraging active-duty AFSA members to write individual letters to their members of Congress urging investment in diplomacy and development. These messages specifically explain that denying FSOs overseas comparability pay in effect cuts salaries by up to 24 percent, penalizing those who serve abroad. As of mid-April, we estimate that about 450 letters have been sent to 78 senators and 105 individual members of Congress from 39 states. AFSA President Susan Johnson, whose recent updates on the budget process helped encourage the campaign, calls this initial response "impressive and encouraging." Read more online at www.afsa.org/president.aspx.

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

New: Pet Relocation Discount for AFSA Members

AFSA is pleased to announce a new benefit that is now available to all members, whether active-duty, retired or associate. AFSA has partnered with the Austin, Texas-based company PetRelocation.com to offer discounts to all AFSA members.

PetRelocation.com has been in business since 2002 and is rated A+ by the Better Business Bureau. Drawing on extensive experience in working with military families and individuals, they have transported pets door-to-door in both domestic and international settings. AFSA members will receive a 10-percent discount on all pet moves, both domestic and international, when they contact the company at a dedicated e-mail address for AFSA members: afsa@petrelocation.com.

AFSA customers will be assigned to a pet relocation specialist who will work with each individual throughout the duration of the move. To welcome AFSA members who may be moving with their pets, PetRelocation.com is offering a free *Pet Relocation Preparation Guide*, available exclusively to AFSA members at http://afsa.petrelocation.com. This new service is in response to our recent pet survey, which indicated that a large portion of Foreign Service employees have pets in their homes and often face problems when moving these important companions from post to post. We hope that this new benefit will assist our members in their moves and provide a smooth experience for their pets. Results of the pet survey will appear in a future issue of *AFSA News*.

To assist our members further, AFSA has increased the pet resources on our Web site. You can find updated pet travel guidance in the Member Guidance section and other helpful pet resources in our Online Resources section at www.afsa.org/online_fs_resources.aspx.

Eugene Sullivan

An Extraordinary Officer Whose Legacy Lives On

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

HOPE CORKIN SULLIVAN

Eugene Sullivan in a pedicab on the streets of Taipei, 1959.

On May 6, the name of Eugene Sullivan will be added to the AFSA Memorial Plaques in a ceremony at the State Department. Although he died in 1972 at the young age of 47, he had already lived a richer life than most men twice his age. He had been married for 26 years to Hope Corkin Sullivan, and had fathered eight children. He was fluent in no fewer than 13 languages, some of them considered the most difficult in the world.

Before joining the Foreign Service in 1957, he served in the U.S. Navy, earned a degree in chemical engineering while working at the Naval Department as a Chinese translator, and worked as a linguist for the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency. Sullivan was an FSO with the USAID mission in Ethiopia at the time of his death from a particularly virulent strain of malaria: blackwater fever.

Sullivan had previously served in Seoul, Taipei, Manila and Bangkok. Although he was fluent in two Chinese dialects — Mandarin and Foochow — he was never assigned to China. Says his daughter Maureen Romagnoli, "I think if I could have granted him just two wishes, the first would have been that he could have lived long enough to travel to China. It was a dream of his that he never fulfilled."

The second wish for her Massachusetts-born father? "To see his beloved Red Sox win the World Series. He was often discovered sitting at 2 a.m. on the edge of some bathtub in Taipei or Manila, straining to hear the games live over transoceanic radio static."

A scholar, officer and father, he loved reading bedtime stories to his children. "I remember listening at the doorway as he read stories to my younger brothers," his daughter recalls, "and he did all the voices and accents to make the books come to life."

She also remembers her father's great sense of humor and dry wit. "You didn't want to play Scrabble against him, because he could pull the most obscure words out of the air. And he could not only spell them, but recite multiple definitions."

His family discovered after his death that he had been anonymously funding an orphanage in Ethiopia. A desire to help the poor and underprivileged is part of the legacy that Eugene Sullivan has left his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His daughter adds that she has a third wish for her father, "as everyone knows you always get three. I wish he could have lived long enough to know his grandchildren. He would have been very proud." ❑

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The discussion was moderated by Amb. Donnelly, former assistant U.S. trade representative for Europe and the Middle East, and a former ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives. Amb. Donnelly has worked for both the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

A Period of Great Change

The discussion opened with reminiscences of periods of great change in our foreign economic policy, including the fallout from the "Nixon Shock" in 1971, when the U.S. ended its participation in the gold standard, and the impact of internationalizing the Foreign Practices Act, in which Amb. Larson was involved. But of more immediate concern to both the audience and panelists was President Barack Obama's recent focus on international trade and export, and how globalization has changed the approach to economic diplomacy.

On the difference between economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy, the consensus was that the two are now more intertwined than ever. "We used to say, 'When it's handled by the State Department, it's economic,'" joked Ford, "and when it's handled by FCS, it's commercial.'" But he conceded that commercial diplomacy plays a "crucial role" in economic diplomacy, pointing to Northern Ireland as an example of the commerce-and-trade angle used as a diplomatic negotiating strategy.

Ford added that both State and Commerce need to constantly coordinate their respective roles. "The private-sector relationships that Commerce has forged are invaluable to economic diplomacy," he pointed out.

National Export Initiative

A large part of the afternoon program focused on the National Export Initiative, described in an executive order the White House issued in 2010. Said Ford, "This is the first time I recall a pres-

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THIS MONTH IN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY: MAY

Francis Gary Powers' Unscheduled Landing in the USSR

BY GREG NAARDEN

As our colleagues in Lahore can certainly attest, cases of detained Americans accused of spying are some of the most complicated that we can encounter. The month of May gives us the opportunity to recollect one of the most high-profile of such cases: Francis Gary Powers.

On May 1, 1960, as the U.S. was preoccupied with containing Soviet influence, Soviet missiles brought down Francis Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane near Sverdlovsk. Powers had been a U.S. Air Force pilot who joined the Central Intelligence Agency to fly covert aerial reconnaissance missions. When the CIA found out that Powers had gone missing, the U.S. issued a statement that the downed plane was a weather plane. Powers parachuted safely but was captured, and the wreckage of the U-2 was relatively intact. The U.S. was caught red-handed, spying on the Soviets.

Of course, Moscow made a huge spectacle of the incident, expressing indignation about the U.S. spying effort. But the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations at the time, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., gave a most effective response. During a May 26, 1960 U.N. Security Council meeting, Lodge asserted that the U.S. had not been doing anything that the Soviets themselves had not done. As evidence, he produced a gift that the Soviets had given U.S. Ambassador Averell Harriman in 1946: a replica of the Great Seal, which had hung in the ambassador's residence in Moscow. In 1952, agents from the Office of Security (the predecessor to Diplomatic Security) found a radio transmitter in that Great Seal. Lodge's presentation did not erase the embarrassment of the incident, but it did undercut support for a resolution condemning the U-2 spying missions.

The Soviets convicted Powers of espionage, and he returned to the U.S. in 1962 in a prisoner swap. Despite criticism that he had not activated the U-2's self-destruct mechanism, a Senate panel determined that he had followed orders and conducted himself well in difficult circumstances. He died in 1977 in a helicopter accident after having covered bush fires for a California TV station. ❑

This is the second installment of a monthly column on U.S. diplomatic history by FSO Greg Naarden, who has served in Frankfurt, Dushanbe and Kabul. He is currently assigned to Washington, where he is trying to track down artifacts for the U.S. Diplomacy Center (http://diplomacy.state.gov).

Texas • Continued from page 65

AFSA also arranged meetings for Amb. Neumann with the Austin district directors for Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a member of the Senate Committee on the Budget; Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations; and Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Also attending were Austin FS retirees John Wood and Jerry Mitchell, as well as Ambassador Tibor Nagy, vice provost of the Office of International Affairs at Texas Tech University.

Discussion centered on current AAD and AFSA efforts to persuade Congress to sustain full funding for U.S. diplomacy. The Foreign Service representatives also requested, if budget reductions were unavoidable, that programs, not people, should be cut. Decreasing the FS work force would seriously damage the effectiveness of diplomacy, and would require many years and budget cycles to recover.

All three directors agreed to brief the senators on the urgency of this issue.

In addition, John Wood, coordinator for Central Texas Foreign Affairs Retirees, arranged an informal brunch for Austin-area retirees. AAD and AFSA leaders urged the attendees to stay in contact with their members of Congress and local congressional staff, and to press them to sustain full funding for the State Department, USAID and the other foreign affairs agencies so that they can effectively resolve the grave challenges facing U.S. foreign policy around the globe.

The Austin events were part of a series of new AFSA outreach programs in various regions around the U.S. aimed at educating the American public, as well as opinion leaders, about the role diplomacy plays in defending vital American interests. ❑

TIBOR NAGY

Left to right: Jerry Mitchell, Austin FS retiree; John Wood, Coordinator, Central Texas retirees; John Etue, regional director for Sen. Hutchison; Amb. Ronald Neumann, president, AAD; and Tom Switzer, AFSA communications director, at the Austin offices of Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison on March 3.

MILESTONES ■ BY FRANCESCA KELLY

AFSA's Affable Spokesman

Ten Years at AFSA: Tom Switzer

FRANCESCA KELLY

Communications Director Tom Switzer was born into a family proud of getting the message out. His father was a regional news director for NBC in the Denver area, and his mother was a high school teacher. Tom's dad spoke several foreign languages and implanted in his son a lifelong interest in world affairs.

Graduating from Notre Dame, Tom studied international relations one summer at Harvard and was hooked. He signed up for the Peace Corps and spent two years in Malawi. Following graduate studies at the University of Colorado, he joined the Foreign Service as a public diplomacy officer, serving in Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Spain, plus temporary-duty stints in Kosovo and Russia. He also had two Washington assignments in the Bureau of European Affairs and the Office of Broadcast Services.

Tom is thoughtful about his extraordinary experiences, including work on the 1987 Reagan-Gorbachev summit where he had the opportunity to meet the legendary George Kennan. Another "close-up" for Tom involved arranging logistical support for Henry Kissinger's speech at the World's Fair Exposition in Seville in 1992. "It was fascinating — if at times somewhat prickly — seeing from inside to what degree Kissinger demanded perfection in all details, as well as to observe the esteem, even awe, he commanded among his European counterparts."

Tom met his wife, Sheila, while serving as a regional public affairs officer in Mexico. She was a newspaper reporter who requested an interview with the U.S. ambassador. "Of course, I gladly obliged," smiles Tom. The interview was a big success, and the rest is history. "She shares my love of travel, culture and meeting people from many exotic backgrounds," he notes. Sheila teaches protocol and etiquette at the Foreign Service Institute, and also serves as president of the Pan American Roundtable. The couple have two daughters, both graduates of the University of Virginia and fluent in six languages between them.

Tom joined AFSA after he retired from the State Department in 2001 and says he has greatly enjoyed promoting AFSA and the Foreign Service. "We have a first-class, highly dedicated team of professionals, who work together quite closely and congenially, almost as a family." He adds, "I also feel great personal pride and satisfaction in knowing that my work is directly contributing to a greater public awareness of the importance of our beloved Foreign Service in advancing vital American interests."

AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston has worked with Tom for several years, and calls him "energetic, committed and a skillful communicator who knows the Foreign Service inside and out. Tom is the kind of personality who sees the glass as half-full — an invaluable trait."

Tom has many interests, including reading, languages, music, painting, fine arts, hiking, boating and travel. He recently enjoyed reading *Washington Rules* by security expert Andrew Bacevich, and has been known to cast a fishing line into the beautiful Shenandoah River now and again. ❑

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ident talking about exports in a State of the Union address." He called the goal of doubling exports "very ambitious," but said it could be done through trade agreements, export financing and an export promotion program. And since most exporters only export to one country, he added, we need to help them expand to other countries.

In response to a question by Donnelly about the Secretary of State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, Larson reacted positively, saying that it has "elevated the importance of the functional bureaus." Pointing to a need for a "reservoir of knowledge in today's interconnected world," he feels the QDDR is "putting more muscle" into the State Department's agenda overseas.

All three panelists spoke of the importance of ambassadors thinking of themselves as the senior commercial officers at post. "Early in my career," said Larson, "there was the impression that State FSOs didn't want to 'get their hands dirty' with commercial work. Later, when I briefed outgoing ambassadors about FCS, I told them, 'I'm going to break out the champagne on the day that I hear an ambassador was overly zealous in promoting American business interests overseas.'"

The audience included more than a few current and former high-level officials from State and Commerce who posed thoughtful questions. Topics such as gross domestic product/gross national product, bribery and corruption, and "inward investment" were discussed. Many people, including the panelists, expressed concern that no one person is actually accountable for implementing the National Export Initiative, and that it lacks an "action plan."

Still, the speakers were excited about the changing face of economic and commercial diplomacy. "There's a very important journey going on now," Ford said. "It's not just about selling widget X to country Y."

A video of the program can be viewed at www.afsa.org.

AFSA appreciates the charitable support of the Lockheed Martin Corporation for these lectures. We also appreciate the individual donors of AFSA who have contributed to the Fund for American Diplomacy. ❑

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Hail and Farewell

AFSA welcomes several new staff members:

Director of Policy **Ed Dickens** is a retired Senior FSO who has served in the former Yugoslavia, Belgium and Iceland on a wide variety of issues. He was selected to open the department's first congressional liaison office on the Hill in 2001.

Labor Management Counselor **Janet Weber** retired from the Senior Foreign Service in 2008 after serving in Poland, Russia, Costa Rica and Mexico. Since her retirement, she has worked primarily in the nonprofit sector on international visitor programs and child protection issues.

Jeff Lau is the new Web/IT assistant, providing Web support and development. A native of Lebanon, Pa., Jeff recently graduated from Boston University's Center for Digital Imaging Arts. Check out his web site at www.drfrankenlau.com.

Kristy Pomes is no stranger to AFSA; serving first as public affairs intern this past winter, she is now AFSA's new member services representative. She attended the University of Florida and is a devoted traveler and softball player.

Donna Ayerst joins us as the new *AFSA News* editor, starting with the June issue. Most recently she worked at the Family Liaison Office as the CLO program coordinator, and, before that, as FLO's communications/publications coordinator.

We say farewell to **Amy McKeever**, who was tapped to be editor of *Eater DC*, a restaurant and nightlife blog. We also bid farewell to Legislative Affairs Director **Casey Frary**, who plans to continue working in a Hill-related capacity.

Correction and Apology

USAID representative Michael Henning was left off the list of those AFSA Governing Board members not depicted in the March Annual report photo. *AFSA News* greatly regrets this omission and apologizes to Mr. Henning.

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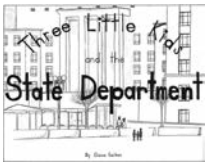

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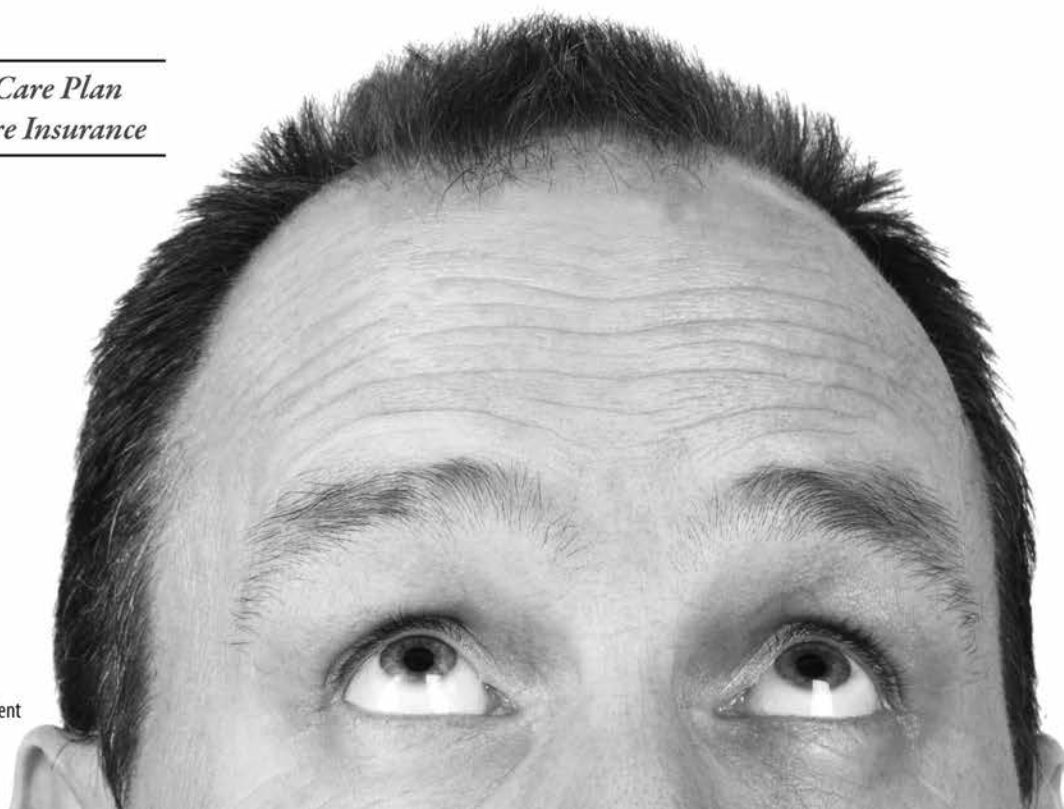

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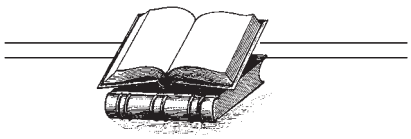

BOOKS

Developing an Early-Warning System

Beyond the Crash: Overcoming the First Crisis of Globalization
Gordon Brown, Free Press, 2010, $26, hardcover, 336 pages.

REVIEWED BY HARRY C. BLANEY III

Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's latest book, *Beyond the Crash: Overcoming the First Crisis of Globalization*, explores several major themes: how heads of government conduct diplomacy; why it is vital for diplomats to understand the economic and financial forces underlying globalization; and how to tame those forces and harness them for the common good.

As he did while in office, both as chancellor of the exchequer (secretary of the treasury) and as prime minister, Brown aspires to craft economic and social policies, implemented through durable yet nimble institutions, which he and other leaders can use not just to prevent another crash but to shape a new political and economic order.

Motivated partly by guilt about missing early signs of the coming fiscal collapse while in office, he uses the book to advocate a new order that will bring greater prosperity, security and fairness than our self-serving bankers and myopic politicians have left us.

In these pages, Gordon Brown carries us along with him to Cabinet meetings, summits, confrontations and dialogues with bankers, and meetings and conversations with former President George W. Bush and many other world leaders, all aimed at forging a global consensus to solve one of the most intractable crises of our generation. He displays a serious, brilliant mind constantly at work — a man of moral purpose rather than a time-server.

> Beyond the Crash *sketches a credible blueprint for dealing with financial, economic, trade, and crisis prevention measures.*

Along the way, he recounts some major achievements: the initial responses to the Asian financial crisis, the creation of the Group of 20 and, not least, progress toward instituting global regulation of financial risks by the major economic powers. As Brown puts it: "I wanted an early-warning system, and I wanted the financial regulators to work together at a global level as an executive." But one painful lesson he learned was that once a crisis seems to be over, the push for corrective action and strong oversight loses steam.

That should come as no surprise to diplomats who went through the energy crisis of the 1970s, more recent efforts to deal with climate change, or ongoing efforts to roll back moves to better regulate banks and international financial transactions.

Brown's vision is grand. Rather than tinkering at the edges, which he sees as inadequate to our challenges, he seeks a worldwide "coalition for change." He covers the role that each government, including America, can play in seeking a strategy of growth — which he sees as the key to dealing with our financial and economic challenges. Global cooperation is a key plank of his platform, which echoes Benjamin Franklin's warning: "We must all hang together or we shall all hang separately."

Beyond the Crash sketches a credible blueprint of a serious international and national framework for dealing with financial, economic, trade and crisis prevention measures. It is one that all policymakers — and economic diplomats, in particular — should take seriously. For instance, he proposes a "banking constitution," a global levy or tax on financial transactions, a worldwide growth plan for jobs and justice, strengthening the G-20, and a host of other reforms — all intended to deal with the problem of "capitalism without capital."

But perhaps the most refreshing contribution this book makes is to treat systemic reform as an embodiment of the concept of the public good. Gordon Brown's "Scottish" sense of seriousness and restraint reflects his upbringing, but his vision is very global.

Harry C. Blaney III, a retired FSO, is currently a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy. He spent six years on the Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff covering global issues, among many other Foreign Service assignments, and also worked on international environmental policy as a special assistant to the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality.

Seeing the World Anew

Monsoon
Robert D. Kaplan, Random House, 2010, $28, hardcover, 366 pages.

REVIEWED BY JOSH GLAZEROFF

Let me be blunt. Don't bother reading this book unless you'd like to see the world in a new way, with a new map in front of you.

Remember the map on the wall in school? It depicted the United States between two oceans, with everything else far away.

Author Robert D. Kaplan explains why we need to rethink that world view, reassessing which two oceans surround us. As he points out, the new world dynamic features a rising China and India, and many other players we must consider. And these are all connected not by the Atlantic, but by the Indian Ocean.

Africa, the Middle East, India,

BOOKS

The developed world now cares in a brand-new way about what is happening in the Indian Ocean.

Southeast Asia — all are linked historically by the monsoon and the ocean waves. And today, they are linked even more closely.

The U.S. Navy still maintains the global shipping lanes, but for how much longer? While the number of U.S. ships in service declines each year as a percentage of the world's naval fleet, the role of Asian powers only grows greater.

Consider two familiar topics much in the news lately: oil shipments and piracy. Both of them are linked to the Indian Ocean and its littoral. For Beijing, on track to become the world's top energy consumer, the oil is going to come from the Middle East and Africa via Southeast Asia. Already it is pursuing port projects in Gwadar, Pakistan; Hambantota, Sri Lanka; and Chittagong, Bangladesh. And it is planning canals, rail transfers and roads across the Malaysian and Thai peninsulas.

And on the piracy front, just about every country with any sort of navy is currently patrolling off the coast of Somalia (and much further abroad) to ensure commerce can continue.

Consequently, the developed world now cares in a brand-new way about

what is happening in the Indian Ocean — which, Kaplan reminds us, represents history repeating itself. So if you're a U.S. policymaker or diplomat, this new reality should matter to you.

Kaplan advises us to take a fresh look at Oman and Zanzibar, Gujarat and Aceh — places not usually high on the list of traditional U.S. foreign policy concerns. He suggests that perhaps conducting two significant land wars during the past decade was not the best use of our resources — particularly as China focused on the "First Island Chain" (a chain of major archipelagos extending out from the East Asian continential mainland coast) and explored ways to turn Taiwan, an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," from a geographical liability into a natural asset.

Conversely, our effort to rebuild relations with Indonesia is producing long-term benefits for us in what is now a huge and democratic Islamic nation. And how closely and effectively the U.S. works with India in the information technology industry, on agricultural issues and in defense, among many other fields, multiplies out across a vast region of influence.

The Middle East has long been on our list of geopolitical hot spots, but we don't usually think of Iran (a thorn in our side for more than 30 years now) and Pakistan (which may well become another enduring headache) as next-door neighbors. But they are.

Both in scale and duration, the trade, cultural connectivity and shared experiences of these nations and their peoples go far beyond those triggered by our own declaration of independence. So we neglect the history of these places at our peril. ■

Josh Glazeroff, an FSO since 1997, is visa chief at Embassy New Delhi.

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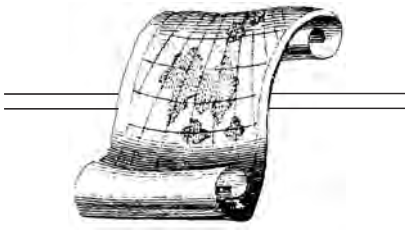

REFLECTIONS

A Dad in Iraq

BY YASMIN RANZ-LIND

My dad left for Iraq in August. My mom, my little brother and I were all distressed, but we knew it was only for a year, and that he would come visit us here in Morocco in just three months. I also found out that the anticipation leading up to the day he left was much worse than when he actually left. Life hasn't been quite the same, but I've learned that there are both pros and cons to my dad's leaving.

When my dad was here, my parents would talk during dinner about work and the news; things that didn't interest me. I even got into the habit of raising my hand when I wanted to speak, like I do at school. But now that he isn't here, I can talk about things that I'd like to talk about, like what I learned that day.

Another pro is that we can go to bed later. When my dad was here, we had a strict bedtime of 8:30 so that my parents could spend time together or watch TV shows that they liked before they went to sleep. Now that my dad isn't here, my mom is much more flexible. Now, she lets us watch television with her until around 9:30 before we go to bed.

An additional positive aspect is that since my mom needs to work (and sometimes even travel) we hired a French au pair. She helps us with our French studies and plays with us when my mom doesn't have the energy or the time.

> *Just not having him around feels … different.*

However, there are many cons, as well. For instance, when my father was around he used to read to my brother before bed, so that I could watch TV or read with my mom. He used to cook things my mom doesn't know how to make that I miss. Also, just not having him around feels … different.

I play the piano, and I've been playing since I was 5 years old. My dad always sat with me and corrected things like my hand position or speed. He also helped me memorize difficult pieces for recitals. My mom doesn't even know how to read music.

My brother, who is 6, thinks that another result of my dad being away is that we seem to be getting sick more often. "Because you're sad inside, your cells can't fight the bacteria," says my brother, the budding scientist.

It is always hardest when my mom needs to travel for work, because then I feel lonely and upset. Even though my mom doesn't have to travel a lot, any time she does it makes me sad. Even if she tells me weeks before, it always somehow takes me by surprise.

Something that helps us get through my dad's absence is that we know he's safe and we'll see him very soon. Also, we have many means of communication. Almost every night, we videochat through Skype. We also communicate through Facebook and through e-mail. But, when the Internet is down or slow, or our computer isn't working, it feels like we're disconnected from my dad. We've gotten used to seeing him all the time even if it's through a screen.

Every three months, my dad gets R&R time to visit us for 2½ weeks. He actually gets three weeks off, but it takes two days each way to travel from Baghdad. It is fun making plans with him when he is here. For instance, on his first visit, we went to Geneva, thinking it would be the exact opposite of Baghdad. On his next trip, we are meeting up in the States so we can see my grandparents.

I suppose my dad going to Iraq helped me understand that it's hard having a parent away, but it also taught me a lesson: I realize how much I love him, something that I didn't appreciate all of the time before. I really miss my dad, and can't wait to see him again! ■

Yasmin Ranz-Lind, the daughter of FSOs David Ranz and Taly Lind, is a fifth-grader at the Rabat American School, a reporter for the school paper and a lifetime Foreign Service brat.

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